



UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR LEARNING

Document control table

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2. Approved by	Education Committee

Policy development steps

3. Legal implications of this policy area	
4. Consultation for this policy	Academic Services, Future Students Office, Finance, Distance Learning Hubs
5. Related procedures/guidance	Senate Regulations 2 and 3
6. Version history	Version 2
7. Monitoring	
8. Date of issue	June 2021
9. Review date	2024

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out the University’s requirements for the management and assessment of Accredited Prior Learning (APL). The regulatory requirements relating to APL are stated in Senate Regulation 2: Regulations governing admission and registration for taught programmes and Senate Regulation 3 governing fees.
- 1.2 This policy applies to prospective students who wish to apply for the recognition of credits gained previously at the University or another institution towards a University award. It does not apply to the assessment of an applicant’s eligibility for entry to a programme based on non-standard entry qualifications/experience.

2. Terminology

2.1 Accreditation of Prior Learning

Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) is the generic term used for the award of credit for demonstrated learning achieved prior to entry to a programme of study. It falls into two main categories:

- **Accreditation of Prior Certified Learning (APCL)**– the recognition of learning that has previously been assessed and certificated by an education provider, for example an institution of Higher Education
- **Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)**– the recognition of prior learning gained through relevant experience which can be evaluated

2.2 Direct Entry

Direct Entry is the term used to describe the process whereby applicants for undergraduate programmes who have studied part of an equivalent programme at another institution apply

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through UCAS to enter a programme at an advanced point of study (typically year 2). A separate APL application is not required.

2.3 Credit

Credit is the means by which learning outcomes are quantified at a given level.

2.4 Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes specify the threshold attainments that students are expected to meet to be awarded credit for a given module or programme.

2.5 Module

A module is a component of a programme with its own approved learning outcomes and assessment methods. Modules are at a specified level in accordance with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ).

3. Principles

- 3.1 APL is accepted by the University as specified for particular programmes of study.
- 3.2 Where the option for APL or Direct Entry exists this will be publicised in the prospectuses and school information.
- 3.3 Each academic school within the University can decide whether it is appropriate to accept APL for programmes that it offers.
- 3.4 Where APL is offered this will be approved as part of the programme approval process for new programmes. Any amendment to requirements may be approved by College Education Committees.
- 3.5 Where APL is offered the requirements should be recorded on the relevant programme specification. For undergraduate programmes the standard University is that direct entry is possible at the discretion of the relevant programme team, based upon a review of student's prior studies.
- 3.6 Where a school does offer APL this may be limited to exemption from specific modules. Where schools wish to specify particular modules as not eligible for APL this should be recorded on the relevant programme specification.
- 3.7 Credits may be given for prior learning where the level, standard content and relevance of that learning are judged to be appropriate to a particular programme of study.
- 3.8 APL may be granted for whole modules only and at the same level as the programme of study for which an application is being made. In certain cases it may be appropriate to allow APL from a higher level qualification to count towards a lower award. Where this is possible it will be stated in the programme specification. Credit at a lower level will not be accepted for APL against modules at a higher level.
- 3.9 Decisions regarding the accreditation of prior learning are an academic judgement and schools will determine whether the prior learning is at the required level and broadly equivalent to the learning outcomes which would have been assessed during a module.
- 3.10 Schools will determine the currency of prior learning on a case by case basis within an overall requirement that, at the time of application, any prior learning which is more than five years

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old will not normally be considered current for this purpose. Where the prior study was undertaken at the University of Leicester consideration may be given to accepting APL that is more than 5 years old, on a case by case basis,

- 3.11 Students may receive an exit award if they have been awarded APL credit, providing they have accumulated sufficient University of Leicester credits, during their period of registration at the University to qualify for such an award.
- 3.12 Direct entry may be included in a formal articulation agreement with another institution. The evaluation of credits for the purpose of articulation will be undertaken in accordance with procedures detailed in the Code of Practice on the University's Procedures for Managing Higher Education Provision with Others.

4. Application Process

- 4.1 Prospective students who require further information on the admissions process should contact the Admissions Office. Specific information about requirements relating to a particular programme may be obtained from the relevant school.
- 4.2 For prospective apprenticeship learners the assessment of eligibility for APL will be undertaken through the Initial Needs Analysis (INA).
- 4.3 Applications for consideration of APL should be made at the point of application or as soon as possible thereafter.
- 4.4 Applications for APL will not normally be considered after a student has registered for a programme at the University, but may be possible where agreed by the school in question.
- 4.5 Applicants should make a request on the online application form for the consideration of APL to the Admissions Office
- 4.6 Schools or the Admissions Office as appropriate, will advise applicants of the specific requirements which relate to a particular programme. Examples of the type of information required to assess the APL application are shown below.

For APCL

- Institution and dates of attendance
- Programme title
- Programme structure, module content and scheme of assessment.
- Qualification obtained, if any
- An authorised transcript of marks, endorsed by the institution
- An academic reference from the institution awarding the credits

For APEL

- A summary of the applicant's professional experience and specific activities, including employment and relevant training with dates

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- A detailed commentary of what has been learned from these activities and how these are relevant to the level of the programme and intended learning outcomes of the particular modules from which exemption is sought
- Confirmation from the relevant employer(s) or other independent source that the activities claimed by the applicant have been undertaken with some indication of the level at which these were undertaken

4.7 The application for AP(E)L should be submitted to the Admissions Office as appropriate which will forward it to the relevant school for consideration.

5. Consideration of Applications

5.1 Applications will be considered by a member of the academic staff of the school, normally the programme director or admissions tutor. There may be some programmes where for reasons of Professional Accreditation the External Examiner(s) for the programme is required to approve the application. Where this is a requirement it will be set out in programme documentation.

5.2 All applications for APL will be treated equitably regardless of the type and source of learning being assessed.

5.3 Submission of an application for APL does not guarantee that exemptions from particular modules will be granted.

5.4 A decision regarding whether an application for APL should be approved will depend on the requirements and specific learning outcomes of the modules for a particular programme as well as the individual application.

5.5 Applicants may be requested to provide additional information, attend an interview in support of their application, or/and have their application reviewed by an external examiner as required.

5.6 Assessors will match the evidence provided by the applicant against the intended learning outcomes of the modules for which exemption has been requested considering the following:

- Subject content and knowledge
- Volume of learning
- Level of learning
- Evidence of achievements
- The requirements of Professional or Statutory Bodies, where appropriate

5.7 In forming a judgement about level assessors will refer to the characteristics articulated in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications published by the Quality Assurance Agency at: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/qualifications-frameworks.pdf>

5.8 An application for APL will only be granted where a school is satisfied that:

- The factual statements included in an application are accurate

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- The dates of the prior learning have been checked and confirmed to have taken place in line with the requirements set out in para 3.10 (or sooner where specified in the relevant programme specification)
- There is a correlation between the prior learning or experience and the level and intended learning outcomes of the modules which will not be taken as a result of the APL
- Where the prior learning is certificated the applicant has gained marks which are equivalent to those required to pass a module at the University

6. Outcome of Consideration of Applications

- 6.1 On completion of consideration of an application for APL the relevant school should report its decision to the Admissions Office.
- 6.2 Applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application for APL by the Admissions Office.
- 6.3 Where an application has been approved the applicant will be notified of the exemptions and issued an offer letter with the revised fee payable, having been adjusted for the modules from which they are exempt.
- 6.4 The decision will be held on the applicant's record by adding an APL SQE with details of the credits and modules APL has been granted for. An APL flag is also added on to the STU record

7. Appeals against decisions

- 7.1 The consideration of APL applications involves an academic judgement. The University will not review a decision on an application for APL where an applicant simply disagrees with the academic judgement that has been applied.
- 7.2 If an applicant believes that the application has not been considered in accordance with the relevant school's stated procedure, or the applicant obtains additional documentation pertaining to their application prior to registration which was not available at the time of the initial assessment, they should submit a formal request for review in accordance with the process detailed in the University's Code of Practice for Admissions.

8. Limitations on APL

- 8.1 Senate Regulation 2 states that the maximum number of credits for which a student may be granted APL is one half of the taught credits which lead to an award and no student may be granted exemption from a project or dissertation.
- 8.2 Requirements vary according to programme and level and mode of study as detailed below but the maximum number of credits for which exemption may be granted is 60 for taught postgraduate programmes, 180 for bachelor's programmes and 240 for integrated master's programmes.
- 8.3 In exceptional cases additional requirements may be introduced for the purposes of recognition/accreditation by a Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body. Exemptions to Senate Regulation 2 and the limitations set out in this policy may be considered by a

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Programme Approval Panel and recommended for approval by the Quality and Standards Sub-Committee. They will be recorded in the relevant programme specification(s).

8.4 A summary of limitations by level of study is given in Appendix 1.

Undergraduate programmes

8.5 APL will not be granted at a module level for full-time undergraduate programmes but will be considered as a request for direct entry to a particular level of study.

8.6 For full-time undergraduate programmes applicants will apply for direct entry to the second year of a three year degree programme through UCAS or through a direct application to the University.

8.7 In exceptional cases applicants may apply for direct entry to the third year of a four year integrated master's programme.

8.8 APL/Direct Entry will not be granted to the final year of any programme.

8.9 APL may be granted on a module basis for distance-learning programmes up to a maximum stated in Appendix 1, except in cases where a programme approval panel grants exemptions at a higher threshold, which in all cases will not exceed 50% of the taught elements of the programme.

Postgraduate Taught Programmes

8.10 Applicants may apply for exemptions up to a maximum of 60 taught credits.

8.11 Exemptions will not be granted for the dissertation/project.

9. Impact of APL on awards

9.1 Where AP(C)L is approved this will be graded and, where appropriate will contribute to the final classification of an award. Where credits do not count towards classification of the final award, schools may determine that the level achieved is sufficient for the credits to be awarded but are not required to undertake a separate grading exercise.

9.2 Where AP(E)L is approved this will be ungraded and classification of an award will be based on modules undertaken at the University and the relevant scheme of assessment for the award of the degree will be reduced on a pro-rata basis.

10. Student Transcripts

The amount and level of credit for which exemptions have been granted will be recorded on the student's transcript.

11. Registration Periods

Normal and maximum registration periods for students on campus based programmes who have been granted exemptions from modules based on APL will normally be adjusted according to the number of modules for which exemption is granted based on the percentage these represent of the programme.

The period of registration for a student on a distance learning programme will not be adjusted on the basis of an approved application for APL, due to the alternative structure of DL programmes.

12. Fees

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Where an applicant is granted exemption from modules their programme fee will be adjusted accordingly and the revised fee will be notified to the applicant prior to their entry to the programme.

1. For undergraduate students granted direct entry to years two or three fees will be charged for the years for which they register at the applicable rate.
2. For all other students the fee will be reduced according to the number of credits for which exemption has been granted.
3. Full-time undergraduate students will be required to pay their tuition fee following the standard billing pattern for such students.
4. For all other programmes the revised fee will be spread over the registration period and can be paid yearly or in accordance with the revised billing schedule.

Appendix 1

Notwithstanding 8.3 in the policy, the table below provides a summary of the maximum number of credits for which APL may be granted for University awards. The actual number of APL credits allowed for a particular programme is detailed in the relevant programme specification.

University Award	Level	Number of Credits for Award	Maximum APL Credits permitted
Certificate of Higher Education	4	120	60
Diploma of Higher Education	5	240	120
Foundation Degree	5	240	120
3 year full-time (or equivalent part-time/distance-learning) Honours Degree	6	360	120
4 year full-time Integrated Masters Degree	7	480	240
Postgraduate Certificate	7	60	30
Postgraduate Diploma	7	120	60
Masters Degree	7	180	60*

*taught credits only

Appendix 2

Roles and Responsibilities

Applicant

General Requirements

1. Identifying whether a claim for APL might be appropriate and contacting the relevant school or Admissions to seek advice and guidance.
2. Ensuring that they apply for the programme of study for which APL might be claimed.
3. Familiarising themselves with the programme and modules including the intended learning outcomes to establish where prior learning might be claimed.
4. Submitting a claim for APL at the earliest opportunity, by deadlines specified by the relevant school and prior to registration.
5. Providing all the required information for APL to be assessed and complying with school guidance in this respect.

Applying for APCL

1. Providing detailed evidence of the structure, level and content of previous studies to enable the University to make a decision on their application.
2. Considering whether previous studies are likely to match modules for which exemption is sought in terms of content, learning outcomes and level before an application is submitted.
3. Ensuring that applications submitted relate to demonstrated learning achieved within the period specified in para 3.10rs.

Applying for APEL

1. Applicants applying for APEL should recognise that it is the outcomes of any learning gained from experience that may be accredited and not just the experience itself. There will therefore be a requirement to reflect on this learning during the application process.
2. Applicants should be aware that submitting an application for APEL will require the production of a written submission which may, for example, include a commentary on their experience or a portfolio of work and they will be required to work on this independently.
3. Applicants wishing to submit an application for APEL are advised to contact the relevant admissions tutor/programme director to discuss whether a claim can be pursued, the nature of the submission required and timescale for its consideration.
4. Applicants should only start work on such a submission if they hold an offer for the programme for which they wish to claim APEL.
5. Applicants who decide to submit a claim for APEL should be aware that submission of a claim does not guarantee it will be successful.

Schools

1. Ensuring that the programme documentation accurately reflects where APL is available on a programme, and any associated limitations..

2. Advising students seeking APL for campus-based programmes on school requirements including documentation to be submitted or referring applicants to the appropriate distance learning hub.
3. Assessing applications for APL, ensuring that they demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes for the modules for which exemption is being claimed.
4. Communicating with External Examiners to enable external scrutiny of applications (if applicable).

External Examiners (if applicable)

1. Assessing applications for APL, ensuring that they demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes for the modules for which exemption is being claimed.

Admissions Office/

1. Providing initial advice to applicants on the documentation to be completed
2. Advising applicants on deadlines for submitting APL and the timescale for the consideration of applications.
3. Sending the completed application to the admissions tutor/programme director for consideration.
4. Notifying the applicant of the decision with respect to their application for APL.
5. Where an application for APL is granted ensuring that students are informed of the outcome

Distance learning hub

6. Updating the applicant's pre-registration record to include;
 - modules from which exemption has been granted
 - any adjustment to the fee
7. Assessing the impact the reduction in the number of credits being studied may have on their status as full-time students

Student Records/Distance Learning hub

1. Ensuring that the student's transcript reflects the amount and level of credit for which exemptions have been granted.
2. Ensuring that appropriate progression and award criteria are applied depending on whether students have AP(C)L or AP(E)L.
3. Ensuring that the student's post registration record includes
 - the appropriate normal and extended registration periods
 - modules from which exemption has been granted
 - normal and maximum periods of registration
4. Advising the student on any revisions to their timetable that arise from the exemptions that have been granted.