



**The Quality Assurance Agency  
for Higher Education**

# **Guidelines on the accreditation of prior learning**

**September 2004**

© Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2004

ISBN 1 84482 177 3

All the Agency's publications are available on our web site [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

*Printed copies are available from:*

Linney Direct

Adamsway

Mansfield

NG18 4FN

Tel 01623 450788

Fax 01623 450629

Email [qaa@linneydirect.com](mailto:qaa@linneydirect.com)

## Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>1</b>
The accreditation of prior learning in context	1
<b>Section A: Background and introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
Current practice(s) in the accreditation of prior learning	2
Definitions, boundaries and scope	2
Purpose and format of these Guidelines	4
<b>Section B: General principles of good practice in assuring and enhancing quality and standards in higher education</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Section C: Principles for guidance and explanatory notes</b>	<b>7</b>
Policies and procedures	7
Information	9
Roles and responsibilities	13
Support	14
Monitoring and review	15
<b>Appendix 1: Glossary of terms</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Appendix 2: Bibliography</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Appendix 3: Membership of Advisory Groups</b>	<b>19</b>

## Foreword

### **The accreditation of prior learning in context**

1 The emerging agenda for higher education (HE) in the United Kingdom (UK) promotes lifelong learning, social inclusion, wider participation, employability and partnership working with business, community organisations and among HE providers nationally and internationally. Consequently, higher education institutions (HEIs) are increasingly recognising the significant knowledge, skills and understanding which can be developed as a result of learning opportunities found at work, both paid and unpaid, and through individual activities and interests.

2 The accreditation of learning and achievement is one of the central functions of HE. In exercising this function, HE providers are increasingly considering how learning that has taken place in a range of contexts may be assessed and formally recognised through accreditation.

3 These *Guidelines on the accreditation of prior learning* (the *Guidelines*) have been drawn up by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (the Agency) at the request of individuals and groups within the HE community, in order to help ensure that this important activity can be conducted with a high level of security and in the light of the best current practice.

4 Guidelines on the recognition of prior learning (RPL) will be produced separately by the development partners, the Agency's Scottish office, Universities Scotland, the Scottish Qualifications Authority and the Scottish Executive, for the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The SCQF guidelines will support the implementation of RPL provision across all post-compulsory education sectors in Scotland, and will cover all prior learning which has not been previously assessed or credit-rated. This will include prior learning achieved through life and work experiences as well as prior learning gained in less formal contexts in community-based learning, work-based learning, continuing professional development and voluntary work. The SCQF guidelines on RPL will be published in spring 2005.

## Section A: Background and introduction

### **Current practice(s) in the accreditation of prior learning**

5 The UK has always had, and celebrated, diversity of provision and variety in its approach to the delivery of learning opportunities and the practice of learning in HE. Formal certification of this learning operates within robust and participatory quality assurance frameworks. These frameworks promote public understanding and confidence in both the quality of HE and the standard of its outcomes.

6 A similarly diverse range of approaches and practices for the accreditation of prior learning has evolved across the HE sector. Public confidence in the accreditation of prior learning, comparable to that for learning achieved during more traditional teaching and learning activities, is important if the practice is to be sustained and developed.

### **Definitions, boundaries and scope**

7 The process of identification, assessment and formal acknowledgement of prior learning and achievement is commonly known across the HE sector as 'accreditation'. The term 'accreditation of prior learning' is used in the *Guidelines* to encapsulate the range of activity and approaches used formally to acknowledge and establish publicly that some reasonably substantial and significant element of learning has taken place. Such learning may have been recognised previously by an education provider, for the purposes of the *Guidelines* described as 'prior certificated learning'; or it may have been achieved by reflecting upon experiences outside the formal education and training systems, described for the purposes of the *Guidelines* as 'prior experiential learning'.

8 Although not an exhaustive list, HE providers typically describe their approach to the accreditation of prior learning under one or more of the following headings:

- accreditation of prior learning (APL);
- accreditation of prior certificated learning (APCL);
- accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL);
- accreditation of prior certificated and/or experiential learning (AP[E/C]L);
- accreditation of prior learning and achievement (APL&A).

9 These approaches typically include policies and practices designed to accredit learning and achievement that occurred:

- and has been previously assessed and certificated;
- in a work/community-based or related setting, but is not a formal part of that experience;
- at some time, prior to the formal HE programme on which an applicant is about to embark;
- concurrent with participation in a HE programme, but is not a formal part of that experience;
- through experience and critical reflection, but was not part of a formal learning programme.

10 The theme common to prior certificated learning, prior experiential learning and to all of the illustrative activities above, which must be properly considered for accreditation, is learning. It is the achievement of learning, or the outcomes of that learning, and not just the experience of the activities alone, that is being accredited.

11 The term accreditation of prior learning as used in the *Guidelines*, therefore, does not include:

- policies and practices to identify, assess and acknowledge formally the achievement of learning that occurred as an intended or planned outcome of the validated HE programme the student is enrolled on;
- learning resulting from, for example, formal teaching, a work or community-based (work or community-related) placement, group work or independent study designed as an integral part of the programme, although the intended learning outcomes of such study may be used as key reference points against which decisions about the accreditation of prior learning can be made. Recognition of these forms of learning would be expected to occur in the usual formal assessment practices of a programme of learning;
- the acknowledgement of experience alone.

Whenever and wherever the experience occurred, evidence must be presented to demonstrate that learning has taken place.

### **Purpose and format of these Guidelines**

12 Higher education providers have, and will continue to develop, their own approaches to accrediting learning that is substantive and meaningful, including learning attained outside a formal learning environment.

13 The *Guidelines* are not a 'how to do it manual' and do not provide models of practice or a detailed account of approaches and procedures to be followed. They are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. The purpose of the *Guidelines* is to encourage HE providers to explore, with their partners and stakeholders, a range of issues that can emerge when developing and refining approaches to the accreditation of prior learning.

14 The aim of the *Guidelines* is to provide prompts to HE providers, as they develop and reflect upon their policies and procedures, and seek to assure themselves that their practices promote the maintenance and enhancement of quality and standards. They do this by describing general principles that underpin good practice in the assurance of quality and standards in HE and by providing a structure within which reflection and debate may take place. A range of matters that HE providers may find useful to attend to when developing and reviewing their approach to the accreditation of prior learning are highlighted, and suggestions offered for the development and/or enhancement of good practice.

15 The *Guidelines* have been written with a relatively high level of generality and, as such, should be of interest and accessible to a range of readers. Administrators and managers in HE may find the *Guidelines* a useful resource when assuring themselves (and others) that institutional policies and practices are based on firm principles. Academic staff (lecturers, programme designers, advisors, assessors and examiners) may also find it useful to refer to the *Guidelines* alongside institutional-specific documentation.

16 The *Guidelines* may also serve as a source of information for those that have an interest in the approaches adopted by HE providers for the accreditation of prior learning. Applicants considering whether to seek accreditation of their learning, and advisers to potential HE students, may find the *Guidelines* a useful aid to seeking information about institutional policies and practices. Employers and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies may also consult the *Guidelines* when trying to understand how the HE opportunities available to their staff and members can be matched to their own expectations and requirements. Finally, external examiners, who may be asked to comment on or verify a decision to accredit prior experiential learning, may find the *Guidelines* a useful supplement to institutional policy documents.

17 The body of these *Guidelines* comprises two main sections, B and C. Section B outlines general principles of good practice in assuring and enhancing quality and standards in HE. Section C contains a set of principles covering a range of issues HE providers may encounter in developing and refining their approach to the accreditation of prior learning. Explanatory notes for the development and enhancement of good practice accompany each principle.



## **Section B: General principles of good practice in assuring and enhancing quality and standards in higher education**

18 The *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code*) has been developed in close consultation with the HE sector. It contains general principles that underpin the assurance of academic quality and standards in a range of HE activities. These general principles are equally applicable to the quality assurance of the accreditation of prior learning.

19 The general principles of good practice in assuring and enhancing quality and standards in HE are that:

- policies and procedures should be explicit and fair and applied consistently. Policies and procedures adopted should help an institution to demonstrate that it exercises properly its responsibility for the academic standards of all awards granted in its name;
- information available to applicants and staff should be clear, explicit and accessible;
- roles and responsibilities of staff and applicants should be defined clearly. Staff should be competent to undertake their responsibilities;
- appropriate support should be offered to applicants;
- policies and procedures should be monitored and reviewed.

20 While the *Guidelines* flow from, and are consistent with, these principles, it does not attempt to set out any one particular approach to the accreditation of prior learning.

21 Where appropriate, reference is made to the *Code*, constituent elements of the Academic Infrastructure (Subject benchmark statements; programme specifications; the frameworks for higher education qualifications) and other reference points. The *Guidelines* should be read in conjunction with these documents.

## Section C: Principles for guidance and explanatory notes

### Policies and procedures

#### 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.

22 Where accreditation of prior learning is being sought for the award of academic credit<sup>1</sup>, an HE provider will wish to assure itself that the learning derived from experience and/or prior certificated study is equivalent to that of the learning that might otherwise have been achieved by following the HE provider's validated programme of study. In reaching a decision about the equivalence of learning, an HE provider will wish to consider the combination of skills and learning outcomes, and level and relevance of the subject knowledge and understanding to be evidenced by an applicant.

23 As with other methods used to assess student's learning and achievement, HE providers will want to ensure that the decision-making process used to assess a claim for the accreditation of prior learning, and the outcomes of this process, are 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 progression, the award of any interim qualification and the classification or grading of a final qualification should be clear and transparent.

24 In developing its approach to the accreditation of prior learning, an HE provider will find it useful to describe and explain the reasons for its decisions, policies and the procedures adopted for imposing limits, if any, on the volume of learning that can be achieved through the accreditation process. Limits may be applied to the smallest amount of learning that can be accredited, for example, a module or cluster of learning outcomes, and/or a maximum amount of learning that any individual applicant may claim for accreditation.

---

<sup>1</sup>HE providers may wish to develop policies and practices for the accreditation of prior learning within the context of a credit framework. The approach employed by an institution will typically reflect the mechanisms it uses to record the learning that results from a programme. While the use of a credit framework may simplify the process of recognition, and make the process more easily understood by others using a similar framework, it is not essential for the accreditation of prior learning.

25 When articulating its policies on whether limits are imposed on the proportion of a qualification that may be achieved through the accreditation of prior experiential or certificated learning, an HE provider may also wish to consider the appropriateness of the 'use and reuse of credit/'double counting of learning achievement'. An HE provider is encouraged to make clear its policies regarding the recognition of learning that has previously been accredited in the award of a qualification, credit, or other form of certification, and is subsequently being presented for recognition in a second qualification, or part thereof.

26 An HE provider may also wish to include in its discussions consideration of whether learning derived from experience which is successfully accredited should be graded and, if so, how. Similarly, useful consideration may also be given to whether grades awarded by another education provider can be accepted, when a claim for the recognition of prior certificated learning has been successful.

27 Applicants will need to be made aware of any limitations to progression, obtaining an interim award, and/or the range of qualification grades or classifications that are normally available in a programme of study, which may apply if their application is successful.

**Principle 3:**

Prior experiential and/or certificated learning that has been accredited by an HE provider should be clearly identified on students' transcripts.

30 As transcripts of learning become more widely used and understood, an HE provider will want to consider how the accreditation of prior learning can be appropriately identified on students' transcripts of learning. Any decision is likely to be influenced by the HE provider's use (or not) of credit, and how its accreditation of prior learning procedures and policies link to its policies and regulations on admission and entry to a programme, the granting of advanced standing and criteria for progression. HE providers' approaches to identifying accredited learning on students' transcripts are also likely to be influenced by the data set recommended for inclusion on students' transcripts outlined in the *Guidelines for HE Progress Files* and/or the data fields specified in the *Diploma Supplement*.

## Information

### Principle 4:

Higher education providers should provide clear and accessible information for applicants, academic staff, examiners and stakeholders about its policies, procedures and practices for the accreditation of prior learning.

31 Higher education providers will develop their own policies, procedures and practices for the accreditation of prior learning, reflecting their individual organisational structures and missions.

32 The information that an HE provider makes available to applicants, academic staff, examiners and stakeholders will typically include an explanation of what will, and will not, be accredited (ie demonstrable learning and not experience alone); when a claim for the accreditation of prior learning can be made; and the nature of any support and advice available to applicants.

33 Applicants particularly will appreciate clear information and guidance on how claims for accreditation should be presented and submitted, including the scope and nature of the evidence that will be required to support the claim, and any time limits applied to the currency of evidence supplied. The assessment procedures and methods, including how a successful claim for accreditation will be presented on a transcript of learning, need to be clear and transparent to all staff, applicants, examiners and stakeholders.

34 Details of how a candidate's standing on a programme, including, if appropriate, the award of credit and how accredited learning will affect the availability of any potential awards or qualification classifications and any available interim qualifications or stopping off points, will need to be considered by HE providers when devising their policies and providing guidance to staff, applicants, examiners and stakeholders.

35 HE providers will also want to ensure that their policies on the requirements of professional and regulatory bodies; the possible outcomes of a claim, such as partial accreditation and/or opportunities for the re-submission of an unsuccessful claim; the fees charged for the consideration of claims and for subsequent planned learning; and the circumstances, if any, in which an appeal against a decision on the accreditation of prior learning would be considered, and the procedures to be followed, are clear and readily accessible.

36 An HE provider may also want to consider whether a single, institution-wide policy and set of procedures should apply to all claims, or whether diversity in policy and practice is acceptable, perhaps to permit programme/subject/profession-specific issues to be addressed. The nature and extent of any divergence in policy and practice will need to be made clear and transparent.

**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.

37 Higher education providers are encouraged to set out clearly and unambiguously definitions of the terms they have adopted in the documentation setting out their policies, procedures and approaches to the accreditation of prior learning.

38 Clear descriptions of the scope and boundaries of the policies, procedures and practices adopted for the accreditation of prior learning may assist an HE provider with their implementation. Applicants, academic staff, stakeholders, assessors and examiners will find it beneficial to have clear and transparent information about where policies and procedures for accreditation of prior experiential learning are the same as, and where they differ from, those used to consider claims for accreditation based on previously certificated learning.

**Principle 6:**

Information and guidance materials outlining the process(es) for the assessment of claims for the accreditation of prior experiential and/or previously certificated learning should be clear, accurate and easily accessible.

39 Each of the stages in the processes for the assessment of claims for the accreditation of prior experiential and/or prior certificated learning should be carefully identified. Clear and readily available documentation making explicit how each of these stages are managed, and the roles and responsibilities of staff, internal and external assessors, verifiers and examiners, and applicants themselves, at each of the stages, can assist the smooth implementation of the HE provider's policies and procedures.

**Principle 7:**

Higher education providers should consider the range and form(s) of assessment appropriate to consider claims for the recognition of learning.

40 Higher education providers may wish to consider the range of assessment tools they will permit (and encourage) to be used in assessing claims for the recognition of learning and the appropriateness of these tools.

41 Assessment tools often used in the accreditation of experiential learning include a portfolio of evidence; a focused interview or viva; and completion of a piece of work and a reflective account/diary of the learning achieved, or completion of the usual assessment used to demonstrate learning in the module/course/programme for which equivalence is being claimed.

42 The assessment of portfolios is widely used by HE providers. Guidance on portfolio preparation can helpfully address such factors as the nature and volume of the evidence to be included, requirements as to its currency and any necessity for independent verification of evidence. An HE provider may also wish to include guidance on the language in which evidence should be presented, together with guidance on any translation requirements and responsibilities.

**Principle 8:**

The criteria to be used in judging a claim for the accreditation of prior learning should be made explicit to applicants, academic staff, stakeholders and assessors and examiners.

43 The assessment of learning derived from experience should, in general, be determined by the same institutional internal and external quality assurance procedures as the assessment of learning through more traditional routes.

44 Any decision on the accreditation of prior learning will be an academic judgement about the equivalence of the learning derived from experience and the learning that might otherwise have been assessed during the course or programme, or evidenced by a qualification or other form of certificated learning recognised in the institution's entry requirements.

45 Decisions about the equivalence of learning should be informed by reference to explicit criteria such as those contained within programme specifications and statements of learning outcomes (for example, the combination of skills and learning outcomes, level, subject knowledge and understanding). Statements of professional competency (for example, where required by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies) may also be relevant and should be applied as appropriate. Higher education providers will also need to consider whether decisions about equivalence require evidence of an

exact and complete match to the learning and achievement that would otherwise need to be demonstrated when studying the validated programme and undertaking its assessment requirements.

46 In common with good practice in assessment generally, processes and procedures for the assessment of learning derived from experience and/or prior certificated learning should demonstrate objectivity, be clear and consistently applied.

**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.

47 The nature of experiential learning may require that a variety of instruments be used to evidence learning (eg portfolios, interviews, artefacts, projects etc). In determining the nature and range of evidence appropriate to support a claim for the accreditation of prior learning, HE providers may wish to consider the following criteria:

- Acceptability - is there an appropriate match between the evidence presented and the learning being demonstrated? Is the evidence valid and reliable?
- Sufficiency - is there sufficient evidence to demonstrate fully the achievement of the learning claimed?
- Authenticity - is the evidence clearly related to the applicants' own efforts and achievements?
- Currency - does the evidence relate to current learning? Where HE providers and/or professional, statutory or regulatory bodies have specific requirements and/or time limits for the currency of evidence, certification, or demonstration of learning, these should be made clear and transparent.

**Principle 10:**

The assessment of learning derived from experience should be open to internal and external scrutiny and monitoring within institutional quality assurance procedures.

48 The assessment of learning derived from experience should, in general, be subject to the same institutional internal and external quality assurance procedures as assessment of learning through more traditional routes. Assessment methods must be appropriate to the evidence provided, and the criteria by which it will be assessed must be clear.

## Roles and responsibilities

### Principle 11:

The locus of authority and responsibilities for making and verifying decisions about the accreditation of prior learning should be clearly specified.

49 An HE provider will want to outline clearly where the authority lies for making the decision to accredit learning derived from experience and/or prior certificated study, and the procedures to be followed.

50 An HE provider will want to consider whether arrangements for the accreditation of prior learning should be managed centrally or devolved among its departments/schools/faculties. Similarly, an HE provider will want to discuss with its partner organisations where the locus of authority and responsibilities for making and verifying decisions about the accreditation of prior learning are located.

51 The respective roles and responsibilities of individual assessors, assessment panels/boards and external examiners will need to be addressed and defined in the accreditation procedures. HE providers will need to ensure that all involved with the process are competent to undertake their roles, and have the time and resources to do so.

### 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 associated staff and applicants.

52 Staff, including those of partner organisations and external examiners, need to be informed about the HE provider's approach to the accreditation of prior learning and the opportunities available to applicants to seek such accreditation. Staff will need to be aware of the circumstances in which they might contribute to the accreditation of prior learning process(es).

53 Applicants will also need to be informed about their own responsibilities within the process(es), for example, their responsibilities towards the integrity of the process to assess their learning and any time limits within which they must submit their claim.

54 Applicants should be informed, at the outset of the process, about any fees that are payable to an HE provider for the consideration of claims for the accreditation of prior learning. The language in which claims and evidence should be presented, together with any responsibilities for translation should also be made clear.



**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.

55 Higher education providers should ensure that all staff, including those of partner organisations and external examiners, involved in the process(es) of accreditation of prior learning are adequately informed, appropriately trained and supported to undertake their role(s).

56 The roles of those who advise and support applicants with the preparation of evidence to support their claim, and the role of assessing claims, should be clearly delineated.

**Support**

**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.

57 When developing and refining its policies for the accreditation of prior learning, an HE provider may find it advisable to consider claims:

- only prior to the start of the programme;
- within a designated time from the start of the programme (in order to provide a candidate/applicant with an opportunity to consider, once they have started their studies, the relevance of their prior learning);
- from applicants at any time during of the programme (perhaps in order to allow part-time applicants to demonstrate learning from any employment or other activity being undertaken in parallel to their HE course). Under such circumstances an HE provider will also want to consider the number of claims, in total, that will be permitted.

58 In determining its approach to the timing of the submission of claims, an HE provider may wish to consider its mission and objectives in relation to widening participation and improved access to its awards, and how these may be best served by its approach to the accreditation of prior learning. Whether the approach adopted will promote or compromise equality of opportunity and how, for example, part-time students may be affected, might also be usefully discussed.

59 An HE provider may wish to consider whether curriculum design should explicitly facilitate claims for the accreditation of prior learning and if so, the potential effects on the coherence of the HE learning experience and the potential influence on applicants' motivation to take up opportunities to submit a claim.

**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.

60 Support available to applicants will vary according to the HE provider's approach to the accreditation of prior learning and the nature and number of claims it receives.

61 Applicants will find it useful to receive information and advice about the assessment procedures and an explanation of the learning that would need to be evidenced and the nature of the evidence to be provided.

62 Active support for applicants making a claim may be provided during the process in the form of a short course or module to prepare applicants to reflect upon their experiences and describe and analyse their learning, or via tools to assist applicants to reflect upon their experiences and identify and evidence the learning gained from those experiences.

63 Reflective learning can be a difficult concept, but is fundamental to the accreditation of learning from experience. Support to applicants preparing to evidence their learning may be connected to an institution's approach to the introduction of progress files for higher education and, in particular, personal development planning or with other initiatives to promote reflective learning.

64 Applicants should also be supported by effective, timely and appropriate feedback and HE providers may wish to consider when and how feedback is provided and how such feedback promotes future learning and progression.

**Monitoring and review**

**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 frameworks for quality assurance, management and enhancement.

#### Guidelines on the accreditation of prior learning

65 Regular review of policies and practices will assist an HE provider in assuring itself, applicants, partner organisations and stakeholders of the quality of its approach towards the accreditation of prior learning and the maintenance of academic standards.

66 The assurance of quality and standards may be included in an institution's general procedures. An HE provider may, however, also wish to consider in particular how judgements about claims are verified and whether decisions are shared in ways that promote consistency and equity. Feedback from external examiners involved in the process(es) can also be a useful source of information, and ways in which this information might be taken into account and acted upon should be considered.

67 The opportunities for collecting, considering and acting upon feedback from applicants who have made a claim for the accreditation of prior learning, and mechanisms for tracking and monitoring the progress and performance of applicants who have made a successful claim for the accreditation of prior learning, including in relation to other applicants who have not made similar claims for accreditation, might also be considered.

## Appendix 1: Glossary of terms

**Accreditation:** is a term frequently used as a synonym for the recognition of learning as defined below. However, it is perhaps more properly used to signify the most formalised and widely practised forms of recognition.

**Acknowledgement:** is another term sometimes used to describe the recognition of learning, but is usually used in a more broad and non-specific sense and does not necessarily involve the use of standardised mechanisms.

**Accreditation of prior learning (APL):** a process for accessing and, as appropriate, recognising prior experiential learning or prior certificated learning for academic purposes. This recognition may give the learning a credit-value in a credit-based structure and allow it to be counted towards the completion of a programme of study and the award(s) or qualifications associated with it.

The term 'accreditation of prior learning' is used in these *Guidelines* to encapsulate the range of activity and approaches used formally to acknowledge and establish publicly that some reasonably substantial and significant element of learning has taken place. Such learning may have been recognised previously by an education provider; described as 'prior certificated learning' or it may have been achieved by reflecting upon experiences outside the formal education and training systems; described as 'prior experiential learning'.

**Accreditation of prior certificated learning (APCL):** a process, through which previously assessed and certificated learning is considered and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes.

**Accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL):** a process through which learning achieved outside education or training systems is assessed and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes.

**Recognition (of learning):** any process that acknowledges and establishes publicly that some reasonably substantial and significant element of learning has taken place and can be assessed to have done so.

## Appendix 2: Bibliography

Bjornavold J (1997), Assessment of Non-Formal Learning: the Quality and Limitations of Methodologies, *European Journal of Vocational Training*, 12, 52-67

Boud D, Keog R & Walker D (1995), *Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning*, London, Kogan Page

Brown A (1992), *Valuing Skills: Recognition of Prior Learning*, North Melbourne, Australia, Victorian Education Foundation (2nd ed)

CEDEFOP (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training), (1997), *Identification, Validation and Accreditation of Prior and Informal Learning: the United Kingdom*, (a CEDEFOP national report), Thessaloniki, CEDEFOP

Dearden G (1991), Assessment of Prior Learning: An introduction for employers, employees and academic assessors, London, Learning from Experience Trust

Dochy F, Segers M & Buehl M M (1999), The Relationship between Assessment Practices and Outcomes of Studies: the Case of Research into Prior Learning, *Review of Educational Research*, 69 (2), 145-186

The Employment Department (1992), *How to Accredite Work-Based Learning: A conceptual framework*, Sheffield, HMSO

Evans N (2000), *Assessing experiential learning around the world: employability and the global economy*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Evans N (1987), *Assessing Experiential Learning: A review of progress and practice*, A Project Report, London, Longmans for FEU

HEQC (Higher Education Quality Council) (1995), *Guidelines on Quality Assurance of Credit-Based Learning*, London, HEQC

Johnson B (2002), *Models of APEL and Quality Assurance*, SEEC (South East England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer), Brentwood, Cravitz

Merrifield J, McIntyre D & Osaigbovo R (2000), *Mapping APEL: Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning in English Higher Education*, London, Learning from Experience Trust

Nganasurian W (1999), *Accreditation of Prior Learning for Nurses and Midwives*, Salisbury Quay Books

Nyatanga L, Forman D & Fox J (1998), *Good Practice in the Accreditation of Prior Learning*, London, Cassel

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2001), *Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*, QAA, Gloucester

SEEC (2003), *Revised SEEC Code of Practice for the Assessment of Prior (Experiential) Learning*, SEEC

Storan J (2003), *Transfine Project (Transfer between formal, informal and non-formal education): A UK Country Study*, University of East London

Wailey T & Simpson R (2000), Juggling between Learning and Work: AP(E)L in the UK, *Lifelong Learning in Europe*, 5 (2), 83-89

## Appendix 3: Membership of Advisory Groups

### Membership of Advisory Group

Janet Bohrer	Development Officer, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Carol Curran	Associate Head of School of Nursing, University of Ulster
Jonathan Garnett	Director of the National Centre for Work Based Learning Partnerships, Middlesex University
Nick Harris	Director, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
William Locke	Senior Policy Advisor, Universities UK
Garth Long	Education Advisor, Nursing and Midwifery Council
Phil Margham	Director of Learning Innovation, Liverpool John Moores University
Jayne Mitchell	Assistant Director, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Helen Pokorny	Teaching and Learning Co-ordinator, London Metropolitan University
Ann Read	Associate Dean, Southampton Institute
Alan Runcie	Assistant Director, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Polly Thornton	Learning Skills and Enterprise Manager, Hastings and Bexhill Task Force/SEEDA
Pauline Tweedale	Head of Professional Development/AP(E)L Co-ordinator, University of Nottingham
Fiona Waye	Policy Advisor, Universities UK (formerly Standing Conference of Principals)
Stephanie Wilson	Director of Academic Guidance, Anglia Polytechnic University
Peter Wright	Consultant and advisor to Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

### **Membership of Advisory Group for learning outside formal teaching**

David Bottomley	Assistant Director, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Pandy Brodie	Credit Co-ordinator, Work-based Learning and Senior Lecturer, University College Chester
Patricia Higham	Head of Department, Health & Human Services, Nottingham Trent University
Karen Hilling	Formerly Personnel Officer, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Janet Newsome	Planning and Policy Development Officer, University of Birmingham
Michael Richardson	Director of Continuing Education, University of Cambridge
Norman Sharp	Head of Scottish Office, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Julie Swan	Formerly Director of Development, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Jan Tennant	Staff Development Officer, Loughborough University
Bill Thomson	Associate Dean (Development), University of Strathclyde
Juliet Weale	Formerly Senior Assistant Registrar, Brunel University



**The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education**

Southgate House  
Southgate Street  
Gloucester  
GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000  
Fax 01452 557070  
Email [comms@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:comms@qaa.ac.uk)  
Web [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

QAA 064 09/04