



**Higher Education Accreditation of  
Prior Learning (APL)  
Policy, Regulations, and Procedures  
2017-18**

## 1. Purpose of this APL Policy

Please note that all franchised courses are subject to the host university's policy, regulations, and procedures. It is crucial that all franchised courses' adhere to the host organisation's own documentation regarding APL.

- For the University of Bolton, please refer to the university Admissions policy:  
<http://www.bolton.ac.uk/Everything/StudentInfoPolicyZone/2017-18-Documents/University-of-Bolton-Student-Admissions-Policy-2017-18.pdf>  
Also refer to the University Accreditation of prior Learning Policy:  
<http://www.bolton.ac.uk/Everything/StudentInfoPolicyZone/2017-18-Documents/Regulations-and-Policy-for-the-Recognition-of-Prior-Learning-2017-18.pdf>
- The University of West London has not specified any APL criteria for the FdA Healthcare Play Specialism. For further information go to:  
<http://www.uwl.ac.uk/students/undergraduate/accreditation-of-prior-learning>

The College recognises that many of its potential HE students already possess considerable amounts of learning which could be legitimately counted for academic credit. This learning may be certificated learning (obtained via previous study) or experiential learning (previous learning which has not received recognition in the form of a recognised certificate. Experiential learning should have resulted in the acquisition of knowledge and skills equivalent to learning arising from study).

The College wishes to encourage and facilitate the admission of suitably qualified students to programmes of study, through the use of the Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL). It recognises that the application of APL procedures does vary across the different HE courses due to the differing needs of particular courses and students.

The purpose of this policy is to allow flexibility for the different HE courses to use APL procedures to their best effect and at the same time ensure quality assurance issues as referred to in the QAA Quality Code, Part B, chapter B6: Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning:

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code>

Please note that before any APL can be agreed for any HNC/HND course, the course leader must liaise with Pearson Edexcel and send relevant documentation to Pearson Edexcel for permission to use APL.

## 2. Definitions

Throughout this document the following terms will be used as defined below.

### **Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)**

This is an inclusive term which covers the formal recognition, assessment and award of credit at levels 3 to 8 within the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). It comprises the Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) and the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL).

### **Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL)**

This is the formal recognition, assessment and award of credit for prior certificated learning. This may also be referred to as **credit transfer**.

### **Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)**

This is the formal recognition, assessment and award of credit for prior experiential learning that is learning which has not been certificated but which has been achieved in specific contexts such as employment, voluntary work or life experience. Experiential learning should have resulted in the acquisition of knowledge and skills equivalent to learning arising from study at levels 3 to 8 within the FHEQ and/or the QCF.

### **Advanced entry**

This is where the amount of credit an applicant is awarded via APL allows the applicant to gain exemption from one or more **modules**, but not a whole level or stage of study, within a programme.

### **Advanced standing**

This is where the amount of credit an applicant is awarded via APL allows the applicant to gain exemption from at least one whole level or stage of study within a programme.

### **Assessment criteria**

Assessment criteria describe what the learner has to do to show that the **learning outcome** has been achieved. They are based on the intended learning outcomes for the work being assessed and specify the standards that must be met and the evidence that will be gathered to demonstrate the achievement of the learning outcomes.

### **Credit**

This refers to a quantitative measure of the amount of learning required to achieve specified learning outcomes of a module or level within a programme of study. One credit equates to ten hours of required learning. The learning time includes class contact, directed learning, private study, and preparation of assessments, revision and examinations.

### **General credit**

This refers to credit which may qualify a student for entry to HE but which may or may not be matched to the student's choice of programme of study. The total amount of credit, at a specified level, a student may claim for appropriate prior learning. It is the award of credit which does not count towards specific module(s) but which may qualify the applicant for entry to the start of a specific programme of study.

### **Learning outcomes**

Learning outcomes are specific for a programme or module. They describe what a student should know, understand, or be able to do at the end of that programme or module.

### **Level**

Credit is expressed in terms of the academic level of study which relates to the relative demand, complexity, depth of learning and learner autonomy required in order to achieve the learning outcomes of a module or level within a programme

### **Module / Unit**

A component of a programme of study to which are allocated learning outcomes and ways of achieving those learning outcomes through learning opportunities and the completion of assessment items. Modules are defined in terms of their credit value at a particular level of study.

The standard module /unit is the basic course unit in the HE curriculum and is can be worth 20, 15, or 10 credits, and some modules /units carrying 30 or more credits which devote the proportionate amount of learning time to the module material.

**Specific credit**

Credit which may qualify a student for entry onto a specific course where the volume, content and level of prior learning can be matched to the learning outcomes within a module / unit or level/stage of a chosen programme. Credit, at a specified level, for prior learning, can be used to gain exemptions from specific modules within an award.

Guidance on the procedures to be followed and the responsibilities of academic staff and applicants is available in the following documents:

1. Higher Education Accreditation of Prior Learning: Guidance for Academic Staff
2. Higher Education Accreditation of Prior Learning: Guidance for Applicants / Students

**3. Below are the general principles within which the procedures should operate within Subject areas.**

The availability of APL to prospective/current students should be advertised via the College web site, including course specific web pages.

APL may be used for:

1. Gaining entry, at the initial point of entry, to a programme of study validated by internal validation, then Pearson Edexcel.
2. Gaining entry, at a point subsequent to the initial entry point, to a programme of study validated by internal validation, then Pearson Edexcel.
3. Recognising previously accumulated credit which can then count towards an award by Pearson Edexcel.
4. A claim for APL credit may be made at any time before or after a student has enrolled on a programme of study, providing Pearson Edexcel approve. 'It is learning which is accredited not just the experience of doing', i.e. acceptable evidence of achieved learning must be provided in a form which allows a judgement to be made about the equivalence of that learning to a given set of learning outcomes.
5. Decisions on an application for APL credit will be based on academic judgement of the equivalence of the learning outcomes of previous study or experience to the stated learning outcomes of a module/unit validated by Pearson Edexcel. Even if there is judged to be equivalence in this respect it may be that the award of credit would disadvantage the applicant in terms of their level of achievement in the award for which they are registered, due to the fact that credit awarded through APL procedures is not normally graded (see 16 below).
6. An award of general credit through the APL procedures does not necessarily mean that all that credit may be used to exempt the applicant from specific modules. The amount of specific credit is likely to be less, since this is related to the degree of relevance of the prior learning to the modules for which the applicant is seeking exemption.
7. A credit value of 1 relates to 10 notional learning hours.
8. Credit gained through APL procedures can be awarded at all levels of study.
9. Credit gained through APL procedures can be awarded in respect of any module / unit but not for any module / unit which comprise a major project, or a module /unit that requires currency in knowledge or application.
10. The minimum amount of credit which may be claimed is the amount allocated to the smallest credit-rated module / unit within a programme. APL cannot be used to gain exemption from part of a module / unit. However, programme teams may, in certain cases, suggest that an applicant undertakes specific self-directed study to complete the outstanding learning outcomes for a module for which they are seeking APL credit.
11. The maximum amount of credit which may be claimed is normally up to two thirds of the credits **required at the level of the intended award.**  
**Table 1 at the end of the document shows the maximum credit allowable under the APL policy for each of the HNC and HND awards.**

12. Credit for prior learning for which an award has previously been achieved may be counted towards a subsequent award requiring further credits at the same and/or higher level(s) where it can be established to the satisfaction of the College and Pearson Edexcel that this is educationally desirable and consistent with the approved aims, intended learning outcomes and curriculum of the award.
  - Credit will not normally be transferable in this way where the previous and subsequent award titles are effectively the same, as per the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ).
  - Credit will not normally be transferable in this way if it is considered not to be educationally desirable to do so by the College and Pearson Edexcel because of the similarity of the aims, the intended learning outcomes or curricula of the programmes leading to the two award titles.
  - Outside these circumstances, the double counting of credit for APL purposes is not normally permitted.
13. Credits for previous certificated study awarded by a recognised body are equivalent to those awarded for study at the College and Pearson Edexcel.
14. APL cannot be considered towards an award and programme title where the requirements of a professional, statutory or regulatory body for that award or programme title are not met.
15. During the APL process, due regard must be given to professional, statutory and regulatory body specifications and requirements. Where the maximum credit permitted under the regulations of the professional or statutory body is less than that allowed by Pearson Edexcel APL Policy and procedures, the regulations of the professional, statutory or regulatory body will supersede those of the College and Pearson Edexcel if the award is to be recognised by that body.
16. Credits awarded via Pearson Edexcel's APL procedures will not normally be graded. Calculation of the classification of an award (where appropriate) is done only on the basis of the marks achieved for modules studied at the College.
17. The evidence submitted in support of a claim for APL credit must have:
  - Detail (appropriate to the amount of credit applied for),
  - Acceptability (in terms of the type of evidence being submitted),
  - Sufficiency (in terms of the level of credit applied for and should include evidence of reflection on the learning that has been achieved),
  - Authenticity (in terms of the evidence relating to the applicant's own work),
  - Currency (should normally relate to learning which has taken place within the last five years. This time may be reduced in subject areas where the content is changing rapidly or may be increased where the applicant can provide evidence of substantial and continual up-dating since a recognised qualification was awarded).
18. The evaluation of this evidence should normally include an assessment of the learning needs of the applicant.
19. All claims for APL, together with the evidence supporting these claims, must be submitted in English. Where evidence in the form of certificates, testimonials, or references is in a language other than English it is the responsibility of the applicant to provide an accurate translation.

20. Various forms of assessment may be used in the assessment of claims for APL. For example, portfolio, interview or *viva*, applicant's performance, artefact(s), certificates, completion of written work (which may be an item or items of assessment normally used within the module or programme for which credit is being claimed). In addition, a reflective account or diary demonstrating the learning achieved may be required.
- The precise form(s) of assessment to be used will be identified and agreed by the applicant and members of staff responsible for APL in the School/Centre at the start of the process, with reference to the learning outcomes of the module/programme for which the applicant is seeking credit.
  - The production of a portfolio of evidence is one of the most used forms of assessment for APL purposes and guidance will be provided by the member(s) of staff responsible for APL in the School/Centre on its contents, preparation and production.
21. The outcome of a claim for APL will be one of:
- The claim for credit is successful.
  - The evidence is incomplete. (Insufficient information has been provided in order to allow the assessor(s) to arrive at a decision. The assessor(s) will decide if the applicant is allowed to re-work and resubmit their evidence).
  - The claim for credit is not successful. (The claim for credit is not successful because the level and/or volume of learning are/is insufficient).
22. The outcome of the assessment process is subject to the approval of the Head of Area, and Pearson Edexcel. Documents relating to any claims should be made available to the Pearson Edexcel external verifier for the programme.
23. Each subject area should identify named members of staff as having responsibility for the APL process within that subject area.
- All members of staff responsible for APL within the subject area should have received appropriate staff development and be given time for carrying out their responsibilities and for up-dating.
  - It is the responsibility of these named members of staff to provide applicants with appropriate guidance during all stages of the APL process (For example, initial guidance, on the form of the evidence to be presented, how the assessment of evidence will be carried out etc.) and with effective, timely and accurate feedback.
24. Details of all cases involving APL applications and procedures will be fully documented by subject areas, and copies sent to the HE Co-ordinator. This documentation should normally include:
- Correspondence between the applicant and the member(s) of staff responsible for APL in the subject area;
  - Evidence submitted by the applicant in support of their claim for APL ;
  - A record of the decisions taken by the member(s) of staff responsible for APL in relation to the claim;
  - A record of the verification of the claim by the Assessment / Standardisation Meeting and the external verifier /examiner for the programme;
  - A record of the agreed outcome to be passed to the responsible part of the College for entry onto the student's official record and transcript. A record must also be sent to the HE Co-ordinator.

- Applicants who are awarded credit through the APEL procedures should be tracked through their studies by the subject area and the HE Student database and their performance compared with students on the same programme who did not apply for credit through these procedures.
- Applicants who have been through the APL procedures should be asked by the subject area to provide written feedback on their experience of the process.
- The subject area is responsible for reporting annually on APL applications for consideration at the Assessment / Standardisation Meeting.

25. Applicants may request a review of the decisions of the APL assessment under the College Appeal Procedures if it is believed the following grounds may apply:

- There was some material irregularity in the conduct of handling the claim for APL.
- An applicant's performance in any assessment associated with their claim for APL was affected by mitigating circumstances.

**Please Note:**

- Decisions based on academic judgement cannot form the basis of an appeal.
- Submission of an appeal is only possible once the decision on a claim for APL has been ratified by the Assessment / Standardisation Meeting.

**Table 1**

The maximum amount of credit which may be claimed under the APL Policy and procedures for each award are:

<b>Award (total credits)</b>	<b>Maximum APL credits permitted</b>	<b>Minimum credits to be studied at level of award</b>
HND (240)	200	30 from 120 at HE5
HNC (150)	120*	30 from 150 at HE5

\*QCF Level 3

<b>Area</b>	HE
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