

Section 42: BIMM Institute Recognition of Prior Practice (RPP) Policy & Procedure

Section A: Introduction & Terminology

Introduction

BIMM Institute recognises the value of learning wherever it occurs, either to meet course entry requirements or to achieve credit towards named awards. Recognition of Prior Practice is an alternative entry route onto Level 4 of a BIMM undergraduate course for mature applicants who do not hold the minimum qualifications required to gain entry onto a course. A mature applicant must be 19 years of age by course start date for their RPP application to be considered.

BIMM Institute shall seek to operate its RPP procedures in ways that are fair and in accordance with legal requirements and the Institute's regulations at all times. This includes specific compliance with the Equality Act and BIMM Institute's Equal Opportunities & Diversity Policy, as well as including a commitment that the Institute will foster stronger recruitment from groups currently under-represented in higher education, by working to raise aspirations and break down barriers to participation such as those created by culture, geography, social and economic factors.

Publicity

Details about RPP, including information on where prospective students can obtain advice and guidance about submitting an application, any fees payable, and time limits shall be publicised to applicants via the Institute's prospectus and website.

Terminology

- **Recognition** - Refers to the process whereby applicants of all ages and backgrounds are eligible to receive recognition and/or formal credit for learning acquired in the past through formal study, through work and other life experiences.
- **Recognition of Prior Practice (RPP)** - Refers to the recognition of prior practice and experience gained outside the Institute through:
 - Other experience, which is uncertified and not previously assessed. For example, learning from paid or unpaid work, community activities, leisure pursuits and other informal learning experiences related to the subject of study in the course of interest.

Where 'recognised' prior practice meets the criteria above but there is no formal credit allocated, the Institute shall follow the procedures detailed in this policy to gauge the equivalent qualification level required for entry onto the applied for undergraduate course/s.

Section B: Application Process

Criteria, Conditions & Restrictions for RPP

The procedures for recognising prior practice shall ensure that the learning which has taken place and is presented as RPP demonstrates a satisfactory level of academic ability and aptitude (via the essay submission) that is required for L4 study (first year of a BIMM Institute undergraduate course), as well as related experience to subject of study being to a level that may be equivalent to time spent, or learning outcomes similar to the qualifications required to enter an undergraduate course.

Applicants for RPP shall provide the following evidence that learning has taken place to demonstrate equivalence. All evidence of learning shall be:

- **Written in English**
- **Sufficient** - Keep in mind that evidence presented (e.g. a portfolio or syllabus) should be concise and contain sufficient evidence for the purpose intended.
- **Recent** - How recent the learning and/or experience is can determine its value. Certain skills and knowledge, for example, can quickly become redundant.
- **Authentic** - For certain evidence to be accepted it may require endorsement or a reference from relevant sources, e.g. employers, recognised professional bodies or validating institutions.
- **Relevant** - The specifications of a job or the learning outcomes of a particular qualification will determine the relevance of the evidence.

Criteria

When considering evidence for learning through practice, the RPP Assessor shall:

- Assess the evidence submitted against the requirements and learning outcomes of the relevant level of qualification needed to gain entry onto a BIMM Institute undergraduate course. Please see specific course entry requirements. They can be found within the BIMM Institute prospectus or on the BIMM Institute website.
- Confirm that the learning has been in a subject area relevant to the course of study.
- Assess equivalences of competence between learning at work (for example) and having gained a specific qualification.

'Shelf Life' of Prior Practice/Experiential Learning

Recognition shall normally be considered for learning attained via practice within five years prior to the enrolment date for the intended course at BIMM Institute.

Prior practice or work completed more than five years prior to the enrolment date for the intended course may be recognised and subject to the following conditions:

- The Course Leader or Assessor confirms that the learning is still relevant and meets the required Learning Outcomes; and/or
- The applicant can demonstrate evidence of continuous application, updating and relevance to their practice.

Falsification or misrepresentation of evidence

BIMM Institute reserves the right to terminate an application for or registration on a course if the applicant/student is found to have omitted relevant facts or information in connection with their RPP application or to have falsified or misrepresented any part of their application.

Application Requirements

Applications for RPP shall consist of a written request, stating the BIMM Institute award in respect of which the student seeks RPP and submit:

- Applicants are required to submit a Portfolio, the content of which shall vary in accordance with the nature of the experiences and of the learning that has resulted from that experience but shall normally include the following elements:
 - The statement of the claim;
 - A brief CV to provide a context for the claim;
 - Reflection on the relevance of the learning to the course against which the claim is being made (this will normally be in the form of a 1500-word academic essay – the admissions department will provide the applicant with full details and guidance on this submission);
 - Portfolio of evidence – this will be required in support of the written (essay) submission. A variety of artefacts can be considered – a full description of accepted items will be sent to the applicant prior to their submission and can also be viewed in **Appendix 1** at the bottom of this document. Appendix 1 provides information about the types of evidence required and a general methodology of the process.

In preparing the Portfolio, upon request, an applicant may be allocated a mentor by BIMM Institute who may be subsequently involved in the assessment of the evidence but shall not be the sole assessor. The mentor shall advise the applicant of any additional course-specific criteria and what evidence shall be required for this.

The procedure for considering requests for the accreditation of prior experiential learning shall include the following stages:

- Agreement of work to be submitted (e.g. essay submission, portfolio, presentation, submission of artefacts);
- Agreement of submission date;
- Agreement of any tutorial arrangements (including monitoring progress towards submission, reviewing drafts, etc.);
- Clarification of arrangements for assessment

Timescale for Submission

Applicants wishing to apply via the RPP application route will be advised in the first instance to discuss the matter with the Admissions Team, who will ensure that the applicant is informed of the Institute's RPP policy and procedure.

Applications for RPP should normally be made no later than ten weeks in advance of enrolling on the intended undergraduate course.

Students who apply after the start of their course may be disadvantaged by missing the enrolment and induction events which provide essential information and missing lessons in the first few weeks may also add strain on the student in terms of assessments taking place in the first semester.

If the applicant has a problem obtaining appropriate evidence in time to meet the ten-week deadline above, they should inform BIMM Institute and request an extension at the earliest opportunity.

Approval Process & Confirmation of Decision

The Admissions Team will advise RPP applicants on deadlines for submission of their application and work with College academic teams to arrange appropriate support, where applicable, to ensure the applicant understands what is required of them.

If the agreed submission deadline is missed by the applicant, the Admissions Team will advise on the next available date by which their application should be received to ensure it makes the next RPP Panel date. If the applicant has missed the final RPP Panel date for the relevant year of entry, Admissions will discuss the application with the RPP Panel Chair to see if other options are available or if the applicant needs to re-apply the following academic year.

All RPP applications accepted by the Admissions Team will be referred to a College RPP Academic Lead (normally the Head of Education, Head of Higher Education or Head of Learning & Teaching), who will assign an RPP Assessor (normally the relevant Course Leader or Deputy Course Leader).

The RPP Assessor will consider the application and, should they require additional information, the applicant will be advised within fifteen working days of the original submission, with an appropriate deadline agreed for the new information to be submitted. When the RPP Assessor is satisfied that they have all the necessary details to assess the application, they will make a recommendation to the RPP Panel via the College RPP Academic Lead.

It is the responsibility of the College RPP Academic Lead to ensure all RPP Assessors meet the marking deadline to ensure the RPP submissions are considered at the panel date as agreed with the applicant. The RPP Assessor will mark the work as either a pass or fail and submit the work and mark for panel consideration.

The College RPP Academic Lead will be responsible for consistency of marking and the submitting of assessed RPP applications and accompanying recommendations to the RPP Panel, which will consider them for final approval. The RPP Panel will be comprised of all College RPP Academic Leads and chaired by the Academic Registrar. The decision of the RPP Panel will be communicated to the Admissions Team within ten working days of meeting (Panel dates are listed in Appendix 3). T

The RPP applicant will be notified of the decision in writing by the Admissions Team, who will update the applicant's record as appropriate and store the documentation on file. Where the RPP application is rejected, the letter confirming the decision shall include details of any shortcomings and how they might be rectified should the applicant wish to re-apply.

Appeals

Applicants may not appeal against the academic or professional judgement of those making the decision on an application. However, BIMM Institute shall consider a request from an appellant that the decision to reject their application be reviewed on the grounds that:

- There exists new evidence, which can be corroborated, and could not have been brought to the attention of BIMM Institute prior to the selection process;
- There is evidence of a procedural irregularity connected directly with the selection process undertaken by BIMM Institute;
- The decision of BIMM Institute is, on the basis of the information available, unreasonable;
- There is evidence of prejudice or bias on the part of those involved in the selection process.

Appeals must be made in writing within twenty-eight calendar days of the date of the letter from BIMM Institute notifying the applicant of the decision. Further details may be found in BIMM Institute's Appeals Procedure, available via the BIMM Institute website: www.bimm.co.uk/appeals-process/.

Complaints

BIMM Institute is committed to delivering a high quality, efficient and fair admissions service, and it is encouraged that applicants notify the institution of any causes for concern, and areas for improvement. Complaints may be made regarding the services or facilities offered by BIMM Institute or the actions or behaviour of a member of staff during the process. The outcome of a complaint that is upheld could include an apology or an undertaking to revise procedures. However, it will not usually result in reconsideration of the candidate's application. Students who wish to complain may do so in accordance with BIMM Institute's Appeals & Complaints Procedures.

Appendix 1: Portfolio Criteria for Experiential Learning – Guidance for Applicants

A portfolio is an organised folder of information compiled by an applicant with support from BIMM Institute staff if required or requested by the applicant. It will contain details of past experiences and accomplishments. It may also contain evidence that the individual has reliably demonstrated the skills, knowledge and understanding to be given recognition to gain exemption, or to gain equivalency to the minimum entry requirements of their chosen course of study.

A Portfolio can be used to gain accreditation and/or exemption, or to decide what continuing education is appropriate. It needs to be concise, well presented and relevant.

Key Features of a Portfolio

The folder should contain details of:

- Skills
- Knowledge
- Understanding
- Achievement

These features can come from:

- Paid employment
- Voluntary work
- Self-directed/managed project work/practice within a commercial/public domain
- Self employed/freelance work related to the desired subject of study
- Domestic work
- Hobbies and interests
- Education and training

What should be included in the Portfolio:

- A Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- Voluntary work – unpaid
- Domestic work – unpaid
- Hobbies and interests
- Education and training: formal and informal
- List of competencies
- Supporting evidence

Types of Evidence Required

Direct Evidence (your own work)

For example:

- Written reports
- Essays/Poems
- Articles
- Computer courses
- A set of accounts
- Photographs of objects that you have produced
- Practice-based documents
- Reports based on reflection on practice
- Video/audio materials relating to the learning outcomes
- Analysis of issues arising in preparing for practice

- Analysis and description of practice activities
- Analysis of training activities in relation to the practice
- Statements from line-managers in relation to your practice

Indirect Evidence (what someone else says about you)

For example:

- Testimonials from one or more of the following:
 - Employers
 - Colleagues
 - Business partners
 - Creative/project partners
 - Voluntary organisations
 - Teachers/lecturers etc.
 - Articles written about you
 - Prizes/Awards
 - Certificates

Laying out the information

You do not have to use a prescribed format to present the material, but you might find the following order useful:

1. Cover page – RPP application for (your name)
2. Curriculum Vitae
3. Essay Submission (a reflective 1500-word academic essay on your prior practice upon which your application and evidence is based)
4. Education and training – indicate the skills, knowledge and understanding which you have acquired through various aspects of your education
5. Work experience and training – indicate the skills, knowledge and understanding you have acquired through employment
6. Voluntary or community work – identify what skills, knowledge and understanding has been acquired
7. Other formal or informal learning experiences for example, touring, organising events, live performances, working at events or venues, leading a sports club, coaching, etc
8. List of competencies – categorise your skills, knowledge and understanding. For example:
 - Personal skills
 - Good communicator
 - Confident public speaker
 - Ability to assimilate a range of ideas
9. Any areas that do not fall into the above categories (4 - 7) which you consider relevant for assessment.

BIMM Institute’s Commitment to Applicants

The Admissions department and BIMM College Academic teams will be able to provide applicants with a marking criteria guide for their portfolio submission and essay. This will help demonstrate what is required for a pass mark. The work being marked as part of the RPP application will be marked as a pass or fail only. If the submission does not meet the criteria required for a pass, the marker will provide feedback for the applicant.

When requested, BIMM Institute is able to help applicants compile a portfolio of evidence by offering the relevant resources, information, advice and one-to-one guidance on how to collect evidence and lay

out the portfolio. We will also offer a one-hour tutorial to check the completed portfolio and to make recommendations if further evidence or descriptions are needed. If any additional support is required, this should be requested by the applicant in advance of the tutorial.

Appendix 2: Supporting Staff Assessing RPP

College Principals will nominate a College RPP Academic Lead (normally the Head of Education, Head of Higher Education or Head of Learning & Teaching) to support academics dealing with RPP applications. This person shall be experienced in RPP processes and will be allocated time to fulfil their responsibilities. The College RPP Academic Lead will be responsible for ensuring consistency within their own college.

The RPP Panel is responsible for final approval of all RPP applications, and all paperwork should be available for internal or external scrutiny, as required.

Appendix 3: RPP Panel dates for Academic Year of Entry 2020/21

Applicant Deadline for RPP submission	RPP submission marking deadlines	RPP submission received by RPP panel	RPP panel date:	<i>Applicant informed of decision – guide dates below: (normally within ten working days of RPP panel date)</i>
3 rd February	17 th February	21 st February	26 th February	<i>4th March</i>
30 th March	13 th April	17 th April	24 th April	<i>28th April</i>
1 st May	15 th May	21 st May	28 th May	<i>3rd June</i>
15 th June	26 th June	3 rd July	10 th July	<i>14th July</i>
25 th August	11 th September	15 th September	18 th September	<i>21st September</i>