

Recognition and Accreditation of Prior Learning (R/APL) Policy and Procedures

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this Policy and Procedures

- 1.1.1 The Art School offers an excellent specialist education in Art, Craft and Conservation, and wishes to ensure that everyone who is able to complete and benefit from our courses has an equal opportunity to be considered for admission.
- 1.1.2 We recognise that many gifted and motivated applicants will have acquired skills and knowledge outside formal education, and that this learning may be equivalent to, or exceed, our standard entry requirements. Furthermore, in some cases applicants may already have learnt areas which are covered by the course for which they are applying.
- 1.1.3 The purpose of this document is to set out the framework under which prior learning, including learning through experience, is recognised and fairly accredited at the Art School, and to define the responsibilities of applicants and staff in implementing our procedures effectively.
- 1.1.4 This policy document is supplemented by guidance on the assessment of prior learning which is provided in our *Admissions Handbook* for staff involved in the admissions process; and by guidance for applicants on prior learning and how to present evidence of it as part of their application, which [will be] provided on the Art School website.

1.2 Scope

- 1.2.1 This Policy and Procedures covers the recognition and accreditation of prior certificated and/or experiential learning in the following circumstances:
- (i) At the admissions stage to enable applicants to enter a programme of study with credit for specific modules
 - (ii) At the admissions stage to enable applicants to enter a programme of study with 'advanced standing', i.e. to enter with credit for an entire level, or levels, of a programme – e.g. transfer students
 - (iii) During the course of a student's programme of study to grant credit in partial fulfilment of the course requirements (i.e. to claim credit for a

particular module/unit for which the student can demonstrate prior learning)

- 1.2.2 This document also includes the procedures to be followed where at the time of admission for entry to the start of any of the Art School's courses, an applicant cannot meet the stated minimum academic entry requirements but has asked for other formal or informal learning, or learning acquired through experience, to be taken into consideration. Although not strictly 'accredited', in such cases the prior learning is evaluated against the stated admissions criteria and deemed either to be equivalent to, or exceed, the matriculation requirements prescribed for the relevant programme of study.
- 1.2.3 This Art School Policy and Procedures document is designed to be wholly compatible with the AP(E)L policies of Birmingham City University (BCU) in respect of the BA and MA in and Fine Art, the BA in Conservation Studies and the MA Conservation; and of the University of the Arts London (UAL) Awarding Body in respect of the Level 4 Foundation Diploma in Art & Design.

1.3 Definitions

- 1.3.1 The terms '**recognition**' and '**accreditation**' are interchangeable in this document. 'Recognition/accreditation of prior learning' (R/APL) is the **generic term** used by the Art School for the award of credit based on equivalent learning which has been achieved in the past. This learning can be either **certificated** or **experiential**.
- 1.3.2 **Certificated learning (CL)** is learning which has been **formally assessed and certified** by an educational institution or by a training provider
- 1.3.3 **Experiential learning (EL)** is learning gained through other experience, including employment, voluntary work, self-directed study and/or leisure interests and activities.
- 1.3.4 The abbreviations **R/APCL** and **R/APEL** are used where it is necessary to differentiate between the forms of learning as described above.

2. Context and compliance

2.1 Relationship to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education

- 2.1.1 This Policy and Procedures is informed by, and draws upon, Chapter B6 of the Quality Code (*Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning*) in respect of our procedures for the fair assessment and accreditation of prior learning and the information and support provided to students during the application and assessment processes.
- 2.1.2 It also draws upon Chapter B2 (*Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education*) in the application of APL within the context of the admissions process.

2.2 Relationship to the Policies and Regulations of our validating Partners

2.2.1 This Policy and Procedures should be read in conjunction with the following, as appropriate to the programme of study being applied to:

- Birmingham City University *Procedures for the Accreditation of Prior Learning*
- Birmingham City University *Regulations & Policies* Part I Section D ('The Admission of Students')
- BCU /Art School Operations Manual, sections 3.4 and 3.6, which make clear the extent of the devolution of responsibility for admissions decisions based on the recognition/accreditation of prior learning
- UAL Guidance to Centres on the Recognition of Prior Learning (Section E of the UAL Awarding Body's *Operations, Policies and Procedures Handbook*), which itself explicitly draws upon the *Guidance on RPL* published by the Qualifications & Curriculum Authority (QCA) in 2008; this requires approved Centres to have procedures in place for the consideration of applications for the accreditation of prior (experiential) learning

2.3 Relationship to other Art School policies

2.3.1 This Policy and Procedures should be read and applied in conjunction with the following Art School policies and guidance:

- Equality & Diversity Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Art School Admissions Handbook, which includes guidance for staff on the application of this Policy and Procedures as part of the admissions process [in progress]
- Guidance for applicants for each programme of study, to be found on the Art School's website [to be written]

3. Art School Policy on the recognition and accreditation of prior learning

3.1 Policy statement

3.1.1 The Art School undertakes to give due and equal consideration to all valid applications to its courses from anyone who is able to benefit from the education we provide and who can demonstrate learning, whether formally acquired, or through employment, voluntary work, or the applicant's individual interests /activities.

3.1.2 Insofar as the regulations of our validating partners allow, we will consider applications from individuals who wish to enter a programme at the Art School at a point other than the start of the course and wish to claim academic credit for part of the programme through the accreditation of prior learning. Such applicants may already be a student on a different course at the Art School, or

wish to transfer from another institution, or believe they are eligible to apply for 'advanced standing'.

- 3.1.3 The Art School also welcomes valid applications for initial entry to any of our courses from any prospective student whose formal educational qualifications do not meet the normal entry requirements for the course for which they have applied, but who can demonstrate prior certificated and/or experiential learning which is equivalent to, or exceeds, the standard of those requirements.

4. Art School procedures for the consideration of applications for the recognition/accreditation of prior learning

4.1 General principles

- 4.1.1 All applications for R/APL will be considered on their individual merits and in a fair and consistent way, in accordance with the Art School's Equality & Diversity and Admissions Policies. Detailed selection and administrative processes for admission are laid out in our Admissions Handbook [in progress].
- 4.1.2 Recommendations for admission to the Art School with academic credit will always be based on the academic judgements of at least 2 members of staff, and the award of any formal academic credit, together with exemption from any elements of the course must be approved by the appropriate Examination Board Chair and be reported to that Examination Board.
- 4.1.3 Decisions on applications for admission to the start of a course where an applicant wishes to present evidence of prior certificated or experiential learning in lieu of the normal minimum entry requirements must be made by at least 2 members of staff, one of whom will normally be the Head of the admitting Department.
- 4.1.4 The Art School will provide information and support to prospective students who wish to apply for prior learning to be taken into consideration at the application stage. For example, advice will be available to applicants on how they can provide evidence of their prior learning in a format which will enable an academic judgement to be made on their aptitude and suitability for the course. However, it is the responsibility of the applicant or student to initiate the application process.
- 4.1.5 Evidence provided by applicants of their certificated or experiential learning must always demonstrate that the relevant learning outcomes for which credit is sought (including minimum entry requirements) have actually been achieved. Admission must not rely solely on evidence such as the length of a period of workplace experience.
- 4.1.6 The Academic Registrar is responsible for verifying all certified evidence provided by applicants in support of their claim for credit, prior to the student's enrolment at the Art School. Evidence which cannot be verified will not be

used to evaluate a candidate's learning, and an offer of a place made on the basis of evidence which turns out to be unverifiable or false will be withdrawn.

- 4.1.7 Admissions decisions made on the basis of accreditation of prior learning are matters of academic judgement which cannot be challenged; however, if based on a perceived error of process, or on new information coming to light that was not previously available, a request for the review of a decision may be considered under the Art School's Admissions Complaints & Appeals Procedure.

4.2 Applications for initial entry to a programme based on prior certificated or experiential learning

- 4.2.1 The Art School is responsible for making admissions decisions in respect of all the courses we offer, both BCU and the UAL Awarding Body having devolved this responsibility in respect of the programmes validated by those institutions.
- 4.2.2 It is the applicant's responsibility to indicate formally on their application form if they wish to be considered on the basis of R/APL. This will normally mean that they acknowledge that the qualifications they have achieved by formal education do not satisfy the academic requirements for entry to the programme they have applied for, but the applicant believes they can demonstrate learning acquired via other means which is equivalent to, or exceeds, the minimum entry requirement and will equip them to achieve the standard required to complete a course successfully at the Art School.
- 4.2.3 The Art School will ensure that the published admissions criteria for all courses contain broad statements of the achievements, knowledge, skills and expertise that those applicants who do not meet the standard entry requirements in terms of qualifications, should be expected to be able to demonstrate by means of further evidence. We will provide advice and support to applicants as necessary to enable them to present their evidence in a format that can be assessed in terms of its equivalence to the standard entry requirements.
- 4.2.4 Applicants should provide, as part of the personal statement in their original application, at least an outline of the evidence they wish to use to demonstrate their suitability and aptitude for the course they are applying for. Either the Art School's Admissions Officer or a member of the admitting Department will contact the applicant if further evidence, or evidence in a different format, is required before a decision can be made.
- 4.2.5 Examples of evidence applicants might be asked to provide include (but is not restricted to):
- A portfolio of practical work, e.g. drawings, designs, paintings, artefacts etc. which they have produced in the course of previous certificated or private study, vocational or professional work, voluntary work or leisure activities

- Examples of essay- or discourse writing which may have been undertaken in any of the above contexts
- Profiles, Progress Files or Records of Achievement which may or may not be associated with formal qualifications

- 4.2.6 The assessment of evidence produced in support of an application made on the basis of R/APL will be undertaken by at least 2 members of staff. The assessment process will include an interview (via Skype if necessary), which will be recorded on a standard form on which the evidence supplied by the applicant is evaluated against the assessment criteria.
- 4.2.7 Evaluation of the evidence will always be made in relation to the standard assessment criteria for the programme, including the requirement for proficiency in English Language.
- 4.2.8 In making their assessment and the subsequent academic judgement on a candidate's suitability, selectors will also consider the Art School's capacity to provide any support a student might need where their prior learning demonstrates an ability to complete the programme successfully but particular skills (e.g. ability to express oneself in formal academic writing) may need to be updated or enhanced in order to benefit fully from the programme. The selectors will liaise with the Head of Student Support in such cases to arrange an assessment of the candidate's needs.
- 4.2.9 The successful outcome of the assessment of prior learning will result in a place on the course being offered. The offer may be conditional on the applicant providing a further piece of evidence in fulfilment of one or more of the assessment criteria.
- 4.2.10 The unsuccessful outcome of an application based on the assessment of prior learning will result in the application being formally rejected. However, the applicant will be advised, if appropriate, of ways in which s/he might acquire further learning in order to provide evidence of progression to a point where an application in a subsequent year may be successful.
- 4.2.11 As stated in section 4.1.7 above, unsuccessful applicants may not appeal against the academic judgement of the selectors, but in the event of a perceived irregularity in the process, or if new evidence of their suitability is discovered, an applicant may seek a review of the decision via the Admissions Complaints & Appeals procedure (see Appendix A of the Art School's Admissions Policy).

4.3 Applications for the award of academic credit at the admission stage

- 4.3.1 Applications for **admission with academic credit** to the BA/MA programmes in Fine Art and in Conservation must be considered under the APEL Policies and Procedures of Birmingham City University, as required under section 3.4 of the BCU/Art School Operations Manual (current from July 2016).

- 4.3.2 Any R/APL application in respect of these courses will therefore be considered by Art School staff in the first instance in line with the Principles laid out in section 3 of this document. Staff will then liaise with the BCU Faculty Link Tutor in order to obtain formal approval for admission from the BCU Faculty Admissions Committee. Approval of any academic credit/module exemptions must additionally be obtained from the Chair of the relevant Art School Examination Board and must comply with BCU's Regulations on the award of credit through recognition/accreditation of prior learning.
- 4.3.3 In the case of an application for admission with academic credit for the Art School's Historic Carving courses, assessment of the evidence must be evaluated by at least 2 members of staff and admission must have the approval of the Head of Historic Carving. Approval of any academic credit and/or exemption from any part of the Historic Carving programmes must additionally be obtained from the Chair of the Historic Carving Examination Board and be formally reported to that Examination Board.
- 4.3.4 In order to provide consistency across our courses, the Art School's regulations for the award of academic credit and exemption from any part of the Historic Carving courses through R/APL, will align where possible with those of BCU until such time as it is agreed that any other Regulations supersede them.
- 4.3.5 In the case of the Level 4 Foundation Diploma in Art & Design, which is delivered at the Art School as a Centre approved by the University of the Arts London (UAL) Awarding Body, the Art School's procedures for the consideration of applications for admission with academic credit would be in strict accordance with Section E of the UAL Awarding Body's *Operations, Policies and Procedures Handbook*. There have been to date no instances of such an application but in the event that one is received, the Head of Foundation will liaise closely with the UAL Awarding Body's Quality Manager to ensure that all requirements are met.

4.4 Applications for the recognition/accreditation of prior learning from current students

- 4.4.1 Applications may be made by students who are already following a course of study at the Art School, to be granted credit in partial fulfilment of their programme requirements through the recognition/accreditation of prior certified or experiential learning.
- 4.4.2 Should a student realise part way through their programme that s/he has relevant learning which may form the basis of a claim for credit against a particular module, the Art School will provide advice and support as necessary to enable that student to present evidence for that claim in a format which enables assessment as to whether the learning outcomes of the relevant module are met.
- 4.4.3 In order to comply with BCU's Procedures for the Accreditation of Prior Learning, full-time applicants for the validated courses and for Historic

Carving must apply for R/APL within 6 weeks of enrolment or re-enrolment if a returning student. Part-time students may make a claim at any point in the year but where progression or exit awards are dependent on its outcome, the claim should be submitted at least 10 weeks before the relevant Examination Board meeting.

- 4.4.4 In the case of programmes validated by BCU, the evidence will be evaluated by at least 2 members of staff who will liaise with the Faculty Link Tutor to ensure compliance with BCU's procedures and regulations on the minimum amount of credit that must be achieved on the programme itself. Approval for any award of credit and exemption from any part of the programmes must be given by the Chair of the relevant Examination Board and reported formally to that Board.
- 4.4.5 For Historic Carving, evidence in support of R/APL will be evaluated by at least 2 members of staff, and approval for any award of credit and exemption from part of the programme endorsed by the Chair of the Historic Carving Examination Board and reported formally to that Board.
- 4.4.6 Applications for R/APL can also be made by students on the Foundation Diploma course who can demonstrate prior learning, either certified or experiential, which may form the basis of a claim for credit and exemption from one or more units. Claims may only be made in respect of Units 1-6 as Unit 7 is not suitable for R/APL.
- 4.4.7 As with claims for credit at the admission stage, the Head of Foundaton will liaise with the UAL Awarding Body's Quality Manager to ensure that any claim for credit made by a current student is dealt with in compliance with the Principles laid down by the Qualifications and Credit Framework for the operation of R/APL as laid out in Section E of the UAL Awarding Body's *Operations, Policies and Procedures Handbook*.

5. Monitoring, reporting and review of this Policy and Procedure

5.1 Monitoring and reporting

- 5.1.1 Applications for entry to the Art School on the basis of R/APL will be included separately in anonymised management information on student recruitment and reports correlating students' final results with their entry profiles. These reports will be included in Annual Programme Monitoring reports considered by Boards of Studies, the Senior Management Team and Academic Board.

5.2 Review of this Policy and Procedures

- 5.2.1 This Policy will be formally reviewed by Academic Board every 5 years. In order to incorporate any changes to national and/or institutional requirements in the interim, it will additionally be reviewed annually by the Academic Registrar and any updates reported to the Senior Management Team and Academic Board for formal approval.