

Peter Symonds College

Adult and Higher Education Division

**Accreditation of Prior Learning
Guidelines**

REVIEWED: March 2022

NEXT REVIEW DUE: March 2024



Peter Symonds College recognises:

- The importance of promoting lifelong learning, social inclusion, wider participation, employability and partnership working with business, community organizations;
- That significant knowledge, skills and understanding can be developed as a result of learning opportunities found at work, both paid and unpaid, and through individual activities and interests.
- The purpose of this protocol is to provide clear guidelines and guidance as to how learning that has This policy needs to be read bearing in mind the key principles for guidance outlined in QAA Guidelines in Accreditation of Prior Learning.

Key features of APL

- QAA define APL as: *“The identification, assessment and formal acknowledgement of learning and achievement that occurred at some time in the past (perhaps as the result of a previous course, self-directed study, or active experience), which is taken into account when admitting a student to a course of study.”*
- Enables individuals to identify and build on existing strengths, through an exploration of experience and prior learning, rather than asking the individual to undergo repetition of learning experience.
- The underlying principle of APL is that all learning, which can be judged to be at a higher education level, can be quantified in terms of academic credit.
- Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning involves an assessment process that leads to accreditation through the award of a credit. Prior Experiential Learning may refer to those experiences both in and outside of a working environment which has provided the individual with the opportunity to learn. An individual who has been the carer for a child or an adult with severe problems, an individual who has worked as a mental health worker for several years, an individual who has been coaching a sports team for many years, or an individual working in a business environment all may have the learning gained from that experience accounted for.

Definitions Boundaries and Scope

Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)

The process for assessing and, as appropriate, recognizing prior learning which includes the following (as defined by QAA):

- **Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL)**
The identification, assessment and formal acknowledgement of learning and achievement that occurred at some time in the past prior to entry to a course of study, and for which the learner was awarded some form of official recognition.
- **Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)**
The identification, assessment and formal acknowledgement of learning and achievement that occurred at some time in the past prior to entry to a course of study, but not in the context of formal education or training.
- **Accreditation of Prior Certificated and/or Experiential Learning (AP[E/C]L)**
A combination of APEL and APCL where assessed learning and achievement is used with learning and achievement that does not have formal recognition

The college recognises each of the above either as a basis for entry into its programmes or to exempt applicants from some of the requirements for its awards.

- It is the learning gained through the experience and not the experience itself which is being assessed.
- Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning may include short courses, CPD and professional qualifications.

Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL)

This will entail the recognition of credits awarded by another institution to contribute to the credit requirement for the award. The following need to be considered:

- For a credit to be transferred the learning must be relevant to the course for which the claim for credit is being made.
- The learning must also have been at a comparable academic level and must have been assessed.
- Subject to currency and relevance, credit for study at another institution will normally be given the same tariff and level as that awarded by the other institution.
- The amount of credit transferred cannot exceed the amount of credit awarded by the institution at the time the learning took place however the amount of credit given may be below that awarded by the institution if, for example, that learning is not directly comparable to the course for which the claim for credit is being made or if the learning is out of date.
- When considering overseas students, the structure and level of national awards as well as the content of the course covered should be verified.
- The minimum number of credits for which APL will be considered is 10 credits.
- At least half the credits required for an award normally will be accumulated as a result of the learning assessed at the college however exceptions to this include a Honours Degree where students are permitted a maximum of 120 credits at Level 4 and 120 credits at Level 5.
- Agreement with regard to the number of credits awarded shall be agreed at the time of transfer and the student shall sign an acceptance of the credit transfer agreement.

Approval of Credit Transfer

The authority to consider requests for credit transfer is delegated to academic staff with authority to admit applicants to the relevant course. For claims against individual modules, this may involve consultation with the relevant module leader.

In considering a request for credit transfer the relevant member of academic staff shall:

- Confirm (against a transcript of credit or award certification) that credit has been awarded by an agency that is recognised by the college.
- Confirm (against a transcript of credit or award certification) that the learning activity has been given a credit rating (e.g. 20 CATS at Level 4) or judge the level and amount of credit on the basis of the year and volume of study at another UK institution or confirm the level and volume of study successfully undertaken in an overseas university or similar institution. If this learning has been awarded a grade (e.g. %, Pass, Merit, Distinction then that grade will be adopted and integrated into the mark system. If it has not been graded it will be assumed that the grade is a pass.
- Confirm that the learning has been in a subject area relevant to the module or modules against which a claim has been made.

- If, because of transfer credit, the student is exempted from modules which count towards honours classification or to an award of distinction a decision must be made to determine how the student's final mark will be calculated. This must then be ratified by the appropriate Awards Board.

Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)

In this case learning has not taken place in the formal educational setting, therefore does not result from following a course and has not been measured in and verified by a transcript. The learning will have taken place in a different setting e.g. in a paid or unpaid work setting.

Credit given is not awarded on the basis of experience: it is awarded on the basis of what has been learned through reflection on the experience and students will need to complete the APL portfolio process contained in this document. A pass grade only can be awarded for credit claimed through this process.

Accreditation of Prior Certificated and/or Experiential Learning (AP[E/C]L)

A combination of the methods identified above will be applied.

Timescale

The timescale will be determined by the adviser and be dependent upon individual circumstances.

Entry Criteria and Criteria for Accreditation of Prior Learning for the following degree programmes:

Early Years (FdA)

Early Years BA (Hons) Top-up

Teaching and Learning Support (FdA)

Teaching and Learning Support (BA) Top-up

Special Educational Needs and Disability (FdA)

Special Educational Needs and Disability (BA) Top-up

Sport Injury & Treatment (BSc)

Management & Business (FdA)

Management & Business (BA) Top-up

Insurance (BA)

Entry requirements

Foundation degree, HNC, HND, Diploma HE (for courses listed above).

Applicants under 21 must have successfully completed a level three qualification equalling at least 64 UCAS points

Mature students (over 21) without traditional qualifications may also be accepted following Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) providing they can show appropriate levels of relevant ability and experience.

- they have worked in a role /workplace relevant to the degree programme they are applying for
- a satisfactory reference is received from their employer
- their performance at interview indicates they have the ability and skills to be successful at HE level.

Entry Requirements for BA Top Up (for courses listed above)

Students will need to hold a related Foundation Degree or HND. Students progressing from the organisations FdA will need to have passed all modules. Modules cannot be trailed from the Foundation Degree onto the BA.

Entry Requirements for FdA and BA Counselling

Foundation Degree in Humanistic Counselling Based on Transactional Analysis (BACP accredited)

Successful completion of a Level 3 Diploma in Counselling Skills and attendance at a two-day Transactional Analysis 101 workshop

For those who have not completed the Level 3 Diploma in Counselling Skills a portfolio, constructed as per the guidelines in this document, showing how each of the Learning Outcomes for the Level 3 diploma have been met. Please note attendance at the TA 101 two-day course is still essential.

BA Hons Humanistic and Integrative Counselling

- Successful completion of a Level 5 (Diploma or Foundation Degree) in Humanistic Counselling
- Successful completion of a Level 4 Diploma in Humanistic Counselling plus evidence of ongoing Professional Development and a secure clinical practice.
- Students wishing to join the BA top up year, in either pathway, who have not achieved the requirements outlined above may gain exemption if s/he has studied at an appropriate institute and can clearly demonstrate, via a portfolio, how the learning outcomes have been achieved.

Please note any portfolio submitted must follow the process indicated in the guidelines which follow. Each application will be considered on individual merit.

Accreditation of Prior Learning Process

Purpose of this process:

To provide a template to enable each department/curriculum area to account for and accredit prior certificated and or experiential learning.

It is essential when planning the documentation for the student that there is both clarity and transparency regarding the process and that consistency and fairness is exhibited across all areas. Sections of this document may be used in the information provided for students.

The process is divided into various sections:

- **Introduction**
- **Stages in the Process**
- **Role of the Adviser**
- **Role of the Assessor**
- **Student's Responsibilities**
- **The Contents of an APL Portfolio**
- **APL Portfolio Submission form**
- **Feedback Form**

Introduction

There is a link between assessment used as a basis used for recognizing learning gained outside of a formal or defined higher education programme and that used for learning within the programme. Key features of sound practice are common to both.

Accreditation of prior learning is a process through which an individual may be awarded credit for both informal and formal learning experiences.

Claiming exemptions from elements of degree programmes:

Potential students may wish to make a claim for Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) as exemptions from parts of the degree programmes are possible. Claimants seeking APL and APEL must apply to the College and may be required to present a portfolio in support of their claims. Each application will be considered on individual merit.

Please see: The section on the process on the following pages and Section 4 of Accreditation of Prior Learning Procedure (appendix).

Construction of a Portfolio for Accreditation of Prior Learning

Stages in the Process

Candidate Profiling (Stage 1)

- ❖ Individual develops a profile of what they know and can do;
- ❖ Produce a written report;
- ❖ Compare this to the learning outcomes of the course/module for which they wish to have recognition.
- ❖ They may draw upon the advice of an advisor in this process.

Evidence Gathering (Stage 2)

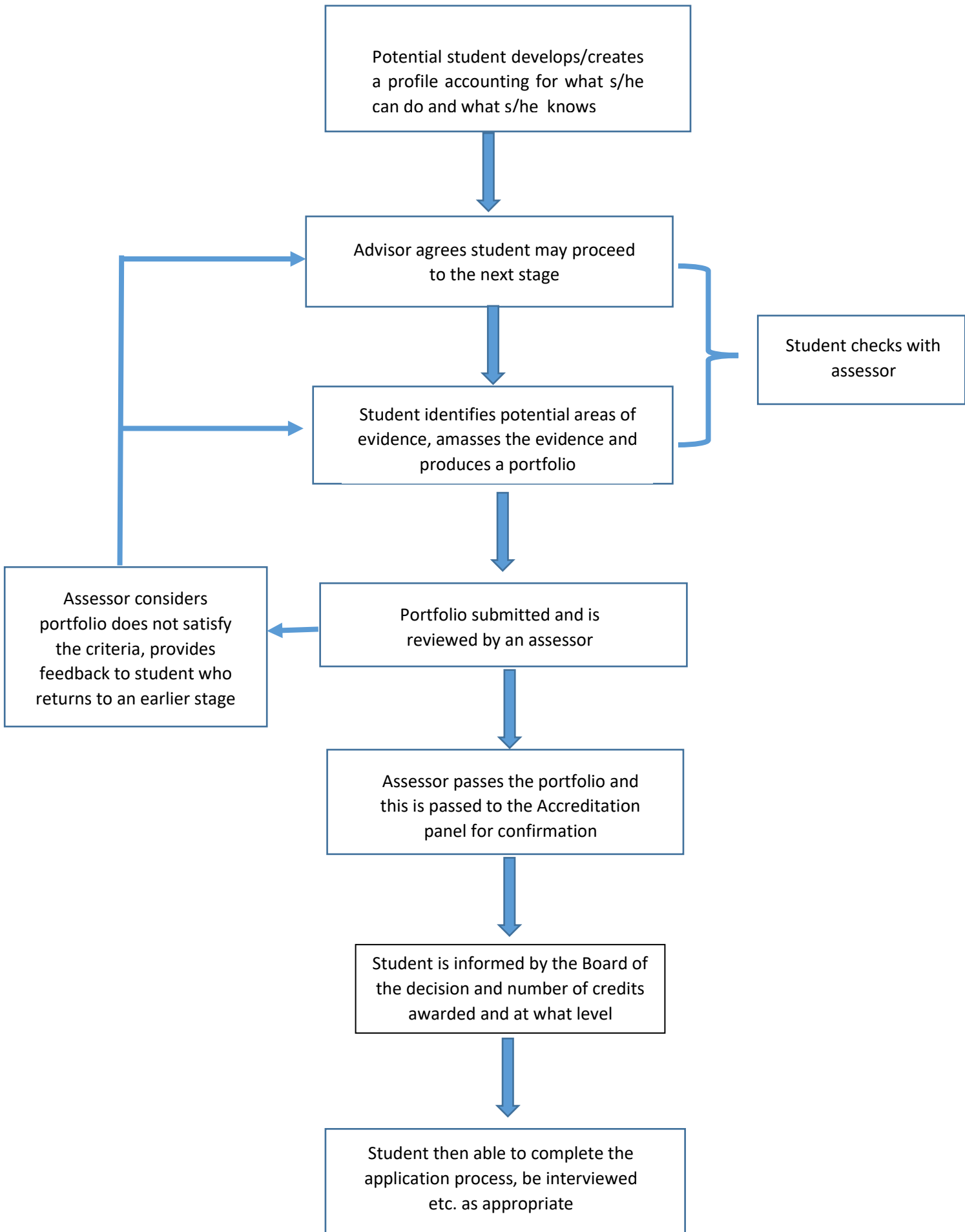
- ❖ The individual identifies how best s/he may prove his/her claim to credit;
- ❖ Gather the necessary evidence e.g.
 - a) Certificates of attendance at a course;
 - b) Writing to a former employer for a letter of validation concerning skills and performance;
 - c) Reports from a current place of work;
 - d) Reports from any voluntary work undertaken etc.
- ❖ Evidence may be generated in the form of essays, transcripts to supplement the other forms of evidence
- ❖ The individual compiles a portfolio and prepares the evidence for assessment.
- ❖ Portfolio is submitted at least one calendar month before the Panel sits.

Assessment and Accreditation (Stage 3)

- ❖ The assessor reviews the portfolio
- ❖ If the evidence is sufficient, has relevance and the assessor is satisfied with its authenticity the assessor will record the outcome, recommend credit and will pass the portfolio to the next meeting of the Accreditation Panel (a sub group of the Academic Board)
- ❖ The Accreditation Panel will involve the following:
 - a) The Curriculum Head or Programme Leader and a member of that department's Higher Education teaching team;
 - b) The Director of Adult and Higher Education
 - c) The Higher Education Administrator;
 - d) The advisor/assessor to attend in an observation capacity if desired.
 - e) Where possible a member of staff from the awarding university. Where this is not possible the accreditation panel must seek agreement in writing from the relevant awarding university's link tutor before the results of the Panel are communicated to the Academic board/ student.
- ❖ The results of the Panel will be communicated to the Academic Board.
- ❖ The Panel will meet twice a year in June and September.
- ❖ If the evidence is not sufficient s/he will inform the individual as the required steps to improve the portfolio.

Post assessment guidance

- ❖ Given to the individual by the advisor
- ❖ Individual able to integrate the learning in the process to his/her overall personal targets which will link to the student's individual learning plan.
- ❖ Individual will receive a clear written statement, from the Accreditation Panel, of the outcome of the assessment and credits awarded.
- ❖ The statement from the Accreditation Panel will be included in the student transcript on successful completion of their qualification.



Role of the Adviser

The role of the adviser is strictly educational and the advisor will:

- Help the student become aware of the purposes and nature of APL
- Help the student clarify goals in seeking APL
- Help student become familiar with standards and qualifications
- Help candidates match competence to standards
- Respond to questions
- Provide information about the APL process and roles and responsibilities of staff
- Help candidate identify appropriate sources and types of evidence
- Negotiate and agree what should be included in the portfolio
- Provide ongoing support and feedback on an individual or group basis
- Help the student to prepare for assessment
- Provide information on new learning opportunities
- Review the portfolio of completeness
- Liaise with the assessors
- Provide support and guidance after the assessment

Role of the Assessor

- Assess the student's portfolio of evidence
- Ensure that all elements or learning outcomes have been met
- Communicate with student, provide feedback on the acceptability of the student's evidence and highlight any further evidence requirements.
- Discuss with the student and conduct a viva to verify the contents of the portfolio
- Ensure that the student has met the required standards
- Make recommendations about the award or denial of credit
- Provide written feedback to the student
- Provide support and liaise with advisors.

Student's Responsibilities

- To consult with Programme Leader/Head of Curriculum initially who will assign you an assessor to support you through the process
- To consider the course requirements and using them, submit a detailed written statement showing how your previous training and experiences equate to the learning outcomes in the module(s) for which you are seeking accreditation
- Address each Learning Outcome specifically and show how a mixture of training, self-directed learning has an equivalency to this level of input.
- Write an introductory summary for each module for which you are seeking accreditation. We suggest one side of A4 double spaced.
- Please include relevant assessed work as part of your supporting evidence. If you do not have this then you are required to write an essay which meets the learning outcomes of the module.
- These collectively form part of your portfolio.
- You may refer to the same piece of work for different modules.
- Please do not just submit a list of training events: demonstrate your learning in a discursive way
- You need to clearly demonstrate and articulate that you have met the learning outcomes in order for that work to be given credit and exempt you from those modules

Contents of an APL Portfolio

- A relevant and up to date Curriculum Vitae in which you clearly account for your experiences.
- A letter of reference or support for your APL
- An account of the learning you have attained which is of an equivalency to those parts of the syllabus for which you wish to be accredited.
- Evidence of that learning matched to the learning outcomes, knowledge, skills and area of learning.
- Include the areas of learning described and follow the following format:
 - ❖ Area of learning;
 - ❖ How acquired
 - ❖ Evidence.

Example

Area of Learning:

- Year 1 Module Number: Title of the Module

How acquired

- Reading: may include recommended books, journal articles etc.
- Attendance at a workshop: Include title of workshop, name of facilitator, name of the organization responsible for the delivery of the workshop and date.

Evidence:

- Certificate of attendance at workshop
- Assessment
- Written reflections on the learning gained.

Glossary of Terms

APCL	Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning
APEL	Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning
APC/EL	Accreditation of Prior Certificated and/or Experiential Learning

PETER SYMONDS COLLEGE PROCEDURE

Appendix 1

QAA Guidelines on the Accreditation of Prior Learning

- Principle 1: Decisions regarding the accreditation of prior learning are a matter of academic judgement. The decision-making process and outcomes should be transparent and demonstrably rigorous and fair.
- Principle 2: Where limits are imposed on the proportion of learning that can be recognised through the accreditation process, these limits should be explicitly stated. The implications for the progression, the award of any interim qualification and the classification or grading of a final qualification should be clear and transparent.
- Principle 3: Prior experiential and/or certificated learning that has been accredited by an HE provider should be clearly identified on students' transcripts.
- Principle 4: Higher Education providers should provide clear and accessible information for applicant, academic staff, examiners and stakeholders about its policies, procedures and practices for the accreditation of prior learning.
- Principle 5: The terminology, scope and boundaries used by an HE provider in its policies, procedures and practices for the accreditation of prior learning should be explicitly defined in information and guidance materials.
- Principle 6: Information and guidance materials outline the process(es) for the assessment of claims for the accreditation of prior learning and/or previously certificate learning should be clear, accurate and easily accessible.
- Principle 7: Higher Education providers should consider the range and form(s) of assessment appropriate to consider claims for the recognition of learning.
- Principle 8: The criteria to be used in judging a claim for accreditation of prior learning should be made explicit to applicants, academic staff, stakeholders and assessors and examiners.
- Principle 9: Applicants should be fully informed of the nature and range of evidence considered appropriate to support a claim for the accreditation of prior learning.
- Principle 10: The assessment of learning derived from experience should be open to internal and external scrutiny and monitoring within institutional quality assurance procedures.
- Principle 11: The locus of authority and responsibilities for making and verifying decisions about the accreditation of prior learning should be clearly specified.
- Principle 12: All staff associated with the accreditation of prior learning should have their roles clearly and explicitly defined. Full details of all roles and responsibilities should be available to all staff and applicants.
- Principle 13: Appropriate arrangements should be developed for the training and support of all staff associated with the support, guidance and assessment of claims for the accreditation of prior learning.
- Principle 14: Clear guidance should be given to applicants about when a claim for the accreditation of prior learning may be submitted, the timescale for considering the claim and the outcome.
- Principle 15: Appropriate arrangements should be in place to support applicants submitting claims for the accreditation of prior learning and to provide feedback on decisions.
- Principle 16: Arrangements for the regular monitoring and review of policies and procedures for the accreditation of prior learning should be clearly established. These arrangements should be set within established institutional framework for quality assurance, management and enhancement.

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