Accreditation of Prior Learning

1. Introduction

1.1 Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) is the process whereby students can be exempt from some parts of their chosen programme of academic study by recognition of their learning from previous experiences and achievements.

1.2 Accredited Prior ‘Certified’ Learning (APCL) is the achievement of learning that has been formally assessed and certificated from previous study with a higher education institution, which can include the University of Exeter. Where groups, or cohorts, of students wish to apply, this should usually be covered by the creation of a ‘progression agreement’.

1.3 Accredited Prior 'Experiential' Learning (APEL) is the non-certified acquisition of relevant skills and knowledge, gained through relevant experience, which is capable of being evaluated.

1.4 It is the achievement of learning, or outcomes of the learning, and not just the experience of the activities that is being accredited. In all cases evidence must be presented to the University that such learning has taken place.

1.5 Some programmes have approved modules/periods of study undertaken at another institution or in the workplace. Where this is a recognised part of an approved programme these guidelines do not apply.

1.6 The term ‘prior learning’ does not include the learning implicit in formal teaching, a work placement, group work or independent study designed as part of a programme of study provided by a higher education institution. Recognition of such learning would be expected to occur in the formal assessment practice of the programme.

1.7 APL operates at the whole module level, and cannot be applied to components of modules. Consideration of whether the student has demonstrated every single ILO is not required, only that the student can demonstrate achievement of the significant learning outcomes for the module to be exempted. Other ILOs are likely to have been demonstrated through completion of the remaining parts of the programme of study.

1.8 Acceptance of prior learning for credit purposes is at the discretion of the College, with approval from the relevant Faculty Dean. Colleges should ensure that the criteria by which they judge applications for APL are transparent and accessible.

1.9. Prior learning should not normally be accepted if five or more years have elapsed since it occurred unless the applicant can provide evidence that his/her learning has continued in a professional or similar context. In such cases the College may choose to set an assessment to test an applicant's current knowledge.

1.10 All students must be treated equitably regardless of the type or source of learning that is being assessed.

1.11 Where a student is exempt from part of their programme of study at the University of Exeter the programme fee for the relevant year may be reduced pro-rata to the amount of credit being studied.
1.12. In all cases the award of a qualification of the University is subject to students meeting the requirements of section 7 of the Credit and Qualifications Framework.

   a) For undergraduate programmes the final 120 credits of the programme must be taken as University of Exeter modules and the maximum amount of APCL permitted is 180 credits in a 360 credit programme or 240 credits in a 480 credit programme. Exceptionally this amount may be exceeded with the approval of the Dean of the relevant Faculty.

   b) Masters programmes should normally include at least 90 credits taken as University of Exeter modules. Exceptionally this amount may be reduced with the approval of the Dean of the relevant Faculty, on a programme by programme basis.

   c) For all awards the maximum amount of permitted APCL credits are as follows. With exceptional approval from the Dean of the relevant Faculty these amounts may be varied.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Award type</th>
<th>Total credit required for award</th>
<th>Maximum amount of APL allowed</th>
<th>Minimum amount of Exeter credit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Credit-rated graduate research</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit-bearing Doctoral awards (e.g. Professional Doctorates)</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Postgraduate Level Award</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters Degrees (MSc, MA etc.)</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>90*</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip)</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Undergraduate Level Award</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Diploma (GradDip)</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Certificate (GradCert)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated Masters Degree with Honours (MSci, MEng etc.)</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors Degree with Honours (3 years)</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors Degree with Honours (4 years)</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary Degree</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation Degree (FdSc)</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>120</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*This can be increased to 120 credits where credits are from another University of Exeter programme, or where a programme has been given permission from the Academic Dean for Students to allow a greater number of credits to be accredited (as set out in 1.12b).

2. Applications

2.1 A nominated Admissions Tutor within each College should act as the central contact for all APL requests. Appropriate reference to applications for APL will be included in admissions statements.

2.2 All applications for APL should normally be made prior to the student's date of registration. All applications must include evidence of the prior learning, provided by the applicant.

2.3 Applications for APL should be considered by the relevant Admissions Tutor. The Admissions Tutor will need to consider whether the student's prior learning (certified and / or experiential) adequately demonstrates achievement of the learning outcomes for the module(s) from which exemption is sought. For experiential learning the student may be required to complete a portfolio to demonstrate their learning, or to undertake some other form of assessment as appropriate. If a College is satisfied that the experiential learning is equivalent to the standard of a module(s) that the student is requesting
exemption from, then assessment may not be required.

2.4 Applications may be rejected at any stage. Appeals against judgments on applications for APL will be treated in the same way as appeals on admissions applications.

2.5 APL should be recorded on the student record system and clearly identified on a student's transcript, including the amount and level of credit from which exemption has been granted.

2.6 The University has devolved the management of all APL applications to Colleges.

3. APCL General Principles

3.1 The College should assure itself that the prior certified study is equivalent to the standard of learning that would otherwise have been achieved from study in the relevant module(s) in the programme on to which the student is being accepted. This is usually done by analysis of the intended learning outcomes of the module(s). This is particularly relevant to professional programmes where fitness to practice is pertinent.

3.2 Colleges should consider the learning which has been previously accredited and decide, in the best interests of the student, how this can be taken into account. It is at the discretion of the College to decide if the subject content and therefore knowledge gained is sufficiently similar for a student to be exempt from the module(s). Evidence for acceptance of APCL should demonstrate that the learner has a reasonable expectation of satisfactorily completing the programme for which they are applying.

3.3 Prior credit obtained from another institution can be recognised, but given that the University could not have full confidence in marks awarded in all circumstances, the marks awarded from prior certified learning will not be used for the purpose of classification of the Exeter award. This does not apply to credits awarded at the University of Exeter which may, if the College considers this appropriate in the individual circumstances, be counted towards the final classification. Where previous University of Exeter credits have been allowed under APL these will be shown on the student transcript.

3.4 Exceptionally, the nature of the BMBS programme is such that no recognition of prior learning or exemption from study is normally permissible, other than transfer at an appropriate level of study from another UK Medical School, at the discretion of the Pro-Vice Chancellor and Executive Dean of the University of Exeter Medical School.

4. APEL General Principles

4.1 Colleges should consider the learning demonstrated through the student's experience in order to decide whether the ILOs for the module to be exempted have been demonstrated. Appropriate assessments may be set in order that the student may demonstrate achievement of these learning outcomes, including assessment of a portfolio of the student’s work.

4.2 APEL does not exempt a student from study but allows the use of different routes to the award of credit. All students must meet the learning outcomes as set out in the programme specification in order to qualify for the award.

5. Procedure for APL

5.1 Stage 1 – Application

All applications for APL should normally be made prior to the student's date of registration. Students should be able to seek guidance from the College prior to completion of their APL application. The nominated Admissions Tutors in Colleges should act as a central contact for all APL requests. Students should be able to meet with appropriate College staff to discuss
the type of evidence that may be required and the likely timetable of the process. Appropriate reference to applications for APL should be included in Colleges’ admissions material. Appendix A provides a summary of information that should be made available to the students.

5.2 Stage 2 - Initial assessment of case

The Admission Tutor should discuss the APEL application form with the student and:

- Clarify what learning outcomes the student is seeking credit for
- Discuss with the student how experiential learning might most appropriately be evidenced, and
- Advise the student on how and when to submit the necessary portfolio of evidence
- Consult with the programme director and other colleagues as necessary on the appropriate method(s) to be used to assess the applicant’s experiential learning and the evidence submitted.

5.3 The degree of advice and guidance required by APEL applicants will vary from case to case. (Where as an application for APCL might be supported via email or a one-to-one interview, APEL applications are likely to require more detailed and frequent discussion in order to reach a satisfactory outcome).

Students should submit the appropriate application fee. Where a College is accrediting prior experiential learning as part of a student’s programme of study, then a fee may be charged to cover the costs of administering and assessing the application. The normal fee will be 25% of the fee for the module with half payable for the assessment of the student’s learning and half payable when the application is accepted.

5.4 Stage 3 - Submission of evidence.

The third stage requires the candidate to submit a portfolio of evidence demonstrating the learning achieved and to complete the application form to indicate what is being submitted against which ILOs. The portfolio might include;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APEL</th>
<th>APCL</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Direct evidence:</strong></td>
<td>• Any relevant transcripts from previous institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Practice-based documents</td>
<td>• In addition to the submission of a portfolio, assessment of learning can include oral examinations, and/or one or more traditional examinations. Colleges might also wish to request a reflective account (with a word limit).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Published articles and manuscripts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Video/audio tapes/computer discs/electronic files, with commentary and analysis related to achievement of learning outcomes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Analytical and evaluative description of practice</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Awards and honours</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Viva</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Artefacts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indirect evidence:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Statements from supervisors or managers in relation to aspects of practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• References from colleagues, employees, voluntary organisations, professional bodies</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
5.5 Stage 4 – Assessment

The submission of evidence should be considered by the relevant Admissions Tutor

Whatever the form of evidence, the assessment process must evaluate a submission in terms of the following criteria:

- validity – it must be appropriate in terms of level, volume (i.e. match that for which the claim is made, although higher level credit may substitute for lower level credit) and relevance for the purpose of the particular claim;
- sufficiency – it must be enough to satisfy the learning outcomes of the module(s), level claimed;
- currency – it must represent the applicant’s present knowledge and abilities;
- authenticity – it must be indicative of the applicant’s own learning achievements.

For cases of APEL, assessment must be rigorous in ensuring that the learning that has taken place through experience is equivalent to the learning that would occur from following those elements of the study which the student is seeking exemption from. Credit must only be given for demonstrated learning, where equivalence of learning outcomes can be demonstrated.

The Admissions Tutor will review the portfolio and discuss with the student any revisions or supplementary material that might be required. Once the assessment is complete the Admissions Tutor should sign off the recommendation section of the form, following approval from the ADE and relevant Faculty Dean, indicating the specific academic credit to be awarded in respect of the named module.

5.6 Stage 5 – Outcome and feedback

Students should be informed by Admissions in writing of the decision on their application as soon as possible. APL decisions should be recorded on the student record system and clearly identified on a student’s transcript, including the amount and level of credit from which exemption has been granted.

5.7 Appendix A: Checklist of information to be provided to students

Students (current or potential) should be provided with clear information and guidance on APL including:

a) the nature of any support and advice available to students
b) definitions and boundaries of terminology used in University APL processes
c) roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the APL process, including students themselves
d) any applicable limits for recognition of credit (institutional and programme-specific)
e) how claims for accreditation should be presented and submitted
f) point(s) at which APL claims can be made, and likely timescales
g) the scope and nature of the evidence that will be required to support claims, and any time limits applied to the currency of that evidence
h) any applicable requirements of professional and regulatory bodies
i) effect of APL on availability of any potential awards, interim qualifications or qualification classifications
j) assessment procedures, methods and criteria
k) how and when feedback will be given
l) information on the possible outcomes of a claim and opportunities for the re-submission of an unsuccessful claim
m) the circumstances in which an appeal against a decision on the accreditation of prior learning would be considered, and the procedures to be followed
n) how a successful APL claim will be presented on a transcript of learning, and whether used for admission, entry with advanced standing, or progression
o) fees charged for the consideration of claims (compiling and/or assessing)

APL Process Flow Diagram

Stage 1
Student applies through Admissions to join a programme using APL

Stage 2
Application received by Admissions

Stage 3
Application forwarded to College Admissions Tutor for consideration before recommending to the ADE and relevant Faculty Dean for Approval.

Stage 4
College Admissions Tutor to respond to Admissions who then respond to student and save the email dialogue of the APL process to the student’s record.

Stage 5
College APL Coordinator to create SMC record in SITS – please follow the link for more information on how SITS calculates APL credit.

Admissions;
Basic information (i.e. evidence of prior qualifications) uploaded to SITS (SQE table).