
14 Accreditation of academic credit

14.1 Introduction and principles of accreditation at Middlesex University

Accreditation is the formal mechanism for the recognition of learning that is achieved outside the University's validated programmes of study. It uses the Middlesex University academic credit framework to evaluate and quantify such learning in terms of credit points at a particular level.

The accreditation process is managed according to the following principles:

- Middlesex University is responsible for the academic standards of all academic credit awarded in its name.
- Middlesex University will implement appropriate and proportionate due diligence procedures to assess academic, financial, legal and reputational risks associated with organisations proposing external courses or other activity for accreditation.
- All applications for credit will be assessed rigorously in accordance with the assessment regulations of the University, with credit only awarded against qualifications for demonstrable learning achievement (i.e. not for time taken).
- Accreditation assessment shall be subject to internal moderation and appropriate external scrutiny, and approved by a University Faculty Committee.
- Accreditation can lead to the award of general or specific credit against a qualification. The recognition of academic credit does not in itself constitute the award of a University qualification but rather credit that can count towards such a qualification.
- Specific credit is that which relates to and can count towards the achievement of an identified Middlesex University qualification.
- The recognition of specific credit provides students with exemption awarded against specific modules of the programme and enables students to access the programme at a later stage and complete it in less time than it would normally take.
- Specific credit for learning cannot be recognised at a higher level or with a greater number of credit points than the general credit rating of the same learning.
- General credit can be recognised towards the achievement of qualifications within the University awards, as agreed.
- The University Regulations define the maximum amount of specific credit that can count towards Middlesex University qualifications.
- All credit recognised be certificated. In the case of general credit a Certificate of Credit will be provided. All specific credit used towards an award bearing programme will be recorded as part of a student Diploma Supplement.
- All credit recognised through accreditation will be ungraded.
- Claimants may appeal against the decisions of the Assessment Board in accordance with the University appeal regulations.
- The University will provide advice to support the development of a proposal/claim for accreditation, and appropriate staff development for those involved in accreditation assessment.
- The accreditation proposal/claim remains the responsibility of the proposer/claimant.
- Accreditation activity will be subject to annual monitoring.

14.2 Types of accreditation at Middlesex University

The following types of learning activity can be accredited at Middlesex University:

Accreditation of external learning activity or courses

This type of accreditation concerns the development, credit rating and implementation of the award of credit to successful participants on external courses which do not already hold a credit value from a recognised framework (e.g. FHEQ), for example professional in-house training. University Faculties make the decision about the extent to which they engage with accreditation activity; in particular, decisions will relate to the cost effectiveness of the proposed activity, the rationale in the context of Faculty business and the proposed progression to University academic awards.

At this time some faculties have decided not to actively pursue relationships of this nature and will only be entered into on exceptional basis. Any discussion on potential relationships must be approved at the earliest opportunity.

Accreditation of individual ‘recognition of prior learning’ (RPL) claims

This concerns RPL claims submitted by individuals for ‘certificated’ and/or ‘experiential’ learning. Certificated learning includes qualifications or certificates awarded by a university or other awarding body as evidence of previously recognised learning that has an established academic credit value.

Where a prior qualification or certificate is not from a recognised awarding body, its equivalence to specific learning outcomes will need to be established with reference to UK NARIC. Where a qualification or certificate’s credit value cannot be established, the prior learning associated with it will require further evidence that can be assessed.

14.3 Collaborative Programme Accreditation Boards

Collaborative programmes may, as part of validation or subsequently as a consequence of a review of their policy by the relevant Faculty committee, apply for authority to award specific credit in respect solely of the validated collaborative programme. The quality assurance principles of Middlesex University apply in respect of the partner institution.

The Collaborative Programme Accreditation Board is constituted as follows:

- Programme Leader (Chair)
- Middlesex University Link Tutor
- Assessor(s) and external examiners as appropriate

The terms of reference of a Collaborative Programme Accreditation Board are:

- To consider and where appropriate recognition in respect of claims for accreditation put forward by individuals and to decide upon the number and level of credits.

The decisions of the Collaborative Programme Accreditation Board are reported to the assessment board of the programme concerned and are subject to scrutiny by external examiners aligned to the programme. The operation of the Collaborative Programme

Accreditation Board will be included as part of the programme annual monitoring report required by the University.

14.4 Accreditation of external learning activity and courses

14.4.1 Development of the accreditation proposal

University Faculty representatives will make an initial assessment of the suitability of the organisation and activity for accreditation and, in consultation with the relevant University Faculty Deputy Dean, confirm, or otherwise, approval to proceed to accreditation proposal stage. This approval confirms the availability of appropriate resources to support the development, assessment and quality monitoring of accredited activity.

The client organisation will submit the completed *Accreditation Proposal* form to the relevant Faculty Committee.

14.4.2 Credit rating the proposal

The relevant Faculty appoint an Assessor(s) for each proposal. The role of the Accreditation Proposal Assessor is to assess a proposal and make a recommendation to the Faculty committee with respect to its appropriateness in relation to the volume and level of credit sought. The proposal and assessor recommendations are considered by the Faculty committee which will consider the proposal and the Assessor's recommendation, in respect of:

- the number of credits
- the level of credits; and
- the appropriateness of the proposed learning outcomes and assessment requirements.

The Faculty committee will approve (or otherwise) the proposal, with or without conditions and recommendations, and will approve the award of *general* or *specific* credit. The Officer to the Committee will:

- inform the client of the decision, including any conditions and for accreditation;
- arrange for an invoice to be raised in accordance with the accreditation contract; and
- arrange for a Memorandum of Accreditation (MoAc) to be produced, for approval by the Director of Academic Quality or nominee and the client. The MoAc must be signed prior to commencement of the accreditation arrangements.

14.4.3 Implementing the accreditation

- Guidance on development of marketing materials can be found in section 12.
- Any changes to the learning and assessment after initial approval must be notified to the Accreditation Link Tutor for approval.
- Where the credit to be awarded is at Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) Level 5 or above the University Faculty to which the accredited activity is aligned shall identify an appropriate External Examiner. This may be from those already appointed but it is possible to nominate an External Examiner purely for the purpose of examining accredited activity following the normal external examiner nomination process detailed in section 4. External Examiners will report to the University.

A Middlesex University Faculty representative will act as Accreditation Link Tutor. The role of the Accreditation Link Tutor is to:

- act as moderator to the client's assessment team;
- liaise as appropriate with the External Examiner;
- be responsible for communicating recommendations for the award of credit to the relevant Faculty committee; and
- facilitate the submission of an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR).

The recommended pass list of individuals who have successfully demonstrated accredited learning outcomes, signed by the client organisation and the Middlesex University Accreditation Link Tutor and, where relating to credit at level 5 or above, an appropriate External Examiner, will be considered and ratified by the Faculty committee.

The relevant AQS administrator will request that the client be invoiced in respect of fees relating to the issue of student certificates of credit, within 30 days of the ratification of the results of students on the pass list.

14.4.4 Annual Monitoring

All accreditations require the production of an AMR. This report is an evaluative review of the quality of learning opportunities provided by the accredited external learning activity or training course. The Accreditation Link Tutor (ALT) liaises with the organisation, which delivers the accredited learning activity, in the production of the AMR and reviews the report.

14.4.5 Expiry of agreements

The Faculty committee will receive a schedule of agreements due to expire within the next 12 months at the last meeting of each academic year. The committee will note any agreements which are not renewed and the last date at which students may be awarded credit.

14.6 Accreditation of individual RPL claims

Individual RPL claims can include evidence of either certificated and experiential learning or a combination of both.

Individual RPL claims can be considered at the stage of admission to a programme of study providing the opportunity for exemption awarded against specific modules of the programme to enable students to access the programme at a later stage and complete it in less time than it would normally take.

Each Faculty identifies the mechanisms in place for the consideration of individual RPL claims. Faculty committees considering individual RPL claims for the purposes of admissions shall be required to have an approved RPL Assessment Plan in place to ensure that the process of assessing claims is reliable, valid and transparent. All claims for credit at level 5 and above must include evidence of external review.

Individual RPL claims can also be made during a programme of study where the process of making RPL claims is an integrated aspect of the programme being undertaken. Normally,

this will include students undertaking a Review of Learning module designed to support the development of RPL claims. Normally students making claims while undertaking a programme of study shall have up to two opportunities to submit RPL claims during their programme.

14.6.1 Process for making an individual specific credit claim at the admission stage

Where a claimant/applicant provides evidence of certificated learning, an assessment of the certificated learning against the learning outcomes of the programme will be made by the relevant Programme Leader or nominee. Review of Learning modules are available level 4-7 to facilitate the applicant in making their claim.

Where a claimant/applicant provides evidence of experiential learning, an assessment of the experiential learning against the learning outcomes of the programme will be made by the relevant Programme Leader or nominee. This assessment will be subject to moderation by a second assessor and where at level 5 or above scrutiny by an appropriate External Examiner. The RPL claim will then be considered for approval by the relevant University Faculty Committee with regards to admissions with credit or 'advanced standing'.

14.6.3 Process for making individual specific credit RPL claims as part of a programme of study

Where claims for RPL (including for certificated and/or experiential learning) are made as an integrated aspect of a programme of study (normally by undertaking a Review of Learning module) a portfolio of evidence of learning will be submitted for assessment. RPL claims for experiential learning will normally be constituted as 'Areas of Learning' (AoLs). AoLs are will be benchmarked against identified specific programme modules.

An assessment of the AoLs against the learning outcomes of the identified specific programme modules will be made by the relevant Programme Leader or nominee. This assessment will be subject to moderation by a second assessor and where at level 5 or above scrutiny by an appropriate External Examiner.

The RPL claim will then be considered for approval by the relevant University Faculty Committee which will, where appropriate, confirm the award of credit.