

Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy and Procedure

1. INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITIONS

This policy and procedure have been informed by the OfS Sector Recognised Standards.

- 1.1 The policy must also be used in conjunction with the Norland Academic Regulations relating to the current year. Any award of Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) credit must be in accordance with these regulations.
- 1.2 Norland 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.
- 1.3 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 of study at Norland. As such the APL policy supports Norland's aim of promoting and supporting the personal development, knowledge, skills and employability of students.
- 1.4 APL is an umbrella term used to describe the process by which students who wish to have learning that has already been undertaken, recognised by Norland, either for entry purposes or for the award of credit within a programme of study.
- 1.5 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.
- 1.6 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).
- 1.7 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 Norland modules. The specific learning requirements of a Norland 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.

2. POLICY AND GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 It is the *responsibility of the student or applicant* to make a claim for APL and to support the claim with appropriate evidence. Norland will offer guidance in relation to the process but prime responsibility rests with the student/applicant.

- 2.2** 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.
- 2.3** There must be 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.
- 2.4** Assessment of APL is the responsibility of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education and Research) or their nominee. In making that assessment they 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 is 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.
- 2.5** The method of assessment will be appropriate for the evidence which is being assessed, hence the assessor 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.
- 2.6** 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 relevant External Examiner to further ensure that academic standards are being maintained.
- 2.7** The maximum credit for prior learning that can be counted towards a programme award is defined in the Norland Academic Regulations.
- 2.8** The smallest amount of learning that can be accredited through APL on any taught programme is a single module irrespective of credit value.
- 2.9** Norland will recognise credit awarded by accredited UK HE institutions subject to application of this policy.
- 2.10** APL credit is not generally graded unless the learning has been undertaken and assessed as part of an academic programme at Norland.

- 2.11** The APL processes adopted by Norland will be rigorous; fair to applicants; reflect Norland's Equal Opportunities Policy; and ensure that the student's programme of study builds upon prior learning in a coherent way.
- 2.12** Norland 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.
- 2.13** It should be noted that accreditation against one programme will not necessarily be appropriate against other programmes delivered by Norland.
- 2.14** 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. The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education and Research) 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 an interview and may be required to complete additional pieces of work as part of the assessment process.
- 2.15** Applications for advanced entry (for example where a student has completed the first year of a programme at another institution) are also handled through the admissions process, but outcomes will be reported to the appropriate Assessment or Award/Progression Board and will be subject to scrutiny by the External Examiner where the entry level is above level 4.
- 2.16** Students seeking APL credit for individual modules once they have been accepted onto a programme should apply using this procedure. Decisions will be reported to the appropriate Assessment or Awards/Progression Board and will be subject to scrutiny by the External Examiner where the credit awarded is above level 4.

3. PROCEDURE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 3.1** Any application for APL should be submitted to the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education and Research), who will advise the applicant on whether they are likely to be successful in that application and the way in which evidence for consideration should be presented.
- 3.2** When the application has been completed, the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education and Research) will submit the evidence to the Vice Chancellor who will make the decision to award credit or not based on the criteria in paragraph 2.4 above and subject to the maxima detailed in the Norland Academic Regulations. If the credit to be awarded is at level 5 or above the decision must be confirmed by the External Examiner.
- 3.3** The decision of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education and Research) must be reported to the Assessment Board and confirmed by the Awards/Progression Board.

4. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

- 4.1** 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.



5. MONITORING AND REVIEW

- 5.1** The Academic Board will receive an annual report of any APL applications and review the effectiveness of this policy and procedure.

Document Control Information	
Policy title:	Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy and Procedure
Summary description:	This policy outlines the process for applicants or students wishing to apply for Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL). APL is the process for accessing and recognising prior experiential learning or certificated learning for academic purposes.
Relates to staff/ student (include Set), NQN or Norlander:	Applicants Students (all Sets)
Version number (e.g. V1.0/EB/DD-MM-YY):	V6.0/EM/17-02-26
Owner:	Pro Vice Chancellor (Student Experience)
Housekeeping updates only:	Amendments to job titles
Approving body:	Academic Board
Related Norland documents:	Assessment and Feedback Policy Programme Design, Development and Approval Policy External Examining Policy Admissions Policy Fitness to Practise Policy Fitness to Study Policy Exceptional Assessment Circumstances Policy and Procedure Academic Misconduct Procedure Academic Appeals Policy Academic Regulations
Date of approval:	17 th February 2026
Date of effect:	As above
Frequency of review (i.e. annually or every 2 years):	Annually
Date of next review:	February 2027
Upload to website:	Yes