

## Recognition of Prior Learning Policy for Higher Education

**PURPOSE:** The following details the procedure to follow when a student would like to apply for recognition of previous studies that are directly related, and at the same level of the learning they are planning to undertake. It is College policy to acknowledge and accredit a student's prior learning and achievement so that she/he may gain part of a qualification without undertaking a full learning programme. However, under all circumstances the Awarding Organisation regulations apply.

**SCOPE:** Policy applies to HE Students, HE Academic and Professional Services Staff

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Overall responsibility lies with the Dean of Higher Education and Research and the Director of Quality

**LEGAL CONTEXT: NA**

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# **POLICY & PROCEDURE FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR LEARNING (APL) FOR HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES**

## **1. Purpose**

This purpose of this policy is to:

Identify the principles which underpin the operation of College processes for the recognition of students' prior learning. The recognition of prior learning is the generic term used for the recognition of certificated, and non-certificated (experiential) learning that has occurred at some time in the past, and can be assessed as equivalent to the learning of modules/units or stages of study in a chosen course of study, within a higher education programme (e.g. degree, certificate and Edexcel Pearson BTEC HNC/D).

This policy and associated procedures follow the principles and guidance contained in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and has been developed with reference to associated Advice and Guidance relating to Admissions, Recruitment and Widening Access.

The Policy is also aligned with the requirements of the College's validation partners and Awarding Body (Pearson).

This policy supports the College's commitment to support widening participation and access to higher education. The following details the procedure to follow when a student would like to apply for

## **2. 2) Definition**

Key word/Acronym Definition

2.1 RPL: The generic term used for the recognition of certificated, and non-certificated (experiential) learning that has occurred at some time in the past, and is of equivalence to modules/units or stages of study in their chosen course of study, and which can be assessed and accredited within a higher education programme.

2.2 RPCL: Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning i.e. learning for which certification has been awarded by an educational institution or another education/training provider i.e. this is normally a recognised course of study that is at a particular academic level and carries a credit rating.

2.3 RP(E)L: Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning i.e. uncertificated learning gained from prior experience, work experience or training/study, and which is capable of being assessed and accredited as equivalent to the learning outcomes of modules/stages of study.

2.4 Advanced Standing: Occurs where an applicant enters an approved course of study at a stage later than the normal entry point of the course, with a previous qualification or other certificated learning, that is current and at the appropriate academic level, and maps against the learning outcomes of the earlier stage of study.

2.5 General credit: Credit for prior learning that indicates a particular quality and level – but only become of value in terms of accreditation when they are matched against a particular set of learning outcomes and become specific credit.

2.6 Specific credit: Prior learning that has been assessed against a particular set of learning outcomes and can be accredited against a specific module and/or stage of a programme leading to an award.

2.7 Portfolio of evidence: A collection of evidence completed by an applicant which is used to judge individual achievement, usually as part of a claim for experiential learning:-

- It demonstrates reflection in the learning from prior experience
- It presents claims to that learning
- It contains relevant evidence, enabling claims to be evaluated

### **3. Responsibility**

Overall responsibility lies with the Dean of Higher Education and Research. Responsibilities of Programme Leaders, College assessors and Heads of School are defined within the procedure.

### **4. Scope**

APL is the process of awarding academic or unit credit for prior learning or experience. It is also known as an exemptions policy or a policy of advanced standing.

Policies and procedures have been developed over time which has led to the use of a number of terms to describe the process. Among the most common are:

- Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)
- Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)
- Accreditation of Prior Achievement (APA)
- Accreditation of Prior Learning and Achievement (APLA)
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

These terms broadly describe the same process.

Pearson also use the term Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

The College has an approved RPL policy for Further Education qualifications.

For Validated and Franchised HE programmes, External Examiners will be notified of APL candidates and will review APL decisions, while for Pearson Higher National programmes the Dean will follow the awarding body procedures. (note Pearson HN programme EEs are contracted annually)

It is College policy that students should be given encouragement and support so that they feel confident in initiating the APL process at any time during their programme. Students should be supported in this process by appropriately qualified and experienced staff.

### **5. Process**

When a student initiates the APL request, the Course Leader will assess the extent of the relevance of the prior learning and achievement which the student wishes to claim and will advise accordingly. When following the APL process, the Course Leader and specialist subject tutor should complete the relevant proforma (see Appendix 1). In the event of a different form used by validated or franchised partners, a copy of their form will be used and saved in the Quality Folder of the programme.

When a student is claiming APL by providing evidence of an equivalent qualification from either abroad or the UK, the course tutor will require the student to provide an authenticated copy of the relevant certificate. The Admission Officer will provide the course leader with a report from UK NARIC identifying the foreign qualification. The course leader will then identify the foreign qualification in NARICS, (The British Council International Guide to Qualifications in Education, available from the National Academic Recognition Information Centre for the UK), or will contact the relevant Professional Institute and identify the nature and extent of equivalency. To ensure rigour in this process, the support and approval of a

specialist subject tutor may be required. It may also be necessary to obtain a complete transcript of the professional or foreign qualification and to map it against unit outcomes.

If a student is claiming APL through the submission of work related assessment and experience, the student must be made aware that the evidence proffered must be current, authentic, valid and sufficient. (Current usually means within the last two to three years, but this is subject to the discretion of the assessor and the nature of the evidence. Authentic means that any evidence must be genuine and supported by credible witnesses or referees. Valid means that evidence must be relevant to the outcomes or units claimed. Sufficient means that there is an adequate quantity of evidence that enables a rigorous assessment to be made).

It may be necessary for a subject specialist tutor to advise the HE course leader and the student regarding the relevance of the evidence. (Note: there is a distinction between the APL assessor and the subject specialist adviser.)

The course tutor will complete an initial assessment form with the student which identifies the nature and form of the prior learning being claimed and will map this against the outcomes for the unit or units claimed. Where the mapping procedure identifies gaps in either knowledge or understanding or evidence, the course tutor will advise as to whether the qualification or unit can be completed with a limited amount of additional evidence: or whether the student needs to attend the usual programme of learning. The final approval for APL rests with the awarding body.

Where it appears that the student can provide evidence, the course tutor will complete an action plan with the student which will include the following:

- The nature of evidence which is to be provided
- Where evidence requires further authentication
- The date by which this evidence will be provided and assessed
- Students should be given the opportunity to be able to sit the units if their APL claim is not successful within a reasonable timeframe
- Agreed dates for a progress check to see if students require tutorial or subject specialist support.

(\*Where additional evidence is required, the tutor will provide assignments or other appropriate means of assessment that will enable the student to provide sufficient evidence of the achievement of the unit outcomes).

The student will then submit a portfolio for assessment which will be subject to internal and external verification. The student will be provided with summative feedback on the success of their APL claim. If the claim is not successful but could, with additional evidence, meet the requirements; formative feedback may be provided to allow resubmission.

Any part of a higher education award (carrying academic credit) which has been certificated by Pearson, cannot be used as prior learning to contribute to the achievement of another Pearson higher education award of an equivalent level

Where RPL is being used to determine if unit learning outcomes have been met on a Pearson Higher Education award, the maximum grade that the student can achieve for that unit will be a pass.

For HNC/D work-based evidence can only be awarded a Pass. Evidence from foreign or

other qualifications may be graded Pass, Merit or Distinction after assessing equivalency through **UK NARIC**. Any units claimed by APL must be made clear to the Assessment Board and if approved will be entered on to the student's SRF.

Review of progress of students who have applied for APL will be analysed in the course Annual Monitoring Reports – signed off by the Head of School.

As with any assessment decision on procedural grounds; if a student wishes to appeal against a decision made about their assessment they need to follow the Solihull College & University Centre Appeals Policy and procedures.

Where evidence is assessed to be only sufficient to cover one or more learning outcomes, or to partly meet the need of a learning outcome, then additional assessment methods should be used to generate sufficient evidence to be able to award the learning outcome(s) for the whole unit.

The APL process is not concerned with allowing for exceptional entry to, or exemption from, a programme of study.

The APL process does not allow the recognition of any unit or qualification assessed by external assessment only. This is because such units are subject to specific evidence requirements.

Normally the maximum amount of APL available to a candidate will be 50% of the qualification; this is subject to awarding body requirements.

**PROFORMA FOR APL - HIGHER  
EDUCATION AWARDS**



Name of Student:

Date:

Qualification Title & Awarding Body:

Assessor's Name:

Reasons why APL process initiated by student:

**Date of initial interview with student and evidence requested**

Date:

Evidence requested:

**Date and details of evidence seen**

Date:

Evidence Seen:

**National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARICS) validity checked**

Signature of assessor:

Date:

Attach photocopy to student file.

**Transcription of qualification seen and mapped against awarding body learning outcomes**

Signature:

Date:

Photocopy and add to student file.

Professional institute contacted for equivalency (i.e. a summary of their response)

A list of evidence supplied and assessed by subject specialist as sufficient, valid, relevant and authentic

Assignments set with dates for submission (or other means of assessment) that provide sufficient evidence

APL approved in the following units with final grade provisionally awarded

**Evidence approved by assessor**

Signature:

Date:

**APL approved by Head of School**

Name:

Signature:

Date: