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02.8

PROCEDURE FOR ADMINISTRATION OF RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)



PROCEDURE FOR ADMINISTRATION OF RPL: RECOGNITION OF PRIOR CERTIFICATED LEARNING (RPCL) AND RECOGNITION OF PRIOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING (RPEL)

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a generic term referring to the award of academic credit to an individual based on previous demonstrable learning. Such learning may have resulted from a formal course of study, self-directed study or as the result of experience gained at the workplace.
- 1.2 The concept of RPL can be confusing, with a range of acronyms used by different individuals and institutions to identify the process. Cardiff Metropolitan University has opted to adopt the below definitions which distinguish between learning gained outside a defined (or formal) higher education programme and learning gained within such a programme:
- **RPCL:** The Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning
This relates to the recognition of prior learning (such as professional development awards or employment-based awards) which is at higher education level but which has not led to the award of credits or qualifications.
 - **RPEL:** The Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning
This refers to uncertificated learning gained from experience in the workplace, voluntary work or other sphere of related activity. Recognition is given through the award of credit. The essential feature of this process is that it is the learning gained through experience which is being assessed, not the experience itself.
 - **Credit Transfer**
Credits awarded on a previous formal higher education qualification may allow a student to gain exemptions from modules on a Cardiff Metropolitan University qualification. The process by which such credit is recognised is known as Credit Transfer.

Cardiff Metropolitan University will determine the status of the previous award (including consideration of its volume and level) as it relates to the programme on which the student is seeking exemption.

In determining equivalency of credit volume and level Cardiff Metropolitan University will use guidance from relevant agencies such as the UK National Academic Recognition Information Centre (UK NARIC).

- 1.3 Within Higher Education, the credit awarded on the basis of prior learning and/or experience can be represented by direct entry into a programme of study, the award of advanced standing within a programme of study or credit towards a given award. Decisions regarding the type and amount of credit can be based on certificates (with demonstrable evidence of assessed learning outcomes) or be based on any learning resulting from experience and which is considered to be worthy of credit.
- 1.4 Any resultant credit is regarded to be of equal standing to that awarded to learners following a more traditional route towards an award (e.g. through taught or distance learning modules).
- 1.5 The volume of credits that may be recognised through the RPL process is dependent on the award being studied as set out in the table below:

Qualification	Maximum Credit through RPL	Credit through Cardiff Metropolitan University Modules
POSTGRADUATE		
Master's Degree	120 credits*	60 credits at Level 7
PG Diploma	60 credits	60 credits at Level 7
PG Certificate	30 credits	30 credits at Level 7
UNDERGRADUATE		
Honours Degree	240 credits	120 credits at Level 6
Ordinary Degree	200 credits	100 credits, of these a minimum of 60 at Level 6
Foundation Degree	120 credits	120 credits at Level 5
Diploma HE or Higher Diploma	120 credits	120 credits at Level 5
Certificate HE	60 credits	60 credits at Level 4
Foundation Certificate	60 credits	60 credits at Level 3

*at least 90 credits with Cardiff Metropolitan University to gain a Merit or Distinction

- 1.6 RPL can be of particular benefit to mature “returnees to learning” and its significance is increasing due to initiatives aimed at widening participation, lifelong learning and increasing employability. Individuals wishing to take advantage of RPL can do so on the basis of several forms of learning including:

- work-based learning that has been certificated;
- experiential learning acquired in the workplace;
- uncertificated learning resulting from self-directed study;
- experiential learning acquired in unpaid or voluntary work;
- certificated learning from overseas institutions including ECTS and the Bologna Declaration;
- experiential learning acquired from leisure activities;
- certificated learning from other United Kingdom educational institutions.

1.7 Within Higher Education, prior learning may be assessed and used for:

- entry into the institution;
- entry into access provision;
- direct entry into a second or subsequent year of a programme;
- advanced standing with credit towards a target award (e.g. the award of credit against specified modules within a programme, which do not necessarily amount to the equivalent of a whole year).

1.8 The basic precepts of RPL are founded on the fact that the assessment of an individual's learning (for academic credit) should be mapped against learning outcomes that have been negotiated by that individual in collaboration with a member of staff within the assessing institution.

1.9 The process by which prior learning is considered varies between Credit Transfer, RPCL and RPEL as follows:

1.9.1 Credit Transfer refers to credits obtained within a formal Higher Education setting. When judged to appropriately map onto modules on the programme the student wishes to join they are documented on the 'Credit Transfer' form and recorded against the student profile. (Appendices 1 and 2).

1.9.2 RPCL refers to certificated learning awarded outside a formal HE setting. Once the credit volume and level of learning is considered in the context of the programme of study being joined, the awarded credit is documented on the 'RPCL' form and recorded against the student profile. (Appendices 3 and 4).

1.9.3 Since RPEL involves assessment of learning that has taken place in a variety of ways, it is necessary for a portfolio of evidence to be submitted. This is prepared with support from an appointed School RPEL adviser, submitted for scrutiny, and credit awarded when evidence of learning outcomes having been met is accepted. Appendix 5 provides a flowchart process, and a sample portfolio structure and guidance document are also available. Appendix 6 provides a flowchart process for recognising RPEL and the RPEL form is included as Appendix 7.

Where an applicant is advised that their RPEL will accumulate more than 60 credits following assessment of the portfolio, the **RPEL form** needs to be

completed by CWBL and the RPL Adviser. Once completed, the form should be returned to MIS and Admissions.

If an applicant wishes to use the RPEL credit provisionally awarded to join a full programme at the University, they will need to apply either via UCAS for an undergraduate full-time programme, or through the Self Service facility for a part-time undergraduate or any postgraduate programme. The provisional credit awarded needs to be confirmed before the start of the programme in order for the applicant to be accepted. The applicant will be allowed to enrol and the credit subsequently confirmed at a University Examination Board. The Board, which may be held virtually, should normally take place at least 10 working days prior to the start of the programme.

Information regarding the full RPL process is available in the Admissions RPL Guidance for Staff:

<http://www.cardiffmet.ac.uk/about/admissionsguide/Pages/RPL-Guidance-for-Staff.aspx>

- 1.10 It is emphasised that approval of RPL for direct entry purposes beyond the normal entry point of the programme is part of the admissions process and all RPL claims must be approved and submitted to the MIS Unit (Registry Services) at the time of enrolment on the programme in question. Where a student wishes to claim exemption for one or more modules on the basis of RPL, such claims should normally be submitted prior to the start of the programme.

2 Advantages of RPL

- 2.1 Credits may be accrued by several groups of learners, many of whom may not have had prior opportunities of participating in Higher Education, for example:
- individuals who may have exited a Higher Education programme prior to completion and who wish to count that learning towards another award;
 - those wishing to “top-up” an existing qualification;
 - learners with overseas qualifications;
 - unemployed individuals seeking recognition for past achievements (that may or may not be work related) in order to gain entry into Higher Education, or advanced standing with credit towards a particular award;
 - individuals with certificated or non-certificated work-based learning looking for recognised credit for such learning towards an academic award at the Higher Education level.
- 2.2 Such schemes have the potential to widen access, increase flexibility within the curriculum, provide the means of integrating theory with practice and for promoting reflective practice.

- 2.3 Credit achieved through such routes can be used to access programmes leading to particular qualifications or can be counted as part of the total credit required for particular academic awards. This may accelerate the time necessary to gain a particular qualification.
- 2.4 The recognition of learning from experience and the associated process of reflective synthesis required in order to construct an RPEL claim can often result in an increased level of confidence within the prospective learner. Such reflection can also enhance the link between theory and practice.
- 2.5 A higher level of interest and motivation relating to aspects of practice can be achieved on the part of both students and employers – this can often lead to new ideas or developments within the workplace.
- 2.6 The focus on learning outcomes can encourage curriculum development since a student's RPEL claim may suggest novel ideas for assessment strategies or even lead to the development of new taught modules.
- 2.7 There can be a renewed focus on the importance of issues within the workplace together with a re-emphasis on aspects relating to aspects of Continuing Professional Development.
- 2.8 The RPL/RPEL process can encourage study to be more relevant to the context of the working environment, life experience and personal development.
- 2.9 Claims for RPEL are often made on the dependence of recent work experience. Such demands represent contemporary and dynamic interaction with the world of work thus providing material for discussion with employers in relation to the outcomes, aims and objectives of the learner.
- 2.10 RPL can be used as an effective marketing tool particularly to increase the attractiveness of part-time provision and in order to provide enhanced opportunities for Life-Long Learning.

3 Principles and Process for awarding RPL

- 3.1 Students should be informed that suitable mechanisms exist for consideration of prospective claims for RPL. Relevant documents such as marketing material, joining instructions, programme documents and student handbooks are required to include an appropriate degree of information in order that applicants can make informed decisions.
- 3.2 Any decision-making process must be transparent, fair, authentic and academically rigorous. It must also be compliant with the University's Equal Opportunities Policy.

http://www.cardiffmet.ac.uk/about/structureandgovernance/equalityanddiversity/Documents/Equal_Opportunities_Policy%20MB%20Approved%20Dec%202018.pdf

The following paragraphs represent the minimum for reaching and communicating RPL judgements, but additional steps may be necessary for specific schools or for individual programmes.

- 3.3 Responsibility for decision-making is devolved to programme teams, using criteria to be applied according to the requirements of the programme in a fair and equitable manner. Where RPL is requested for specific modules, the application should be discussed with the module leader. RPL agreements should first be approved by the relevant School Deputy/Associate Dean.
- 3.4 After initial contact with either Admissions or the Centre for Work Based Learning, intending applicants should write in the first instance to the Programme Director outlining the basis for their application. This initial correspondence should simply include the module(s) against which prior accreditation is being sought, the nature of the application (RPCL or RPEL) and a statement indicating the identity of previously attained qualifications (or experience), together with the relevant academic level (where appropriate) against which accreditation will be judged. Specific programmes may require additional information, in which case this should be clearly identified in any published documents.
- 3.5 In the case of Credit Transfer and RPCL, the appropriate documentation should be completed to evidence the process by which the claim has been considered and to verify that existing credits / certificates map onto appropriate learning outcomes within the module(s) required.
- 3.6 The Programme Director will then make a judgement, in conjunction with the relevant module leader(s) (see para 3.3, above) as to whether such a claim warrants consideration. If there is no basis for such a claim then the applicant should be informed in writing that their application has been refused together with an appropriate explanation for such a decision.
- 3.7 If the claim is found to be justified then the Programme Director will identify an appropriate individual (normally either himself/herself or the relevant Module Leader) to act as a mentor for the applicant. This member of staff should then arrange a meeting with the applicant and advise the individual with respect to the preparation of evidence in support of her/his claim. Such evidence may take the form of copies of relevant certificates/diplomas/ course transcripts or in the case of RPEL, a portfolio of evidence. The latter could include employer references, project reports, reflective logbooks, evidence of work experience. It is the primary responsibilities of the mentor to: -
 - assist the applicant in reviewing his/her academic and professional needs;
 - help the applicant to reflect on prior learning from experience or prior certificated learning;

- work through the RPL process, using the correct mechanism to provide supporting evidence in order to demonstrate appropriate learning at the relevant academic level;
 - review the plan and draft of the applicant's portfolio and check it against the learning outcomes of the Module(s) for which credit is being claimed.
- 3.8 The Programme Director and relevant module leader(s) should consider the evidence tabled and satisfy themselves that:
- the evidence is valid and matches the academic level of the required learning;
 - there is sufficient proof for entry or credit against the specific modules and particularly against the learning outcomes of the module for which exemption is being claimed. Particular attention should be paid to any core, pre-requisite or co-requisite modules;
 - any evidence provided is authentic and the work of the applicant;
 - the learning achievements have academic currency (normally obtained within the previous five years) and can be demonstrated.
- 3.9 The decision arrived at should then be communicated in writing to the applicant and also to Registry Services on the appropriate forms provided in appendices 2 and 4.
- 3.10 With respect to the maximum amount of credit which can be awarded, and the calculation of any Honours Classification, or the awards of Pass / Merit / Distinction in Masters awards, see '*Assessment Regulations*'. Exemption/credit cannot be given for project/dissertation elements.
- 3.11 For 'Advanced Standing' and 'Articulation Agreements,' claims for RPEL for individual students should be subject to approval at University level by the Credit Committee (as in its existing Terms of Reference) following recommended approval at School level. (It is anticipated this would be mainly at meetings of the Credit Committee in September).
- 3.12 Whilst for 'Advanced Standing' and 'Articulation Agreements' RPL does not need specific approval at individual student level, as the credit has already been awarded for the recognised programme/award in question, it needs to be reported to the Student Data and Information Services Unit to upload to the system. In such cases, this can be achieved by submitting one form listing all students involved, rather than individual forms for each student.
- 3.13 Schools are required to use the forms provided to record RPL.

4 Students Transferring between Cardiff Metropolitan University programmes which have common modules.

4.1 As a result of the modular matrix structures common in many Schools, programmes often have modules which are shared with other programmes. It is therefore common for a student transferring from one Cardiff Metropolitan University programme to another to be in the position of having already attempted a module on the new programme whilst studying on the old programme.

Common modules which have been passed:

If the transferring student has previously passed a common module both the credit and module marks should normally be transferred to the student's profile on the new programme.

Common modules which have not been passed:

If the transferring student has previously attempted but not passed a common module then the student will normally be required to take the failed common module again in its entirety as if it had not previously been studied.

Where the programme the student is transferring to is part of the same programme group as the programme they are transferring from the complete module history must be transferred to the student's profile on the new programme.

5 Students Joining Cardiff Metropolitan University programmes which have common modules with modules they have previously studied.

The principles outlined in Paragraph 4 above should be applied to students joining a Cardiff Metropolitan University programme which contains common modules with a previously studied Cardiff Metropolitan University short course.

6 Students Returning to study on programmes having previously been exited by a Board.

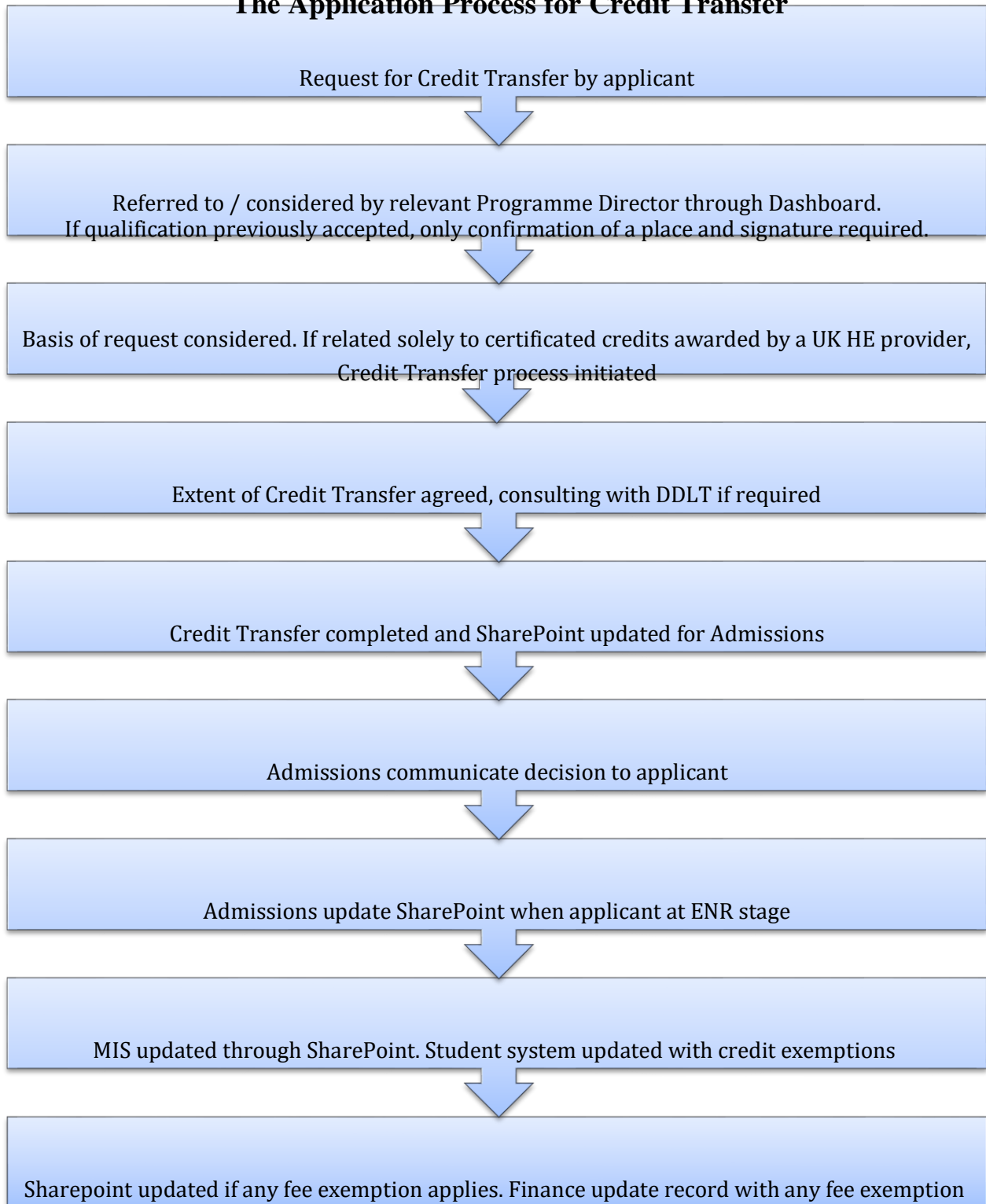
In situations where it has been agreed that a student can return to study having previously been exited by an Examination Board, the full module history shall normally be retained with the end of candidature date unchanged.

A student may return under new candidature and be admitted under Credit Transfer protocols if any of the following apply:

1. A significant period of time has elapsed and completion within previous candidature is not possible.
2. Some of the previously studied modules are no longer part of the current programme.
3. Some of the previous study is deemed out of date.

Appendix 1

The Application Process for Credit Transfer



Appendix 2



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CREDIT TRANSFER FORM for EXEMPTION (Form 2.8a)

In accordance with the QAA Quality Code, **CREDIT TRANSFER** refers to the process for evaluation – for volume and level – of credits or qualifications held by student applicants and awarded by a UK HE degree-awarding body* in accordance with the relevant higher education qualifications framework, as they relate to the programme of study.

*In determining equivalency of credit volume and level Cardiff Metropolitan University will use guidance from relevant agencies such as the UK National Academic Recognition Information Centre (UK NARIC).

Please note:

- Programme Director (or equivalent) to complete after relevant communication with student, e.g. details provided on application
- Full completion essential to evidence due process
- Copy to be retained by PD (or equivalent) for future reference to permit equitable and consistent treatment of all applications
- Copy to be provided to Admissions/Partner Admissions as appropriate.

Student name(s):

Student number(s):

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Programme name:

Programme number:

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Proposed entry date:

Proposed level of entry:

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Details of Credits being transferred (with institution, level and volume):

Institution	Module / award name*	Level	Volume

*award name for use with block transfer of, for example, CertHE

Details of credit transfer awarded:

Module / Programme Name*	Module Number (if known)	Credit value	Level (4-7)

*Programme name for use with block transfer of, for example, CertHE

Outline the process by which consideration was given to the above credit award(s):

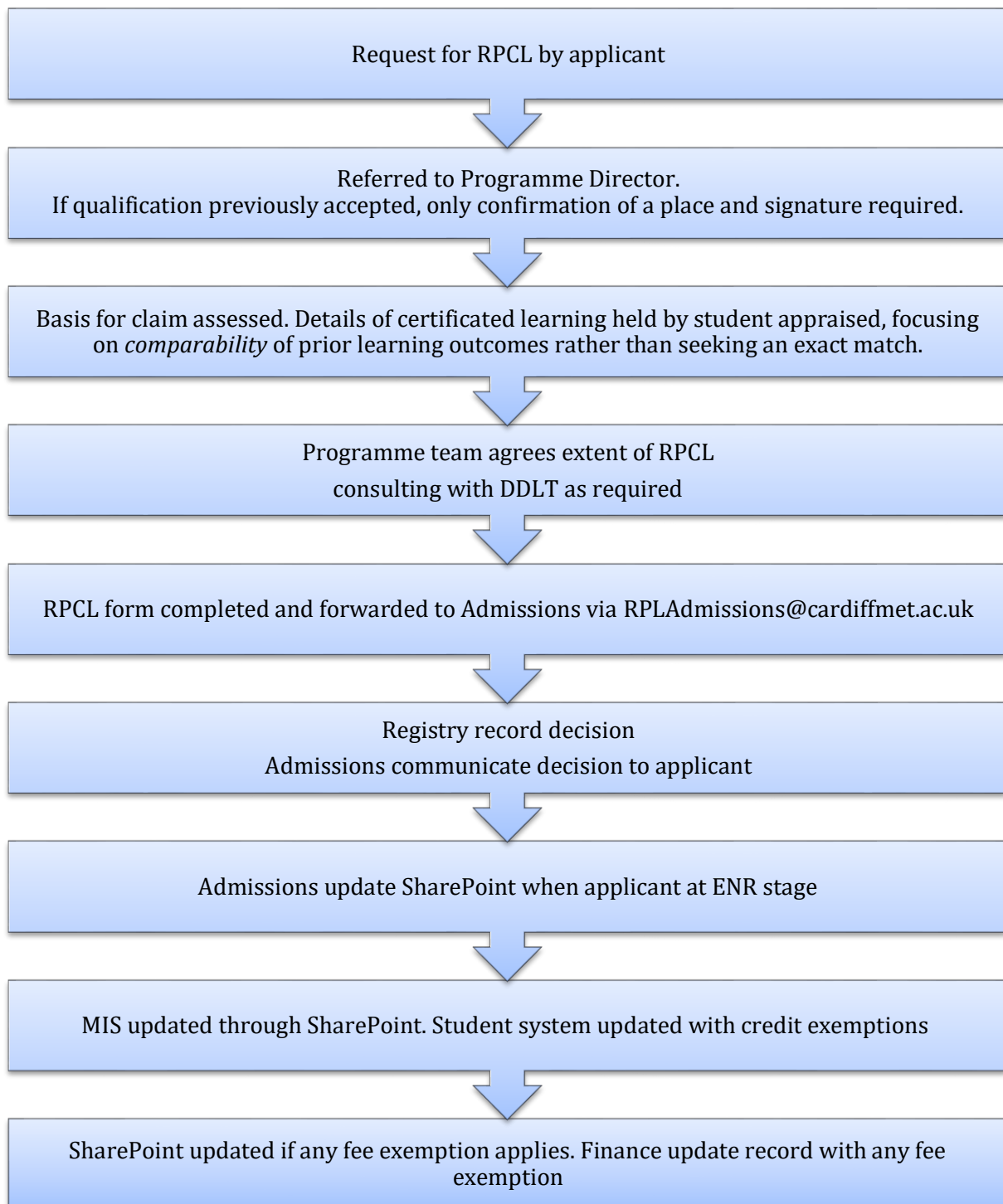
Stage of process	PD Verification (initials)
Communication between student / Admissions / PD (or equivalent) to confirm learning outcomes and content of modules	
Consultation with DD/AD (if applicable)	

Verification of credit transfer award:

	Name	Signature	Date
PD			
DD/AD (if applicable)			

Appendix 3

The Application Process for RPCL



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RECOGNISED PRIOR CERTIFICATED LEARNING (RPCL) FORM FOR ENTRY or EXEMPTION (✓ appropriate box) (Form 2.8b)

In accordance with the QAA Quality Code, **RPCL** refers to the process of evaluation – for volume and level – of prior certified learning at HE level that has not led to the award of credits or qualifications positioned on the relevant HE qualifications framework, as they relate to the programme of study.

Please note:

- Programme director to complete after discussion with student
- Full completion essential to evidence due process
- Copy to be retained by PD for future reference to permit equitable and consistent treatment of all applications
- Copies to be provided to Registry and Admissions.

Student name:

Student number:

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Programme name:

Programme number:

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Proposed entry date:

Proposed intake ID:

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Details of Recognised Prior Certificated Learning being awarded (with institution, level and volume):

Institution / Awarding Body	Module / award name	Level	Volume

Details of Recognised Prior Certificated Learning awarded:

Module Name	Module Number	Credit value	Level (4-7)	% of learning outcomes met

Where less than 100% of the learning outcomes have been met, provide details of how the shortfall will be addressed:

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Outline the process by which consideration was given to the above credit award(s):

Stage of process	PD Verification (initials)
Discussion between student and programme director	
Discussion of learning outcomes and indicative content of module(s)	
Consideration and agreement by programme team	
Consultation with DD/AD	

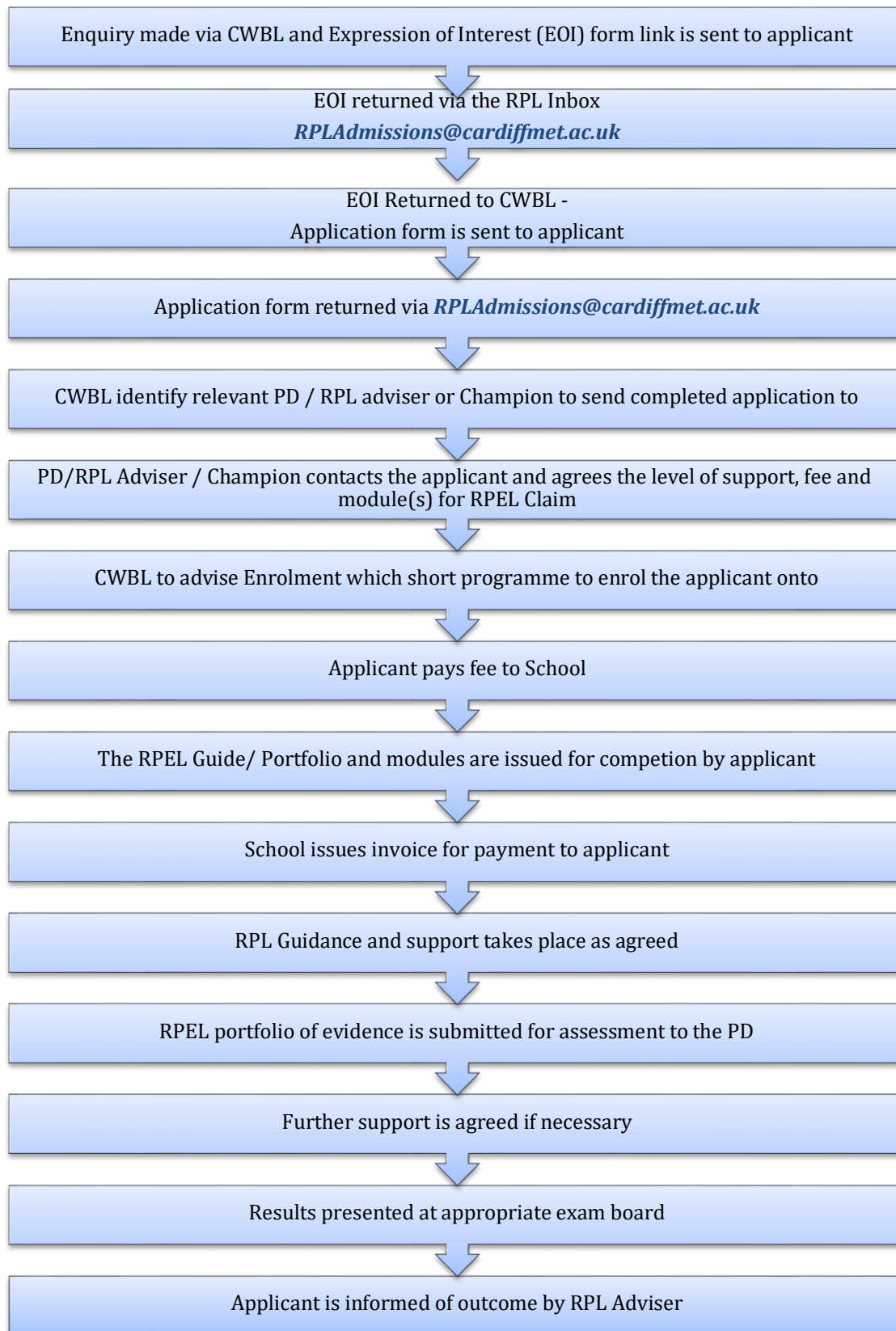
Verification of Recognised Prior Certificated Learning award:

	Name	Signature	Date
PD			

DD/AD			
Chair: Examination Board			

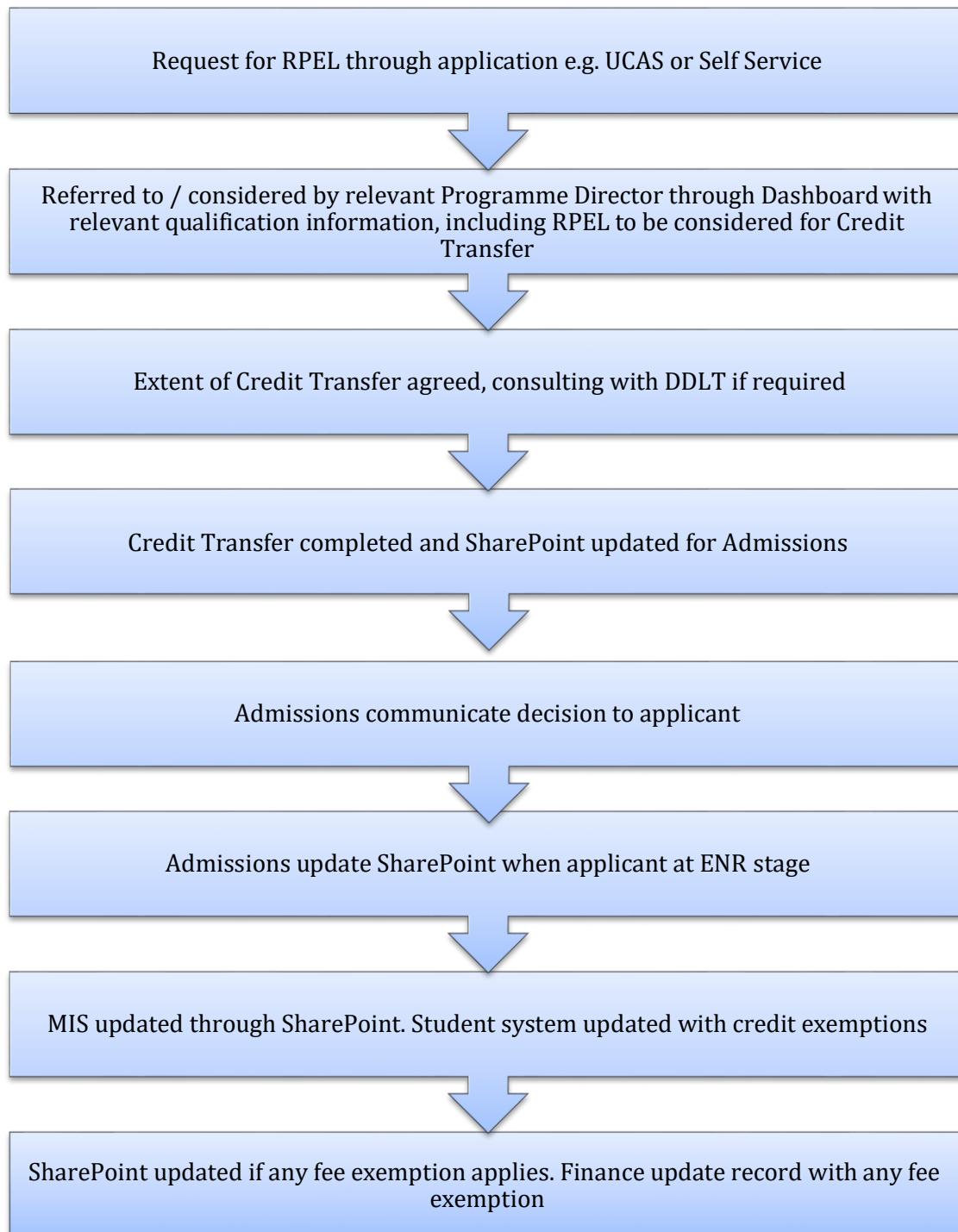
Appendix 5

The Application Process for Awarding of RPEL by Cardiff Met



Appendix 6

The Process for Recognising RPEL



Appendix 7



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RECOGNISED PRIOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING (RPEL) FORM FOR

ENTRY or EXEMPTION (✓ appropriate box) (Form 2.8c)

In accordance with the QAA Quality Code, **RPEL** refers to the process of evaluation – for volume and level – of prior experiential learning that has not led to the award of credits or qualifications positioned on the relevant HE qualifications framework, as they relate to the programme of study.

Please note:

- To be completed by CWBL and RPL Advisor
- To be completed only when credits provisionally awarded by Cardiff Met equal **more than 60 credits**
- Full completion essential to evidence due process
- Copy to be retained by PD for future reference to permit equitable and consistent treatment of all applications
- Copies to be provided to MIS and Admissions.

Student name:

Student number (if known):

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Programme name:

Programme number

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Proposed entry date:

Proposed intake ID

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Details of Recognised Prior Experiential Learning being provisionally awarded (with level & volume):

Module / Award name	Level	Volume

Details of Recognised Prior Experiential Learning awarded:

Module / Award Name	Level	Volume

Outline the process by which consideration was given to the above credit award(s):

Stage of process	PD Verification (initials)
Development and assessment of portfolio of work	
Assessment of portfolio by External Examiner	
Consultation with Deputy Dean	
Agreement of provisional credit being awarded	
Ratification of credits awarded at Exam Board	

Verification of provisional Recognised Prior Experiential Learning award:

	Name	Signature	Date
PD			
DDL			

Verification of confirmed Recognised Prior Experiential Learning award:

	Name	Signature	Date
Chair: Examination Board			

Appendix 8

Recognition of Credit for ERASMUS

