



## University of West of Scotland

### Making Experience Count – A Case Study in RPL for Workbased Learning

The University of the West of Scotland (UWS) has a strong commitment to the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and has a process embedded within the regulatory framework of the University whereby learning which has taken place in a variety of contexts, both formal and informal, can be recognised either for entry to a programme of study or where the learning is at the right level, for credit towards a specific programme. Recognising and/or awarding credit for prior learning including workbased or work related learning is of increasing importance in Scotland with the development and implementation of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) which encourages an ethos of lifelong learning within Scottish society.

This can be illustrated through the following case study which had the ambitious aim of awarding credit for 120 credit points at SCQF levels 7 and 8 through RPL including both certificated and/or workbased experiential learning for part time students who had considerable experience within the workplace allowing entry to SCQF level 9 (equivalent to the final year of an unclassified degree programme) of a BA Management programme.

This ground-breaking development involved students attending workshop sessions where UWS RPL procedures were explained. Students participated in a number of exercises to enable them to reflect and begin to construct learning outcomes based on their experience within the workplace, prior to developing a portfolio of evidence in support of their RPL claim.

While recognising the need for a robust procedure to assess RPL some students were surprised at the amount of work required and needed considerable encouragement and support. Students who completed and were awarded 240 credit points were extremely positive about the reflective nature of the process and felt they had benefited enormously from the learning experience becoming more reflective in their learning styles and confident in their professional practice. All have now completed their studies and graduated in November 2011.

This case study has led to a review of UWS RPL Policy and Guidelines to ensure RPL is recognised as an important means of capturing the importance of workbased learning and how this can enhance motivation and participation within lifelong learning.

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