THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

Policy No.	SRA-009	Version:	004
.Title	Policy for the recognition of prior learning for admission to the University of Edinburgh		
Description	The University's approach to recognition of alternative evidence of learning than standard qualifications in meeting entry requirements.		

Dates					
First approved:	01/09/2014	Last approved:	26/09/2023	Active from:	01/10/2023
Equality impact assessment:	2023				

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UK quality code:	Core practices: The provider has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system.	Legal/regulatory-driven	Yes		

Purpose

The policy sets out the University's position on recognition of prior learning for admissions purposes. This is also in line with our widening participation aspirations in terms of reducing barriers to applications from under-represented groups.

Scope	Mandatory

The policy concerns anyone applying for either undergraduate or postgraduate study and is enacted by the University College admissions teams.

Consultation carried out

College admissions teams; SRA stakeholders

Responsibilities

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Approving body:	Student Recruitment and Fees Strategy Group				
Related policies:	University of Edinburgh Admissions Policy; Adult Returners' Policy; University Widening Participation Strategy 2018 – 2021: Guiding Principles				
Policies superseded:	None				
Keywords:	Admissions; prior learning; qualifications				

Policy for the recognition of prior learning in admissions to the University of Edinburgh

1. Purpose

1.1. To set out the University of Edinburgh's position on the recognition of prior learning for admissions purposes.

2. Scope

2.1. The policy covers the recognition of prior learning in the admissions process only. Arrangements for the transfer of credit from prior learning, including intercalating students, are set out in The University of Edinburgh Degree Regulations and dealt with by Academic Services.

2.2. The policy applies to undergraduate and postgraduate admissions.

2.3. This policy does not encompass standard work experience entry requirements.

3. Abbreviations

3.1. **HESA:** HHigher Education Statistics Agency

3.2. **RPL:** Recognition of Prior Learning

3.3. **SFC:** Scottish Funding Council

3.4. **SRA:** Student Recruitment and Admissions

3.5. **UCAS:** Universities and Colleges Admissions Service

4. Definitions

4.1. **Prior learning:** Any formal or informal education, training, or knowledge that an applicant has acquired before applying to a university. This can be either:

- **Certificated learning:** learning which has been formally assessed and certificated. It includes non-standard qualifications, certificated study from other higher education institutions, and professional and vocational qualifications.

- **Experiential learning:** Learning gained through substantial, relevant experience which has not been formally assessed. This may include work experience or knowledge gained through experiences outside work. The emphasis is on the learning achieved through the experience, and not just on the experience itself.

4.2. **Recent:** In the context of recognising prior learning, the prior learning or qualifications you have should be current enough to demonstrate your knowledge and skills in the field of study. The specific timespan will vary depending on the specific programme or course applied to and the applicant's specific circumstances, but generally, admissions staff would consider qualifications or prior learning to be recent if they have been completed within the last three to five years.

4.3. **Non-standard qualification:** a type of assessed educational achievement that differs from those most commonly considered in university admissions, such as Scottish Highers or A-levels. These can include vocational diplomas or international qualifications and are evaluated individually to determine if they meet admission requirements.

5. Background

5.1. The University of Edinburgh is committed to increasing the diversity of its student population by removing unnecessary barriers in its admissions selection processes, for prospective students currently underrepresented in higher education.

5.2. The University recognises that some prospective students may not be able to evidence that they meet the University's entry requirements through the accepted qualifications detailed in University publications, but they can provide substantial and relevant alternative evidence that they have the potential to succeed on their chosen programme.

6. Policy detail

6.1. This policy sets out the process by which evidence of prior learning can be fairly and consistently assessed for admission to the University.

6.2. Prior learning can be recognised in both the undergraduate and postgraduate admissions processes.

6.3. The University of Edinburgh can accept an applicant into the selection process for a degree programme where the applicant can evidence that their previous learning experiences meet the following criteria:

- **Relevance** – the learning gained provides the applicant with knowledge and skills that are relevant to the programme applied for.

- **Sufficient** – the learning gained is of an equivalent academic level to the standard entry requirement, and the quantity of prior learning is considered to be sufficient to demonstrate the applicant's potential.

- **Verifiable** – the evidence provided can be authenticated as being the outcome of the learner's own effort.

- **Recent** – the learning meets the University's requirement for recent study.

6.4. Where RPL is regularly used in the admissions process for a particular programme, detailed information will be available for applicants about what evidence they will be required to provide, and how this will be used in the admissions process.

6.5. Where RPL is not regularly used, consideration will be on an individual basis. When applying, candidates who wish to make an application based on RPL should select their preferred proof of education on UCAS, and if offered a place their proof of education will then be considered based on a match of subjects and performance to ensure admissions criteria can be met.

6.6. Evidence will vary depending on the nature of the prior learning that is being demonstrated and the programme being applied to, but may include:

- Certificates and course outlines from non-standard qualifications
- CV and/or work reference
- Portfolio
- Written assignment
- Interview

6.7 Undergraduate admissions: Non-standard qualifications and prior experiential learning will only be considered for admission to an undergraduate degree programme where an applicant has had a break of at least three years in their formal education.

6.7.1 Anyone wishing to submit an undergraduate application based on RPL **must** discuss this with the appropriate admissions office before making an application, to ensure that the previous learning experiences meet the criteria set out in 6.3 above in relation to the programme they wish to apply to. The admissions office will also agree on what evidence will be required to verify the prior learning. Failure to do this may mean that the evidence required to assess the application is missing, leading to an unsuccessful application.

6.7.2 An agreement to consider an application based on RPL is not a guarantee that an offer will be made. Where there are more applications than there are places available, there will be a competitive selection process in which an application based on RPL will be considered alongside other applications for the same programme. The application based on RPL will be assessed on the quality demonstrated through the evidence provided to support the RPL claim.

6.8 Postgraduate taught admissions: Anyone wishing to submit an application based on RPL **must** contact the appropriate College or School admissions office before making an application, to ensure that the previous learning experiences meet the criteria set out in 6.3 above.

6.8.1 Where RPL is used regularly, admissions staff will be able to advise on the process to be followed and the evidence that will be required to support the application. In other circumstances, the evidence required to support an application based on RPL will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Failure to discuss the application in advance may

mean that the evidence required to assess the application is missing, leading to an unsuccessful application.

    6.8.2 An agreement to consider an application based on RPL is not a guarantee that an offer will be made. Where there are more applications than there are places available, there will be a competitive selection process in which the application based on RPL will be considered alongside other applications for the same programme. The application based on RPL will be assessed on the quality demonstrated through the evidence provided to support the RPL claim.

6.9 **Postgraduate research admissions:** Applicants for PhD and MPhil programmes may be able to have RPL taken into consideration, which may be evidenced through previously published work. An applicant who wishes to have non-standard evidence considered as part of their application should contact the relevant School to discuss this before making an application.

7. Data protection

7.1. The University of Edinburgh holds information about everyone who applies and studies at the institution. Information supplied as part of an application is used to administer the admissions process and may be shared with UCAS or other bodies to verify the identity, qualifications or references of an applicant. Information may also be used in an anonymised form for statistical purposes, which may be subsequently published or passed to government bodies such as the SFC or HESA to guide policy and funding allocation.

7.2. Information held on successful applicants will be additionally used to administer studies, monitor performance and attendance, and provide student support. Further information about the University's use of data is available from the University's Data Protection Officer.

8. Responsibilities

- SRA Admission team [Monitors effectiveness of policy/reviews/amends]
- College undergraduate and postgraduate offices [implement policy and provide feedback to SRA]

9. Associated documents

- Widening Participation at the University of Edinburgh

10. Related policies

- Policy for Admission to the University of Edinburgh
- Adult Returners Policy

11. Policy version history

- Published: September 2014

- Reviewed: September 2015, no changes

- Reviewed: November 2019, no changes

- Policy reviewed: September 2023, [cover sheet and minor changes to structure and clarity rather than content]