



University of  
**Salford**  
MANCHESTER

# **Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) Policy**

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**Admissions/ Student Administration**

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## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to set out the principles of Accreditation of Prior Learning at the University of Salford
- 1.2 This policy is informed by the expectations and indicators of sound practice presented in the QAA's UK Quality Code for Higher Education – Advice and Guidance Assessment, November 2018.

## **2.0 Scope**

- 2.1 This policy applies to all students undertaking taught programmes levels 3 - 7 at the University of Salford and partner institutions.

## **3.0 Rationale for an Institutional Framework**

The University recognises the need for an Institutional Policy Framework for the Accreditation of Prior Learning as part of its mission to widen participation. The Framework acknowledges that the uses of APL vary between Schools and that the needs of the School, programme and student group may differ accordingly. This document provides a framework for APL provision within the University of Salford by identifying the benefits of it, the responsibilities of those implementing it, the key elements and individual roles in any application of the process, and the quality assurance of the process. Although it is desirable that there should be flexibility within the framework, it is also essential that procedures are adhered to and documented.

## **4.0 What is APL?**

- 4.1 The University acknowledges that APL is used to:
  - widen access for students who want to enter postgraduate, professional, undergraduate, Access and other foundation programmes;
  - award specific credit within modularised programmes at postgraduate and undergraduate levels.
- 4.2 The Accreditation of Prior Learning includes the assessment and possible accreditation of prior certificated or experiential learning. The process acknowledges that students can learn not only by attending programmes but also through paid or unpaid work, and their own self-directed learning. The APL process for Apprenticeship programmes is specified in Appendix 1.
- 4.3 The University's Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes govern APL. Exceptions to the Academic Regulations regarding APL are approved by the Academic Regulations Sub-Committee, prior to consideration by the Programme Validation Panel, on the basis of a strong academic rationale for doing so and reflected on the Programme Specification. The Quality Management Office (QMO) maintains a database of all approved exceptions which are regularly reviewed by the Academic Regulations Sub-Committee. For further information on these exceptions, please contact QMO at [QMO@salford.ac.uk](mailto:QMO@salford.ac.uk)

- 4.4 The Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes stipulate that modules for which credit may be awarded through APL are modules which comprise in part or in full the first two thirds of a programme leading to the qualification (final award of Honours or PGT Masters degree). Specifically, credit may not be awarded through APL for modules which have already been used towards a target award at level 6 of an Honours Degree programme or modules which comprise the final 60 credit stage of a Master's programme (the project stage).
- 4.5 An applicant who has already gained an Honours degree or an equivalent level 6 qualification may be granted up to one third exemption of the total credit value towards another equivalent or lower qualification as defined by the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ).
- 4.6 An applicant who has already gained a Taught Master's or Integrated Master's degree may be granted up to one third of the total credit value towards another equivalent or lower qualification as defined by the FHEQ.
- 4.7 Up to 60 credits at level 6 may be awarded through APL for professional modules that contribute to post-qualifying nursing programmes.
- 4.8 Former University of Salford students, who did not complete their target award of an honours degree but successfully completed some level 6 credits, may be re-admitted to their programme at a later date. In such instances, the School would make the decision regarding re-admission at the point where the student had withdrawn during level 6 study to allow continuation and completion of the target award. This would not be an automatic right and Schools would need to consider the individual's reasons for return, potential for repeat failure, the currency of former study, and whether the credits map to the current programme.
- 4.9 No level 3 credit may be used for Advanced Standing for entry, this applies to programmes with a foundation year programme to gain entry to a three year undergraduate programme.
- 4.10 Where a level 3 foundation year has been integrated as part of a four year undergraduate programme, level 3 credit may be used for Advanced Standing for identified programmes only and where permitted by PSRB requirements. The level 3 credit will be exempt from the 5 year currency requirement in section 7.5, unless it is a PSRB requirement. The qualification used for APL must meet the required UCAS tariff point score for entry to level 4 of the relevant programme and meet any programme specific requirements. This applies to programmes which have an integrated level 3 only but does not apply to programmes with a Foundation Year or International Foundation Year.

## **5.0 Terminology**

Relevant terminology is defined as follows:

### **5.1 Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)**

A generic term for the process which evaluates, recognises and assigns credit to both certificated and experiential learning. APL can be used to gain entry onto a programme of study and/or to give credit for parts of a programme of study.

### **5.2 Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL)**

A specific term for the process which evaluates, recognises and assigns credit to learning that has already been formally assessed and certificated by another institution with credible academic standing. APCL can be used to gain entry onto a programme of study and/or to give credit for parts of a programme of study.

### **5.3 Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)**

A specific term for the process which evaluates, recognises and assigns credit to learning which has been acquired through experience in particular contexts such as employment, voluntary work, self-directed learning or through life experience and which has not been previously certificated. APEL can be used to gain entry onto a programme of study and/or to give credit for parts of a programme of study.

### **5.4 Entry with Advanced Standing**

A term used to determine what credit may be awarded to the learner for previous learning and therefore what credit can be given for an individual module or modules. The APL process is used to determine what credit can be awarded to the learner for previous certificated learning and/or experiential learning and therefore at what level or stage the learner may enter a programme of study.

### **5.5 Award of Credit by Level through APL**

A term used where learning outcomes for each level and stage of a programme are incorporated into the programme specification in order that the APL process may be used to award credit for a level or stage of a programme. Where a programme incorporates a specific Intermediate Terminating Qualification (ITQ) the programme specification should include learning outcomes for that ITQ. This process is less time consuming and costly than awarding APL against individual modules and enables judgements to be located between individual modules and programmes as a whole.

## **6.0 The Benefits of the Accreditation of Prior Learning**

### **6.1 Benefits for the University**

- Extends our traditions of access by providing opportunities that enable a wider range of people to study and learn in a variety of ways at a variety of times.
- Develops flexibility in curriculum delivery and methods of learning that maintain our competitive edge by emphasising our tradition of education for capability and partnership with employers and other organisations.

### **6.2 Benefits for the School and Programme Team**

- **Recruitment:** Enables them to widen their recruitment by assessing the knowledge and skills an applicant has before entry and to consider, at that stage, whether an applicant's prior certificated or experiential learning could provide evidence of their suitability for entry, or whether it potentially meets the learning outcomes of a module or modules for the award of specific credit.
- **Retention, Guidance and Learner Support:** If the Admissions or Module tutor were able to identify the needs of a learner before entry, any referrals that were necessary

could be organised to ensure that appropriate academic support could be organised before a learner began their programme. Retention may then be improved by using the appropriate academic guidance and learning support services offered to ensure that the maximum benefit is gained from the guidance and support that is available.

- Self-support: Given that the APL process encourages learners to reflect on their knowledge, skills and experience, before entry, each individual should have greater self-awareness and may then be able to take more responsibility for organising their own learning during their programme.

### 6.3 Benefits for the Learner

- Enables them to identify their initial academic needs by reflecting on the potential value of the knowledge and skills gained through experience as well as prior certificated learning.
- Enables them to have their existing knowledge and skills formally recognised, assuming that the learning from experience or prior certificated learning is presented in an appropriate form. When the evidence is assessed, it has to meet the necessary criteria defined or the outcomes of prior certificated/experiential learning have to meet the learning outcomes of the specific module.
- Encourages them to take greater responsibility for organising their own learning.
- Encourages them to meet their academic and professional needs before, during, and having completed their programme by using the range of guidance and learner support services.

## 7.0 Implementation of APL

### 7.1 Introduction

The introduction to the framework emphasises that APL should be used flexibly across the institution given the differences in who is using it, their purpose and the level it is being used at. However initially each Programme Team should refer to the core documentation, APL Institutional Framework, Introducing APL, APL: A Learner's Guide and APL: A Staff Guide. Although a programme may want to produce its own documentation for the learner, to complement the core documentation, it is essential that this is agreed with the APL Co-ordinator and School APL Co-ordinator and they receive a copy of this.

### 7.2 Guidance

It is essential that each individual learner receives:

- Initial information and advice on the process including the fee structure and the limits on the amount of credit that can be awarded.
- Guidance on either the knowledge, skills and understanding that have to be demonstrated for access to a programme or the outcomes that have to be met if a claim for specific credit is to be made.

- Guidance on the mechanisms that can be used for making claims;
- Guidance on the assessment process for APL claims;
- Guidance on the costs for APL. There is no charge for APL for entry to a programme and no charge for credit claims for APCL. In the case of credit claims for APEL, there may be a case made for charging no more than 50% of the module fee(s). This must be agreed by Schools as part of their non-standard fees process and made explicitly clear to students. If a School does charge for APEL credit claims, then a fee will not be charged for unsuccessful claims.

### **7.3 Eligibility for a Postgraduate Student Loan**

Acceptance of APL may affect the duration of the programme of study and therefore a student may not be eligible to apply for a Postgraduate Student Loan. Students should seek advice prior to submitting an application.

### **7.4 Student visa**

Students Requiring a Student visa to study – acceptance of Recognition of Prior Learning may affect the duration of their programme of study and therefore affect their Student visa. Students should seek advice from Home Office Compliance Team prior to submitting an application.

### **7.5 Application Process**

Although the process will vary for each individual, depending on whether they want to use prior experiential learning for entry onto a programme, or prior certificated or experiential learning for credit towards an award, any application of APL must ensure that the:

- criteria for entry onto a programme, or the learning outcomes that have to be met if credit is to be awarded against specific modules within a programme, are specified at the beginning of the process;
- appropriate levels of guidance for each individual are negotiated and agreed at each stage;
- individual emphasises the learning that they have gained from either prior certificated or experiential learning and not the experience itself;
- assessment of any claim must be documented and should evaluate whether the evidence submitted is:
  - valid and matches the level of learning required;
  - sufficient proof for entry or credit against the specific modules;
  - authentic and the work of the learner;
  - current and that the relevant knowledge and skills that the learner is claiming can be demonstrated. The experiential or certificated learning must be no more than

5 years old. If certificated learning is over 5 years old the applicant must provide evidence of how they have kept their knowledge up to date

## 7.6 Timescale and Registration

The timing of the APL process is critical and needs to be completed before a student registers for a programme or embarks on a part of a programme in which APL was to be claimed.

For credit purposes, all APL processes must be completed in time for ratification by the Board of Examiners which meets prior to the semester for which credit is claimed. Chairs Action can be taken for APL credit claims for both certificated and experiential learning, to resolve issues with registration. A student cannot be awarded credit until they are registered on a programme of study and credit cannot be awarded for stand-alone modules.

## 8.0 Individual Roles

### 8.1 Learner

The role of the learner is to:

- prepare a claim for entry or credit based on the criteria provided by the Programme Team;
- identify how they can make their experience count by reflecting on their learning from experience and reviewing their academic and professional needs;
- negotiate credit that can be awarded for specific modules given other appropriate certificated or experiential learning;
- produce a claim based on the appropriate mechanism that has been agreed with the APL Co-ordinator, School APL Co-ordinator, Advisor and Assessor.

### 8.2 Advisor

The role of the advisor is to provide advice and guidance during the APL process that will enable each learner to:

- review their academic and professional needs;
- reflect on their learning from experience or prior certificated learning;
- work through the APL process and use the appropriate mechanism to provide supporting evidence to demonstrate learning;
- review the plan and draft of their portfolio and check it against the criteria defined by the member(s) of the Programme Team.



### **8.3 Assessor: Admissions Tutor or Module Tutor**

The role of the assessor is to:

- define the criteria for entry or the learning outcomes that have to be met for specific credit and agree this with the APL Co-ordinator and APL School Co-ordinator.;
- assess the evidence against the criteria defined;
- confirm the outcome of the assessment they have made and report their recommendation to the APL School Co-ordinator, to the Director of Admissions in the case of entry via APL, or to the Examination Board where specific credit is awarded and to get final approval from the APL Co-ordinator.

## **9.0 Quality Assurance: Responsibilities of the Institution**

### **9.1 The APL Manual and Related Resources**

- 9.1.1 The Quality and Enhancement Office will provide a link on their website to the documents APL Institutional Framework and related resources.
- 9.1.2 Admissions Tutors, Module Tutors and Programme Leaders will have been provided with core documentation and other appropriate staff development.
- 9.1.3 The complementary document, “APL: A Staff Guide”, summarises the process and identifies roles. If necessary, direct staff development is then provided by the APL Co-ordinator and the School APL Co-ordinator who sits on the APL Group to support and approve the definition of the criteria for entry or credit and the subsequent assessment of the claim. The Admissions Tutors, or other appropriate member of a Programme Team, would also identify the specific evidence they require from the learner in their claim for entry or credit and agree these with the APL Co-ordinator and APL School Co-ordinator.

### **9.2 Programme proposals and re-specifications**

- 9.2.1 When submitting either a new programme proposal, or the re-specification of an existing programme, documentation should detail how the learners could apply for entry by using APL or how specific credit can be awarded when learning can be demonstrated using prior certificated and/or experiential learning.
- 9.2.2 A statement of the learning outcomes for each level and stage of a programme is included in the programme specification in order that the APL process may be used to award credit for a level or stage of a programme.
- 9.2.3 Students may be awarded credit by level or stage through APL. The following conditions apply:
- The learning outcomes for the level or stage of the programme should have been approved as part of the programme specification.

- A student may commence the process having already accumulated some or none of the credits for the level or stage of the programme.
- A student who has demonstrated through the APL processes that they have met all the learning outcomes for the level or stage of a programme shall be awarded all the remaining credits for that level or stage.
- A student who has not demonstrated that they have met all the learning outcomes for a level or stage of a programme shall not be awarded any further credits through this process.
- Existing restrictions regarding the volume and level of credits awarded through APL continue to apply.

9.2.4 Schools are advised to consider developing an Evidencing Personal and Professional Development module, which helps students reflect on their prior learning and put together a portfolio demonstrating this learning and identifying opportunities for further learning. Achieving this module would help students compile a claim for the remaining credits at that same level.

### **9.3 External Examiners and APL**

9.3.1 The Programme Leader should inform the External Examiner that APL is being used on the programme. The Programme Leader should provide the External Examiner with a copy of the APL Institutional Policy Framework and any additional information that has been produced by the Programme Team. Completed APL assessments and evidence from candidates should then be available for the External Examiner to sample and review how the process is applied in practice.

### **9.4 Monitoring and Evaluation**

9.4.1 The APL Co-ordinator, in conjunction with the School APL Co-ordinator who sits on the APL Group, are responsible for monitoring the number of learners making APL claims, their success and failure rate, their evaluation of the APL process and an evaluation of their progress by the Programme Leader or Module Tutor. Any required changes or amendments to the APL procedure must be made through the APL Group and then sent to ASQAC for approval.

### **9.5 Roles of the School APL Co-ordinators**

- School APL Co-ordinators will countersign the Assessment Outcomes Form, as initially signed by the Admissions or Module Tutor.
- To ensure that all colleagues use the appropriate APL process and that the Director of Admissions countersigns the form for entry or the Chair of the Board of Examiners for credit. School APL Co-ordinator to forward the Assessment Outcomes Form to the APL Co-ordinator in Student Experience and Academic Support for countersigning and recording.

- To work with the APL Co-ordinator to ensure that the University requirements to use APL, where appropriate, are implemented.
- To contribute to monitoring and evaluation by working with the APL Co-ordinator and ensuring that relevant data is collected.
- To work with APL Co-ordinator to identify any particular academic needs students entering via APL may have, and to work with others to ensure those needs are met.
- To work with the APL Co-ordinator to deliver appropriate staff development with academic and academic support staff within their School.
- To work with the APL Co-ordinator to identify and share good practice with others.

## **10.0 Quality Assurance: Entitlements of the Learner**

### **10.1 Individual Advice**

Initial information that should be circulated includes the core booklet, “Introducing the APL”, which summarises the overall process. Learners enquiring about APL may then be invited to an individual or group advisory session on APL with either the APL Co-ordinator, the School APL Co-ordinator, or a member of the Programme Team.

### **10.2 Preparing and Planning a Claim**

When the learner proceeds with their APL claim Student Experience and Academic Support can provide them with further core documentation in “APL: A Learner’s Guide”. Additional information may also be available from the Programme Leader or Module Tutor specifying the particular needs of that programme. If a learner wants to use the process for entry the Admissions Tutor or Programme Leader should confirm the knowledge, skills and understanding they require using the documentation in “APL: A Staff Guide”. The appropriate combination of information, advice and guidance from Student Experience and Academic Support and the Programme Team should enable each individual to prepare, plan and produce a claim for entry or credit based on the appropriate mechanisms that have been agreed.

### **10.3 Producing the Evidence**

The learner produces their APL claim based on the appropriate mechanism and supporting evidence.

### **10.4 Assessing the Claim**

The APL assessment and evidence are then evaluated using the criteria defined by the Programme Leader or Admissions Tutor and approved by the APL Co-ordinator and the assessment guidelines in “APL: A Staff Guide”. The recommendation of the assessor must also then be recorded using the documentation in “APL: A Staff Guide”.

Where a student has been awarded credit via APL for a module from another institution, a module grade of pass (P), rather than a numerical grade, shall be recorded, with the exception of credit awarded for professional modules that contribute to post-qualifying nursing programmes.

Programme classifications will be based on the module marks awarded by the University of Salford.

An appeal against an APL credit claim can only be made by a student registered on a programme of study. Further information on grounds for appeal can be found in the University's [Appeals Procedure](#).

## 11.0 Further Information

In the first instance, the APL and WBL Manager in Student Experience and Academic Support, can provide information and advice on APL including the School representative on the APL Group.

Contact details: APL and WBL Manager, email: [r.potts@salford.ac.uk](mailto:r.potts@salford.ac.uk)

## 12.0 Related Documentation

[Academic Regulations For Taught and Research Programmes](#)

[APL Assessment Outcomes Form](#)

[QAA UK Higher Education Credit Framework for England: Advice on Academic Credit Arrangements 26 May 2021](#)

[QAA UK Making Use of Credit: A Companion to the Higher Education Credit Framework for England 26 May 2021](#)

[QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education - Advice and Guidance Assessment, November 2018](#)

## Appendix 1

### APL Process for Apprenticeships

Learners applying for apprenticeship programmes must undertake an initial needs assessment against the apprenticeship standards knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSB), prior to an unconditional offer of a place on the programme being made. The initial assessment will include identifying and evidencing any APL credit for prior certificated and/or experiential learning that could be claimed, in accordance with the University APL Procedure.

Responsibility for the initial assessment belongs to the Programme Leader or nominee and includes the apprentice and employer.

The APL process for an Apprenticeship programme will consist of the following steps:

1. Mapping of the prior learning both certificated and experiential against the apprenticeship standards KSB.
2. Identification of any APL credit that can be claimed.
3. Submission and assessment of the evidence using the University APL Procedure.
4. Notification of credit awarded. For higher and degree apprenticeships, APL could lead to credits being awarded for modules. Credit will only be awarded where all learning outcomes of a module have been met.
5. Programme Leader or nominee negotiating fee reduction with the employer.
6. Recording APL in the commitment statement and developing a learning plan including content, duration of the programme and reduction of fees.

### Related Documentation

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeships-recognition-of-prior-learning/apprenticeships-initial-assessment-to-recognise-prior-learning>



EN-5 Initial  
Assessment of Prior

<b>Document Control Information</b>			
<b>Revision History incl. Authorisation: (most recent first)</b>			
<b>Author</b>	<b>Summary of changes</b>	<b>Version</b>	<b>Authorised &amp; Date</b>
Ruth Potts	<i>Compilation of existing information and guidance on the APL process into one Policy document.</i>	V1	ASQAC – August 2018
Ruth Potts	<i>Updated QAA UK Quality code for Higher Education reference and included information regarding the University's Appeals Procedure and Exceptions to the Academic Regulations regarding APL</i>	V2.0	ASQAC – June 2019
Ruth Potts	<i>Section 4.2 updated to include APL process for apprenticeships as appendix. Section 4.8 Updated exception to Level 3 credit and</i>	V3.0	ASQAC – May 2020
Ruth Potts	<i>Section 4.3 updated to provide guidance regarding re-admission of former University of Salford students who achieved some level 6 credits. Section 7.4 updated new terminology Tier 4 Visa now called Student visa. Appendix 1 updates to reflect EFSA guidance to make explicit APL may lead to the award of credit. QAA UK Higher Education Credit Framework for England: Advice on Academic Credit Arrangements 26 May 2021 and QAA UK Making Use of Credit: A Companion to the Higher Education Credit Framework for England 26 May 2021referenced.</i>	V4.0	E.g. Executive: 01/09/11
Ruth Potts	<i>Section 4.10 added to clarify that level 3 credit used for APL within an integrated 4 year degree programme is exempt from the 5 year currency requirement, subject to PSRB requirements.</i>	V4.1	ULTC by Chair's Action 25 January 2023
<b>Policy Management and Responsibilities:</b>			
Owner:	This Policy is issued by the Associate Director, Student Administration, who has the authority to issue and communicate policy on APL and has delegated day to day management and communication of the policy to APL and WBL Co-ordinator.		
Others with responsibilities (please specify):	All subjects of the Policy will be responsible for engaging with and adhering to this policy.		
<b>Author to complete formal assessment with the following advisory teams:</b>			
Equality Analysis (E&D, HR)	1. <i>Completed 24 August 2018 and emailed to <a href="mailto:Equality@salford.ac.uk">Equality@salford.ac.uk</a></i>		
Legal implications (LPG)	2. <i>N/A</i>		
Information Governance (LPG)	3. <i>N/A</i>		
Student facing procedures (QMO)	4. <i>Through APL Working Group meetings</i>		
UKVI Compliance (Student Admin)	5. <i>Through APL Working Group meetings</i>		
<b>Consultation:</b>			
Staff Trades Unions via HR	N/A		

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<b>The owner and author are responsible for publicising this policy document.</b>	