



## UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION

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Colombo 07.

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Vice Chancellors of Universities  
Rectors of Campuses  
Directors of Institutes

### **RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING, CREDIT TRANSFER AND LATERAL ENTRY IN THE CONTEXT OF SLQF 2015**

#### **Recognition of Prior Learning**

Formal arrangements for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) enable universities to offer students advanced placement on a given course of study, based on evidence of prior learning in subject areas relevant to the course of study. It is a mechanism that allows the credit awarded by one higher education institute (HEI) to be recognized, quantified and included in the credit requirements for a program delivered by another HEI or between programs offered by the same HEI.

#### **Credit transfer, course exemptions and lateral entry**

RPL may take the form of credit transfer or course exemptions, also sometimes referred to as lateral entry. It involves the evaluation of a student's transcript, course outlines and other relevant information. Credit values give information about the amount of learning and academic demands of that learning. Although the principle behind RPL is simple, issues involved in the formulation of a credit accumulation and transfer scheme are complex.

The Australian credit transfer system, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation system, the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework, credit accumulation and transfer schemes in the United Kingdom, and the ASEAN credit transfer systems all facilitate the credit transfer process between participant countries. They have developed a common conversion system that facilitates the credit transfer process.

### **RPL in the Sri Lankan context**

RPL may be considered in award of qualifications at any of SLQF Levels 4 to 7 (sub-degree and first degree levels). However, in order to practice RPL, the entire structure for the programme(s) of study leading to the qualification(s) awarded by the university must be specified in detail, with clear indication of entry and exit points and/or intermediate awards in the course documents approved by the university authorities and the University Grants Commission.

**Credit Transfer** to a study programme (e.g. SP-A) implies that courses completed in a different study programme (e.g. SP-B) are recognized as courses completed under SP-A, with rational mapping of courses and assignment of grades. This is easily achieved if both study programmes follow the same credit system. **Course exemptions** imply that a student is exempted from following a course (or courses) within the programme of study due to knowledge, skills or competencies gained by following equivalent courses within or outside the university, which are not considered for credit transfer.

Both forms of RPL are practiced even now in some of the state universities in Sri Lanka. This concept paper sets out guidance for doing so in a consistent manner in all Sri Lankan universities in awarding their qualifications.

### **Students eligible for RPL**

The following categories of students are recommended for the purposes of credit transfer or course exemption:

1. Students who wish to undertake a short period of study in a foreign university

Full-time undergraduate students registered in a state university following the regular admissions process may be offered an opportunity to study in a foreign university for a specified period of time (e.g. one or more semesters), under a Memorandum of Understanding regarding student exchange between the two universities. In this situation, students are expected to return to their home university, which will award the degree, and this home university will accept transfer of credits earned in the foreign university. *If the two universities do not follow the same credit system, a suitable method should be specified for mapping of courses and assignment of grades and approved by the University Senate or equivalent academic authority.*

2. Students who wish to undertake a short period of study (one or two semesters) in another state university

Full-time undergraduate students registered in a state university may seek an opportunity to study in another state university for one or two semesters, or follow specific course units which are not available in the home university. In this situation too, students would be provided documentation regarding completion of specific course units in the guest university, and the home university will accept transfer of these credits towards the degree to be awarded by the home university.

### 3. Students who wish to upgrade a sub-degree level qualification to a Bachelors or Bachelor's Honours degree

This category of students, who may seek admission as full time undergraduates, or to external degree programmes in conventional universities, or to programmes of study offered by the Open University, may be granted admission to university to complete a programme of study directly related to a previous course of study. Such students may be allowed to transfer credits from the previous course of study, or be granted course exemptions if appropriate (i.e., lateral entry), subject to Principles 1 to 4 listed below.

#### **Students not eligible for RPL**

Students who have registered for higher studies in a foreign university or a non-state higher education institution in Sri Lanka, cannot be considered for admission and RPL in a state university.

#### **Principles to be followed in implementation of RPL**

**Principle 1.** Decisions regarding admission of students should be separate from decisions regarding RPL. The admissions process that decides whether students are eligible to enter a particular programme of study should be based on the minimum admission requirements stipulated by the university in accordance with SLQF 2015, and approved by the UGC. Students admitted to a programme of study after fulfilling approved entry requirements may be considered for RPL in order to determine which individual modules/ course units may be credited based on prior learning, and resultant advanced placement.

**Principle 2.** Not more than 50% of the total volume of credits required for the qualification to be awarded should be considered under RPL (e.g. 45 of 90 credits for a Bachelor's degree or 60 of 120 credits required for a Bachelor's Honours degree). Thus a minimum of 50% of the total volume of credits must be completed at the university awarding the qualification.

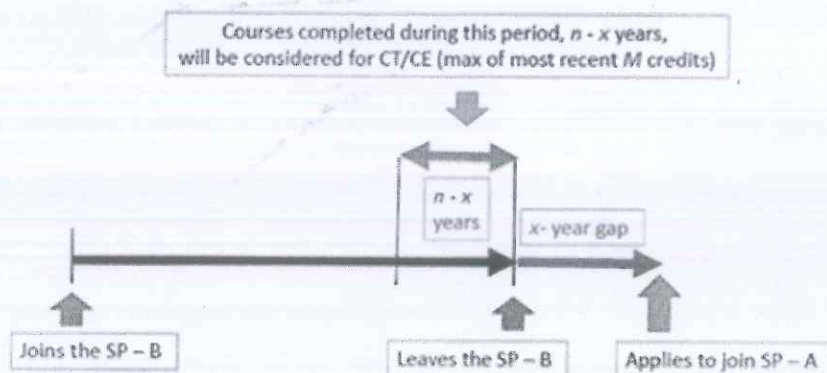
**Principle 3.** Course exemptions based on RPL should not be granted for any of the course credits at the highest level pertaining to an award, e.g. the fourth year of a Bachelor's Honours degree. However, when courses in two different programmes of study have been clearly mapped, and a suitable method has been specified for assigning grades, and approved by the Senate of the university, credit transfer may be allowed even at the highest level pertaining to an award.

**Principle 4.** A limit must be placed on the time period for which RPL is permitted. It is recommended that RPL should be considered for not more than 10 years from the date of achieving the relevant learning outcomes.

#### **Illustration**

- A student having followed SP-B in a Higher Education Institute for a certain number of years, either completes that SP, or decides to stop it without completing it.

- After a certain period of time, say  $x$  years, this student applies for registration for SP-A in the same HEI, or another one, and seeks RPL based on the SP-B.
- The following figure illustrates how the credit transfer and/or course exemptions can be considered under RPL scheme subject to conditions stated above.



### Guidance regarding implementation of credit transfer mechanisms

#### 1. Transfer of grades

In order to facilitate transfer of grades from one institution to another, it is necessary for the home institution to provide the host not only the grades and the raw marks pertaining to the student requesting a transfer but also the raw marks of all the candidates who sat the relevant module examinations concurrently. This would enable the host institution to ascertain the position of the applicant in relation to the others.

#### 2. Evaluation of the Transcript

A student who is transferring credit from one university to another must obtain an academic transcript(s) listing the courses followed, grades and other attributes obtained from the institution attended. Each transcript and the listed courses should be evaluated by a Committee appointed for this purpose to see if the courses followed satisfy the requirements of the receiving institution.

#### 3. Arrangements for credit transfer and course exemption

Potential students need reasonable assurance that they will be able to take education pathways which recognize previous work and study outcomes and give appropriate credit where they relate to further studies, and increase opportunities for students with prior experience and qualifications to access higher education by facilitating student mobility.

General information on relevant pathways should be provided to prospective students so that they are made aware of the opportunity and application process. This should cover means of obtaining further information to enable informed comparison of consequences of enrolment in different courses.

Registered students should be able to access detailed information on credit transfer. Key information, including the date at which the information is current, should be made available in a single source/site, with links to more detailed information in other documents or sites as appropriate.

Each university will have to develop its own mechanism, by establishing a committee convened by the Academic division of the university, to draft suitable regulations and oversee the process.

4. Explanation of Terms

Across the university, terms should be explained in "simple" language and using standardized terminology. Key terms used by the university should be defined and illustrated where appropriate with examples, both to reinforce understanding of the approach used by the institution and to encourage students to consider seeking credit transfer. These terms should be consistent with nationally agreed terminology, e.g. the Sri Lankan Qualifications Framework (SLQF).

5. Limits of Credit

Academic rules, regulations and any results which set precedents that govern credit decisions should be "transparent". These should be accessible to potential applicants and clearly explained so that applicants know in advance where they stand.

6. Contact Officers

Information for students should include a list of contact officers with appropriate expertise and resources to advise on the process and likely outcomes of applications in individual programs.

7. Credit Application form

Students should be able to access the relevant credit application form on-line or as hard copy, including instructions for completing it. Students should not have to search separately for additional information to understand the terms used in the instructions. The evidence required to be submitted in support of the application should be spelt out along with a brief explanation of the rationale, e. g. to assure academic integrity.

8. Similarity of Requirements for Evidence

Requirements for supporting evidence should be similar across faculties, unless variations are approved by the institution.

9. Onus of Proof (Responsibility)

In general, the responsibility for making a case for credit transfer and articulation rests with the applicant. Where formal arrangements exist between universities and/or other higher education institutions, information relevant to an individual's application should be verified through institutional systems where possible.

10. Timing of Lodgement and Processing

Appropriate and reasonable time frames for the lodgement and processing of applications should be advertised to students.

11. Avenues of Appeal

Grounds for appeal and procedures for appeal should be specified and be explained clearly to students. Appeal procedures should be consistent across the institution.

The Circular is effective from 12.03.2021. Please take necessary action accordingly.



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Chairman

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