



BISHOP GROSSETESTE UNIVERSITY

Document Administration

<b>Document Title:</b>	Code of Practice for the Accreditation of Prior Learning
<b>Document Category:</b>	Code of Practice
<b>Version Number:</b>	2.3
<b>Status:</b>	<i>Approved.</i>
<b>Reason for development:</b>	To set out clearly the process for students who wish to claim accreditation for prior learning
<b>Scope:</b>	This procedure applies to staff and students.
<b>Author / developer:</b>	Academic Quality and Compliance Manager
<b>Owner</b>	Academic Quality and Compliance Manager
<b>Assessment:</b> (where relevant)	Tick relevant assessments <input type="checkbox"/> Equality Assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Legal <input type="checkbox"/> Information Governance <input type="checkbox"/> Academic Governance
<b>Consultation:</b> (where relevant)	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff Trade Unions via HR <input type="checkbox"/> Students via Bishop Grosseteste University Students' Union <input type="checkbox"/> Any relevant external statutory bodies
<b>Authorised by (Board):</b>	Quality Assurance Committee
<b>Date Authorised:</b>	
<b>Effective from:</b>	
<b>Review due:</b>	July 2019
<b>Document location:</b>	University Website
<b>Document dissemination / communications plan</b>	University website, Staff Portal, Student Portal.
<b>Document control:</b>	All printed versions of this document are classified as uncontrolled. A controlled version is available from the <i>University website</i> .



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*NB It should be noted that post-doctoral awards are excluded from the Bishop Grosseteste University Code of Practice for the Accreditation of Prior Learning. Instead, reference should be made to the University of Leicester's Policy and Procedure for the Accreditation of Prior Learning.*

## Introduction

1. In line with the priority which it gives to promoting opportunities for lifelong learning and widening access to Higher Education, the University welcomes applications from prospective students who are seeking to gain exemption from parts of an academic programme by gaining accreditation for prior learning. Such claims may be based either on a previous programme 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 University. It follows the 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* [date] and, in particular, seeks to ensure that the University 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.

It should be noted that this process does not represent any full admissions process to the University; for instance any assessment as to the immigration status of the applicant and other checks will be done separately as part of the University's general admissions processes.

It should also be noted that use of accreditation of prior learning in relation to Postgraduate programmes might affect applicants' eligibility to apply for postgraduate loan funding.

This *Code of Practice* should be read with reference to other University Codes of Practice, most notably the *Code of Practice for the Admission of Students*.

## Definitions and Scope

3. 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.
4. 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 Certificated Learning* (APCL) 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.

5. Accreditation of Prior Learning may be used to gain exemption from specified elements of a programme of study at the University. Applications for Accreditation of Prior Learning should normally be made prior to enrolment on a programme of study. 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. It should be noted 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*

6. Accreditation of Prior Learning involves the recognition of credit towards an award; it therefore falls within the University's quality assurance and enhancement procedures and the process must in all cases be undertaken with rigour and integrity. In particular, the University 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 University from which exemption is sought.
7. 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, but are likely to be more generic at programme level for postgraduate programmes. These judgements will be facilitated in the case of 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 University. Evidence provided by applicants needs to be relevant, sufficient, authentic and current.
8. 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*

9. 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.
10. For students entering an undergraduate programme with advanced standing the maximum volume of credit which can be recognised through Accreditation of Prior Learning is 240 credits at Levels 4 and 5. (For the avoidance of doubt, students who have completed a

foundation degree of the University and who wish to follow a progression route which is formally linked to it are not required to apply through the Accreditation of Prior Learning process).

11. The maximum amount of credit that will be recognised for students entering Level 5 Foundation programmes is 120 credits at Level 4.
12. For students entering courses at Master's level, the maximum volume of credit which can be recognised through Accreditation of Prior Learning is 120 credits at Level 7. Exemption should not be granted for the dissertation stage of a Master's programme. In the case of students who are registered for a postgraduate certificate or postgraduate diploma, applications will be limited to a maximum of 30 credits and 60 credits respectively (that is one half of the total credits for the award).

#### *Timing of applications*

13. An application for Accreditation of Prior Learning should be made concurrently with a formal application for admission to the programme for which accreditation is being sought by the applicant.
14. Prospective students applying for Accreditation of Prior Learning with a view to entering a programme with advanced standing must have their application for Accreditation of Prior Learning approved prior to enrolment. Entry with advanced standing is not used for Postgraduate Initial Teacher Training programmes. An application for exemption may not be made retrospectively or after delivery has commenced.

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

15. 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 or postgraduate certificates and diplomas at Level 7. Credits awarded for a Foundation Degree may be accepted for entry to a Level 6 programme leading to an honours award. See paragraph 10 above.

#### *Use of marks or grades awarded by other institutions*

16. Marks or grades awarded by any provider will not be accepted when a claim for accreditation 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 Accreditation of Prior Learning. In cases where a mark or 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. Where a student enters at Level 6 with advanced standing the degree classification will be based upon the average mark for all modules at that level.

#### *Currency of prior learning*

17. Applications for Accreditation of Prior Learning are subject to the currency of that learning. The applicant must have undertaken the learning for which accreditation is sought, whether certificated or experiential, no more than five years prior to the stated intended start date of the programme which they will be entering with advanced standing or in which exemption from specified modules is to be granted.
18. An application for Accreditation of Prior Learning will only be valid for the intended date of entry as stated on the completed Accreditation of Prior Learning application form.

#### *Review*

19. The Quality Assurance Committee will monitor the effectiveness of the arrangements for the Accreditation of Prior Learning and propose changes to the Academic Enhancement Committee (AEC) and Senate, when appropriate. The Academic Quality Manager will monitor applications and outcomes under the Diversity and Equality Policy and prepare an Annual Report reviewing applications and decisions for Accreditation of Prior Learning, information from which will be shared with Chief External Examiners, School Boards and relevant University Committees.

#### **Process**

20. Applications for Accreditation of Prior Learning should be submitted to the Quality Team using the appropriate form. Applicants are also required to submit an application to the University for admission to the programme for which they are seeking accreditation (refer to paragraph 13 above and to the Code of Practice for the Admission of Students).
21. In the case of an application for Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning, the applicant will complete form APL1 and submit it, with the required evidence, to the Quality Team. The applicant will need to supply evidence of the following documentation:
  - formal certification showing their achievement on the previous programme;
  - and
  - information from their previous Institution about the programme, typically including the programme specification and the relevant module descriptors including module learning outcomes. If the applicant has not yet completed their previous programme then approval will be conditional on their achievement of the current programme of study;
  - and
  - a statement of comparability from the UK National Academic Recognition Information Centre (UK NARIC), if the programme of study was taken outside of the UK.
22. The APL1 form will be assessed and logged by the Quality Team and, providing it is considered complete and suitable for further consideration, then sent to the appropriate Programme Leader, who will consider the evidence and decide whether the application should be:
  - (a) supported,
  - (b) supported with modifications or,
  - (c) 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 will return the completed form to the Quality Team and the decision will be recorded. 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.

23. In the case of an application for Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning, form APL2 should be submitted to the Quality Team, outlining the nature of the applicant's experience and providing evidence of learning to support the claim. The form will be assessed and logged by the Quality Team and, providing it is considered complete and suitable for further consideration, then sent to the appropriate Programme Leader.
24. In completing their assessment of the application for Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning, the Programme Leader will review the applicant's relevant prior experience and the module(s) for which exemption is claimed. The Programme Leader may require the applicant to complete a piece of work to demonstrate that they would be able to undertake academic study at the appropriate level. The Programme Leader will then consider the evidence and decide whether the application should be:

- (a) supported,
- (b) supported with modifications or,
- (c) rejected.

The Programme Leader will return the completed form to the Quality Team, normally within a 10 working day period, and the decision will be recorded. 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.

25. Where the Programme Leader does not support an application for either Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning or Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning, the Quality Team will advise the applicant of the outcome and the reasons for that decision.
26. Applications which have the support of the Programme Leader, with or without modifications, will be considered by the Bishop Grosseteste University Accreditation of Prior Learning Panel, which will normally hold twelve scheduled meetings in each academic year. Membership of the Panel will normally comprise the Registrar who shall normally act as Chair, the Heads of School or their nominee(s), a representative of the Centre for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching and a representative from the Students' Union.
27. 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. A representative of the Quality Team will be in attendance and will subsequently inform the applicant and Programme Leader of the Panel's decision.
28. Where an application for either Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning or Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning is rejected, students will be advised that they may appeal on the grounds of procedural irregularity, but they may not challenge an academic judgement.

29. In the case of successful applications for both Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning and Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning, the Quality Team will inform the student and Programme Leader of the outcome and the student will be provided with a full statement of the elements of the programme for which accreditation has been granted. The Quality Team will record the accredited modules on the Student Record System following enrolment, and the module(s) for which exemption is granted will be recorded on the final transcript as AP(E)L.

### **Standard Accreditation**

30. The Standard Accreditation procedure may be followed where it is expected that students who have completed a specified award or stage of a specified award offered by the University or another institution (which already has relevant memoranda and/or other required contractual agreements in place with BGU) will be applying to progress with advanced standing to a programme at the University. It is intended to avoid the need for individual Accreditation of Prior Learning applications where it is expected that a significant number of students from the feeder course will be applying for admission to the University programme and where the arrangement is likely to remain in place for a sustained period. In this case, students completing the specified award or stage successfully will be eligible to enter a specified programme at this institution with advanced standing (subject to the availability of places and meeting other admission requirements).
31. An application for Standard Accreditation should be prepared by the Programme Leader proposing such an accreditation in conjunction with an articulation agreement/memoranda with the institution offering the programme for which accreditation is sought. It is important that the agreement should include an explicit undertaking to inform the University in writing of any change to the learning outcomes or syllabus of the programme. Where the University is notified of a change, the Standard Accreditation arrangement must either be renewed or terminated. In any event, the Standard Accreditation will not automatically extend beyond the point at which the programme is subject to periodic review. There may be exceptions to the need for an articulation agreement/memoranda and these will be considered on a case by case basis.
32. The Programme Leader seeking to initiate a Standard Accreditation should complete application form SA1. The completed form should be passed to the Head of School for approval. Provided the proposal has the support of the School, it should be forwarded to the Quality Team who will log and review the form for completeness, prior to arranging for it to be considered by the Accreditation of Prior Learning Panel. The form should be accompanied by the programme specification and relevant module specifications of the programme for which accreditation is sought and the equivalent documentation for the BG programme; a suitable mapping proposal will also be expected. It is noted that where the conditions set out in paragraphs 30 and 31 do not apply, individual applications for the Accreditation of Prior Learning should be submitted to the Quality Team by students using form APL1.