

Issue Date:	November 2017
Approved by:	Approved by the Executive November 2017
Review Date:	November 2019



**POLICY STATEMENT NO. 11h**

**TITLE: CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR LEARNING – HIGHER EDUCATION**

**INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW:**

1. In line with the priority which it gives to promoting opportunities for lifelong learning and widening access to Higher Education, the college welcomes applications from prospective students who are seeking to gain exemption from some parts of an academic programme by gaining accreditation for prior learning. Such claims may be based either on a previous course of study or on experience gained in paid employment or voluntary activities.
  
2. This *Code of Practice* sets out the regulations governing such applications and explains the processes that are to be followed by prospective students and the staff of the college. It follows the precepts and guidance contained in the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) *UK Quality Code for Higher Education, specifically Chapter B6 – Assessment of students and the recognition of prior learning (2013)* and, in particular, it seeks to ensure that the college follows the general principles of good practice in assuring and enhancing quality and standards in HE which are set out in that document, namely that:
  - Higher education providers take into account the entitlements of their students who reflect the diversity of protected characteristics and prior educational experience, and promote the development of inclusive practice.
  - Policies and procedures should be explicit and fair and applied consistently;
  - Information available to applicants and staff should be clear, explicit and accessible.
  - Roles and responsibilities of staff and applicants should be defined clearly;
  - Appropriate support should be offered to applicants;
  - Policies and procedures should be monitored and reviewed.

**STATEMENT/GUIDELINES**

**Definitions and Scope**

1. The term *accreditation of prior learning* (APL) is used to denote the process by which a reasonably substantial and significant element of prior learning is identified, assessed and formally acknowledged.
  
2. Such learning may have been gained through the pursuit of a programme of study offered by an education provider and publicly recognised through certification. In such cases, the term *accreditation of prior learning* (APL) is adopted. The certification may or may not have been provided within the context of a credit transfer system. Alternatively, the learning may have taken place as a result of reflection upon experience gained outside the formal education and training system. In such cases, the term *accreditation of prior experiential learning* (APEL) is adopted. In the case of accreditation for prior experiential learning, it must be emphasised that accreditation is given for evidence of learning gained through experience and not for the experience alone.

3. Accredited prior learning may be used to gain exemption from specified elements of a programme of study at the college. Typically, applications will be made prior to enrolment on a programme of study. In such cases, if the application is successful, the student may not be required to complete the initial stage of the programme and will enter with advanced standing or may be exempted from a specific module or modules. Under certain circumstances, most commonly in the case of part-time students, the learning to be accredited may, by prior agreement, take place concurrently with other parts of the programme. It should be noted in this context that the term *accreditation of prior learning* does not include the assessment of learning in the workplace or on placements which is an intended or planned element of the programme on which the student is enrolled.

## **Policy**

### ***Evidence requirements***

1. Accreditation of prior learning involves the recognition of credit towards an award. It therefore falls within the College's quality assurance and enhancement procedures and the process must in all cases be undertaken with rigour and integrity. In particular, the College must be assured that there is robust evidence of the learning which has resulted from prior certificated study or reflection on experience and must be satisfied that it is equivalent to the learning that would otherwise have been gained by following the elements of the programme at the College from which exemption is sought.
2. The staff responsible for making this academic judgement will establish that the evidence shows that the learning is comparable in terms of level and the learning outcomes achieved, and that the knowledge, understanding and skills that have been gained are relevant to the programme which the applicant intends to join and, more particularly, to those parts of the programme from which exemption is sought. Learning outcomes will normally be at module level for undergraduate programmes. These judgements will be facilitated in the case of the accreditation of prior certificated learning where the applicant has undertaken a programme of study which is part of a credit transfer scheme. Where this is not the case, and in all cases of applications for the accreditation of prior experiential learning, the evidence should be measured against the credit framework in operation at the College. Evidence provided by applicants needs to be relevant, sufficient, authentic and current.
3. Applications for entry to programmes which carry professional accreditation will be assessed in the light of the applicant's ability to meet all requirements of that accreditation.

### ***Volume and level of credit for which applications may be entertained***

4. There are limits as to the maximum and minimum volume of credit which can be awarded through accreditation of prior learning. Applications must relate to exemption from complete modules.
5. For students entering an undergraduate programme the maximum volume of credit which can be recognised through accreditation of prior learning is 240 credits at Levels 4 and 5.

### ***Timing of applications***

Prospective students applying for admission with advanced standing (entry to a programme after the completion of the first level) must have their application approved before entry. An application for exemption from a module may not be made retrospectively or after its delivery has commenced.

### ***Claims relating to credit which has already contributed to an award***

Learning that has previously been accredited in the award of another qualification

cannot be accepted for the purposes of the accreditation of prior certificated learning unless the award is a recognised stage in the progression to a higher award – e.g. certificate and diploma of HE.

**8. Use of marks or grades awarded by other institutions**

Marks or grades awarded by another provider will not be accepted when a claim for recognition of prior certificated learning has been successful. The student's transcript will show all modules which form part of the programme for which the student has been accepted but, in the case of those from which exemption has been granted, will indicate that the credit has been awarded without a mark or grade through APL. In cases where a mark or a grade is material to the classification of a final award, a grade or mark average for that level will be used for modules which have been accredited.

Programme leaders should be particularly careful to bring this regulation to the attention of prospective applicants.

**9. Currency of prior learning**

Applications for the accreditation of prior learning are subject to the currency of that learning. The student must have undertaken the learning for which accreditation is sought, whether certificated or experiential, normally no more than five years before commencing the programme which he or she will be entering with advanced standing or in which exemption from specified modules is to be granted.

**10. Charges**

The College will make a charge to cover the costs of processing an application for accreditation of prior learning. Applicants will be advised of the current charges before the application is processed.

**11. Review**

Boards of Examiners will receive information regarding accreditation of prior learning and will monitor the progress of such students.

**Process**

1. Initial enquiries regarding entry with advanced standing through the APL procedures should be made to the Head of Higher Education using the appropriate form stating clearly the programme for which the application will be made and, if possible, giving an indication of those elements of the programme for which exemption is to be claimed. Such applicants will in other respects be subject to normal entry requirements and procedures (as detailed in the HE Admissions Policy).
2. If the applicant is studying a previously mapped programme (see section 30 below) then the application will be recorded, approved and passed to the Admissions Manager. If the applicant is studying on a programme outside of the approved list of standard accreditations then the Student Administration Manager will pass the application and supporting evidence to the Academic Co-ordinator for approval and possible standard accreditation through the procedure in sections 30-32.
3. In the case of accreditation of prior certificated learning, the Academic Co-ordinator will confirm with the applicant the modules for which exemption is sought and the elements of the applicant's previous programme on which the claim is based. The Applicant will need to supply (i) the original formal certification showing his or her achievement on the previous programme and (ii) information about the programme, typically including the programme specification (or, if not available, a statement of the aims and learning outcomes) and the relevant module descriptors. If the applicant has not yet completed their previous programme then their approval will be conditional on their achievement

of the award.

4. The applicant will complete form APL1 and submit, with the required evidence and fee, to the Head of Higher Education. The form will be logged and then be sent to the appropriate Programme Leader. The Programme Leader will then consider the evidence and decide whether the application should be (i) supported, (ii) supported with modifications or (iii) rejected. Where the applicant's previous programme has not operated under a credit transfer system, the Programme Leader will assess the credit volume of the prior learning (normally taking a complete stage as 120 credits in the case of an undergraduate programme) and its level by reference to the *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications* (FHEQ) and current level descriptors. The Programme Leader's decision will be recorded and the form returned to the Head of Higher Education. Where the Programme Leader does not support the application, or supports it with modifications, the reasons for that decision and the nature of any modifications should be clearly stated.
5. In the case of an application for accreditation of prior experiential learning, a meeting will normally be arranged between the Programme Leader and applicant at which the nature of the applicant's experience and an outline of the evidence of learning that would be required to support the claim will be discussed. The applicant should not be asked to complete further work as evidence at this stage.
6. The Programme Leader and applicant will complete form APL2 indicating briefly the nature of the applicant's relevant prior experience and the module(s) for which exemption is claimed. The Programme Leader will then consider the proposal and decide whether the application should be (i) given initial approval, (ii) given initial approval with modifications or (iii) rejected. The Programme Leader's decision will be recorded, and the form, together with a specification of the evidence of learning that the student will be expected to provide, should be returned to the Head of Higher Education. Where the Programme Leader does not support the application, or supports it with modifications, the reasons for that decision and the nature of any modifications should be clearly stated.
7. Where the Programme Leader does not support an application for Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning or Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning, the Head of Higher Education will advise the applicant of the outcome and the reasons for that decision.
8. Applications which have the support of the Programme leader, with or without modifications, will be considered by an APL panel, which will normally hold three scheduled meetings in each semester. The membership of the panel will normally comprise a Director of Learning, who shall normally act as Chair, and at least three Learning Standards Managers. The panel may decide to accept or reject the Programme Leader's recommendation or to make acceptance subject to further modifications. The panel may also refer the application to the Programme Leader for further information or evidence before making a decision. The Head of Higher Education will be in attendance and will inform the applicant and Programme Leader of the panel's decision.
9. In the case of an application for prior experiential learning, the Programme Leader will draw up an assignment brief setting out the nature of the assessed work that will be required.
10. The applicant will be offered advice on how to approach the assignment, especially with regard to the collection of appropriate evidence of achieved learning outcomes

and the style in which such an analytical account should be presented. An appropriate tutor will be nominated by the Programme Leader for this purpose but he or she will not normally be involved in the assessment of the claim. It may also be appropriate to refer the applicant to Learner Support for further guidance.

11. In the case of successful applications for both prior certificated learning and prior experiential learning, the student will be provided with a full statement of the elements of the programme for which accreditation has been granted and confirmation of his or her programme of study, i.e. those modules which must be undertaken in order to complete the programme. The module(s) will be recorded on the final transcript as AP(E)L. Where the application is rejected, students will be advised that they may appeal on the grounds of procedural irregularity but may not challenge an academic judgement.

12. **Validatory Bodies**

This process is designed to comply with the requirements of the College's validating bodies but may occasionally vary slightly in order to meet their requirements.

**IMPACT ASSESSMENT:**

This policy has been assessed and considered for impact upon people who share the following protected characteristics and factors: race, gender and gender identity, disability (including learning difficulty), religion and belief, sexual orientation, age, pregnancy, maternity and marital status.

**EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT SUMMARY:**

This policy has been impact assessed and has identified the following:

- Negative impacts (Y)
- Appropriate actions/mitigations to address the negative impacts have been put in place (Y)
- Positive impacts (Y)

For further detail of the impacts and associated actions, please see the EIA which is attached to the filed copy of this document.

**LINKED POLICIES:**

Admissions Policy – Higher Education

**MONITORING PROCEDURE:**

Academic Board

**DATE FOR REVIEW:**

November 2019

**RESPONSIBILITY:**

Head of Higher Education

**ENDORSED BY EXECUTIVE:**

*J. Meeragh*

Principal

7 December 2017 Date

**APPLICATION FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR CERTIFICATED LEARNING**

Before completion please read the 'Notes for Guidance' which can be found attached.

**Part A – Applicant Details**

**Name of Student**

<b>Title</b>		<b>Surname</b>		<b>First Names</b>	
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<b>Telephone</b>		<b>Email</b>	
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<b>Address</b>

Part B – Details of Application

Previous/Current Programme	Programme applied for
Name of Institution	
Title of Programme/Course	
Title of Final Award	

Please indicate which level of entry is requested if wishing to join an Undergraduate Programme	
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Details of Prior Learning (modules)	Level	Credit	Code and Title of Module to be accredited	Level	Credit

**Important Note to Applicant:**

Transcript, Programme Specifications and Module Descriptors for which accreditation is claimed must be attached to this application. Applications without the appropriate documentation will not be considered

Signature		Date	
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**Part C – Mapping and Comments of Programme Leader****Mapping: To be completed by the Programme Leader**

Student Outcomes Achieved	Programme and Module Outcomes

Comments:

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I support this application	
I support this application with the modifications noted above	
I do not support this application	
I have attached the appropriate documentary evidence	

<b>Signature</b>		<b>Date</b>	
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Comments of Chair of the APL Panel

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I support this application	
I support this application with the modifications noted above	
I do not support this application	

<b>Signature</b>		<b>Date</b>	
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## APPLICATION FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Before completion please also read the 'Notes for Guidance' which can be found attached.

### Part A – Applicant Details

#### Name of Student

<b>Title</b>		<b>Surname</b>		<b>First names</b>	
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<b>Telephone</b>		<b>Email</b>	
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#### Address

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### Part B – Details of Application

#### College programme for which application is being made

<b>Name of Programme</b>	
<b>Title of Award</b>	

Outline description of prior experience and the nature of evidence of learning	Modules for which credit is claimed		
	Code and Title of module	Level	Credit
Outline description of prior experience and the nature of evidence of learning	Modules for which credit is claimed		
	Code and Title of module	Level	Credit

**Important Note to Applicant:**

All written evidence pertinent to the experiential learning for which accreditation is claimed must be attached to this application. Applications without appropriate documentation will not be considered.

<b>Signature</b>		<b>Date</b>	
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**Part C – Mapping and Comments of Programme Leader****Mapping:**

Student Experience Achieved	BG Module Outcomes

Comments:

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<b>I support this application</b>	
<b>I support this application with the modifications noted above</b>	
<b>I do not support this application</b>	
<b>I have attached the appropriate documentary evidence</b>	

<b>Signature</b>		<b>Date</b>	
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Comments of Chair of the APL Panel

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<b>I support this application</b>	
<b>I support this application with the modifications noted above</b>	
<b>I do not support this application</b>	

<b>Signature</b>		<b>Date</b>	
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## **Guidance notes for Application for the Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APL) and Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)**

APL is the tool used to gain exemption from specified elements of an academic programme of study at the College using learning from an education provider and publicly recognised through certification. This learning could have been gained through the pursuit of a programme at an educational institution and the certification may or may not have been provided within the context of a credit transfer system. This type of application is termed as *Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APL)*.

Alternatively, the learning may have taken place as a result of reflection upon experience gained outside the formal education and training system. The term *Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning* is applied to this type of application.

The form APL 1 or APL 2 for experiential learning must be completed by the applicant outlining the course of study and all modules and credits to be considered for APL and the course of study wishing to be pursued by the applicant at College.

To support the application, the applicant must provide evidence of the content of the prior learning by attaching a Transcript of Results, an outline of the Programme previously studied which may be a Programme Handbook issued at the beginning of the course of study and the description and content of the modules within the programme outlining the 'Learning Outcomes' expected from the individual module or area of work. Applications cannot be considered without supporting evidence.

### Part A – Applicant Details

Applicants should ensure all contact details are clear and legible.

### Part B – Details of Application

Applicants should state in full the name of the educational institution and the programme or course of study together with the title of any award gained.

If an application is being made for individual modules ensure that this section is completed for each module to be considered.

Applicants applying to join an Undergraduate Programme should indicate at which level they wish to be considered for on the entry to a course of study at this college i.e. Level 4 is typically Year 1. Level 5 equates to Year 2.

Once the application has been signed at Part B the form should be posted together with fee as appropriate to:

Head of Higher Education  
New College Stamford  
Drift Road  
Stamford  
PE9 1XA