

Section H

Accreditation Processes

Contents

Section H.....	1
Accreditation Processes.....	1
Forms and Templates.....	2
Abbreviations in this section	2
Definitions.....	3
Advanced standing.....	3
Articulation	3
Credit rating	4
General Credit.....	4
Progression Agreements.....	4
Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	4
Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL).....	4
Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)	4
Specific Credit.....	4
Work-based learning.....	4
Masters Award by Learning Agreement (MALA).....	4
Purpose	5
Criteria	5
Process.....	6
Recognition of Prior Learning (Individuals).....	6
Introduction	6
Process (RPL Individual).....	6
RPL applications criteria	7
Collaborative Provision and RPL.....	8
Monitoring RPL	8
RPL in another language	8
Articulation Agreement	10
Introduction	10
Process (Articulation Agreements).....	10
Approval of the Agreement	11

Evidence required	11
Monitoring Articulation Agreements	13
Progression Agreements	14
Progression Agreements with Advanced Standing	14
Monitoring Progression Agreements	14
Masters Awards by Learning Agreement (MALA).....	16
Introduction	16
Documentation	16
Levels of Monitoring and Approval	16
Process (MALA).....	17
Employer with no input.....	17
Employer seeking blanket RPL towards an award	18
Employer, or third-party training provider or consortium of both, with delivery inputs	18
Credit rating of external programmes of study	20
Introduction	20
Process (Credit rating)	20
Documentation	20
Monitoring	21

Forms and Templates

Form H1	Assessment of application for RPL
Form H2	Articulation proposal form
Template H3	Articulation Agreement
Form H4	Monitoring of Articulation Agreements
Form H5	Monitoring of Progression Agreements
Template H6	Progression Agreement

Abbreviations in this section

AQSH	Academic Quality and Standards Handbook
BL	Blended Learning
CATS	Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme
EC	Education Committee

FEC	Further Education College
HE	Higher Education
HEAR	Higher Education Achievement Record
HEI	Higher Education Institution
INA	Initial Needs Assessment
KU	Kingston University
LA	Learning Agreement
MALA	Masters Award(s) by Learning Agreement
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centre
OfS	Office for Students
PAB	Programme Assessment Board
QA	Quality Assurance
QAE	Quality Assurance & Enhancement
QAPCC	Quality Assurance Portfolio Change Committee
RPCL	Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning
RPEL	Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAIL	Study Abroad International Learning Office
SEC	School Education Committee
WBL	Work-based Learning

Definitions

Advanced standing

1. Where an individual applicant is entered onto a later year or level or stage of a University award (including exemption of one or more modules), through the use of RPL or via an Articulation Agreement.

Articulation

2. A formal agreement recognising the credit rating of a named qualification of another institution or organisation, creating the opportunity to transfer credit and enable student

entry from the named institution or organisation with advanced standing and specific credit to a University award. Students who achieve the agreed standard have the right to enrol on the articulated course.

Credit rating

3. The process of assigning to a module (or equivalent unit of learning) a number of credits at a specified level.

General Credit

4. Credit that recognises educational level and extent of prior or alternative learning.

Progression Agreements

5. An agreement between the University and another Educational Institution which recognises alternative entry pathways onto University awards. In some cases, the awards of other Institutions can lead to advanced standing for individual students. Students are always considered on a case-by-case basis.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

6. A process for accessing and, as appropriate, recognising prior experiential learning or prior certificated learning for academic purposes. This learning may be given a credit value in a credit-based structure and allows it to be counted towards the completion of a programme of study and the award(s) or qualifications associated with it.

Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL)

7. A process through which previously assessed and certificated learning is considered and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes.

Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)

8. A process through which learning achieved outside education or training systems is assessed and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes.

Specific Credit

9. Credit that recognises prior or alternative learning against specific programme learning outcomes leading to advanced standing and exemption.

Work-based learning

10. Learning that is usually achieved and demonstrated through engagement with a workplace environment, the assessment of reflective practice and the designation of appropriate learning outcomes.

Masters Award by Learning Agreement (MALA)

11. MALA is a form of programme of study followed by individuals or cohorts who do all or a significant part of their study in a work setting. It involves the analysis of WBL by an academic in negotiation with an applicant and/or employer, and the mapping of these into:
 - a generic framework specification to ensure that the learning matches that of a PG Cert, PG Dip or full Masters (drawn from the SEEC level descriptors for level 7);
 - a generic programme specification;

- the specific learning agreement that sets out the learning into assessable and credited learning outcomes.
12. Additionally, the MALA may also include taught modules and accredited learning including RPL and credit via Articulation Agreements.

Purpose

13. The aim of the accreditation processes is to maximise the flexibility of the University modular schemes and credit frameworks, through the recognition of alternative forms of evidence against the defined University level descriptors and programme learning outcomes, to enhance widening participation and social inclusion, employer engagement, the recognition of work-based learning and the reintegration of work-based and lifelong learning principles into the core curricula of the University.
14. Alternative learning can be recognised by the University if sufficient and relevant evidence of that learning is available and subject to at least one of three academic processes: validation and monitoring of courses; curriculum matching; assessment of individually produced evidence against identified learning outcomes. Underlying these processes is the principle of academic judgement within a clear, explicit and accessible framework of self-regulation.
15. The University's overarching approach to credit is that there should be:
- consistency in the award of credit;
 - consistency in the determination of credit value with credit only being awarded for demonstrable learning achievement, not for time taken;
 - common approaches to the accumulation of credit across courses;
 - consistency in the approaches to credit transfers.

Criteria

16. General Credit is recognised through the credit-rating exercise. Specific Credit is recognised through either the RPL process or the Articulation process.
17. Where credit is awarded against identified programme learning outcomes, credit awarded is specific. Where the credit is not mapped against programme learning outcomes, the credit awarded is general.
18. If credit is being awarded for learning done by an individual, the process is RPL. If blanket credit is being given to cohorts of students and advanced standing places are guaranteed, the process is Articulation.

Process

Recognition of Prior Learning (Individuals)

Introduction

19. This process is only applicable to RPL leading to the award of credit. Where RPL is used for entry into a course, this is governed by faculty policy on admissions and monitored through the appropriate SEC.
20. The RPL process will focus on learning and achievement that has occurred:
 - at some time prior to the formal HE course;
 - concurrently with participation in a HE course, but which is not a formal part of that experience.
21. The upper limit of RPL on a taught course is two thirds of the total credit for the required award; the lower limit is 30 credits, equivalent to one standard module (See Undergraduate Regulations and Postgraduate Regulations)
22. The management of RPL lies with the faculties. However, all faculty members involved in the processing of RPL must have the necessary experience and/or access to staff development opportunities to implement the RPL processes and assess RPL evidence against course criteria.
23. All evidence artefacts of the RPL process (notes of meetings, agreements with students) emerge from the process and as such are not subject to standard forms or templates. However, all documentation must be kept in an appropriate central repository for moderation, monitoring and auditing purposes.

Process (RPL Individual)

24. The applicant approaches Admissions about the possibility of gaining specific credit through RPL.
25. Admissions asks the applicant to submit transcripts and/or relevant evidence. Once received, Admissions forward the application with the evidence received to the nominated Admissions Tutor (or equivalent) in the faculty for a decision.
26. The application is considered by the Admissions Tutor (or equivalent) to assess whether the prior learning or experience meets the module learning outcomes and determine whether credit can be given, and which modules can be credited.
27. For RPEL applications, the applicant may be invited to an interview.
28. The Admissions Tutor (or equivalent) confirms their decision via the Admissions OSIS form, and Admissions will confirm the outcome to the applicant.
29. Where the application for RPL was successful the Admissions Tutor (or equivalent) must complete form H1 to detail the modules/level that RPL credits can be applied to. This form must be sent to Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QAE) for storage and reporting purposes.

30. After enrolment, Admissions will provide a report to QAE and Course Support and Administration, providing details of all students who have enrolled at an advanced stage through the use of RPL.
31. Courses with Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) accreditation may have an alternative process for the assessment of RPL applications in order to meet the relevant PSRB requirements. In these cases, a report of all students enrolled with RPL credits should be submitted to the School Education Committee for monitoring purposes.
32. RPL applications can also be submitted by students who are already registered on a Kingston University course. In this scenario, the student should contact their course leader and provide them with all the necessary RPL evidence. The course leader is responsible for assessing whether the prior learning or experience meets the module learning outcomes and determining whether credit can be given. If the application is successful, the course leader should complete an H1 form and return it to QAE for storage and reporting purposes.
33. QAE will provide a report to the first School Education Committee meeting (of the academic year) confirming the number of students enrolled with RPL credits and also that the H1 form has been received.
34. School Education Committees will audit the quality of the completed H1 forms annually.
35. For Degree Apprentices, any application for RPL should be discussed during the Initial Needs Assessment (INA). Nominated Faculty representatives are responsible for signing-off the INA and, as part of this, will assess the RPL evidence and confirm those modules that can be credited. The modules that can be credited will be recorded on the APTEM system. The Course Support and Administration Team will manually input the RPL into SITS using the data accessed from the APTEM system.

RPL applications criteria

36. RPCL applies only when the prior certificated learning meets one of the following criteria:
 - the prior certificate was awarded by another UK HEI (faculties should ensure that such recognition does not contravene the University rules on double counting credit, cf. Undergraduate Regulations and Postgraduate Regulations).
 - the prior certificate falls within another UK regulated credit framework (e.g. the Regulated Qualifications Framework)
 - the prior certificate is mediated by a Progression Agreement with another Educational Institution.
 - the prior certificate is from an international institution and has been reviewed by NARIC to determine its credit value and equivalence to one of the UK national credit frameworks.
37. The University recognises that some qualifications are accredited by professional bodies that define a comprehensive set of standards against which all accredited qualifications are mapped. Where some of these standards might be generic (e.g. the Institute of Engineering UK Spec) others are quite specific and awarding institutions must link the curriculum closely to these standards. In such instances, RPCL across different accredited awarding institutions is facilitated and the need for an individual mapping for each student obviated. The expectation in such cases is that the faculty

maintains sufficient documentation to demonstrate how the dovetailing into national standards evidences RPCL.

38. If the certificate does not meet the RPCL criteria, the student is required to apply for RPEL, demonstrating how their learning represented by the certificate a) maps into University curricula and b) has been applied and consolidated in their wider experience, to allow an academic to determine the extent and level of credit and the relevant University programme learning outcomes.
39. The faculty must guarantee that the learning for RPCL or RPEL is current. That is, not only does the past learning match into the University course, but that the knowledge and/or understanding and/or skills reflected in the prior learning can be presently applied by the applicant. Faculties may wish to set a time limit on the currency of prior certification or may prefer to verify currency on a case-by-case basis.
40. In cases where a complete year is to be recognised with RPL, faculties should consider carefully the enrolment of students. RPL is alternative evidence against the University's validated curriculum and should be sufficiently advanced and reflect the appropriate amount of learning, prior to starting the following year.
41. RPL is not usually graded (see the Undergraduate Regulations and Postgraduate Regulations), unless it is credit from a previous KU award or credit from another UK HEI, in which case the faculty, with agreement from Academic Registry, has the option of transferring grades.
42. There is no fee for RPL but applicants are liable to normal course fees, depending on the extent of the credit given.

Collaborative Provision and RPL

43. If the RPL application is for a franchised course delivered wholly or partly at a partner, the entire RPL process and decision-making is undertaken by the faculty. If the RPL application is for a validated course delivered only by the partner, the faculty must moderate the process and the above processes must be followed by the partner and outcomes reported via the H1 form as stated above.
44. In exceptional cases, a partner might be in a position to undertake initial analysis of RPL claims for franchised provision, for instance if the partner is a FEC with long experience in HE delivery and detailed knowledge of the qualification frameworks. If a faculty wishes to devolve some responsibility for RPL to a partner, they must seek approval via the Education Committee (EC), identifying the relevant prior courses, and outline the monitoring process in place to ensure Faculty oversight.

Monitoring RPL

45. The University will monitor all RPL applications and outcomes through the School Education Committee.

RPL in another language

46. RPL claims could potentially be made against learning undertaken in a language other than English. In these cases, it is the responsibility of the student to provide translations of the required evidence, which could include: transcripts and certificates; curriculum specifications; samples of work.

47. RPEL claims are based on a portfolio of evidence. The reflective aspects of the portfolio must be completed in English, as the portfolio acts as assessment evidence against learning outcomes defined in the KU curriculum. However, it may be possible that items in the portfolio are presented in another language. Translations of these must be provided by the student.

Articulation Agreement

Introduction

48. Articulation Agreements constitute formal arrangements between the University and a partner, where prior agreed University-specific credit is given against achievement by all students on a course delivered by the partner, and all students are reserved the right to take advanced standing on the identified University course. The criteria are thus:
 - Credit is agreed prior to individual applications
 - Blanket credit is given to all students meeting agreed achievement
 - Students are usually reserved places on the University course (subject to set targets, varying teaching capacity and other related issues)
 - The partner is permitted to market the route onto the KU qualification as an **agreed progression route** subject to students meeting the standards of the prior course.
49. The partner course that articulates onto the KU course is referred to as the prior course.
50. Progression agreements, accords and compacts, which facilitate entry onto courses, are not governed by these procedures and are a matter of faculty admissions policy. Where advanced standing is given via one of these instruments, the credit is not agreed prior to application nor is blanket credit given, so each applicant is reviewed on a case-by-case basis, and the University does not reserve places for students. In effect, such agreements are a form of accelerated RPL.

Process (Articulation Agreements)

51. Initial discussions with the potential partner take place to assure each party that an Articulation Agreement is desired and of value to both. The University considers partners in Articulation Agreements as full collaborative partners, requiring approval via the processes outlined in section B. In the case of new partners, the Dean of Faculty signs form A2b to initiate the process of approving the partner, which stands also as the faculty's confirmation of the suitability of the Articulation Agreement. If the proposed Articulation Agreement is with an existing partner, the process goes directly to the approval of the Articulation Agreement.
52. Approval and subsequent re-approval of the partner (see section B) is subject to the usual University requirements of a due diligence process and partner approval/re-approval by QAPCC.
53. Following recommendation of partner approval by QAPCC, the faculty, in conjunction with QAE (where required), produces an Articulation Agreement document that stands as a contract between the University and the partner (template H3).
54. QAE, in discussion with the faculty, sets up a panel to consider the articulation arrangements, as appropriate. This will include the report of an external subject expert who has been identified by the faculty on form C1.
55. Before Articulation Agreements can come into effect, the Articulation Agreement must have been signed by both parties and approval must have been granted by an appropriately constituted approval panel of the University. For partners for whom an institutional agreement is already in place or will be, then confirmation of the articulation agreement may be added as an additional schedule in the institutional agreement.

56. The Agreement will be drawn-up on a standard template (template H3). The Articulation Agreement will:
- state its specific and explicit purpose (e.g. this prior course will allow direct entry to KU course 'x' and at "what" stage);
 - state the partner(s) involved;
 - be time limited to five years;
 - require the arrangement to be reviewed in order to test the prior course remains current, relevant and appropriate;
 - state that the partner provider must alert KU to any material changes to the status and delivery of the prior course;
 - state the terms and use of any promotional materials (normally KU will approve any materials that use the University's name);
 - state the roles of the persons who will take responsibility for the management of the delivery of the courses and with liaison responsibility in both partners;
 - state any staff development requirements;
 - state any additional specific Quality Assurance requirements associated with the partnership (e.g. for assuring the standards in the prior course);
 - state any support arrangements for learners, before, during and after transfer to KU;
 - explicitly state any additional requirements for direct entry to the KU course (e.g. English language competence etc);
 - state the ways in which the Agreement can be terminated and the consequent responsibilities of the partners.

Approval of the Agreement

57. The purpose of approval is to ensure that the accredited course satisfies the requirements of the associated University course and to ensure that sufficient monitoring is in place to guarantee currency.
58. All articulations are subject to University approval, which requires the documentation to be reviewed by an external subject expert.
59. QAE require the completed form H2, with all associated evidence, to be submitted three weeks prior to a sitting of an appropriately constituted panel. The panel must have seen the documentation at least three months before the Articulation Agreement is due to come into effect.

Evidence required

60. Evidence requirements for Articulation Agreements are as follows:
- a) Evidence that the mapping of the prior course against the KU named award to which it is intended to allow credit transfer has been carried out. This must be undertaken by the KU course team who are close to the curriculum. Mapping serves to determine that students are at the right level with appropriate pre-requisites and knowledge to join the KU programme of study. Academic staff will also review broad equivalence (student support, learning resources, and teaching, learning and assessment methods) to ensure that transfer to KU is likely to be academically as smooth as possible for students.
Note: Existing KU partners and UK HEIs will only need to provide evidence of the specific mapping related to the new Articulation Agreement
 - b) Faculty QA mechanisms that will be built into the Articulation Agreement, over and above the University monitoring requirements.

- c) Anonymised samples of student work of at least 10% of cohort (or sufficient to make a judgement of the application of standards and marking criteria, if cohorts are small) from the sections of the prior course being articulated. Samples should demonstrate pass, borderline and fail. Where grades are being recognised on the University transcript, samples should also demonstrate the use of the grade scales. Marking schemes should be provided. (Not required if there is a current NARIC recognition statement provided as part of evidence 'f' below).
 - o The sample should be sufficient to demonstrate students' achievement across the credit which will be recognised at the highest level, (for example all the Level 5 credit in an articulation onto a final year of an undergraduate degree). To illustrate, in a theoretical prior course structured similarly to KU courses with four 30-credit modules per year, the evidence should be a sample of 6 students' work for each module, 24 samples in total.
 - o It is noted that many prior courses will not reflect the structure of the KU course onto which they are being mapped. Use section D(ii) of Form H2 to describe the nature of assessment of the prior course, how the sample of student work demonstrates achievement across the equivalent KU credit and define the proposed sample size. The approval panel will determine whether this is sufficient for quality assurance purposes. Where further work is required, this will be set as a condition of approval. The approval panel will also approve future sampling arrangements for monitoring.
 - d) A proposal of sample size from the prior course, for ongoing monitoring purposes, based on predictions of student intake through the Articulation Agreement.
 - e) Details of the typical qualifications and experience of assessors at the articulating institution, including those of the course leader, and information on the procedures that ensure the quality control of assessment at the articulating institution.
 - f) Secure testimonials and other evidence, where appropriate, on the standing and recognition of the qualification locally and nationally (e.g. British Council, NARIC recognition statement, independent verification).
 - g) The need for other requirements, for example English Language qualifications/approved courses completed, bridging courses etc.
61. Where the articulating course is in a different language, all evidence must be provided in translation.
 62. The Articulation Approval panel, authorised by QAPCC, has the power to approve Articulation Agreements on behalf of the QAPCC and, if in doubt, may request further evidence and/or set conditions of approval.
 63. QAPCC may request modifications to the sampling sizes proposed by the faculty.
 64. The Articulation Approval panel will be established by QAE and will include a Chair, one internal panel member and an external subject expert. The Approval Panel meeting will be clerked by QAE. A report of the outcomes of the approval panel meeting will include the outcomes, any conditions or recommendations, the period of approval and any other stipulations that must be included in the Articulation Agreement, e.g. staff development, additional quality assurance requirements.
 65. The faculty is informed of the decision by QAE directly after the sitting of the panel. Where conditions have been set, the Articulation Agreement cannot come into effect until these have been met.
 66. Two copies of the Articulation Agreement are signed by both parties, each then retaining one copy. The University's original copy is held in QAE and a copy is sent to the faculty.

67. Once final approval has been recorded and the Articulation Agreement has been signed by both parties, the faculty is authorised to admit students via the Articulation Agreement.
68. Students following agreed articulated courses do not register with the University until they have successfully completed the course identified as articulating with the University course. At this stage they are required to complete an application form and enrol in the usual way. The faculty will identify the extent of advanced standing owing to the Articulation Agreement, and this is recorded on SITS and the students' transcript/HEAR.

Monitoring Articulation Agreements

69. The articulation agreement is monitored through a number of mechanisms:
 - annual visits to the partner;
 - the moderation of coursework and assessment at the partner course, including sampling (anonymised) by the external examiner where equivalent KU work is being sampled;
 - the progress and performance of students on a KU course having entered via the articulation.
70. Any issues relating to the articulating institution are gathered by the faculty point of contact for the Articulation Agreement with that institution. They will provide a short annual report on the Agreement for EC using form H4. The faculty monitors articulations at the appropriate SEC.
71. The University monitors articulations via EC, which considers annual articulation reports and external examiner reports. Re-approval of partner organisations involved in an Articulation Agreement is overseen by QAPCC.
72. Articulation Agreements cover five cohorts on the prior course. Where advanced standing is more than one year (e.g. 2+1 on a Bachelors degree) the agreement is signed for three years, which covers five cohorts on the prior course. QAE keeps a schedule of agreed Articulation Agreements and alerts the faculty a year in advance of an agreement lapsing and the need for re-approval. This will be, at a minimum, the re-approval of the collaborative partner (see section B) and a full review of the annual reports, External Examiner Reports and School Education Committee minutes, and any other evidence as determined by QAPCC.
73. The costs of the Articulation Agreement process will be recovered from the prospective partner. 50% of the fee will be payable during the planning stage, once the Articulation Agreement has been approved to proceed to an approval panel. The remaining 50% will be payable after the approval of the Articulation Agreement (see Introduction (iv) for information relating to the current fee payable by the partner). It is usual practice for QAE to bill the faculty proposing the partnership for the required amount, and for the Faculty to recover the sum from the partner.

Progression Agreements

74. Where a progression agreement aims to facilitate entry at course start, it does not come under the remit of the AQSH. The agreement is signed by the Executive Director for Students, and International Development is informed in cases of international providers. The signed agreement is held by QAE.

Progression Agreements with Advanced Standing

75. Such agreements constitute the recognition of prior learning and as such require, as a minimum, the following evidence:
- mapping of curricula;
 - testing of the currency of learning, or an imposed time limit on individual applicants;
 - sampling of work.
76. The curriculum mapping undertaken is submitted to the Faculty Education Committee for approval. Having been signed off by Faculty Education Committee, the Progression Agreement (template H6) is produced.
77. Progression Agreements devised to feed international students into KU courses must align with the International Strategy. Therefore, faculties must liaise with SAIL to ensure that the agreement is compatible with current strategy. QAE maintains a register of all progression agreements. They are signed on the basis that curriculum matching has taken place between the relevant courses of the two institutions. The completed agreement is submitted to SAIL who pass the document to the Executive Director for Students for signature.
78. The Progression Agreement is signed by the Executive Director for Students. Two copies of the signed document are sent to the partner for counter-signing and one of these copies is returned and held by the QAE who update the register.
79. The marketing of Progression Agreements must be closely monitored to ensure that potential applicants do not have inflated expectations. The partner institution can market the route onto KU awards as a **potential progression opportunity**. The faculty is responsible for monitoring partner marketing material. The audit of partner marketing material relating to progression agreements will form part of the QAE audit of partner marketing material.

Monitoring Progression Agreements

80. There is an onus on Kingston University to ensure that the mapping undertaken as part of the agreement process continues to reflect current practice. This can be done by one of two methods:
- an annual mapping exercise, or monitoring process, whereby curriculum changes are reported to the faculty (this is the preferable method where the progression agreement facilitates annual applications);
 - the student provides the curriculum of their course of study on application, allowing a mapping exercise at the point of entry (this method can be used when the progression agreement is utilised only infrequently by students).
81. Where a mapping exercise alone is sufficient for RPL, it does not elucidate the full evidence requirements for international institutions, which might be working to significantly different assessment and grading criteria. To ensure that the applicants have reached the sufficient level of attainment on the prior course, the faculty will need to undertake one of two activities:

- Where there are annual applications, the faculty should sample anonymised student work from the institution to monitor levels of attainment on the course;
 - Where there are only infrequent applications, the faculty must either:
 - request some examples of the applicant's work for consideration as part of the application process; or
 - where work is not available, set an appropriate test or task to determine the level of attainment of the candidate.
82. All work must be provided in English.
83. Progression agreements must be monitored. As described, one aspect of this is to ensure that the curriculum mapping remains current. The second strand of monitoring is to review student progress. If students entering a course with advanced standing through a progression agreement are underperforming, the faculty will need to consider:
- Closing the agreement;
 - Reconsidering the extent of credit awarded under the agreement;
 - Ensuring that appropriate support mechanisms are in place for these students.
84. Currently, the facility is not available in SITS to track students entering the University with advanced standing from a specific progression agreement. Course teams are required to track students manually as part of annual monitoring and raise concerns where these arise from the performance of these students.

Masters Awards by Learning Agreement (MALA)

Introduction

85. The purpose of MALA is to recognise the significant extent of University-level learning that occurs in the workplace, and to make available a means of recognising and awarding achievement within the OfS Sector Recognised Standards.
86. The main detail relating to MALA can be found in the [Masters Awards by Learning Agreement Framework Document](#). The process that follows intends to show how the faculty-level procedures, as outlined in the Framework Document, articulate with University processes, and should be read alongside the Framework Document.
87. Contact QAE if you are considering developing a new MALA programme.

Documentation

88. The three tier documentation that defines the MALA is:

- i. *The Framework Specification*

This is owned by EC and is applied to all MALAs. EC reviews the framework specification annually for fitness and modifies where deemed necessary. Changes may come as a result of changes to regulatory body descriptors, feedback from the relevant SEC, or External Examiner comments. When the specification is modified, these modifications are applied to all future MALAs following the ratification of the changes by EC. Changes are not usually retrospectively applied.

- ii. *The Generic Programme Specification*

This is the document that underpins the award title and is unique to each award title approved. It is owned by the Faculty Education Committee and approved by EC. Whilst the specification must be flexible enough to arch over any number of specific learning agreements, it must specify the subject outcomes sufficiently to allow EC to monitor the nature of the learning agreements being developed under its umbrella.

- iii. *The Learning Agreement*

This is negotiated between the student or the employer and the faculty, and approved at faculty level. It acts as the full specification of the agreed course and must clearly link into the generic programme specification and the framework specification (i.e. is coherent in terms of content and is pitched at the correct level). Individual MALAs are either standard sets of learning outcomes applicable within an established professional setting or individually negotiated between the applicant and the identified academic.

Levels of Monitoring and Approval

89. The framework is monitored by EC.
90. Programme specifications are approved by a panel on behalf of the EC. They are always reviewed by an external subject expert who reports to the panel.

91. Changes to the programme specification are approved by the Faculty Education Committee. The committee must be satisfied that all LAs under the programme specification continue to map into it.
92. New cohort learning agreements are considered by a subject expert and reported to the Faculty Education Committee.
93. Changes to learning agreements:
 - minor changes can be agreed at the School Education Committee;
 - major changes are reviewed by a subject expert and reported to the Faculty Education Committee.
94. Exceptionally, a cohort approach requires individualised learning agreements and the learning agreement is negotiated with each student. In these instances the final agreement is considered by a subject expert and reported to the School Education Committee.

Process (MALA)

95. Applications are made or directed to the appropriate faculty.
96. The faculty determines whether this is an individual or a cohort arrangement. Cohort agreements are those negotiated on behalf of a single employer for a number of potential students, including phased applications.
97. If it is an individual application, the faculty determines whether this falls under an existing approved generic programme specification. If so, the continued process falls under the remit of the MALA framework management document.
98. New titles will only be considered for cohorts. Thus individual applications must identify the approved title and if one does not exist, the application cannot be progressed. (Faculties should avoid titles that may overlap and thus be confused with existing ones that carry external recognition and/or confer licence to practise).
99. If it is a cohort, the faculty must determine the type of partner. There are four distinct types of partner:
 - Existing partner;
 - Employer with no further input;
 - Employer seeking blanket RPL for recognition of prior course;
 - Employer, or third-party training provider or consortium of both, with delivery inputs.

Employer with no input

100. If the employer is seeking no further input into design or delivery of the award or if the employer is an existing partner, the faculty determines whether the application falls under existing programme specifications. If so, the continued process falls under the remit of the MALA framework management document (see section 9 of the MALA framework management document).
101. If the application proves to require a new award title, the faculty must get approval of the new award title from the Portfolio Management Group (PMG).
102. Once PMG recommends the request to go to approval, the faculty submit a generic programme specification for the new award title to QAE, along with:

- Draft Cohort Learning Agreement;
 - Contextual Document based on the A2;
 - Evidence of support from the relevant Head of School;
 - Draft Course Handbook.
103. QAE will send the submitted paperwork to an external subject expert (equivalent role to external panel member, see section C for criteria) to report to an approval panel. Therefore, submission of the programme specification should be made five weeks prior to the sitting.
Note: the faculty will be requested to nominate an external expert using form C1.
104. The panel approves the proposal and title, or requests further information, or rejects the proposal.
105. Once approved, the continued process falls under the remit of the MALA framework management document (see section 18 of the MALA framework management document).

Employer seeking blanket RPL towards an award

106. Irrespective of the extent of the credit being sought, this is regarded as an Articulation. The procedure for Articulation is followed. As the prior course(s) of the partner is articulating onto the MALA framework, the mapping is done onto the generic programme specification and the framework specification. To ensure there is sufficient evidence, the faculty is required to provide course information equivalent to the credit rating exercise.

Employer, or third-party training provider or consortium of both, with delivery inputs

107. This includes any partnership with structured delivery inputs and associated assessment (formative or summative) that has a direct link to the outcomes in the learning agreement.
108. If it is an existing partner, the faculty completes form A2b and submits this to QAPCC for approval.
109. For new partners, due diligence and partnership approval must take place (see section B). The overarching criterion for determining whether an employer or third-party deliverer should be a partner is when the potential partner's involvement in the course is essential, and were they to withdraw, the student's chances of completion would be potentially hindered. That is, the employer and/or deliverer have some influence on the negotiation of the learning agreement and its subsequent implementation, which is essential for the University to assess the work and award the appropriate qualification. For example, the partner undertakes some of the summative assessment, or the delivery of training inputs has an effect on the portfolio production and the assessment schedule. In addition, where there may be significant cross-marketing and/or the need to protect Intellectual Property Rights between partners then it is recommended that the partnership is formalised and framed by a University Institutional Agreement and monitored through the Joint Executive Committee.
110. Once it is determined that a formal partnership must be documented, form A2b is sent to QAPCC to seek approval to proceed.

111. If QAPCC approves the proposal, a due diligence process is undertaken and the partnership is submitted to QAPCC for consideration (see section B).
112. If QAPCC approves the partnership and/or form A2b, the proposal can proceed to validation.
113. The validation process applies (see section C) and will require the following documents:
 - Liaison document – must show how KU maintain QA of delivery;
 - Course handbook – must show relationship between the delivery inputs and the University award;
 - Staff development policy;
 - Draft (at least) of the learning agreement;
 - Details of the structured input (as determined by QAPCC);
 - The generic programme specification.
114. Once validated, the continuing process falls under the remit of the MALA framework management document (see section 18 of the MALA framework management document).

Credit rating of external programmes of study

Introduction

115. Credit rating of external programmes of study leads to the recognition of general credit. It requires the mapping of the programme learning outcomes into the appropriate OfS Sector Recognised Standards and the calculation of the amount of credit. Guidelines state a minimum of 10 notional learning hours equates to one credit. The minimum amount of credit the University will recognise is 30, equating to one standard module.
116. This procedure is used to allocate credit for modules/short courses which are not part of an award bearing course. Credit rating does not require mapping into a University course. If the external programme of study is to be mapped into University curricula in order to recognise it towards a full University award, then the process is either RPL for individual cases, or Articulation for cohort recognition.

Process (Credit rating)

117. Enquiries for credit rating are made or directed to the appropriate faculty. Once the faculty decides to go ahead with the credit rating, it nominates a subject expert to work with the client to develop the evidence required to show that the external programme of study reflects equivalent University learning. This will include:
- consideration of the nature of the intake;
 - the learning and/or training objectives of the programme of study and how these rate against University level descriptors;
 - assessment strategy and criteria;
 - any evidence of progression within the programme of study, or as a result of undertaking it.
118. Proposals are submitted to the QAPCC for consideration and approval. The QAPCC may decide that the credit-rating exercise should be undertaken by a specially convened panel, to consider the proposal in more detail and to engage in dialogue with members of the team submitting the proposal. The panel will have delegated powers to approve the credit rating on behalf of QAPCC.
119. The objective of the credit-rating exercise will be:
- to consider the rationale for the proposal;
 - to evaluate the level of credit to be awarded;
 - to evaluate the programme of study to be credit-rated in terms of learning outcomes and the assessment of learning outcomes;
 - to ensure that learning outcomes are expressed in terms of knowledge, skills and competence;
 - to ensure that learning outcomes are properly assessed and involve adequate external independent examiners;
 - to consider proposals for monitoring and quality assurance;
 - to evaluate whether the programme of study will be offered in an environment appropriate for the award of HE credit.

Documentation

120. QAPCC receives the following documentation to assist their consideration of the proposal:
- A rationale for the proposal - this should include details of the intended market and student group and details of any external company or professional body involved in delivery;

- Programme of study details - this should include the programme aims and learning outcomes, the learning and teaching strategy, assessment strategy, length of course and delivery mode;
- Module Descriptor(s);
- Resources document - this should include CVs of staff delivering the programme of study; details of the learning environment (e.g. library, IT); details of any learning support;
- Details of the monitoring and quality assurance processes - this should include categories of membership and timing of assessment boards and details of external examining and course monitoring arrangements.

121. If the external programme of study is successfully credit-rated, the faculty is informed and the client can apply for certificates of credit. Credit recognised as part of this process cannot be used directly for RPL because the credit is not mapped to specific curricula. If an individual seeks admission onto a University course with advanced standing based on a credit-rated programme of study, additional mapping is required to determine the extent of exemptions possible (see RPL process).

122. The University will charge the faculty a standard fee for the process of credit rating (see Introduction (iii)) which should be passed on to the client. Faculties should determine a charge for the consultation and production of evidence on a case-by-case basis.

Monitoring

123. QAPCC will recommend monitoring activities to ensure continued currency over the approved period, based on a selection of the following activities:
- Sampling of anonymised student work each cycle;
 - Attending assessment boards – minutes of boards;
 - QAPCC – review cycle every two years;
 - Annual reports to the EC.