RECOGNITION OF

PRIOR LEARNING

This leaflet explains the University's regulations for the use of prior certificated and experiential learning.

Registry Services
Assessment, Awards and Regulations

What is recognition of prior learning?

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the generic term used for the award of credit on the basis of demonstrated learning that has occurred at some time in the past. The term encompasses the recognition of prior certificated learning (known as RPCL) and the recognition of prior experiential learning (known as RPEL). It's worth stating at the outset that there are clear upper limits of credit that can be claimed - please consult the full guidance for details.

https://students.shu.ac.uk/regulations/assessment_awards/Recognition%20of%20Prior%20Learning.pdf

Brief definitions

Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL) – awards credits for formal learning that has been assessed and awarded at a Higher Education level.
Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) - awards credits for learning and skills developed outside of a formal educational environment e.g. a workplace.

How can your prior credit gained/awarded be used?

- To provide entry with advanced standing (admission to a later stage or entry point of a particular course) to a Sheffield Hallam University award;
- To provide some specific credit to be counted towards a Sheffield Hallam University award;
- To gain exemption from specific modules within an approved University programme of study.

Please note- there are clearly published maximum limits of the amount of RPL which can be approved and credit awarded through the recognition of prior learning cannot be used to gain a Sheffield Hallam award in its entirety:

https://students.shu.ac.uk/regulations/assessment_awards/Recognition%20of%20Prior%20Learning.pdf

How do I apply for my prior learning to be recognised?

An admission tutor or course leader can advise on the claims process. Decisions are made on an individual basis, based on the requirements of the course and the evidence provided.

For RPEL, claimants will be required to successfully complete a SHU 'Preparing for Recognition of Prior Learning' Module. This will ensure that claims are presented in the appropriate format and content.

How is your prior learning approved?

Decisions on whether prior learning is accepted towards a Sheffield Hallam University award are made by each Faculty's Academic Board. They are responsible for assessing, verifying, checking the suitability and validating applications. They can delegate their authority to other appropriate decision-makers.

Decisions on whether prior learning may be accepted towards the credit requirements for a Sheffield Hallam University award are academic decisions. Each Faculty is responsible for considering and approving RPL matters relating to individual programmes of study, including the verification, suitability, validation and delegation of authority and/or course leaders to approve RPL claims in accordance with the above principles.

We aim to normally provide feedback on claims from the relevant Faculty Board (or delegated authority) within 15 working days of their claim being submitted.

Recognition of prior certificated learning (RPCL)

Sometimes academic work from previous learning, assessed and accredited at a Higher Education level, can be used towards a Sheffield Hallam University award. To use this Prior Certificated Learning you will need to provide evidence of a formal qualification, a transcript, a certificate or some other formal documentation from a University, College or Professional / Regulatory body.

Through RPCL procedures, applicants to Sheffield Hallam University, or students already enrolled on Sheffield Hallam University courses, might be able to use credit gained from formal study and assessment elsewhere, or from within the University, to count towards a Sheffield Hallam University award or to transfer to a different University award. The recognition of prior certificated learning may take place either at the admissions stage of a Sheffield Hallam University programme or at any stage after enrolment.

For example:

- To provide entry to a Sheffield Hallam University award with advanced standing (admission to a later stage or entry point of a particular course) eg. an HND in a (cognate)related discipline might allow direct entry to year 2 or 3 of a Sheffield Hallam University honours degree programme.

- To provide some "specific" credit to be counted towards a Sheffield Hallam University award, eg. relevant modules passed at another institution might replace the need to study the equivalent Sheffield Hallam University modules.

Some principles for awarding prior certificated learning.

- The learning must be demonstrated by evidence that the credit awarded is a result of formal learning and assessment;

- At a specified level and amount in accordance with published frameworks, ie. in the 'Recognition of Prior Learning- a general introduction' document here:

https://students.shu.ac.uk/regulations/assessment_awards/Recognition%20of%20Prior%20Learning.pdf

- Documented or confirmed, normally by an original formal evidence, e.g. a transcript;
- Of appropriate format, content and learning outcomes for the credit amount and value assigned to it, and appropriate to its use as entry to or inclusion in the target award, or both;
- Matched to the learning outcomes, level and credit value of a single, specific module (as a minimum), multiple modules or a whole level within a specific Sheffield Hallam University target award
- Timely in the context of the target award and developments of the subject discipline. The learning must have taken place recently enough, for there to be reasonable expectation by Sheffield Hallam University that the learning is relevant and current to the target award and subject discipline, and that the student can apply the prior learning to the target award.

Recognition of prior experiential learning (RPEL)

The recognition of prior experiential learning (RPEL) is the process by which an individual's prior learning, gained from experience rather than formally assessed study, may be assessed and formally recognised to provide academic credit towards a target award.

Through the RPEL process, the University recognises that significant knowledge, skills and understanding can be developed in a range of contexts, as a result of learning opportunities found at work and through a variety of individual activities and interests. It is the learning, and not experience alone, which is important.

Assessment of an RPEL claim is based on documented evidence of the learning achieved. If learning cannot be identified and demonstrated there is nothing to assess and a claim cannot be made. Where credit is awarded, this will be of the same value as credit gained within the University on a recognised programme of study, in accordance with the credit requirements of University's Academic Awards Framework.

In considering a claim for RPEL, the University will seek to establish that the learning is:

- valid and matches the level of learning required;
- verifiable (sufficient evidence is provided to demonstrate the learning achieved);
- authentic (evidence that the learning has been achieved by the applicant);
- current (the evidence provided should relate to current learning).

In assessing an RPEL claim, the University is responsible for:

- the format, content and conduct of the assessment process.
- confirmation of the specific credit value and level achieved.
- confirmation of the specific award to which the credit will contribute.
- ensuring the claim is moderated internally and externally as part of the University's processes.

The University will consider claims for RPEL only when the credit sought is intended to contribute to a specific Sheffield Hallam University award.

Examples of ways in which credit derived from the Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning may be used:

- To provide entry with advanced standing (admission to a later stage or entry point of a particular course) to a Sheffield Hallam University award;
- To provide some specific credit to be counted towards a Sheffield Hallam University award;
- To gain exemption from specific modules within an approved University programme of study.

Some important principles for RPEL:

Credit may be awarded as a result of a formal assessment process by the University, in accordance with University procedures for the assessment of RPEL claims. Therefore credit derived from an RPEL claim is credit awarded by the University.

Credit awarded through informal and experiential learning will have equal value to that gained through formal certificated learning.

Claimants will be required to successfully complete a SHU 'Preparing for Recognition of Prior Learning' Module. This will ensure that claims are presented in the appropriate format and content.

Evidence to support a claim for credit can be demonstrated in a number of ways and includes:

- portfolio/e-portfolio
- structured interview/viva
- workplace devised artefact

This list is indicative and other relevant and appropriate evidence, may be accepted. The evidence will be used to map against the learning outcomes of the module(s) being claimed for. There is a maximum limit of RPEL at each academic level.

Credit will be awarded at a specified level and amount in accordance with the University's credit requirements as set out in the Academic Awards Framework.

Claims will be matched to the learning outcomes, level and credit value of a specific module, multiple modules or a whole level within a specific Sheffield Hallam University target award.

Learning will be timely, in the context of the target award and the subject discipline. The learning must have taken place recently enough for there to be reasonable expectation by Sheffield Hallam University that the learning is relevant to the target award and the subject discipline, and that the student can apply the prior learning to the target award. Decisions on currency and relevance will be made according to the discipline of the target award.

Applications for advanced standing

Applicants enrolled on a professional doctorate programme who wish to transfer their registration to Sheffield Hallam University may be considered for advanced standing. Entry to the research phase of a professional doctorate programme will depend on the applicant's recent study or experience. These programmes of study normally comprise of four complementary studies modules, studied during the first two years of the programme, where candidates are taught in a cohort.

Applicants must also show evidence of having the necessary range of skills to enable them to successfully complete the research phase of the programme within the specified regulatory timeframe.

MPhil/PhD

An applicant seeking to transfer their research degree registration to Sheffield Hallam University from another UK Higher Education Institution is required to provide evidence of their timely progress and attainment at the requisite level. The evidence will include a copy of the applicant's annual progression/assessment report giving details of: the aims and objectives of the research project; the establishment of an appropriate methodology; a literature review and a statement of intended contribution to the relevant subject discipline. This is to ensure the applicant is performing at the appropriate level and is able to complete a successful thesis within the specified regulatory timeframe.

Any suitable applicant who seeks to transfer to a Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) research degree programme prior to successfully completing an interim upgrade assessment at their previous institution will be required to undertake such an assessment at SHU. The deadline for this assessment will be agreed as part of the admissions process. The purpose of this assessment is to ensure that the applicant is performing at the appropriate level and is in a position to successfully complete their thesis within the specified regulatory timeframe.

An applicant may seek to transfer their research degree registration to the University from a non-UK University. To be considered applicants will need to provide evidence that they are performing at the appropriate level and are able to complete a successful thesis within the specified regulatory timeframe.

More information:

A more detailed general introduction on RPL can be found on the university's 'Terms and Conditions & student regulations' pages:

https://students.shu.ac.uk/regulations/assessment_awards/Recognition%20of%20Prior%20Learning.pdf