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BCS Education Operations

Recognition of Prior Learning

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1. Introduction

This Policy applies when a learner wishes to gain credit towards a BCS Higher Education Qualification.

It defines the principles by which BCS will assess applications for accreditation of prior learning and how that credit will be treated when assessing the awards, in accordance with the Higher Education regulations. Such exemptions may be granted based on Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning, Prior Certificated Learning or of credits/awards already achieved in a Higher Education institution and those included on the APL list. This policy defines the requirements for the granting of exemptions, which vary depending on the type of exemption, the basis of the exemption and the context for the exemption. The policy is informed by and is consistent with, Ofqual and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (QAA).

Where a student (or applicant) can demonstrate that they have already met, the appropriate standard, or the intended learning outcomes of part of an HEQ programme level. they may be granted exemption from that part, as permitted in the Individual exemption and APL process. Expectation is that, 'Higher education providers operate equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enables every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought.'

2. General Principles

The amount of credit to be awarded by BCS for previous assessed learning will be in regard to the program structure that the award is credited against. This will take into consideration the credit values through holistic module and/ or programme attainment.

Learners should normally apply for any APL credit as part of the registration process. However, credit may be awarded retrospectively at our discretion; where an application for assessment of prior learning is received after the learner has registered for a program BCS reserves the right not to consider that application.

Credit will be awarded at the discretion of BCS for previous certificated or experiential learning which is deemed to be equivalent to the learning outcomes of individual modules or some or all the learning outcomes of the HEQ programs of study.

Any application for assessment of prior certificated learning should be accompanied by relevant documentation. This will normally include a transcript from the institution concerned confirming any results received by the learner. Individual credit applications may require further evidence of the course syllabus, assessment structure, examinations and practical work.

Credit for learning previously undertaken may not be awarded at a higher level than that which it was studied at (e.g. a learner with credit from another institution at level 4 may not be awarded APL credit for this module at level 5 or above).

Credit from prior learning can be at a higher level than that required (e.g. a learner could use credit from Level 5 against Level 4 requirements).

Credit that has already been used towards an award cannot be considered for APL towards an equivalent or lower level award.

Credit that has already been used towards an award can be considered for APL towards a higher-level award.

APL credit will not normally be awarded towards a given module for a module that has been failed.

The decision to award APL credit is an academic judgement and BCS reserves the right to reject applications for the award of such credit where, there is insufficient evidence, or that the learner's prior learning falls below that of 80% relevancy of the syllabus for which the credit is applied. BCS also reserves the right not to award the full amount of credit that has been awarded by another institution for learning undertaken elsewhere.

Credit is awarded to those learners who have demonstrated their achievement of specified learning. Learners applying for assessment of prior experiential learning will need to be able to demonstrate, via a specified form of assessment, the learning gained from their prior experience. The essential feature of this process is that the learning is gained through experience which is being assessed not the experience itself.

The award of APL credit against an individual module exempts a learner from taking that module. It does not exempt the learner from any other components of the program unless specifically stated.

Professional or accrediting bodies may specify restrictions in the amount of APL credit that may be awarded on an accredited program. Should the maximum amount of credit permitted by the accrediting institution be lower than that permitted by BCS, then the regulations of the accrediting body shall override that of BCS.

The qualification in which we credit will have a 5-year time limit that begins from date of the first unit pass. So, for example, if the qualification has a 5-year time limit and we credit a unit with a prior achieved result from 4 years ago, the learner will now only have 1 year remaining to complete the qualification. Please contact BCS Client Services if you would like further information on limits to HEQ exemption qualifications.

3. Definitions of Prior Learning

For the purposes of this policy, recognition of prior learning is the:

- (a) Identification by an Awarding Organisation of any learning undertaken, and/or attainment, by a Learner
 - (i) Prior to that Learner taking a qualification which BCS makes available or proposes to make available, and
 - (ii) Which is relevant to the knowledge, skills and understanding which will be assessed as part of that qualification and
- (b) Recognition by BCS of that learning and/or attainment through amendment to the requirements which a Learner must have satisfied before the Learner will be assessed or that qualification will be awarded.

Recognition of Prior Experiential learning

Prior certificated learning relates to formally certificated prior learning (such as professional development awards or employment-based or vocational awards) that is at an appropriate level but has not led to the gaining of credits or qualifications in a HE institution. A process of assessment or, in some cases, evaluation of equivalency via NARIC, enables a decision to be made on whether the certificated learning is suitable for recognition [NARIC - Compare Qualifications](#). An evaluation of equivalency, rather than an assessment, may be used only where the standards of the award and of the awarding body are known and appropriate, as designated by the HEQ assessment panel.

Recognition of Credit

The recognition of credit involves an evaluation of equivalency of achieved learning outcomes and the level at which they were taken. The applicant/student may have completed a similar module/block at an international institution; thus, the recognition criteria are- currency, level and learning outcome compatibility, with mapping of a minimum of 80% knowledge undertaken, considering the institutional standards and programme recognition.

4. Limits to exemptions

Requests for recognition of prior learning or exemption award/credit will not normally be accepted if more than five years have elapsed since the said learning has taken place. In addition, limits on the volume of exemption allowed will be as follows for Certificate Level 4, Diploma Level 5 and Professional Graduate Diploma Level 6.

- (i) no more than 50% of assessed credit at HE level undergraduate awards.
- (ii) no more than 50% of the assessed credit of non-degree undergraduate awards.
- (iii) no more than 50% of the taught part assessed credit of any experiential certification.

5. Process of exemption assessment

The assessment process for Recognition of Prior Learning involves consideration of the Individual Exemption Request Form and assessment of the supporting evidence by two or more appropriate members of the Principal examiners assessment panel, who will initially conduct independent assessments of achievement of learning outcomes before agreeing a recommendation to the Chair of the Panel of Examiners for verification. The decisions for the granting of exemptions will then be recorded and sanctioned by the BCS examinations team.

6. User Guide

BCS produces a User Guide that Approved Centres can request which provides guidance on how to register a valid prior achievement through the Approved Centre Forum. This also covers the valid qualifications that we recognise.

7. Review

This policy and will be reviewed on an annual basis in line with departmental quality standards and regulatory criteria. We will also consider any customer feedback, trends from our internal monitoring arrangements, changes in our practices, actions from the Awarding Bodies or other relevant external agencies as well as changes in legislation. If you would like to feed back any views, please contact us.



BCS, 1st Floor, Block D, North Star House, North Star Avenue, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN2 1FA

T +44 (0) 1793 417 655 F +44 (0) 1793 417 559

Email certifications@bcs.uk

Website www.bcs.org

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