Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Edge Hill University recognises that learning may take place in a wide variety of settings including conventional taught courses; online learning; learning outside courses; professional and employment experience; personal and leisure experience; self-directed study etc. The APL policy facilitates the formal recognition of learning gained elsewhere, and where appropriate, provides for credit to be attached to that learning.

1.2 The APL process is a means of building on the existing strengths of individuals, encouraging a sense of life-long learning. Within a credit-based system, APL provides greater flexibility in admitting students to award-bearing courses and it links prior learning experiences to current programmes of study so that the student gains maximum benefit from their period study at Edge Hill University. As such the APL policy supports the University’s aim of promoting and supporting the personal development, knowledge, skills and employability of students.

2. DEFINITIONS

2.1 APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning) is an umbrella term used to describe the process by which students who wish to have learning that has already been undertaken recognised by the University either for entry purposes or for the award of credit within a programme of study.

2.2 APCL (Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning) relates to learning which has been previously assessed for a validated qualification awarded by an educational institution, professional body or other recognised education/training provider.

2.3 APEL (the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning) refers to learning acquired outside formal education and training systems (for example work or life experience from which specific skills or knowledge have been gained).

2.4 General credit represents a judgement that particular learning falls within the range of higher education and indicates its quality and level. These credits only gain value - become specific credit - when they are judged to be equivalent to learning matched to the outcomes of Edge Hill University modules. The specific learning requirements of an Edge Hill award may mean that general credits are not appropriate for credit transfer into the institution. It should be noted however that it is not always necessary to show an exact match in terms of learning content for APL credit to be awarded – it is the learning outcomes that are most important. It may be perfectly possible for example to award APL credit to a student who has successfully studied 19th century European history against a 20th century European history module provided the learning outcomes for the module and for the overall programme have been achieved.
3. **APPLICATION**

The principles described in this policy apply to APL at whatever point it is brought forward by an applicant/student. There are separate processes however in relation to the assessment of APL for admission or entry to a programme of study and the award of credit within specific programmes (see section 5: Operation of APL).

4. **GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF THE APL POLICY AT EDGE HILL UNIVERSITY**

4.1 **The student makes the claim**

It is the responsibility of the student to make a claim for APL and to support the claim with appropriate evidence. The University can offer guidance in relation to process but prime responsibility rests with the student.

4.2 **Learning based on experience**

Where a claim is based on experiential learning, it is the evidence of the learning achieved from the experience that is being identified, assessed and accredited. The intellectual task of moving from a description of experience to an identification of the learning derived from that experience is crucial.

4.3 **Independent Assessment**

There is a clear separation between the identification of prior learning and organising it into forms fit for presentation for assessment, and the assessment process itself. Students may receive advice and guidance in the formative process of identifying prior learning but the assessment of claims must be independent from the support process.

4.4 **Responsibility for assessment**

Assessment is the responsibility of the teaching staff attached to the relevant degree scheme or award-bearing course. In making their assessment teaching staff will include consideration of the following criteria.

- **Authenticity and sufficiency**
  The assessor will need to be sure that the learning has been undertaken by the applicant and has been fully achieved;

- **Relevance/Equivalence**
  The assessor will need to be convinced that the evidence produced relates sufficiently well to the module or programme outcomes against which a claim being made;

- **Quality**
  The assessor will assess whether the structure, process and outcomes of the learning experience are of comparable quality with other accredited learning experiences, including attention to academic level;

- **Currency**
The evidence of achievement will be assessed to ensure its currency. Evidence of further development or updating is normally required if the certificated learning is more than five years old.

4.5 The nature of assessment

The method of assessment will be appropriate for the evidence which is being assessed. Hence staff may choose to use written evidence; the presentation of portfolios; oral testing or presentation; observation of performance etc. Claims based on experiential learning will normally require the submission of a portfolio.

4.6 Quality assurance

Decisions regarding APL are a matter of academic judgement. The decision-making process will be documented and evidence relating to any claim will be made available for consideration by the External Examiner (where appropriate) to further ensure that academic standards are being maintained.

4.7 APL as a proportion of a degree or award

Normally, the maximum credit for prior learning that can be counted towards a programme award is 66% (two thirds) for Honours and Masters degree programmes and 50% for all other awards, including Top-Up degrees. For specific regulations see section C8 of the academic regulations.

4.8 Minimum claim for APL

The smallest amount of learning that can be accredited through APL on any taught programme is a single module irrespective of credit value.

4.9 National framework for credit accumulation

Whilst there is no definitive national agreement on credit accumulation at the present time, Edge Hill will take full account of any agreements and practice within the Higher Education sector and in related professional accrediting bodies. The University will recognise credit awarded by accredited UK HE institutions subject to application of this policy.

4.10 Grading for APL

APL credit is not generally graded unless the learning has been undertaken and assessed as part of a validated programme at Edge Hill University.

4.11 Fairness and Equity

The APL processes adopted by the University will be rigorous; fair to applicants; reflect the University’s Equal Opportunities Policy; and ensure that the student’s programme of study builds upon prior learning in a coherent way.

4.12 The University reserves the right to make a charge in relation to the assessment of APL. Any such charge will be clearly identified to applicants in advance of their submission.
5. **THE OPERATION OF THE APL POLICY AT EDGE HILL UNIVERSITY**

5.1 **General**

The assessment of APL is carried out by subject tutors in Faculties. It is the responsibility of each Faculty to produce an APL Protocol for the assessment of claims. In drawing up or in revising the Protocol, Faculties will consult with the Dean of Teaching and Learning Development; Academic Registry, and Admissions. The Protocols and their operation will be approved, monitored and reviewed by Faculties and be subject to annual monitoring through the Faculty AMR process.

5.2 The Faculty Protocol should be compliant with QAA Code of Practice and the principles outlined in this policy and included in validation documents with an indication of any special arrangements for that particular programme. The Protocol will cover the following:

a) The extent to which APL is applied, including its use for:
   i) initial admission to the degree/award-bearing course
   ii) advanced entry to an award bearing programme
   iii) the recognition of APL credit within an award;

b) The preparation and checking of publicity and marketing materials to ensure potential applicants are aware of APL;

c) The specific procedures that applicants should follow in making a claim for APL at the various stages identified in a) above;

d) The forms of advice, guidance and support available for APL applicants;

e) The procedures that will be followed in assessing and confirming a claim for APL. This will include the clear identification of the persons/sub-committee responsible for these procedures;

f) Details of the operational arrangements of any Faculty APL Panel(s);

g) If it is a classified award, the extent to which grades/marks from other higher education institutions can be incorporated in the Edge Hill award having regard to the University’s Academic Regulations;

h) Any fees to be paid by the applicant in connection with the APL claim.

5.3 **Specific**

a) **Admission to programmes of study**

   Where an applicant wishes to use APL as alternative or supplementary evidence of academic suitability for entry to a programme, the normal admissions process will apply. Admissions tutors will follow the principles outlined above in determining whether
or not an offer of a place can be made. Applicants may be asked to attend for interview and may be required to complete additional pieces of work as part of the assessment process. Applications for advanced entry (for example where a student has completed the first year of a programme at another University) are also handled through the admissions process but outcomes will be reported to the appropriate Progression or Award Board and may be subject to scrutiny by external examiners where the entry level is above level 4.

b) **Articulation/credit recognition arrangements**

Articulation/credit recognition are specific forms of admission with credit where the University has already undertaken a mapping exercise to determine the equivalency of learning for entry/advanced entry from a partner institution/awarding body. Applicants are not required to make separate APL submissions.

c) **Course Transfers**

Students who wish to transfer their programme of study whilst at the University will be assessed for admission in relation to the receiving programme and APL credit previously awarded will be reassessed.

d) **APL credit within programmes**

Students seeking APL credit for individual modules once they have been accepted onto a programme apply using Faculty processes outlined in the Faculty Protocol document. Decisions will be reported to the appropriate Progression/Award Board and may be subject to scrutiny by external examiners where the credit awarded is above level 4.

6. **COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS**

6.1 APL decisions are matters of academic judgement. Students have a right to receive feedback on their submission and may use the complaints and appeals processes as appropriate in relation to the APL process.

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