

**POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR  
THE ACCREDITATION  
OF PRIOR LEARNING  
(APEL)**

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Policy and Procedures for the Accreditation of Prior Learning (APEL)		
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This document updates details the policy and procedures for APEL following the abolition of the University and Faculty APEL Boards.		

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## SECTION A: INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITIONS

### 1. Introduction

The University recognises the value of learning wherever it occurs, either to meet programme entry requirements or to achieve credit towards named awards. However, accreditation of prior learning will only be possible where learning, appropriate to the outcomes of the relevant entry requirements, module(s) or award level, can be assured to be academically valid.

This Policy defines the procedures and guidance for submitting and approving requests for exemption from individual modules or direct entry to the second or subsequent year of a programme of study on the basis of prior learning (APL) or prior experiential learning (APEL).

Procedures relating to the admission of students, who do not meet the usual entry requirements specified for a programme of study, are not included in this policy. Applicants for non-standard entry should contact Student Recruitment and Marketing for advice in the first instance.

### 2. Definitions

**APL** Accreditation of Prior Learning - the formal recognition of prior learning gained outside the University through formally assessed and certificated programmes.

**APEL** Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning - the formal recognition of prior learning gained outside the University through other experience, typically gained in the workplace.

(Credit is not awarded on the basis of experience *per se*: it is awarded on the basis of what is learned through reflecting on experience.)

**AP(E)L** This term and abbreviation encompasses both of the above and is used to refer collectively to all forms of learning accreditation recognised by the University.

Unless otherwise stated, the procedures and guidance below apply equally to APL and APEL.

Partner institutions will either follow these procedures or a similar procedure according to their own AP(E)L Policy, approved by Academic Standards Committee.

## SECTION B: APPLICATION PROCESS

### 3. Application requirements

Applicants wishing to be awarded credit for AP(E)L will be advised, in the first instance, to discuss the matter with the Admissions Office, who will ensure that the applicant is informed of the University's AP(E)L policy and procedure.

Applications for AP(E)L for taught programmes should normally be made before the student enrolls on their intended programme of study for which they are seeking to transfer prior learning. Students who apply after the start of their programme may be disadvantaged, eg they may not be reimbursed for tuition fees already paid for modules from which they are subsequently exempted.

Applications for AP(E)L for taught programmes must consist of a written request, stating the University award in respect of which the student seeks AP(E)L, and submit evidence of previous learning in the form of:

- a) award certificate(s);
- b) transcript(s);
- c) a copy of the curriculum/syllabus or programme specification;
- d) a portfolio of evidence (for prior experiential learning only).

The content of accreditation of prior experiential learning submissions will vary in accordance with the nature of the experiences and of the learning that has resulted from that experience. Each Faculty and Partner institution has an approved procedure for supporting applicants in preparing documentation and considering requests for the accreditation of prior experiential learning. For further information about the types of evidence required and a general methodology of this process please refer to Appendix 1.

Whilst each Faculty and Partner institution may have portfolio criteria that are appropriate for the programmes offered, there is generic portfolio information attached in Appendix 2.

Research Degree students may apply for exemption from the generic Research Training Programme following enrolment on their programme of study. The Programme Leader for the Research Training Programme (who is also the AP(E)L Assessor for this programme) will meet with students individually and advise them as to the appropriate documentation required.

In structuring their programme of study, students must not assume AP(E)L credits to have been granted until they have received an official statement to that effect. Applicants should also note that the reduction in the number of credits being studied may prevent them from having the status of full-time students.

#### **4. Approval process and confirmation of decision**

All applications will be considered by an AP(E)L Assessor (normally the relevant Programme Leader) according to the criteria listed in Section C. The AP(E)L Assessor may request additional information from the applicant or consult with colleagues, if required, before making a recommendation.

Their recommendation is then forwarded, for final approval, to the relevant Head of Department (for taught programmes of study) or the Chair of the relevant Faculty Academic Development Committee (for research degrees and professional doctorates).

The award of transfer credit from the same source for small groups of students regularly admitted with credit, but without an institutional agreement, may be approved by Academic Standards Committee.

A decision should, in normal circumstances, be made within ten working days of receipt of the application.

The AP(E)L applicant will be notified of the decision, by letter, by one of the following:

- a) the Admissions Office (in the case of applicants for taught programmes);
- b) the relevant Faculty Office (in the case of students already enrolled on a programme of study, research degree students and professional doctoral students);
- c) Partner institution.

A copy of the Approval Form and all supporting evidence/documentation should be sent to the Director of HR & Registry and a copy retained by the relevant Faculty Office (or equivalent office at Partner institutions). Registry staff will update the applicant/student's computerised record as appropriate.

#### **5. Conditions and Exemptions**

Applicants should note that the award of specific credit via APL towards their intended course of study at the University may not necessarily directly reflect the value/level of the credit assigned to their current/previous qualification, eg it may be less if the learning is not directly comparable to the programme for which the claim for credit is being made or if that learning is out of date.

No grades and/or marks will be associated with the credit awarded unless the Academic Standards Committee has specifically approved this through a programme specific regulation.

Exemptions will not be considered for prerequisites in certain disciplines where professional and statutory regulating body requirements apply (eg, Teaching Development Agency, British Psychological Society, Law Society etc).

Exemptions will only be considered for modules of study; not elements therein.

The University reserves the right to terminate an application or registration on a programme of study, if the applicant is found to have omitted relevant facts or information in connection with their application or to have falsified or plagiarised any part of their application.

## **6. Charges**

A charge may be made when an applicant wishes to be accredited for individual modules and a formal portfolio of evidence of prior experiential learning is required. The standard module charges will normally apply.

## **7. Calculation of degree results**

In calculating the final degree result of a student who makes a successful AP(E)L application, any courses or modules from which the student is exempted on the basis of AP(E)L will be excluded from calculated averages or other methods used to determine the student's final degree result.

If a student is exempted because of transfer credit from modules which count towards an Honours classification or to the award of distinction, a decision must be made to determine how the student's final mark will be calculated. Exempted modules will normally be disregarded.

## **8. Transcripts**

Where AP(E)L is approved, the modules of the programme from which the student was exempted will be indicated on the transcript.

## **9. Feedback to AP(E)L applicants**

Where the AP(E)L application is partially or fully rejected, the letter confirming the decision should include details of any shortcomings.

## **10. Appeals**

Applicants may not appeal against the academic or professional judgement of those making the decision on an application.

However, the University shall consider a request from an appellant that the decision to reject their application be reviewed on the grounds that:

- a) There exists new evidence, which can be corroborated, and could not have been brought to the attention of the University prior to the selection process.
- b) There is evidence of a procedural irregularity connected directly with the selection process undertaken by the University

- c) That the decision of the University is, on the basis of the information available, unreasonable.
- d) There is evidence of prejudice or bias on the part of those involved in the selection process.

Appeals must be made in writing within twenty working days of the date of the letter from the University notifying the applicant of the decision. Further details may be found in the *University's Policy: Appeals by Student Applicants*, available via the University website under *Freedom of Information/Public Documents*.

## 11. Complaints

The University is committed to delivering to its applicants a high quality, efficient and fair admissions service and encourages its applicants to tell it where there is cause for concern and a case for improvement. Complaints may be made regarding the services or facilities offered by the University or the actions or behaviour of a member of staff during the process. The outcome of a complaint that is upheld could include an apology or an undertaking to revise procedures. It will not usually result in reconsideration of the candidate's application. Complaints must be made in writing to the Director of Student Services and further details may be found in the *Complaints Handling Policy* available via the University website under *Freedom of Information/Public Documents*.

## SECTION C: CRITERIA FOR CONSIDERATION

### 12. Criteria

When considering evidence for APL, the AP(E)L Assessor will:

- a) confirm (against a transcript of credit or award certificate) that credit has been awarded by an agency, such as a university, recognised by the University of Winchester;
- b) confirm (against a transcript of credit or award certificate) that the learning activity has been given a credit rating (eg 15 CATS credits at level 5), or judge the level and amount of credit on the basis of the year and volume of study at another UK institution, or confirm the level and volume of study successfully undertaken in an overseas university or similar institution;
- c) assess the evidence submitted against the requirements and learning outcomes of the relevant degree programme and the constituent modules;
- d) confirm that the learning has been in a subject area relevant to the programme of study.

When considering evidence for APEL, the AP(E)L Assessor will:

- e) assess equivalences of competence between learning at work (for example) and having gained a specific qualification.

The AP(E)L Assessor may request additional information from the applicant or consult with colleagues, if required.

### 13. 'Double counting' of credit

'Double counting' is the use of the same allocation of credit in order to meet the requirements of more than one academic award at the same level. 'Double counting' is not normally permitted: it may exceptionally be permitted where the programmes leading to the awards are closely linked. The amount of credit used to meet the requirements of more than one award may not exceed 30 credits. Where the re-use of credit is permitted the currency of the credit in respect of the second award must be confirmed.

## 14. Credit Grading

Subject to relevance, credit for study at another institution will normally be given at the same or equivalent tariff and level as that awarded by the other institution.

The re-grading of credit is defined as the conversion of credit previously awarded at one academic level (either as part of the requirements for an academic award or in the context of a general credit rating activity) to another academic level normally for the purpose of meeting the requirements of a different academic level.

Credit achieved at a higher level may exempt a student from modules at a lower level (ie downgraded credit)

However, it is not normally permissible to offset credit achieved at a lower level from modules at a higher level (ie upgraded credit).

Students should not normally receive more than one allocation of credit on the basis of a single learning activity.

## 15. 'Shelf-Life' of Learning

The time elapsed since the student undertook learning that forms the basis of an AP(E)L application is a relevant factor to be considered in each case. Normally, learning should have taken place within **five years** prior to the enrolment date for the intended programme of study, unless the applicant can provide supporting evidence which gives an account of ways in which learning achieved through the learning has been applied actively and updated within the past five years.

For Professional Doctorate programmes, learning should have taken place within **ten years** prior to the enrolment date for the intended programme of study

## 16. Volume of AP(E)L in University awards

It is important to note that the acceptance of AP(E)L towards University awards is an admissions decision based on each individual case. The maximum volume of AP(E)L outlined below is provided for the guidance of applicants and departments but does not constitute an entitlement.

Award	Maximum credits which may be exempted	Minimum credits to be achieved on University of Winchester validated programmes	Total credits required for award
Research Degree: <i>Research Training Programme</i>	60/80 ( <i>level 7</i> )	60/80 ( <i>level 7</i> )	60/80
Professional Doctorate	180 ( <i>level 7</i> )	360 ( <i>level 8</i> )	540
Masters Degree	100 ( <i>level 7</i> )	80 ( <i>level 7</i> )	180
Postgraduate Diploma	40 ( <i>level 7</i> )	80 ( <i>level 7</i> )	120
Professional Graduate Diploma	40 ( <i>level 6/7</i> )	80 ( <i>level 6</i> )	120
Postgraduate Certificate	20 ( <i>level 7</i> )	40 ( <i>level 7</i> )	60
Professional Graduate Certificate	20 ( <i>level 6/7</i> )	40 ( <i>level 6</i> )	60
Postgraduate Certificate in Education/Early Years Practice	none	120 ( <i>level 6/7</i> )	120
Professional Graduate Certificate	none	120 ( <i>level 6</i> )	120

<b>Award</b>	<b>Maximum credits which may be exempted</b>	<b>Minimum credits to be achieved on University of Winchester validated programmes</b>	<b>Total credits required for award</b>
in Education/Early Years Practice			
Honours Degree	240 <i>(120 at level 4 and 120 at level 5)</i>	120 <i>(with a minimum of 90 at level 6)</i>	360
Top-up Honours Degree	none	120 <i>(with a minimum of 90 at level 6)</i>	120
Top-up Pass Degree	none	60 <i>(level 6)</i>	60
Foundation Degree	120 <i>(level 4)</i>	120 <i>(level 5)</i>	240
Diploma of HE	120 <i>(level 4)</i>	120 <i>(level 5)</i>	240
Certificate of HE	none	120 <i>(level 4)</i>	120

\* Note: Where individual awards have a higher credit total (eg. Honours degrees with 480 credits) the maximum import thresholds outlined above continue to apply.

In order to receive an Undergraduate award from the University, a student must normally study at least half the required module credits for the award at the University and will normally be required to undertake at least a full academic year, or part-time equivalent, on a University of Winchester validated programme of study.

In order to receive a taught Postgraduate award from the University, a student must normally study at least half the required module credits at the University.

## **APPENDIX 1: ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING (APEL)**

### **1. Content**

The content of APEL submissions will vary in accordance with the nature of the experience and of the learning that has resulted from that experience but might include the following elements:

- (a) the statement of the claim;
- (b) a brief c.v. to provide a context for the claim;
- (c) reflection on the relevance of the learning to the programme against which the claim is being made;
- (d) outcome cross-referenced to the full evidence;
- (e) full evidence.

### **2. Types of evidence might be:**

- (a) practice-based documents;
- (b) reports based on reflection on practice;
- (c) video/audio tapes and analysis relating to the learning outcomes;
- (d) analysis of issues arising in preparing for practice;
- (e) analysis and description of practice activities;
- (f) analysis of training activities in relation to the practice;
- (g) statements from line-managers in relation to practice.

### **3. Criteria**

There must be sufficient evidence to provide the Faculty AP(E)L Board with the details of all prior and/or experiential learning to be taken into account for assessment leading to accreditation. The Faculty AP(E)L Board will look for equivalencies of competence, for example, between learning at work and having gained a specific qualification.

Evidence can be accepted from a wide range of sources, providing that it is:

- *Sufficient* Keep in mind that the portfolio should be concise and sufficient evidence for the purpose intended.
- *Recent* How recent the experience is can determine its value, certain skills and knowledge, for example, can quickly become redundant.
- *Authentic* For certain evidence to be accepted it may require endorsement or a reference from relevant sources eg employers.
- *Relevant* The specifications of a job or the requirements of a particular qualification will determine the relevance of the evidence.

Evidence must not be solely assessed by the staff who have advised the claimant. APEL claims are subject to the same quality assurance processes as learning derived from taught programmes of study.

### **4. Outline methodology of APEL**

Each Faculty has an approved procedure for considering requests for the accreditation of prior experiential learning; all are likely to include the following stages:

- (a) allocation of a member of academic staff to advise the candidate;
- (b) specification of what the claim must entail. In particular the nature and purpose of evidence of learning to be submitted by the candidate must be made clear;
- (c) agreement of assessment work to be submitted (e.g. portfolio, presentation, submission of artefacts, examinations);
- (d) agreement of submission dates;
- (e) agreement of tutorial arrangements (including monitoring progress towards submission, reviewing drafts etc);
- (f) clarification of arrangements for assessment (including assessment criteria, internal and external moderation);
- (g) feedback to the claimant; where the claim cannot be accepted the feedback should include details of its shortcomings and/or any additional evidence necessary for the acceptance of the claim.

## APPENDIX 2: GENERIC PORTFOLIO CRITERIA FOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

### Guidance for Applicants

#### What is a Portfolio?

A portfolio is an organised folder of information compiled by an applicant with support from University staff. It will contain details of past experiences and accomplishments. It may also contain evidence that the individual has reliably demonstrated the skills, knowledge and understanding to be given recognition to gain exemption, or to gain qualifications or credit towards qualifications.

A Portfolio can be used:

- to gain accreditation
- to gain exemption
- to decide what continuing education is appropriate

A Portfolio needs to be:

- Concise
- Well presented
- Relevant

#### Key Features of a Portfolio

The folder should contain details of:

- Skills
- Knowledge
- Understanding
- Achievement

These features can come from:

- Paid employment
- Voluntary work
- Domestic work
- Hobbies and interests
- Education and training

What should be included in the Portfolio

- A Curriculum Vitae
- Voluntary work - unpaid
- Domestic work - unpaid
- Hobbies and interests
- Education and training
- formal
- informal
- List of competencies
- Supporting evidence

### Types of Evidence Required

#### Direct Evidence (your own work)

For example:

- Written reports
- Essays/Poems
- Articles
- Computer programmes
- A set of accounts
- Photographs of objects that you have produced, for example, furniture, painting.

#### Indirect Evidence (what someone else says about you)

For example:

- Testimonials from:
  - employers
  - colleagues
  - business partners
  - voluntary organisations
  - teachers/lecturers
- Articles written about you
- Prizes
- Certificates

### **Laying out the Information**

You do not have to use a prescribed format to present the material but you might find the following order useful.

- Cover page – AP(E)L application for (your name)
- Curriculum Vitae
- Education and training – indicate the skills, knowledge and understanding which you have acquired through various aspects of your education.
- Work experience and training – indicate the skills, knowledge and understanding you have acquired through employment.
- Voluntary or community work – identify what skills, knowledge and understanding has been acquired.
- Other formal or informal learning experiences for example, captain of a sports team, running a sports club, organising a school trip.
- List of competencies – categorise your skills, knowledge and understanding. For example:
  - Personal skills:
  - good communicator
  - confident public speaker
  - ability to assimilate a range of ideas
- Any areas that do not fall in to the above categories (2-7) which you consider relevant for assessment.

**Note:** Supportive evidence, for example transcript of a training course showing learning outcomes, should be included in each section alongside the description given of the specific skill, knowledge and understanding you want assessed

### **Our Commitment to you**

We will help you to compile your portfolio of evidence by offering you a portfolio workshop. The workshop will run for two hours and you will be given information, advice and guidance on how to collect evidence and lay out the portfolio. Dates and times of the workshops will be sent to you when you receive your 'conditional offer'. Tutorial support will be offered to check the completed portfolio and to make recommendations if further evidence or description is needed. There will be a total time allocation of 30 minutes per applicant.

### **APPENDIX 3 MONITORING AP(E)L DECISIONS**

The Head of Department or Chair of Faculty Academic Development Committee is responsible for final approval of all AP(E)L applications and ensuring consistency within their Department/Faculty. All paperwork should be available for internal or external scrutiny, as required.

A copy of the letter, application, approval form and all supporting documentation should be sent to the Director of HR & Registry.

The Director of HR & Registry will be responsible, on behalf of Academic Standards Committee (ASC), for the assurance of quality and standards in the accreditation of prior and experiential learning. In particular to monitor the consistency of AP(E)L decisions and submit an annual report to ASC detailing the number of AP(E)L claims submitted and accepted by programmes, and any issues relating to the principles, process or procedure.