

College Bursary Scheme

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Paul used the College of Policing's Recognition of Prior Experience and Learning process to turn the skills and knowledge he had gained during his 10-year policing career into academic credits.

Why did you decide to apply for a College of Policing bursary?

As my policing career progressed I noticed how the professionalisation of the service meant a move towards an academic evidence base. I didn't do as well in my A levels as I expected to and decided not to go to university and have always regretted this decision.

What made you decide on your particular course?

My course is 100% distance learning and is aimed at police officers who don't necessarily have the required entry qualifications. It was relevant to me as focuses on contemporary issues in policing, such as counter terrorism, security and multi-agency working – all of which are part of my core role in counter terrorism.

What did the Recognition of Prior Experience and Learning process involve?

I was invited for an interview with the course leader who asked about my experience. He asked me to use the College of Policing's Recognition of Prior Experience and Learning (RPL) **credit estimator** and I provided a number of critical reflections on my practice. Once I had submitted this, he created an assessment of my level of practice against set criteria which was externally approved and accredited. This removed any worries I had about not meeting the entry criteria.

How has your course been so far?

Since starting my course I'm already more aware of the sociological theories that policing is based on and have been able to apply those theories to make my own professional practice more effective. I have chosen to conduct my dissertation research in the area of my core role, Prevent. I will critically analyse and highlight what practice works well in this area, and what is either ineffective or has a negative impact, in an attempt to inform the national policing response to this very important safeguarding issue.

How do you balance studying and your work?

It is not easy to balance studying and work, but I compartmentalise my different responsibilities, so work hours are for work only. I ensure I spend quality time with my wife and children until their bedtime (my children's, not my wife's!) and then dedicate a number of hours to study. On my rest days I ensure that I get a couple of hours quality uninterrupted study time in order to keep up with my course. The fact that it is 100% distance learning online means I am able to complete it at a time that suits me, whilst still having access to lectures, tuition support and a platform to converse with my peers from around the country.

At work my managers are very supportive and understand the positive impact this course could have on the whole team. I have been offered study leave and access to my colleagues and partners in this field when I conduct my research.

What College products have you used to assist you during your studies?

I regularly refer to the **Authorised Professional Practice** on the College website and have a membership profile set up to manage my own CPD. I also used my membership to access the **National Police Library**, including OpenAthens, where there are a number of relevant journals which I have found really useful in my study.

What did you think of higher education before starting your course?

Before starting my course I was quite worried about how difficult it would be, I felt as if I knew nothing and would struggle to grasp the content. I had a picture in my head of having to keep to rigid time frames for lectures and tutorials and having to frequently travel to the university for face-to-face sessions. I have found these worries to be unfounded and have discovered that higher education can be really convenient and flexible and there is lots of support provided.

What difference has receiving a College bursary made to you?

Having a College bursary has made the world of difference. I have three children and a mortgage so without the bursary I would simply not have been in a position to apply to university and I would have missed a real opportunity for my own professional development.

What advice would you give to a colleague considering further study?

I'd say go for it! I thought higher education was prohibitively expensive and exclusive in its admissions criteria, but with the College bursary and RPL these common obstacles were removed, allowing me to take on learning that will absolutely have a positive impact on my own professional practice.

Find out if you could turn the skills and experience you've gained during your policing career into academic credits by using our **Credit Estimator**.

If you have any questions about the scheme or need further information, contact **BursaryScheme@college.pnn.police.uk**