

ROYAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC

Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

March 2020

Introduction

The Royal Academy of Music has long recognised that significant knowledge, skills and understanding relevant to our programmes of study can be developed as a result of learning opportunities outside formal educational frameworks, whether through employment, voluntary work, or individual activities and interests. This recognition promotes lifelong learning, social inclusion and wider participation; above all, it ensures that the Academy provides equal access opportunities to gifted and motivated applicants from all backgrounds.

The Academy has developed strong and clear mechanisms for identifying, assessing and formally acknowledging prior learning. This document sets out the definitions, framework and processes whereby prior learning is accredited at the Academy. It is designed:

- To set out fair and explicit procedures
- To define the roles and responsibilities of staff and students/applicants
- To make information available to applicants, students, and staff
- To describe how this policy and its procedures will be monitored and reviewed.

Definitions

1. At the Academy the accreditation of prior learning includes prior certificated learning and prior experiential learning.
2. Prior certificated learning refers to learning and achievement that was assessed and certificated before the start of the programme of study.
3. Prior experiential learning refers to learning and achievement through experience and critical reflection outside the context of a formal programme of study.
4. It is crucial that proper consideration be given in the accreditation process to **learning and achievement through experience**, not just the relevance of the experience alone.

Framework

The Academy will consider the accreditation of prior learning in relation to:

- Matriculation to any of its programmes of study
- Entry at stage 2 of the Bachelor of Music (BMus) programme
- Transfer from the Postgraduate Certificate programme to the Master of Arts (MA) programme
- Transfer from 2-year Masters to 1-year Masters (up to the end of the first term of the programme)

- Transfer from the MA programme to the Master of Music (MMus) programme

The Academy will not normally consider the accreditation of prior learning in relation to direct entry to stages 3 or 4 of the BMus programme because of: (i). the integrated structure of stages 2, 3 and 4 of the programme (in which stages 3 and 4 are designed to develop and consolidate learning achieved by the end of stage 2); (ii). the difficulty in calibrating graded work certificated by other institutions to the Academy's grading standards.

The Academy will not consider the accreditation of prior learning in relation to individual modules at any stage of any of its programmes of study, because of the integral nature of each stage of the programme.

Procedures

General

1. Academic staff assessing APEL will consider written evidence of prior learning and achievement, practical demonstration of prior learning through a structured audition and diagnostic assessment, and verbal evidence of prior learning through a structure interview, as appropriate.
2. Evidence of learning and achievement will be assessed in relation to the following:
 - The subject benchmark statement for Music
 - The relevant programme specification
 - Where relevant, the matriculation requirements of the University of London
3. Academic staff assessing APEL will scrutinise:
 - The authenticity and reliability of the evidence
 - The currency of the evidence
 - The sufficiency of the evidence to demonstrate the applicant's prior learning and achievement at the appropriate level(s)
4. Decisions taken in respect to APEL shall be matters of academic judgment.

Matriculation

1. The Academy annually conducts a rigorous, fair and transparent admissions process through an intensive round of audition, diagnostic assessment and interview designed to ascertain each applicant's skills, understanding and knowledge at a level appropriate to their chosen programme of study. This process is designed to give detailed consideration to evidence of each applicant's certificated *and* experiential prior learning, thus ensuring that the broadest range of evidence is brought to bear on decisions about whom to admit to the programmes of study. Decisions relating to admissions are the responsibility of the

Academy's Selection Board alone. Any admissions decision involving APEL shall be clearly recorded in the minutes of the Admissions Meeting.

2. If the Selection Board is unable to satisfy itself that the applicant can matriculate through the accreditation of prior learning identified during the auditions/interview process, then the procedure set out in paragraphs 2–10 below shall be activated.
3. No additional APEL assessment is required for those students to whom we are offering places on the Professional Diploma or Advanced Diploma when they have a suitable first degree (Bachelor).

Entry to Year 2 of the BMus programme, or transfer between PGT programmes

1. Before making an application, prospective applicants should seek advice from the relevant Head of Programme about the appropriateness of their prior learning. Having received the Head of Programme's advice, applicants should make a formal application to the Registrar for the consideration of APEL. Applications should ideally be made before the start of their programme of study, and must be made not later than one term after the start of their programme of study.
2. On receipt of an application the Registrar will within 10 working days convene an APEL panel and inform the applicant of:
 - The date, time, and venue of any auditions, tests or interviews relating to the accreditation process
 - The applicant's responsibility to provide authentic, relevant, current and sufficient evidence for the panel to reach a decision
 - The framework of the APEL process
3. The APEL panel will consist of one Deputy Principal and the relevant Head of Programmes; at the discretion of the Deputy Principal, one other member of academic staff (who may or may not be the head of the applicant's Principal Study department) may be invited to sit on the panel.
4. The APEL panel will assess the evidence, including – as appropriate – a formal audition, diagnostic assessments, and/or a structured interview with the applicant.
5. The APEL panel may seek advice from an external expert, normally the external member of the Academic Board.
6. The APEL panel chairman will write a report, including recommendations and reasons for the recommendations.
7. The final decision to accredit prior learning will be the sole responsibility of the Chairman of the Selection Board (acting under powers delegated by the Board).
8. The Registrar will inform the applicant of the decision and its rationale within 10 working days of the meeting of the APEL panel.

9. A copy of the panel's report, with an addendum recording the decision of the Chairman of the Selection Board, will be placed in the applicant's file.
10. Prior learning that has been accredited will be recorded on the student's transcript.

Appeals against decisions pertaining to APEL

1. An applicant may lodge an appeal against an APEL decision only on the grounds of procedural irregularity.
2. The appeal should be lodged with the Registrar within 10 days of receipt of the original APEL decision.
3. On receipt of the appeal the Registrar will make an initial judgment about the validity of the appeal. If the Registrar judges that there are sufficient grounds for the appeal to be heard, an appeal panel will convene, consisting of two members of academic staff who were not members of the original APEL panel.
4. The panel will meet within 10 working days of receipt of the appeal. The panel will scrutinise the evidence submitted in support of the appeal and will decide either (a) to uphold the appeal and order a reconsideration of the original APEL application; or (b) to reject the appeal. The appeal panel must give its decision and reasons in writing. The panel's decision is final.
5. The Registrar will inform the appellant of the decision and its rationale within 10 working days of the panel's decision.

Monitoring and Review of APEL Policies and Procedures

1. All APEL decisions will be subject to internal monitoring by the Selection Board (with respect to matriculation), by the Undergraduate Programmes Board (with respect to entry to stage 2 of the BMus programme) and by the Postgraduate Programmes Board (with respect to transfer from one taught postgraduate programme to another).
2. All APEL decisions will be open to external scrutiny through the involvement of external advisors with APEL panels, and through the inclusion of APEL statistics in the Annual Programme Monitoring Reports.
3. The Academy's APEL Policies and Procedures will be reviewed annually by the Standing Committee of Academic Board.

Staff Training Issues

1. Training for all academic staff in APEL policies and procedures will be included in the annual Consolidation Day for admissions.
2. Training for members of APEL panels will be delivered by the Registrar at the time each panel is convened.

3. Training for administrators whose work supports APEL policies and procedures will be the responsibility of the Human Resources department.

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