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LIBF Code of Practice for Quality Assurance (Higher Education)

Chapter 3: accreditation of prior learning (APL)

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1. This chapter is concerned with the provision of academic credit to students who have previously undertaken appropriate certificated and / or experiential learning and are eligible for credits towards our awards. The chapter has been aligned to the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) UK Quality Code for Higher Education with particular consideration to the advice and guidance section on assessment.
- 3.1.2. Accreditation is the process of external quality review used to analyse institutions and / or programmes or modules of study. It's often applied to the accreditation of prior learning, either as part of a formal, independently assessed course of study (certificated learning) or through previous experience and practice (experiential learning).
- 3.1.3. The minimum entry requirements for each award are published in the relevant programme specification. It's recognised, however, that, in addition to meeting these entry requirements, students may also have demonstrated academic achievement of certain elements of a programme prior to starting it. Through such prior learning, and where appropriate evidence can be provided, we may grant the student credits against parts of the programme in line with our [General and Academic Regulations](#).

3.2 Definitions

- 3.2.1. Such prior learning by a student may have been achieved either
- i. as part of a formal course of education which has been independently certificated and is recognised by us. The award of credit on this basis is known as Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL), or
 - ii. through a process of experience and practice which is recognised by us. The award of credit on this basis is known as Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL), or
 - iii. by successfully completing an employer's in-house learning programme that has been formally recognised for the provision of credits by us under an accreditation agreement. The award of credits

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on this basis is known as the accreditation of in-house corporate education programmes.

- 3.2.2. The prior learning listed above may be learning offered by us or may be learning through another, external organisation.

3.3 Policy parameters

- 3.3.1. APL claims for academic credit will only be considered from students who are able to satisfy our general admission criteria.
- 3.3.2. In assessing whether a student's APCL and / or APEL claim is appropriate for the award of credits, we have in place procedures to establish whether the prior learning and achievement match the benchmarks set by us at a specified level, e.g., as established by our academic framework and defined by such factors as programme learning outcomes, syllabus content, notional study hours, and assessment.
- 3.3.3. The act of accreditation applies only in the context of the designated award, i.e., accreditation only covers the grant of credit and doesn't imply, and shouldn't be positioned or interpreted as providing, any additional form of recognition by us of the external programme concerned, unless otherwise stated.
- 3.3.4. Credits gained via APL into our awards may mean that students may not get certain exemptions from other institutions' higher education or professional awards that recognise our programmes.
- 3.3.5. Academic credit may be granted either in the form of specific credits against a specified module(s) and / or notional credits where learning is evidenced at the appropriate level consistent with the programme learning outcomes.

3.4 Policy guidelines

- 3.4.1. The amount, level and nature of any credit that may be gained either through APCL or APEL depends upon both the nature of the programme against which the credits are being claimed, and the prior learning achievements being used as the basis of the claim, in particular their relevance and currency.
- 3.4.2. APCL and APEL claims are considered on an individual basis against established criteria but, in the interests of consistency, decisions are also informed by precedents.
- 3.4.3. When determining the award of credits, we consider the following

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1. the academic level at which the prior learning took place, as informed by the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)
2. the degree of alignment with a module in terms of its syllabus content and learning outcomes – a minimum of 80% is normally required for the award of specific credits
3. the currency of the prior learning – any claim based upon technical learning completed more than seven years previously will normally need to be supported with evidence of ongoing competence
4. the extent to which the award of credits will impact upon the student's learning experience on our programme, to ensure completeness of content coverage and fulfilment of the programme learning outcomes
5. that the study hours should have equivalence to our programme, i.e., represent ten notional hours of study per unit of academic credit
6. the amount of APL that's already been applied within a student's programme of study to ensure the programme outcomes are being met.

3.4.4. *Exceptions:* we can, in certain circumstances, consider claims where the student's prior learning doesn't meet the above criteria. Examples might be where the student holds a relevant postgraduate qualification, or where the award was made more than seven years ago, or the syllabus content match is incomplete, but the student has comprehensive evidence of continuing experiential learning.

Specific credits

- 3.4.5. We may award specific credits against individual, specified module(s) where there is appropriate and sufficient evidence that, through relevant prior learning, the student has achieved the learning outcomes of the specified module(s).
- 3.4.6. Specific credits may be awarded against either compulsory or optional modules but can only be awarded against entire modules and not against parts or fractions of modules. Specific credits can't be awarded against core modules.

Notional credits

- 3.4.7. We may award notional credits where there's appropriate and sufficient evidence that, through relevant prior learning at an appropriate level, the student has successfully completed a course of study consistent with the overall programme learning outcomes, generic skills-based module learning outcomes, and / or a significant number of the subject-related learning outcomes from various modules.
- 3.4.8. Students granted notional credits will be required to complete any specified core elements of the relevant programme and may be restricted in their module choices to avoid content overlap.

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Advanced standing

3.4.9. Where students have already achieved certain qualifications that we recognise as being equivalent to one or more complete levels (specifically FHEQ Levels 4 – 5) of our own programme(s), we're able to allow advanced standing, where a student enters the programme at the next highest level (see chapter 14: collaborative provision).

Articulation

3.4.10. Where students have already achieved certain qualifications that we formally recognise as being equivalent to one of our own programme(s) (specifically FHEQ Levels 4 – 5), we may allow advanced standing by way of a formal articulation agreement with another education provider (see chapter 14: collaborative provision).

3.4.11. The programme for which advanced standing / articulation is under consideration should provide a match of at least 75% to the relevant programme of ours, bearing in mind that our and other institutions' learning outcomes at programme level can often be of a generic nature. It's for this reason that the programme should also be appropriately mapped by its provider to relevant QAA subject benchmark statements, i.e., for Finance and / or General Business and Management, at the appropriate FHEQ level.

3.5 Procedures

3.5.1. All claims and their supporting evidence must be provided to us in English. Students are responsible for arranging any translation and supporting verification required by us.

3.5.2. Fraudulent claims for APL are considered as malpractice (see chapter 9: malpractice) and we reserve the right to withdraw any award made, or credits gained, as a result of such malpractice.

3.5.3. The operation and impact of APEL and APCL are monitored and reviewed at regular intervals by the Learning and Teaching Committee. The Committee is annually provided with information regarding students awarded credits via APCL and / or APEL.

3.5.4. The operation and impact of accreditation of in-house corporate education programmes are monitored and reviewed at regular intervals by the Academic Partnerships Risk Advisory Group (APRAG). The APRAG is also responsible for reviewing proposals for new accreditation agreements with employer organisations and making recommendations, as appropriate to the Academic Board or the Senior Executive Team.

3.5.5. Students should contact the Programme Team for guidance and information on matters relating to APL.

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3.6 Claiming credits

Claiming credits: APCL and / or APEL (including Advanced Standing)

- 3.6.1. All requests for APCL and / or APEL must be made in writing to the Programme Team using the appropriate documentation and accompanied by the relevant analysis fee. In some circumstances when claiming APL from a course of study offered by us, there may be no fee to pay.
- 3.6.2. Students are required to submit a defined claim for credits, supported by a self-assessment rationale, along with a portfolio of supporting evidence.
- 3.6.3. It's the student's responsibility to ensure that all required materials and supporting evidence are provided with the submitted claim. We're not responsible for the absence of evidence to support any claim. Resubmission of a claim with additional supporting evidence will be considered as a new claim. Students are allowed one re-submission of their claim.
- 3.6.4. For claims based upon APCL, the portfolio of evidence will normally contain a description of the content of the learning in the academic programme followed, a transcript of the subjects studied, and a certified copy of the certificate that confirms the student's successful completion of the programme.
- 3.6.5. For claims based upon APEL, the portfolio of evidence will normally contain a description of the content of the learning achieved, where and when it took place, a reflective piece of self-assessment by the student, and independent verification to support the student's claim.
- 3.6.6. The student's self-assessment of their claim will provide a rationale for why, how, and where the supporting evidence justifies the award of the claimed credits. It's the student's responsibility to demonstrate the relevance of the claim and to provide sufficient supporting evidence.
- 3.6.7. The evidence will be considered by the Head of Academic Assurance and Enhancement.
- 3.6.8. Decisions relating to the award of credits are not delegated beyond our Higher Education team, although advice may be sought externally.
- 3.6.9. Decisions regarding claims for APCL and / or APEL are communicated to students in writing by the Programme Team. In the case of unsuccessful claims, brief feedback is provided on why credits weren't awarded.
- 3.6.10. Any offers of credit to a student on the basis of APCL and / or APEL remain valid for a period of six months. Any credits granted remain valid for the duration of the student's study period on the programme, subject to any specified time limits.

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3.6.11. Offers must be accepted in writing by the student and confirmed by payment of the appropriate credit fee. Acceptance will be confirmed by the Programme Team, and formally noted on the student's record, showing details of the nature, level, and amount of credit awarded.

Claiming credits: Accreditation of in-house corporate education programmes

3.6.12. All claims for credits in this category must be made in writing to the Programme Team.

3.6.13. These claims must be submitted in accordance with the procedures and format set down in the formal agreement between us and the relevant employer organisation, together with the relevant fee.

3.6.14. It is the employer's and / or student's responsibility to ensure that all required materials and supporting evidence are provided for each claim. We're not responsible for the absence of evidence to support any claim. Resubmission of a claim without additional supporting evidence is considered as a new claim.

3.6.15. Claims will be considered by the Head of Academic Assurance and Enhancement, who'll be responsible for making a recommendation regarding the award of credits to the relevant module assessment board.

3.6.16. Decisions regarding claims are communicated to students in writing by the Programme Team, in the same manner as module results. In the case of unsuccessful claims, brief feedback is provided on why credits weren't awarded. Students are allowed one re-submission of their claim, for which an additional fee must be paid.

3.6.17. Any offers of credits to a student remain valid for a period of six months. Any credits granted remain valid for the duration of the student's study period on the programme subject to any specified time limits.

3.6.18. Upon a successful claim, the credits will be formally noted on the student's record showing details of the nature, level, and amount of credits awarded.

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