

POLICY/PROCEDURE: ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR LEARNING POLICY/RPL POLICY

Approval required by:	SLT	Y	Governing Body	N
SMT Lead:	Vice Principal Quality			
Responsible Manager:	Director of FE Quality			
Date approved:	May 2025			
Date to be reviewed:	July 2026			
Relevant to:	Students	Y	Staff	Y
	Visitors	N	ITS	Y
Relevant to:	All students	N		
	16-18 Vocational	Y	Sixth Form	Y
	Higher Education	N	Adults	Y
	Apprenticeships	Y	14-16	Y
	Other	Y	
Relevant to:	All staff	N		
	Board	N	SPH	Y
	Managers	Y		
	Teaching staff	Y	Support staff	N
Accessible to	Students	Y	Staff	Y
Friendly version	Students	N	Staff	N
EQIA required		Y		

Significant changes to policy

Change to APL application form templates to reduce from 5 forms to 1

Impact of changes

Simplified process for learners

SCOPE AND PURPOSE

Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) is a process by which individuals can gain credit towards qualifications based on evidence from their past achievements. It facilitates the assessment and formal certification of current competence, based on evidence drawn from past experience and enables individuals to identify new paths for learning and development.

The APL process is not concerned with allowing for exceptional entry to, or exemption from, a programme of study (*Study programme*). It focuses on assessment and certification of prior learning which may count as evidence towards part of a unit or unit(s) accumulated towards a full qualification.

The APL process does not allow the accreditation of any externally assessed unit(s) or parts of a unit(s) because these are subject to specific evidence requirements. Contextual unit grading is an integral part of some qualifications, for example, the GCSE in vocational subjects, Applied GCE, BTEC programmes. When grading APL evidence for these particular qualifications, the guidance in the specification must be adhered to and the learner's performance must be judged against the criteria in the unit grading grid. The requirements of each grading criterion must be met in full (in line with awarding organisation requirements).

Where an Awarding Organisation has published a specific procedure or guidance for the use of APL/RPL these procedures should be followed and will supersede this policy.

CONTEXT

Definitions

APL or RPL	Accreditation/Recognition of Prior Learning: The terms are used interchangeably and refer to formal recognition of prior learning gained outside of the students current course or programme of study.
APCL	Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning: APL for prior learning that has been formally assessed and certificated, such as previous qualifications or courses. A student can gain credit for prior learning that has been formally assessed and certified, often by another educational institution. This means that instead of retaking all or part of a course, a student can be given credit for it based on prior qualifications or certificate
APEL	Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning: APL for prior learning gained through experience, such as work experience, volunteering, or other informal learning. An assessment process which makes use of evidence of a learner's previous non - certificated achievements to demonstrate competence or achievement within a unit or qualification. In no circumstance does the RPL process mean that any required qualification summative assessments can be avoided e.g. mandatory exams, practical/theory tests or assignments

POLICY

Applications

- Application for APL should normally be made before the learner commences study on the programme/course (*Study programme*) into which they are seeking to transfer prior learning.
- Applications must consist of a written request, stating the award in respect of which the learner seeks APL, and documentary evidence of the learning, in the form of transcripts, certificates or other suitable evidence in the case of experiential learning (with appropriate and reasonable adjustments where applicable).
- A decision as to whether APL can be approved will depend both on the specific requirements and learning outcomes of each programme and the details of each individual application.
- Applicants should note that the award of specific credit via APL towards their intended programme of study may not necessarily directly reflect the value/level of the credit assigned to their current/previous qualification, i.e. it may be less.
- Exemptions will not normally be considered for any externally assessed unit(s)/element(s).
- Exemptions will only be considered for full courses, modules and units of study.

‘Shelf-Life’ of Learning

- The time elapsed since the learner undertook the learning that forms the basis of an APL application is a relevant factor to be considered in each case. If learning was achieved five or more years ago (or less depending on the particular programme applied for), the applicant should provide evidence that they have maintained and updated those skills in a professional environment. Please note that Awarding Organisation regulations may vary and will be adhered to.

PROCEDURE

- Applicants wishing to be awarded credit for APL will be advised at first contact to discuss the matter with the Course Leader, who will ensure that the applicant is given access to the Programme Specification, including:
 - the scheme structure
 - the rules of assessment
 - copy of the College APL Policy and Procedure.
- The applicant will meet with the course leader who will advise the applicant on procedures for making a claim, completion of Section A of APL application form
- The Course Leader will review the APL claim with the support of a Quality Manager, and confirm whether the evidence can be accepted and meets Awarding Organisation requirements.
- The Course Leader and Quality Manager will make a decision on whether the application can be supported or not and will document the reasons why and any further evidence that may be required, in section B of the APL application form

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

All learners have equal access to the policy and procedures and these will be applied equally to all learners as per Awarding Body requirements. Support to engage with the process will be given to individual learners as appropriate.

LINKED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning policy is linked to:

- Academic Appeals Policy.
- Assessment Policy.
- HE Policies.
- The Single Equality Scheme.

LOCATION AND ACCESS TO THIS POLICY

Buzz/Policies

Accreditation & Recognition of Prior Learning Claim Form

SECTION A

Details of RPL claim (to be completed by the applicant/student)

Before completing this form, please read the relevant Awarding Organisation Policy on the Accreditation & Recognition of Prior Learning.

A1. Personal details and programme information

Applicant/student name		Student ID number	
Title of Qualification that APL is being applied for		Awarding Organisation Registration Number	

A2. Summary of request for APL

APL Type: APEL ☐ APCL ☐

Unit (s) for which APL is requested	Evidence available to support claim

A3.

Applicant/Student Signature		Date	
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Section B

Decision Outcome

APL reviewer Name & Job Title	
Quality Manager Name	

Decision

Accepted	Further Evidence Required	Rejected
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B1.1 Evidence accepted: outline below specific details of which learning outcomes, units or modules are being claimed as APL

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B.1.2 Further evidence required: please note here what additional type of evidence is required and how applicants/students may change their approach in describing supporting evidence, employ additional procedures or techniques etc.

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B.1.3: Evidence rejected: please provide reasons and describe how applicants/students may change their approach in describing supporting evidence, employ additional procedures or techniques etc for future credit exemption claim or provide clear details of the reason why the evidence was rejected.

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APL reviewer Signatures:

Course Leader	
Quality Manager	