

GUIDELINES ON RECOGNITION OF PRIOR CERTIFICATED AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Validated Programmes

MA Professional Practice
PGDip Professional Practice
PGCert Professional Practice
PGDip Leadership in Professional Practice
PGCert Leadership in Professional Practice
PGCert Professional Education
BA (Hons) Health and Social Care Practice
Dip HE Health and Social Care Practice

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1. INTRODUCTION

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is a system whereby academic credits can be awarded for previous learning that has taken place either through formal courses of study (Certified Learning) or through experience (Experiential Learning).

The postgraduate and post-registration degree pathways are likely to attract students from a variety of backgrounds. The RPEL process detailed here will enable students to be exempt from certain modules of the pathway as well as receive specific credit which can 'count towards' the final award. It will also be used to admit students who do not meet the conventional entry requirements to the programme but can demonstrate an equivalent achievement through other means.

These guidelines reflect the Middlesex University Regulations for Recognition of Prior Learning. They should be read in conjunction with the admissions process for validated graduate and postgraduate programmes.

2. TERMINOLOGY

2.1 Credit:

Each module carries a credit rating, with most modules rated at 20 credits. Other modules may be rated at 40 or 60 credits, and those from other universities (including Middlesex University's other programmes) may be rated as 15 or 30 credits. The rating is assigned according to the number of learning hours the student will undertake to complete the module and the assessment load. This usually equates to 1 credit per 10 hours of learning.

2.2 General credit:

The number of credits awarded to a student following an evaluation of both certificated and uncertificated learning (including experiential learning) prior to being assigned to a particular qualification.

2.3 Specific credit:

The number of credits awarded to a student following an evaluation of both certificated and uncertificated learning (including experiential learning), assigned to a particular module.

2.4 Exemption:

Following an evaluation of both certificated and uncertificated learning (including experiential learning), and then an exemption may be granted from part of the requirements of a qualification. This does not reduce the total number of credits required for the qualification.

3. GRADUATE and POSTGRADUATE QUALIFICATIONS

3.1 Diploma of Higher Education/ Foundation Degree:

This may be awarded to a student who has gained 120 credits at FHEQ Level 4 and 120 credits at FHEQ Level 5.

3.2 Honours Degree:

This may be awarded to a student who has typically gained 120 credits at FHEQ Level 4, 120 credits at FHEQ Level 5, and 120 credits at FHEQ Level 6.

3.3 Postgraduate Certificate:

This may be awarded to a student who has typically gained 60 credits at FHEQ level 7, of which a minimum of 40 credits must be achieved at FHEQ level 7. Up to 20 credits may have been achieved at FHEQ Level 6.

3.4 Postgraduate Diploma

This may be awarded to a student who has typically gained 120 credits at FHEQ Level 7, of which a minimum of 90 credits must be achieved at FHEQ level 7. Up to 30 credits may have been achieved at FHEQ Level 6.

3.5 Masters Degree

This may be awarded to a student who has typically gained 180 credits at FHEQ Level 7, of which a minimum of 150 credits must be achieved at FHEQ level 7. Up to 30 credits may have been achieved at FHEQ Level 6 through Recognition of Prior Learning. A Masters degree will include an extended project comprising 60 credits at Level 7.

4. RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING REGULATIONS APPLYING TO ALL PROGRAMMES

Students who hold qualifications and/or relevant experience may be awarded exemption from certain modules in the pathway or be assigned specific credit towards a post-graduate award. Under the assessment regulations of the University the maximum amount of credit which can be counted towards a qualification is normally two thirds of the total required for the qualification with the exception of a recognised suite of programmes within the Professional Nursing and/or Midwifery field where up to 300 credits from other Nursing and Midwifery Council or QAA recognised programmes may be transferred. This

mean that normally, for example, 240 credits can be recognised through RPL towards the 360 credits required for a Bachelor's degree with honours or 40 credits can be recognised towards the 60 credits required for a Postgraduate Certificate. However, the programme of study may require the completion of compulsory modules against which a claim for prior learning may not be made and this may mean that the amount of credit that can be claimed through RPL is less than two thirds.

The level 5, 6 or 7 work may not have been used towards any other award; the double counting of credit is not permitted.

Prospective students will be expected to attend an informal interview with the programme lead. Original evidence of formal certificated or experiential learning should be brought to the interview to establish whether the student is eligible to gain general entry to the programme, will need to seek alternative entry or is in a position to seek entry with credit. The programme lead will make a record of the interview and will take copies of any relevant certificates.

4.1 Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL)

Some students may present with level 5, 6 or 7 credits which could be used to exempt them from modules within these programmes.

Students who have gained a Diploma of Higher Education, or a Postgraduate award in education, management or health and social care studies may have the opportunity to gain advanced standing in order to 'top up' their qualification to either a BA or a full Master's degree respectively. These students are required to complete the compulsory modules within the programmes which are detailed below.

If a credit bearing module or learning experience was completed more than 5 years ago, students will be required to write a 1000-1200 word reflection to demonstrate evidence of continued personal development in that field, identifying how they have kept this knowledge and skills current.

In some cases, the student may seek RPCL for a module which carries less credits than the module that they are seeking exemption from. In this case they will provide a portfolio, including a reflective account, to demonstrate experiential learning and how the knowledge and skills from this learning has been used in their practice. This will be assessed against the relevant academic level criteria and programme outcomes to top up the credit (see experiential learning below).

4.2 Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)

A professional portfolio may be used to aid an experienced student who does not hold the relevant academic qualification to access the relevant undergraduate or postgraduate programme or to claim Recognition of Prior Learning. Any student wishing to pursue this route will be allocated a personal teacher to guide them through the process of constructing a portfolio. Details of the content of this portfolio are provided in Section 7.

5. REGULATIONS SPECIFIC TO UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

Potential methods of gaining RPL in relation to the Level 5 and 6 programmes are summarised in Figure 1.

5.1 BA (Hons) Health and Social Care Practice

Students entering this degree programme whose professional qualification is not academic credit bearing but constitutes evidence of learning equivalent to 120 credits at Level 4 may apply for Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) at level 4.

Students who hold a Certificate of Higher Education in HE may apply for Recognition of Prior Certified Learning (RPCL) of 120 credits at level 4.

Students who hold a Diploma of Higher Education may apply for RPCL of 120 credits at level 4 and RPCL of 120 credits at level 5.

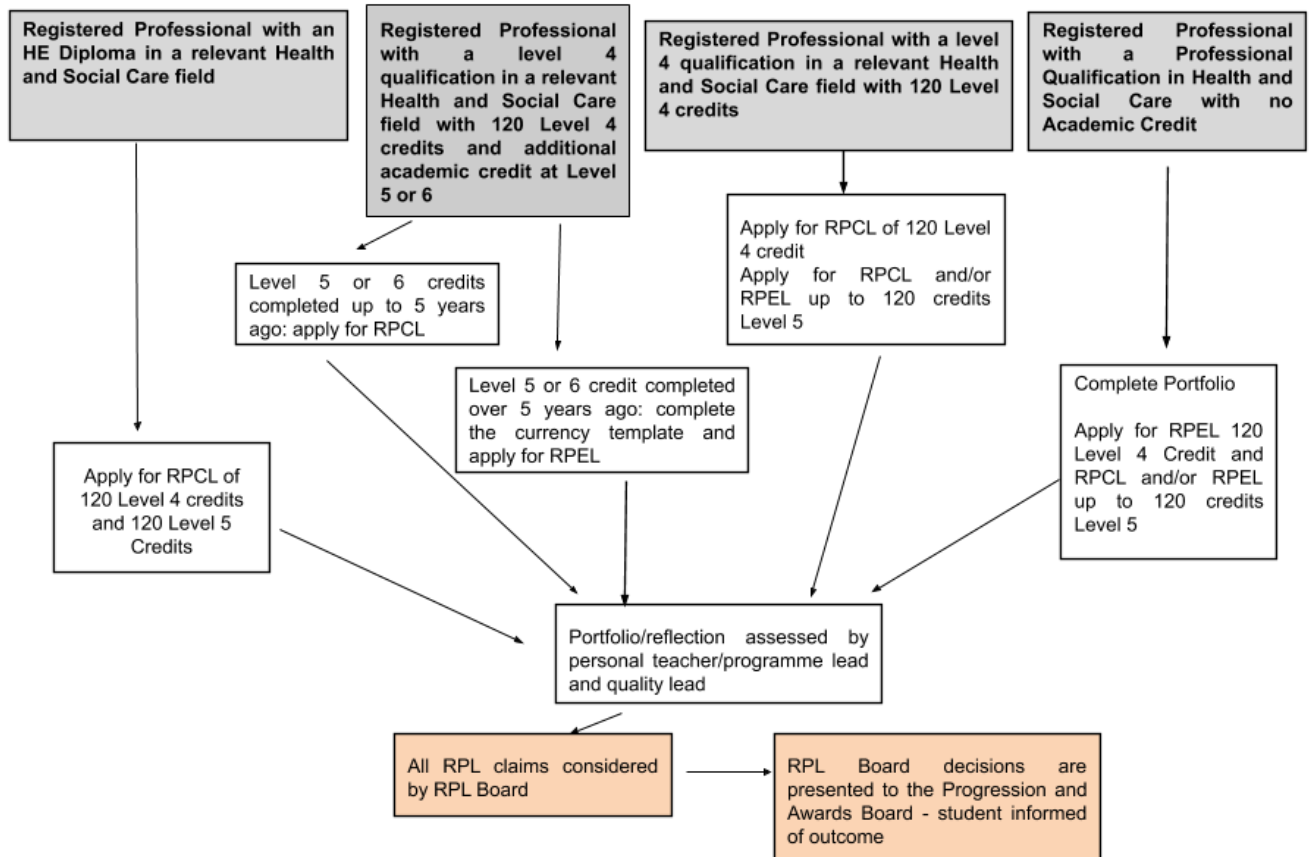
In addition, students may apply for RPCL in relation to a credit-bearing module at academic level 5 or 6, or RPEL in recognition of their learning and development since their original qualification.

Evidence Based Practice L6 and the Dissertation are compulsory modules for all students, and Evidence Based Practice L5 is also compulsory for students entering at Level 5.

5.2 Diploma of HE (Exit Award)

Students enrolled on the BA (Hons) programme may exit with a Diploma in HE. These students must achieve at least 80 credits within this programme and therefore may only be awarded 120 credits at Level 4 and 40 credits at Level 5 through RPL.

Figure 1: Undergraduate Programme Flow Chart



6. GRADUATE PROGRAMMES

These potential methods of gaining RPL in relation to the Masters Level programmes are summarised in Figure 2.

6.1 Postgraduate Certificate

Students enrolling for a Postgraduate Certificate may make an RPL claim for:

- a) Recognition of a maximum of 20 credits at level 6 or level 7 as specific credit, which may be used towards the achievement of the award.

6.2 Postgraduate diploma

Students enrolling for a Postgraduate Diploma may make an RPL claim for either:

- a) Recognition of a maximum of 40 credits at Level 6 or 7, comprising a minimum of 10 credits at Level 7 and a maximum of 30 credits at level 6, or
- b) Advanced standing for the first year of the pathway in recognition of a postgraduate certificate in education, management or health and social care, or a level 7 vocational diploma in strategic management.

6.3 Master's pathway

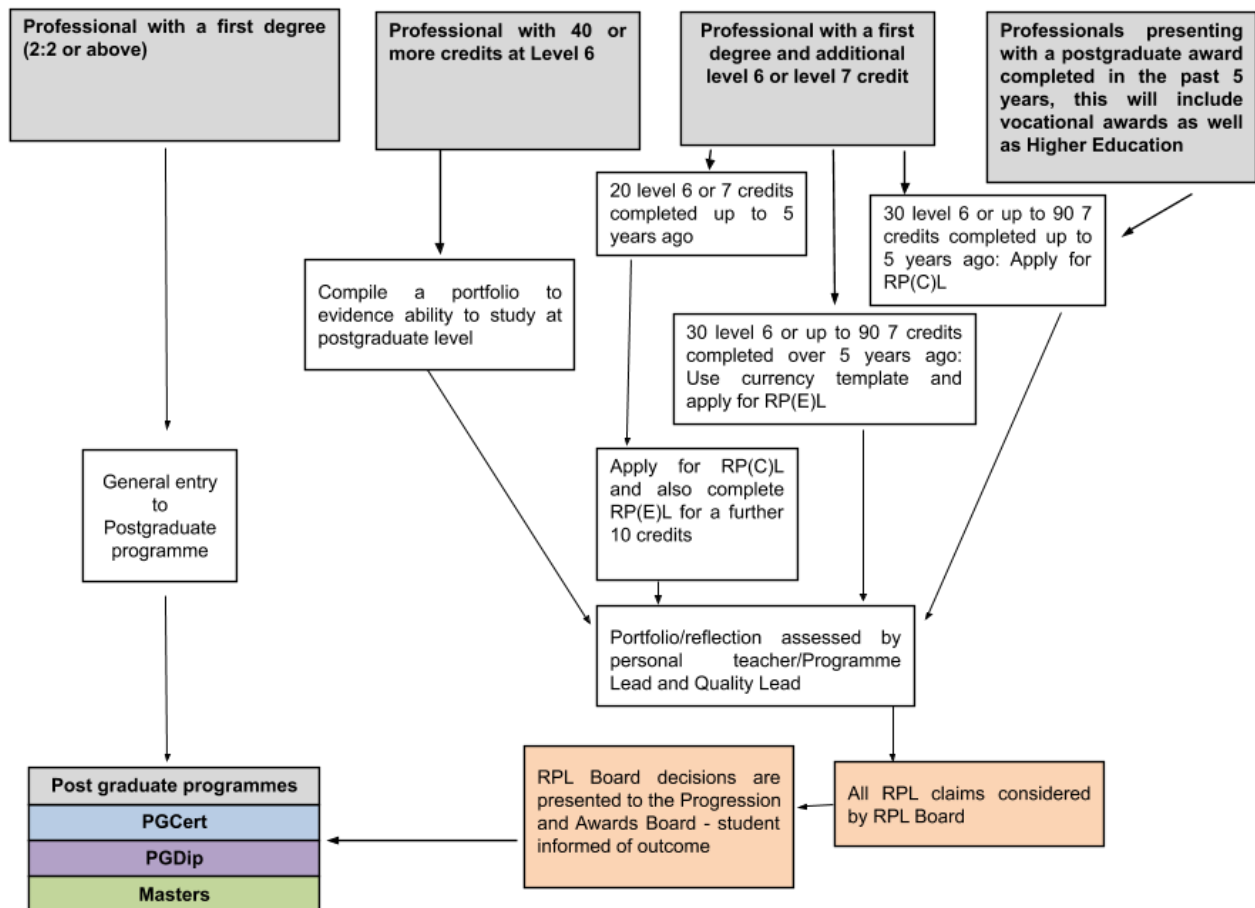
Students enrolling for a full master's may make an RPL claim for one of the following:

- a) Recognition of a maximum of 40 credits at Level 6 or 7, comprising a minimum of 10 credits at Level 7 and a maximum of 30 credits at level 6, or
- b) Advanced standing for the first year of the pathway in recognition of a Postgraduate Certificate in education, management or health and social care, or a level 7 vocational diploma in strategic management, or
- c) Advanced standing for the first year of the programme and 30 credits in the second year in recognition of a Postgraduate Diploma in education, management or health and social care, or a Level 7 vocational extended diploma in strategic management.

Students will be required to complete 'Research and Development Methods' and 'Extended Project' which are compulsory modules.

The learning outcomes achieved in acquiring recognised credit within the Post Graduate programmes must reflect the outcomes of a module in this pathway, and any level 6 credit must not have already been counted towards the award of a Level 6 Degree.

Figure 2: Postgraduate Programme Flow Chart



7. DEVELOPING A PORTFOLIO AS RECOGNITION OF PRIOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING (RPEL)

7.1 Rationale and Aims

1. Experienced health and social care practitioners may have achieved their professional qualification before academic credit bearing awards were

introduced for their profession. Other practitioners will have accumulated some academic credits, but still require further credits in order to achieve higher level academic awards.

2. An RPEL portfolio provides a means by which to recognise such unaccredited prior learning and can be presented in combination with prior certificated learning to make a claim for the recognition of prior learning (RPL).

7.2 Structure of the portfolio

The portfolio should be structured as follows:

1. An RPL claim form (appendix 1).
2. A current CV.
3. Achievements to date; qualifications, innovations, presentations, copies of relevant certificates and academic transcript.
4. Evidence of current professional registration.
5. A current job description.

6. To claim RPCL:

The portfolio should include records of certificated learning. Any certified learning undertaken over 5 years ago needs to be supported with an overview (approximately 1000-1200 words) of how the student has kept the knowledge and skills in line with current theory and practice. This should be recorded on the currency template (appendix 2)

7. To claim RPEL:

This section includes the student's reflections on the experiences that have shaped their development from clinical, professional and interpersonal perspectives. These reflections should each be at least a 1000 words in length, be structured around a reflective framework and include relevant theory to support the analysis and proposed actions for the future. The amount of reflective writing in their portfolio will be dependent on the number of credits the student has accrued (750 words per 10 credits). This should be recorded on the RP(E)L template (appendix 3)

This is probably the most challenging aspect of constructing the portfolio as the reflective writing should conform to the standard of the academic level for which they are seeking credit. It is suggested that the student selects two or three modules from a relevant programme and demonstrate, through their reflective writing, how they have achieved the learning outcomes of these modules. This will ensure that the student achieves the required academic level in their writing. Further guidance is given in the RP(E)L template (appendix 3)

8. Evidence and testimonials to support sections 7 and 8.
9. Evidence of reading and critical thought. The portfolio should be accurately referenced.

Evidence to support a claim could include:-

- * Notes, abstracts, or critical reviews of personal reading and other individual study
- * Evidence of participation in, and learning from, study days/conferences
- * Course syllabus or learning outcomes
- * Survey of patient satisfaction
- * Reflective accounts, including analysis of critical incidents
- * Clinical audit
- * Outcome of IPR/appraisal
- * Testimonial/reference by peer or manager
- * A patient education programme
- * Records of teaching sessions/seminars/presentations given
- * Action plan
- * Account of the introduction of an innovation in health and social care
- * Assessment/evaluation materials
- * Minutes of meetings
- * Written reports

The portfolio will normally be completed within one term and the student will be supported by a member of the academic team.

Please note the development of a portfolio does not mean that the student will be granted an award, it is purely being used as an alternative means of access to the academic graduate programmes.

8. MAKING AN RPL CLAIM

- 8.1.a Following initial interview with the programme lead the students who meet the entry criteria and do not wish to make an RPL claim will be admitted to the programme in the usual way
- 8.1.b Students who meet the entry criteria and have additional credit may seek RPL or advanced standing will complete the RPL claim form and submit it to the Institute for consideration. This form should be accompanied by:
 - Proof of academic qualifications including name of awarding University, award title, academic level and credit awarded (e.g. academic transcript)

- Evidence of current professional registration (if applicable)

8.1c Students who are seeking RPL for a module which is older than 5 years should complete the currency template (see section 4.1)

8.1.d To submit an application for entry by RPEL portfolio, the student will be allocated a personal teacher. This teacher will guide the student in the development of their portfolio. They will:

- Meet with the student to complete an RPL claim form (see appendix one)
- Help the student identify those programme outcomes which best fit their experience and could form a basis for their reflections.
- Agree an academic support plan with the student to ensure the portfolio is completed within a realistic timeframe and to help the student develop their academic skills.
- Ensure the student has a clear brief as to what the portfolio should contain in terms of evidence and reflective writing.

On completing the portfolio the student will submit it for assessment by the personal teacher and the quality lead. The portfolio will be assessed against the criteria included in Appendix 5 .

8.2 All RPL claims will then be presented to the Recognition of Prior Learning Board (RPLB) which consists of:

- a) The Middlesex University Link Tutor
- b) External Examiner
- c) Institute Quality Lead
- d) The Programme Lead
- e) Institute Lecturers (who have assessed RPL)

The outcomes of the RPL claims will be reported to the programme assessment board, where they will be scrutinised by the external examiner. Students will be informed in writing of the outcome of their claim and the implications it has for their progression through the pathway.

8.3 Students do have a right of appeal against the decisions made by the RPLB. The process of appeal is made by following the same procedure

as prescribed in the assessment regulations for appeal against assessment board decisions, see link for further information:

http://www.mdx.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0021/239025/Section-G-16-17.pdf

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)
CLAIM FORM

PART 1 - To be completed by all students making a claim

Name of Applicant:							
Address:							
Date:		Phone:		E-mail:			
Professional Registration (if applicable):							
Professional Body:							
Qualifying Award:				Date of Registration:			
Record of previous certified learning (including undergraduate, postgraduate obtained from other higher education institutions and level 7 vocational awards) and if RPCL is being sought. The currency template will need to be completed if a course/module is more than 5 years old.							
Course/Module	Awarding Institution	Credit Rating		Year Awarded	Classification	RPCL sought (yes/no)	Currency template included (if appropriate)
		Level	No. of Credits				

Approved by Institute Lecturer:

Name:

Title:

Signature:

Date:

Approved by Institute Quality Lead:

Name:

Title:

Signature:

Date:

PART 4 – Recommendations from RPL Board

Outcome of RPL Board	
Date of Meeting:	Recommendation Approved / Rejected <i>(delete/circle)</i>
Reason for Rejection (if applicable):	
Signature of RPL Board Chair:	
Outcome of Programme Progression and Award Board	
Date of Meeting:	Approved / Rejected <i>(delete/circle)</i>
Reason for Rejection (if applicable):	
Signature of Programme Progression and Award Board Chair:	

IHSCS Course Administrator

Received by Course Administrator (tick)	Signature:	Date:
Approved Claim Entered on Database (tick)	Signature:	Date:
Confirmation Letter Sent to Student (tick)	Signature:	Date:

Appendix 2: Currency template

Currency Template for certificated courses that are over 5 years old

(Approx. 1000-1200 words for each module you are claiming currency)

Your name: RPL currency claim for:
Current role: (only need to supply once) Summary of your current role, grade and work setting
Module/ Course name Number of credits and level Awarding institution and date
Currency of learning and updates: A section on how you have kept up to date and how you are still meeting the module learning outcomes
Application of learning: A section on how you use the knowledge and skills gained from the module in your current practice
Attach: Certificates CV Evidence of updates etc

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Appendix 3: Template RP(E)L level 5,6 and 7

RPL Template : Claim for experiential learning 'Areas of learning'

You are claiming for your *informed learning* from a specific aspect of your practice not just for 'doing the job'. You need to consider significant aspects of your practice and if you need more than 20 or 30 credits, divide this into manageable 'areas of learning'. For each credit claim, you will need to first give an introduction and justification for presenting this area of your practice as a significant area of learning. Then using the prompts to help you, systematically and critically discuss your practice and what learning you are claiming credit for. You need to give real examples of how you are applying your learning in your practice and refer to actual evidence, presented in your appendices. Refer directly or link to the evidence as appropriate throughout your discussion. The following is a suggested format for you to follow. Repeat this format for each claim.

Level 5, 6 and 7 Guide :

Assessment size: Word count or equivalent
30 credits – approx. 2000 words + evidence
20 credits - approx. 1500 words + evidence
15 credits – approx. 1000words + evidence

Title of Area of Learning: (or the specific module you are claiming credit towards)

The level and number of credits of your claim:

Introduction:

Give a brief introduction to your work role and the context of your claim. Introduce this aspect of your practice/learning/project and why you have selected this aspect as significant enough to make a claim for credit.

Description of what you are claiming for.

In this section clearly describe what you are claiming credit for ie ***what you did (or still do)*** in this aspect of your practice. The purpose of this section is to simply establish what your claim is for and that it can be evidenced. It should be fairly short and to the point.

Please describe *your* particular responsibilities; aspects of practice that show the level of your expertise and any aspects that you have developed. Back this up with *evidence* ie Your job description, CV, training courses, Re-validation and specific examples of your actions, contributions or cases.

You may work as part of a team but it is your learning that we are accrediting. You need to provide evidence to support this claim – so cross-reference your description with the evidence, in the form of Appendix 1, Appendix 2 and so on. List the evidence/appendices attached here. Be selective and make sure the evidence is directly relevant.

My learning and application:

The third section is an analysis of what you have learned from this experience: and this is where the *level of learning* should be evident. This is the longest section.

At level 5 we want to see that you actively reflect on and develop your practice. We want to see that you are familiar with current best practice and you can apply this learning in your role and to address small issues.

At level 6 we also want to see how you are starting to take a leadership role and contributing to the development of others practice as well as your own. what strategies you used, challenges you may have had and how you overcome these. Also, consider how you will monitor or review practice development in this area.

At Level 7 you must demonstrate leadership and you should also demonstrate an understanding of the wider political implications on this aspect of practice.

Use these prompts to help you analyse your learning and give examples.

- 1) Why did you do things in a certain way? For example, you work within policies, best practice guidelines and codes of practice so do refer to these. (these must be referenced) You also learn from training courses you have attended,(attach certificates as an appendix), from experienced others and reflecting on your own practice.
- 2) What particular skills and expertise have you developed on this aspect of your practice? How does this contribute to your practice with patients/ clients?
- 3) What challenges issues or problems have you faced and how did you address these? What problem-solving methods did you use? What worked /what didn't? What other ways of working can you suggest in light of your experience? (Gibbs reflective model may be useful here)
- 4) Who did/do you engage within this aspect of your practice? How has engagement with others supported you to develop your practice and address issues? Did you find both advantages and challenges in team working? What examples of evidence can you give?

Ongoing practice and professional development

Finally, you need to show us how you are continuing to develop your learning in this aspect of your practice. *In the light of the above experience how are doing things differently?*

How do you assess your own practice and identify areas for development?

What actions are you taking in order to develop yourself professionally in this particular area of Learning?

Level 6 - how are you contributing to the development of others practice

Level 7 - how are you contributing to the development of others and of the service

Appendices:

All appendices need to be numbered and clearly labelled.

Evidence such as your CV and Job description only need to be attached once.

For information: Academic levels and useful references

The way you describe and analyse your learning in each area of learning, along with the evidence you use to support it, will help to support the size and level. As a guide to the characteristics of your claim the levels described below explain what the assessor will be looking for:

- **Level 4** Knowledge and comprehension predominate
- **Level 5** Application of knowledge and comprehension predominate
- **Level 6** High-level analysis, synthesis and evaluation predominate
- **Level 7 (Masters)** Self-directed research and development, depth of understanding and creation and articulation of knowledge of significance to others are the hallmarks of this level.

So, the words you use to describe and analyse your learning are important. The Learning Outcomes you chose will guide you in expressing the range, scope, complexity and depth of what you know. You may wish to use terms shown in the table below to help make clear the level of your learning.

Ways to express the level of your learning

Knowledge

I am able to list/state/outline... the key principles of...

Understanding

I can discuss/explain/clarify/identify... the policy of/procedures for...

Application

I can illustrate/demonstrate/apply... the process of...

Analysis

I know how to distinguish/contrast/compare/calculate... the effectiveness of...

Synthesis

I am able to organise/set up... plans for..

Evaluation

I know how to evaluate/appraise/assess/review... the causes of...

Useful references

Bolton, G (2005) *Reflective Practice writing for professional development* (2nd edition) London: Sage ISBN

Eraut, M. (2004) 'Informal learning in the workplace', *Studies in Continuing Education*, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 247-273.

Gibbs, G. (1988), "Learning by doing: a guide to teaching and learning methods", Oxford, Further Educational Unit, Oxford Polytechnic.

Perrin, D. & Helyer, R. (2015), "Making your learning count: Recognition of Prior Learning", in Helyer, R. (Ed.), *The Work-based learning student handbook* (2nd. Ed.), London, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 96-119.

Michelson, E. & Mandell, A. 2004, *Portfolio development and the assessment of prior learning: perspectives, models, and practices*, 2nd ed, Stylus, Sterling, Va.

Appendix 4:

RPL Accreditation Assessment Forms (Level 5, 6, & 7)

Accreditation Assessment Level 5

Student Name:		Student Number:	
Title of Area of Learning:			
Learning outcome	Met	Not met	Comments
1. Analyse the theoretical and professional concepts related to meeting the specific needs of service users in specific areas of care (A4)			
2. Utilise reflective techniques to learn from experience and integrate theory with practice (B4)			
3. Retrieve and utilise appropriate sources of evidence as a base for health and social care practice (A1, C1)			
4. Demonstrate decision-making and problem-solving skills taking into account the potential ethical and professional dimensions involved in the process (A2, B2, B3)			
5. Demonstrate self – awareness, the ability to be a self-directed independent learner and to undertake further professional development (B5, D3)			
Number of credits awarded: (Marker please insert credit awarded)	Further comments:		
Marker:		Date:	
2nd Marker if appropriate:		Date:	

Accreditation Assessment Level 6

Student Name:		Student Number:	
Title of Area of Learning:			
Learning outcome	Met	Not met	Comments
1. Retrieve and utilise appropriate sources of evidence as a base for health and social care practice (A1, C1)			
2. Critically analyse the theoretical and professional concepts related to meeting the specific needs of service users in specific areas of care (A4)			
3. Utilise reflective techniques to learn from experience and integrate theory with practice (B4)			
4. Demonstrate critical decision-making and problem-solving skills taking into account the potential political, ethical and professional dimensions involved in the process (A2, B2, B3)			
5. Demonstrate high-level self – awareness, the ability to be a self-directed independent learner and to undertake further professional development (B5, D3)			
Number of credits awarded: (Marker please insert credit awarded)	Further comments:		
Marker:			Date:
2nd Marker if appropriate:			Date:

Accreditation Assessment Level 7

Student Name:		Student Number:	
Title of Area of Learning:			
Learning outcome	Met	Not met	Comments
1. Critically evaluate the key concepts supporting advanced professional practice in education, leadership or practice (A1)			
2. Critically examine the legal, ethical and professional issues associated with professional practice (A2)			
3. Use critical reflection to facilitate transformational learning in self and others (B1)			
4. Synthesise information from disparate sources to draw conclusions and make recommendations for service improvements (B4)			
5. Critically analyse and propose solutions to work-based problems evaluating their strategic alignment with organisational priorities (B5)			
Number of credits awarded: (Marker please insert credit awarded)	Further comments:		
Marker:		Date:	
2nd Marker if appropriate:		Date:	