Policy 014: Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning

1. Purpose and Scope

1.1 This policy describes ACM's approach in considering and processing student's applications for Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), including certificated prior learning and experiential prior learning (APEL). The provisions below should also be understood to cover the FE equivalent, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). It is designed to ensure that applicants are treated in a fair and equitable manner.

1.2 This policy applies to all applicants studying in a programme with specific credit (i.e. with one or more credit-bearing modules exempted on the strength of previous achievement), including applications to join a degree programme at FHEQ level 4, 5 and 6.

1.3 This policy addresses the transfer of credit at the appropriate FHEQ level from within or outside ACM, the accreditation of other forms of certificated learning, and the accreditation of experiential or work-based learning undertaken by a student prior to the commencement of their ACM programme of study.

1.4 This Policy outlines the way in which ACM supports those who might be eligible for the recognition of prior learning, to ensure they are made aware of the opportunities available, and are supported throughout the process of application and assessment for recognition.

2. Policy Statement

2.1 In all cases of Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), responsibility rests with the applicant for making a claim to have acquired accreditable knowledge and skill, and for supporting their claim with appropriate evidence. Assistance will be given by ACM in preparing an application for the accreditation of prior experiential learning.

2.2 Students who make enquiries during the Admissions process may be identified, through discussion regarding previous HE or equivalent level study, should be advised regarding the AP(E)L policy, and identified as possible AP(E)L candidates from the earliest opportunity in their application to ACM.

2.2 In all cases of APL, the prior learning must be judged to match the learning outcomes of specific modules on the proposed course of study, if those modules are to be exempted. This mapping is carried out by the relevant Programme Manager or the Head of Education. All forms of APL are considered in relation to whole modules, rather than to specific components of assessment within modules. Applicants are engaged in discussion and negotiation about the form(s) of assessment to to support their AP(E)L application, and from having a shared understanding of the learning that would need to be evidenced as well as the nature of the evidence to be provided. Further clarification regarding specific instruments of evidence are outlined in points 2.14 and 2.16 below.

2.3 The maximum credit that may be awarded towards a qualification on the basis of prior learning is two-thirds of the credit value of the whole qualification, e.g. 240 credits out of a 360-credit Bachelor degree.

2.4 Prior learning must have been achieved less than five years before the start of the proposed new programme of study, to ensure that the learning gained remains current.

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2.5 In all cases of APL, applications will be considered by the relevant Programme Manager
who will make an initial determination, and refer to Head of Education, to moderate this decision. Full details of the decision-making processes for APL and APEL are specified in the procedure associated with this policy. Decisions regarding any application and award of credit will be made in line with the policy of the awarding institution.

2.6 Final approval for any application for specific credit for Degree level programmes normally lies with the representative of the validating or franchise partner.

2.7 Applicants wishing to make an appeal or complaint relating to the APL process or a specific APL decision should refer to the Student Complaints and Appeals policy.

Credit Transfer within FHEQ Levels

2.8 In cases of credit transfer, either through award of block credit or credit mapping of individual modules, it must be possible to determine the FHEQ level of the credits to be transferred.

2.9 Credits which have already contributed to an awarded qualification can not normally be counted towards a second qualification at the *same level* or at a *lower level*. For example, credits at Level 4 which have contributed to a Certificate of Higher Education could not be counted towards another Certificate of Higher Education, but if can be counted towards a degree, subject to satisfying the conditions of this policy.

2.10 Whether prior credits were achieved at the ACM or another institution, the learning outcomes already achieved must map to learning outcomes required by modules of the proposed ACM programme in order for specific credit to be granted.

2.11 Transferred credits from previous study within ACM will normally be used to calculate the classification of a final qualification if they are of an appropriate level. Ungraded credits which are transferred, or modules which are exempted, will not be used to calculate qualification classifications.

2.12 Other factors which may be considered as part of deciding whether to grant specific credit include:

- The grades by which the prior credits were passed, along with any other detail available from the transcript of study
- Any academic reference or personal statement accompanying the application to study
- Any articulation or progression arrangement existing between the institution from which the credit was gained, and the ACM's partner university for the ACM programme in question

Applicants must also meet the usual entry requirements for the programme they propose to study.

Accreditation of other certificated learning

2.13 Where an applicant requests specific credit, block credit, on the basis of documented qualifications whose FHEQ level is not specified, ACM shall attempt to establish the level of the qualification. If the level of the qualification(s) does not match that of the proposed programme of study, or cannot be determined, ACM will consider any information the

applicant can provide about the learning gained in achieving the certificate or qualification.

2.14 If the required learning outcomes are not proven by evidence of the certificate or qualification alone, similar methods to provide documentary evidence for them may be used as for Accreditation of Experiential Learning, below, in point 2.16.

Accreditation of experiential Learning (APEL)

2.15 Learning derived from comparable and relevant practical experience rather than formal education must be supported by evidence in order to be assessed. ACM will provide guidance in order to help the applicant produce documentation, but responsibility for any application for APEL remains with the applicant.

2.16 Prior experiential learning is normally identified through a portfolio provided by the applicant, comprising direct and indirect evidence of having achieved relevant learning such as:

- Published articles and manuscripts
- Practice-based document
- Electronic files, with commentary and analysis related to achievement of learning outcomes
- Written systematic reflection on practical experience
- Artefacts
- Awards and other forms of recognition
- Relevant statements from supervisors or managers in relation to the required learning outcomes
- References from colleagues, employees, voluntary organisations, professional bodies

3. Responsible Parties

3.1 The policy lead is responsible for the cyclical monitoring and review of the policy in liaison with the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manager. The Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy lead is:

- Academic Registrar

3.2 Appropriate actions in support of the implementation of the policy will be authorised by the following designated staff:

- Registry Manager
- Academic Registrar
- Admissions Manager
- Head of Education
- Head of Learning and Teaching
- Programme Managers

4. Reference Points

4.1. Internal:

- Academic Integrity

- Fitness to Study
- Admissions Policy
- Student Complaints and Appeals
- Teaching and Learning Policy

4.2. External:

- Middlesex University Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy (http://www.mdx.ac.uk/courses/help-with-your-application/undergraduate-application/accreditation-of-prior-learning)
- Falmouth University Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy (https://www.falmouth.ac.uk/sites/default/files/download/accreditation_of_prior_learning_apl_policy_1.pdf)
- University of the Arts London Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy (http://www.arts.ac.uk/media/arts/about-ual/ual-awarding-body/documents/policies/UAL-AWARDING-BODY-OPERATIONS-POLICIES-AND-PROCEDURES-V7.0.pdf)
- QAA Quality Code, Chapter B6: Assessment and the recognition of Prior Learning
- The Bologna Process

5. Date of Approval and Next Review

Version:	1.1
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