

**ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR LEARNING
(APL) HANDBOOK
(Including Student Exchange Processes for Credits)**

2013 Entry

ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR ACCREDITED LEARNING (APL), ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING (APeL), AND PROCESSES FOR STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAMME CREDITS

CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	3
Credits	3
Credit Rating and Exchange Programmes Credit Arrangements	4
Summary of APL Process	6
Transfers from Other HEIs (eg)	6
The Accreditation of Prior Accredited Learning (APL)	8
The Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APeL)	9
Completing the Claim Form for the APL and Transfer Committee	10
Processes and Policies for Claims	11
Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL/APeL) - Application Form	12

INTRODUCTION

Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) grew out of a move to recognise the quality of learning undertaken in a range of contexts and was developed as a result of the debate about awarding credit for learning. There are two main routes to claiming accreditation:

1. Accreditation of prior accredited learning, known as **APL**;
2. Accreditation of prior experiential learning, known as **APeL**.

These two routes are described more fully in this document. This handbook also details how credit values are arrived at for students undertaking exchange programmes.

Accumulating Credits through the accreditation of prior learning is not an easy option. It requires applicants to be just as thorough and rigorous in putting together the evidence of that learning they would be in preparing a formal assessment item. What is meant by 'Credit' is outlined below.

The process of applying for accreditation requires applicants to reflect on their own learning and to identify how far they have developed knowledge and understanding in a general or specific HE module. The result for many students can be to improve confidence in their own abilities and enable them to have a clearer understanding of their own capability, as well as providing the necessary documentation to apply for accreditation of prior learning.

CREDITS

Most institutions of Higher Education in Britain have adopted an agreed approach to giving value to each unit or module on their programmes. This is known as the Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme (CATS). Each unit of learning, or module, is allocated a value, or number of credits, and a level, which indicates the degree of challenge of the module. To gain a degree award, students normally have to accumulate 360 credits (or 480 on a four-year programme); a Diploma represents 240 credits and a Certificate 120. Level 4 credits normally equate to the first year of a programme in HE, Level 5 to the second year and Level 6 to Honours level. The level of credits reflects the level of challenge for the learner, the range of knowledge expected and the outcomes required.

Provided that it is clear that individual applicants have fulfilled some of the progression and assessment requirements of the programmes of study concerned by means other than attendance on the planned programme concerned, and that they will be able, by completing the remaining requirements, to fulfil the outcomes of the programmes and attain the standards required for particular awards, such applicants may be admitted as students to any approved appropriate point(s) in the programme(s) concerned subject to any over-riding requirements of the General Academic Regulations, and approval through the APL and Transfer process.

Due rigour is exercised in complying with the requirements relating to the standards of particular awards.

CREDIT RATING

The UK credit system uses a notional equivalent expressed in terms of student effort. Therefore 1 credit is considered to represent a notional 10 hours of student effort. A full year of undergraduate study (120 credits) would notionally equate to 1,200 of student effort.

EXCHANGE PROGRAMMES

European Exchange Programmes

The University, in relation to both European credit mechanisms and to assist with student exchange programmes, recognises and operates the European Credit Transfer Scheme (ECTS) and provides ECTS equivalence for all its modules. The agreed ECTS credit value for the UK is half the credit rating value to UK modules. (NB this should not be taken to reflect the amount of student effort required). A 209 credit UK module will therefore be worth 10 ECTS credits.

American Exchange Programmes

For exchange programmes with the United States, and in line with other UK Universities, the following credit rating is used:

20 UK credits = 5 US credits

15/16 UK Credits = 4 US credits

All credits are given at a specific level and comply with the QAA level descriptors in the framework for Higher Education Qualification and in terms of the European credits, in line with the European cycles of qualifications.

Typical higher education qualifications within each level

FHEQ level	Corresponding FQ-EHEA cycle
Doctoral degrees (e.g., PhD/DPhil (including new-route PhD), EdD, DBA, DClinPsy)	Third cycle
Master's degrees (e.g., MPhil, MLitt, MRes, MA, MSc)	Second cycle
Integrated master's degrees*** qualifications (e.g., MEng, MChem, MPhys, MPharm) Postgraduate diplomas Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) Postgraduate certificates Bachelor's degrees with honours (e.g., BA/BSc Hons) Bachelor's degrees qualifications Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) Graduate diplomas and Graduate certificates	First cycle

FHEQ level	Corresponding FQ-EHEA cycle
Foundation Degrees (e.g., FdE, FdSc) Diplomas of Higher Education (DipHE) Higher National Diplomas (HND) Higher National Certificates (HNC)	Short cycle
Certificates of Higher Education (CertHE)	

A brief description of the UK levels is provided below (from the QAA publication Framework for Higher Education Qualifications):

'level 4: Certificate of Higher Education

Holders of a Certificate of Higher Education will have a sound Knowledge of the basic concepts of a subject, and will have learned How to take different approaches to solving problems. They will be Able to communicate accurately and will have the qualities needed for employment requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility. The Certificate of Higher Education may be a first step towards obtaining higher level qualifications.

level 5: Foundation Degree

The Foundation Degree is an example of a qualification that meets, in full, the expectations of the qualification descriptor (and the Foundation Degree qualification benchmark)¹². Holders of qualifications at this level will have developed a sound understanding of the principles in their field of study, and will have learned to apply those principles more widely. Through this, they will have learned to evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems. Their studies may well have had a vocational orientation, for example HNDs, enabling them to perform effectively in their chosen field. Holders of qualifications at this level will have the qualities necessary for employment in situations requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making.

level 6: Bachelor's degree with honours

Holders of a bachelor's degree with honours will have developed an understanding of a complex body of knowledge, some of it at the current boundaries of an academic discipline. Through this, the holder will have developed analytical techniques and problem-solving skills that can be applied in many types of employment. The holder of such a qualification will be able to evaluate evidence, arguments and assumptions, to reach sound judgements and to communicate them effectively. Holders of a bachelor's degree with honours should have the qualities needed for employment in situations requiring the exercise of personal responsibility, and decision-making in complex and unpredictable circumstances.'

Full details of the descriptors can be found at

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/FHEQ08.pdf>

The principles and processes used for APL are also employed to facilitate the awarding of credit for students undertaking International exchange programmes.

The credits taken on exchange programmes can be considered under APL as detailed in the options below:

- 1 APL for the total number of US/European credits undertaken against the equivalent number of credits here - this would be able to provide a general number of credits (general APL credit)
- 2 APL for the total number of credits/courses directly against the modules the student would have taken here (specific APL credit)
- 3 The recognition of the courses/modules being taken in Europe/the US in place of relevant modules here - this would only need to be used if there is a wish to use the mark achieved in Europe/the US for inclusion in award calculations here. This would however require a common agreement of the worth of the European/US mark system against Newman's mark system.

Students studying abroad may also, subject to University agreement, complete all their University modules and receive additional accreditation for their exchange activities (outside standard academic activities) using section 6.1 of the Higher Education Achievement record (HEAR).

SUMMARY OF APL PROCESSES

On receipt of enquiries or a request to be considered for credit, a copy of the handbook, claim form and Programme Leader contact details will be provided.

On receipt of the completed APL form and evidence, the complete set of documents will be passed to the relevant Programme Leader with a request that they consider the application and complete the approval form for submission to the Chair of the Academic Standards Committee (the Pro Vice Chancellor for Formative Education) and Chair of APL and Transfers process.

Once the decision has been confirmed, the applicant will be informed in writing and copies of the relevant documentation kept on the applicant's file.

TRANSFERS FROM OTHER HEIs TO NEWMAN UNIVERSITY

Students (either part time or full time) who wish to transfer from another HEI to Newman University must write to the University in the first instance to request a transfer. The relevant Head of Subject and Programme Leader will consider the request. If the request is accepted, the student may be called in for an advisory interview or an Applicant Visit Day / Open Day following the procedures outlined above.

If the student is transferring into an Initial Teacher Training (ITE) course, they may be called to a scheduled Interview Day. The University will, where appropriate accept the appropriate preliminary Numeracy and Literacy tests taken at the prior institution. In addition, both the Newman University Programme leader and the Partnership Office must be consulted to ensure the appropriate period of school experience has been undertaken.

The student will then be expected to complete their year of study and forward a results transcript and a letter authorising release from the other institution together with a copy of their original UCAS application form. If credits from the first HEI are being counted against the new programme at Newman University, then the applicant must also apply for APL using the processes described in this handbook.

Where applicants wish to transfer to the University from other institutions or non-educational backgrounds, credit may be given for this previous study or experiential learning (APeL), where it is appropriate in terms of content and level.

Students wishing to apply to University with prior learning or experiential learning must apply to the University directly or through UCAS system, as outlined above.

The UCAS application form allows for application in all years of a course. The receiving institution must consider the application and request confirmation of results and/or experience in the same way as an applicant applying for a HEI place for the first time.

All applications for entry with advanced standing are considered through the APL and Transfer process.

The APL and Transfer process works within the spirit of national credit transfer agreements, but the University reserves the right to:

- ❖ Reject applications where there is an unsatisfactory or inappropriate match of content and level, and
- ❖ Charge a fee for processing APL/APeL applications, normally not in excess of one standard module, but related to the complexity of the claim.

Although admission tutors shall seek to accredit prior learning, credits shall not normally be given for more than two thirds of any undergraduate course.

APL/APeL can normally be given for up to 240 credits on an undergraduate (360 credit) degree; APL/APeL is not given for the final year of a programme.

For Masters Programmes, the normal maximum credit that can be given will be 90 Level 7 credits.

For those applicants wishing to join the final year of an honours degree, with a suitable Foundation degree award or HND or equivalent, the necessary 240 credits may be granted, subject to any conditions required by the Subject and successful completion of the bridging protocol prescribed.

Applicants wishing to join Level 5 of Foundation degrees may also apply for as much as the whole of Level 4 (50% of the programme) to be accredited.

APL claims cannot put forward experience gained from earlier study for consideration under APeL (accreditation of prior experiential learning), as this should relate to non-award bearing courses and work experience. Learning cannot be double counted.

The earlier learning being claimed for APL must be current. Normally qualifications taken / credits awarded earlier than five years before the claim is made are not eligible for consideration.

In assessing a claim for APL, the content and level of earlier accredited learning must be analysed. Applicants are required to produce any certificates awarded, together with transcripts of individual results. Certificates of attendance will not be accepted as evidence.

To assess a claim for accreditation of prior experiential learning (APeL), the applicant will be required to produce a portfolio evidencing their skills and experience which they believe are relevant to the programme for which they are claiming advanced standing. The evidence must be substantial, relevant, authentic, and current and supported by others. Full details of the advised contents of the portfolio can be found in this handbook.

The University reserves the right to:

- ❖ reject applicants where it is not satisfied that the match of content and level is appropriate
- ❖ charge a fee for processing APL/APeL applications, normally not in excess of one standard module, but related to the complexity of the claim.

All applicants wishing to be considered for advanced standing must submit their application to the APL and Transfer process and only when the University has confirmed its decision can an applicant receive a formal offer of a place.

No student claiming APL/APeL can be enrolled with advanced standing until the APL and Transfer process has been completed and the formal decision made.

The following professional qualifications/other qualifications are also accepted by the university for APL:

- i) For the BA Top Up Degree in Counselling, those applicants holding suitable professional Diplomas and demonstrating that they have met the learning outcomes relevant to the Counselling degree,
- ii) For the BA Top Up Degree in Youth and Community, those applicants holding suitable professional diplomas or other professional awards (as defined by the national Youth Work Council (JNC)), and demonstrating that they have met the Learning outcomes relevant to the Youth and Community degree
- iii) Exceptionally, up to 120 credits may be granted APL against the MA in Counselling for those students who gained the previous credits under the University of Birmingham Counselling programme.
- iv) For the BA Theology (Queens Foundation) Programme, those applicants holding the previously awarded Diploma from Queens Foundation, and successfully completed after 2006
- v) For those applicants holding the Associate of Social Services in Social Work from Caritas Institute of Higher Education, entry to the final year of either BA (Honours) in Youth and Community or BA (Honours) Working with Children, Young People and Families, (subject to the usual IELTS requirements)
- vi) For those applicants holding the Higher Diploma in Human Services from Caritas Institute of Higher Education, entry to the Top UP Degree in Management and IT (subject to the usual IELTS requirements).

THE ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR ACCREDITED LEARNING (APL)

Accreditation of Prior Learning may be as simple as recognising the equivalence between two courses. The APL process involves analysing earlier qualifications, such as the

Diploma or the Certificate of Higher Education, and assessing whether or not the content of the learning undertaken for the earlier course is a good match with a new programme leading to a similar or higher qualification in a different institution.

Key issues when considering APL claims are:

- ❖ that modules studied on a previous course are a good match in terms of content and level of learning.
- ❖ that earlier learning is current - normally, qualifications taken earlier than five years before the claim is made are not eligible for consideration;
- ❖ that the experience gained from earlier study is not also being put forward for consideration under APeL - learning cannot be 'double counted'.

MAKING A CLAIM FOR APL

In assessing a claim for APL, the content and level of earlier accredited learning must be analysed. If a student has already been awarded credit on an accredited CATS programme, he or she will normally have to produce any certificates which were awarded (which should state the name and level of the award) together with a breakdown of the content of the modules taken as evidence of the level of study on the previous award (formal transcript).

NOTE: Certificates of Attendance do not count as evidence and transcripts provided must be originals, no copies or webpage examples will be accepted.

If a transcript/Certificate indicates that some or all of the award has included work accredited under APL or APeL processes, such work cannot be presented for the new claim (double accreditation).

THE ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING (APeL)

A different approach to gaining credit against a programme leading to an award is to claim credit for earlier or current work-based experience which has enabled a student to develop his or her knowledge, skills and understanding to a level equivalent to that which would be developed through the modules on a validated taught programme. The process of claiming credit is similar but, because work-based experience is particular to the individual and the learning which results from work can be even more variable than that which results from taught courses, it is essential that the analysis of such experience is carried out against rigorous criteria (statements of content, level and learning outcomes) and that the claim for credit is strengthened through a portfolio of evidence. **Prior experiential learning is learning which has not already been formally assessed.** In making a claim for credit against such learning, the applicant is required to produce evidence that they have made progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding which is equivalent to that gained on a formal programme. In order to do this, applicants will require full details of the modules/programmes against which they are making the claim. The applicant will need specifically to demonstrate how their experience provides a match to the learning outcomes of the modules/level for which they are making a claim.

As the Quality Assurance Agency, which assesses all degree programmes against national standards, is concerned to ensure that all students have an experience of similar quality and that all degrees meet the same quality standards, a claim for prior experiential learning has to include evidence of learning which is comparable to those national

standards. This is in the interest of the student because it ensures that the award which contains an element of APL has equivalent standing with other awards and represents a high quality learning experience.

PREPARATION OF A PORTFOLIO OF EVIDENCE

A portfolio for an APeL claim should contain the evidence which is to be submitted in support of a claim. (APL claims require evidence from the previous institution in which the applicant studied of the content, level and relevance of their prior learning to the new award for which they wish to study). For APeL, the portfolio should demonstrate that earlier learning through experience has enabled the applicant to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding that are equivalent to the learning outcomes of modules on the new award for the applicant to work towards.

The evidence must be:

- ❖ substantial;
- ❖ relevant;
- ❖ authentic;
- ❖ current;
- ❖ supported by others.

Most of the evidence which is brought forward from experiential learning is practical. In order to support a claim that this practical work has enabled the applicant to develop transferable skills, the applicant will need to demonstrate that they have developed an understanding of the theory behind the learning. This can be demonstrated in a number of ways. The applicant can write an analysis of their learning, they can refer to books or articles which show that learning occurs in similar situations or they can be formally interviewed on their portfolio.

PORTFOLIO CONTENTS

- ❖ Cover sheet with the applicant's name, the title of the award they are working towards and the date of submission of the portfolio;
- ❖ Table of contents;
- ❖ Statement of claim;
- ❖ Personal profile or full Curriculum Vitae;
- ❖ Cross-referencing form;
- ❖ The evidence itself, carefully organised and labelled;
- ❖ A statement in which the applicant relates the evidence to the learning outcomes of the modules they wish to be awarded credits.

COMPLETING THE CLAIM FORM FOR THE APL AND TRANSFER PROCESS

The purpose of APL/APeL is to assess prior learning and to evaluate its quality and credit worthiness.

The relevant Admissions staff will help applicants to prepare their claim form and, where claiming APeL, their portfolio. The claim form attached to the evidence is designed to signpost the Programme Leader through the evidence, to make it clear what the applicant

aims to achieve and to indicate the level and credit value of the claim. (An APL form is provided as an appendix to this handbook).

The relevant Programme Leader will assess the application against the criteria and will make an initial judgement as to whether it meets the requirements. If it does, the Programme Leader will then submit all the APL/APeL claim forms and portfolios approved at this stage to the Chair of the Academic Standards Committee, (who oversees the process and approves applications). The Chair must be satisfied that the appropriate procedures have been followed and that the work represents the learning outcomes for which credit is being claimed. If the Chair is satisfied, he will recommend that credit is awarded and Student Records, Admissions and Exams and Assessments will be notified. The APL/APeL credits will appear on student's transcript.

PROCESSES AND POLICIES FOR CLAIMS

1. An applicant making a claim for APL or APeL, or to transfer internally, should not be enrolled, nor advised that they may enrol, until their claim has been formally considered through the APL and Transfer Process and a final decision taken.
2. To present an application for consideration, the applicant's file should contain a completed APL/APeL application form signed by the student and the relevant Programme Leader, together with a current transcript or portfolio. The Programme Leader should also indicate where credit requested is not a full level, what modules the applicant is required to take to make up the necessary credits for the award.
3. Once an application has been considered by the Chair of the Academic Standards Committee and the application for prior credit approved a formal letter will be sent to them by the Admissions team and copied to both the relevant Programme Leader and Examinations and Assessments.
4. All applications will be considered as soon as possible and within six weeks receipt of **all** documents requested, including payment where applicable*

**A fee of £50 for the APL process may be required when transferring from another HEi. A fee of up to £500 may be required for APeL.*