

Credit for Learning

*A Guide to the Accreditation of Prior Certificated and Experiential Learning
in Higher Education in the East of England*

Part of the Regional Credit Agreement

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Mission Statement

MOVE's overarching purpose is to bring about a step change in progression opportunities for vocational learners across the East of England region and to improve opportunities into and through Higher Education at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Foreword

The accreditation of prior and experiential learning is a powerful and effective way of recognising, accrediting and re-purposing existing learning. It is the generic name usually given to what are two separate processes that enable either existing formal (certificated) learning or learning that has been gained through experience to be used as part of a new qualification. It has a key role to play in enabling people to make the most of learning they already have and in particular in developing work based learning. However, despite being in use in some areas for almost twenty years, it is still not as widely understood as it must be to enable it to be used and developed to realise its full potential.

This guide has therefore been written to provide a straightforward guide to APEL - (where the 'E' stands for experiential) and APCL (where the 'C' stands for certificated) - in the region. The first part gives a generic explanation of what APEL /APCL is (definitions and principles), how it works in practice (processes), who can make use of it (users) and who does it (providers). The second section gives more detailed information in a common format from University providers in the region about how it works in each institution with full contact information for potential users.

Although this guide covers APEL and APCL currently available in higher education the newly launched Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) intends to make similar processes available at all levels of learning (levels 1-8) for credit and qualifications in the regulated sector.

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1. Introduction

1.1 General

Most universities in the East of England (see list of Higher Education Institutions and Further Education Colleges in Appendix 1) operate within a credit-based, modular system which offers a flexible structure to study in higher education. This flexibility enables learners to transfer from one institution to another and still benefit from qualifications, part qualifications and other learning already achieved. The transfer of prior learning is managed through the Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme (CATS) and a process called the Accreditation of Prior Certificated and/or Experiential Learning (APCL/APEL). The terms used to describe the transfer of credit, both certificated and experiential, may differ from institution to institution and can be confusing. We have therefore included a glossary of terms at Appendix 2 which includes all terms used in the East of England.

1.2 What is a Credit Based Modular System?

Credit is the term used by higher education institutions to summarise and describe an amount of learning. A credit value identifies the volume (how much) and the level (how difficult) of the learning undertaken. A three year full time honours degree is made up of 360 credits with students studying 120 credits in each year. Year 1 credits are recognised as level 4, year 2 as level 5 and year 3 as level 6 within the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). (The diagram at Appendix 3 shows the levels and equivalence of qualifications from entry level up to level 8. A more detailed version of this diagram is available at www.move.ac.uk)

Each discrete amount of learning is described as a module and may have a credit value of 10, 15, 20, 30 or even 45 credits, depending on the university, and sometimes the course of study. The volume of credit is based on how many 'notional hours' are needed to achieve the credit. Notional hours include all learning activity - lectures, tutorials, workshops, individual study and assessment. There is a nationally accepted agreement that 1 credit = 10 notional hours of learning. This means that a 10 credit module equals 100 hours of learning, a 20 credit module 200 hours and so on.

1.3 What is APCL/APEL?

APCL and APEL are processes that enable existing certificated learning (APCL) and experiential learning (APEL) to be recognised and used as part of new qualification. They are designed to stop the need for learners to repeat learning they have already achieved through a formal course or experience. The process of recognising credit is called the Accreditation of Prior Certificated and/or Experiential Learning (APCL/APEL), although you will see from the glossary of terms (Appendix 2) that various terms and acronyms are used to describe the same process. The transfer of credit for prior learning from one institution to another enables learners to access a course at a later stage, as there is no necessity to repeat learning already achieved and means that a course can be completed in less time than it would normally take.

The majority of the higher education institutions involved in the publication of this document and their partner colleges delivering higher education courses in the East of England operate modular schemes and recognise, under the CATS system, appropriate and relevant learning previously achieved elsewhere. Cambridge University may accept the transfer of an appropriate partially completed award into a Cambridge University course of study by exception but does not use the CATS system within its own programmes.

1.4 How is the transfer of credit managed?

The processes involved in approving the transfer of credit are broadly similar but there are some differences from institution to institution. The process may be managed centrally, by a committee which oversees approval across the institution, by a Faculty or School approvals process or by subject specific department approvals process or by a combination of these methods. However, the good news is that this variation in process should have little or no effect on what users of it – such as learners and employers – need to do!

1.5 How do Higher Education Institutions decide what existing learning is relevant and how much credit can be claimed for it?

Each institution will make individual decisions about how much credit can be approved into any course of study. However, in all institutions the method used to recognise prior certificated learning is to compare what has already been learned with what would be studied on the new course. This will show whether the learning on each course is identical or sufficiently similar to enable the learner to claim that they have already achieved the outcomes within that body of learning and therefore do not need to do it again. It also means that in some cases not all of the credit from existing learning may count towards a new award as not all of it may be relevant and specific to the new award.

1.6 Why does the credit value approved for the same learning differ for different Higher Education Institutions and sometimes from course to course within a Higher Education Institution?

Each course within a higher education institution has been designed to meet certain learning needs and subject specific outcomes. Therefore, because course content can be so different, the amount of credit awarded for the transfer of the same qualification may vary from institution to institution and even from course to course within an institution. To help learners gain a better estimate about how much credit they have achieved and if they can use their qualification within a new award, many higher education institutions have developed a database which gives details of decisions made in the past, the general credit level awarded to some qualifications and the specific credit approved against an award. Each university will be able to advise learners about this.

1.7 How do learners start the process of making an APCL/APEL claim?

It is crucial when applying for a place at an institution, for learners to inform admission tutors that they have some certificated and/or experiential learning that may be relevant, so that the admissions tutor can advise whether a claim would be worthwhile and, if so, how to go about it. In developing a claim for either prior certificated and/or experiential learning, advice and support is available at every stage but it is important for learners to accept that they have a responsibility to discuss the possibility of making a claim with the relevant admissions tutors on application and to ensure that they complete their part in the process on time. The processes relating to each of the higher education institutions are attached at Section 4.

1.8 Are vocational qualifications and NVQs treated differently to other qualifications?

Vocational qualifications (VQs) cover almost every industry sector, and every level of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), ranging from broad-based VQs to specialist qualifications designed for a particular sector. All VQs must meet an agreed set of criteria and achievement enables progression to employment, to further learning opportunities within employment or to further study. The courses may differ in content and duration from other qualifications at the same level in the QCF although they are designed to expect the same level of achievement from the learner.

NVQs have a clear relationship to national occupational standards, are work related and competence based. The subject matter studied is intended to improve and inform practice in the work place and therefore may differ from the theoretical and analytical content of learning on a more academic programme of study such as A Levels or a degree programme. If there are gaps in either the theoretical knowledge or study skills needed to successfully complete the new course, learners may be required to undertake some additional study to ensure that they can meet the academic requirements of the new course. This process is often called 'encapsulation' or 'bridging'. All such modules/courses are designed to fully prepare learners for the new course of study.

BTEC Higher National Certificate and Diploma courses (HNC/HND) are often integrated within and form part of a degree course at a higher education institution and are therefore normally treated as equivalent to any other HE courses at the same level. However, the prior learning will still need to be up to date and relevant to the new course.

1.9 Are international qualifications considered by UK Higher Education Institutions for the purposes of APCL?

Universities in the United Kingdom welcome applications from international students. If a qualification is known and has previously been recognised for entry or admission with credit the process will be identical to that for UK qualifications (see 1.7). Where it is new to the institution the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is used by higher education institutions to establish equivalence. This is based on the principle that two UK credits are equivalent to one ECTS credit and means

that one year of full time study is worth 120 credits in the UK and 60 credits in Europe. Initial advice and information is available from the UK HE Europe Unit on www.europeunit.ac.uk and for international programmes on the UK NARIC website www.naric.org.uk/.

1.10 Where is information about qualifications available?

There are various web sites which explain about qualifications and how they can support progression into and through higher education. These web sites can give information about entry requirements and help students see where they fit on the higher education map. A list of some of these links is attached at Appendix 7.

2. Understanding the processes

2.1 General definitions

Education institutions often use acronyms, abbreviations and jargon which can be confusing. For instance, the Accreditation of Prior Certificated and/or Experiential Learning is commonly known by the acronyms APCL/APEL or AP(E)L; the Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning as APL or APCL and the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning will normally use the acronym APEL, although there are several 'types' of experiential learning. However, a glance at the glossary at Appendix 2 or at the information relating to the university or college of choice will show what other terms can be, and are, used across the East of England. They all refer to the system for giving credit for learning already achieved!

2.2 The Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL)

APCL enables existing formal learning for which certificates have been awarded to be re-used or re-purposed as part of a new award. It enables learners to be given credit for (or to be exempted from) learning that they have already done which forms part of a new course they are about to start. Institutions may also use different terms to describe entry with credit for prior certificated learning, for example Advanced Standing, Exempted Credit or Admission with Credit, but the main criteria for entry to a new course with credit for previously achieved learning are always that the learning achieved must be:

- Assessed.
- Passed.
- Relevant to the new course of study.
- Current (i.e. sufficiently recent to still be relevant).
- Evidenced with an original certificate and transcript and details of the course content from a recognised educational institution or organisation.
- Approved by the institution admitting the learner.

2.3 The Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)

Experiential learning is learning achieved through life or work experience. This learning can be transformed into academic credit and then transferred into a programme of study through a managed process whereby a case is built by the learner to show that learning normally undertaken on a new course of study has already been achieved through life or work experience. Most higher education institutions use a portfolio as a means of assessing learning achieved from experience although other methods are also used. The Accreditation of Prior Experiential learning (APEL) must be:

- Achieved – credit is awarded for the demonstration of learning from experience and not for experience alone.
- Evidenced – supported by evidence that confirms the experience (the nature of evidence may vary eg reports, minutes, job descriptions etc).
- Proved – normally through a learning commentary or other reflective process showing how learning has been achieved and applied.
- Assessed and approved by the institution admitting the learner.

In addition to the evidence and learning commentary, the portfolio will normally include details of the modules, learning outcomes and courses for which credit is being claimed and against which the learning from experience can be matched. All institutions will support learners throughout the process and explicit advice will be available to explain what needs to be done and how to do it. More detailed information about the processes for each institution for the support, assessment and approval of APEL are available at Section 4 of this document.

3. Practical issues concerning developing and submitting a claim

3.1 How much credit can be awarded and at what level?

There is some variation between institutions in the volume and level of credit that can be claimed on admission to a programme. Information outlining the individual approach of each higher education institution to the amount of credit that can be approved is included in Section 4 of this document. The range is typically between half and two thirds of the total award.

3.2 Is there any learning or qualification which can't be used as APCL/APEL?

Individual higher education institutions have different rules. However, in most courses of study, some modules are compulsory and therefore must be studied as new learning. In general, universities do not allow non-subject specific qualifications to be transferred as admission with credit e.g. History into a Nursing course, although some may allow transfer of such credit up to level 4 (year 1 of an undergraduate course).

3.3 When should a claim be made?

When making an initial application to a higher education institution, any possible certificated and/or experiential learning should be included so that the admissions tutor can consider and advise whether there is the basis for a claim to be made. In order to gain some idea of how much learning has been achieved, many higher education institutions will use a basic template to collect this information. A specimen form is included at Appendix 5, which may help potential applicants to collate all their learning and be useful when making an application for admission to a higher education award.

3.4 Are claims possible after a course has started?

Claims normally need to be made and be approved prior to starting a new course of study. However, in some circumstances some institutions allow claims to be made throughout the course of study and/or alongside an agreed new course of study. Admissions tutors will be aware of the regulations relating to this in each institution.

3.5 Can older qualifications still count?

If a qualification is more than five years old it may be considered out of date and therefore lacking in currency. This may vary between subjects e.g. Humanities subjects tend to have a longer shelf-life than technical subjects where the rate of change is rapid. However, if students can show that they have maintained and updated their knowledge through life or work experience this rule may be relaxed and credit towards the new award approved.

3.6 Who decides how much credit can be claimed by an individual applicant?

It is important to note that the decision about how much credit for prior learning can be claimed against a specific award is the responsibility of relevant subject specialists, in consultation with the applicant concerned, on admission to the new institution. The applicant is an active partner in the process. The subject specialists will study, with the applicant, the course content of the prior learning and compare this with the learning that would have been undertaken on the new course. Where the prior learning matches the new learning an application for consideration and approval of the prior learning will be submitted. Each application must be approved by the individual institution and although this process may differ slightly, the processes have been developed to ensure that students are rewarded for relevant and up to date learning. The currency or 'shelf life' of learning is covered in 3.5 above.

3.7 If a qualification is not known to a Higher Education Institution can the learning still be transferred into an award?

In many higher education institutions, courses of study which are new to them and have not already been given a value in terms of level and volume of credit may still be able to be used within a programme of study. Admissions tutors and subject specialists will look closely at the content of the prior qualification to see what has been studied and will then compare this with the learning included in the new award. As with other qualifications, if the subjects studied look to be identical or very similar an

appropriate number of credits and a level can be allocated and approved towards the new award. This process may be called 'credential evaluation' or 'credit recognition' and individual institutions will have information available on request.

3.8 What happens if an APCL/APEL claim covers most of the learning in part of a new award but there are gaps in the knowledge needed for the new course of study?

If when the subject specialists compare the prior learning qualifications with the new course of study they find areas of knowledge and skills which have not been covered, they may be able to design specific modules or units of learning to fill in the gaps. This learning is often referred to as 'encapsulation' or 'bridging' and can be built into a programme of study which includes an APCL/APEL claim.

3.9 What if students realise after starting a course that they already know the content of a module which will be studied at a later stage in their new award - can they make another claim?

This is not always possible but some institutions do allow students to make ongoing claims for certificated or experiential learning on the basis that they were not aware of the available module at the time of admission to the course. Information about the approach of individual institutions is attached.

3.10 Will the credit approved for APCL/APEL appear on the student transcript?

Higher education institutions will always show the volume and level of credit that has been approved through APCL/APEL and it will be clearly identified on the student transcript. How much further detail is included is dependent upon the university's student record system and the way the transcript is presented.

3.11 Are marks for prior learning transferred?

Higher education institutions do not normally transfer marks into new awards when admission with credit from another institution is agreed. This is because marking and grading systems differ across educational institutions which makes it very difficult to aggregate the marks to produce a fair and consistent outcome.

3.12 Will APCL/APEL credit count towards the award classification?

Because marks are not normally transferred, admission with credit (either certificated or experiential) is not considered as part of any final classification awarded.

3.13 Can APCL/APEL be used towards both undergraduate and postgraduate awards?

Most higher education institutions in the East of England accept admission with credit toward both undergraduate and postgraduate awards and the principles and processes are the same at both levels. The possibility of using prior learning and/or experience towards an award should be explored on application to an institution.

3.14 How much does the process cost?

The charge for APCL/APEL varies between provider institutions and will usually depend on the type of claim and the amount of credit claimed. Institutions will discuss the feasibility and cost of any claim on application.

3.15 An important note on work-based learning

The amount of learning that takes place in the work place is often underestimated but universities and other higher education providers are increasingly recognising the value of work based learning, especially within the context of vocational awards. In order to maximise the benefits of this learning, innovative and quality assured means of assessing learning outside the classroom have been developed across the curriculum. If you require further information, please use the attached contact details for each institution. You may also wish to refer to ‘Learning for Credit – A guide to the accreditation of work-based learning in the East of England’ which is the companion volume to this guide and which covers work based learning and other aspects of accreditation in more detail.

4. Detailed Information about APCL/APEL in the Higher Education Institutions in the East of England

This section gives more detailed information about how the common principles of APCL and APEL are applied in practice in each of the providing institutions. Further information may be obtained by using the contact details provided.

Anglia Ruskin University

1. Introduction

Anglia Ruskin University has a comprehensive system for enabling entry via APCL and APEL. The Academic Regulations define the use of APL within all awards.

2. Policy and Principles

- The Academic Regulations allow for up to half of the credits within an award to be gained by APEL and up to two thirds by APCL. A combination of APCL and APEL cannot exceed two thirds.
- Currency is defined as within five years unless the award requires a shorter period. Where learning may have been completed more than five years ago Anglia Ruskin uses clear evidence requirements.
- Claims must be completed with all the necessary evidence provided by week two of teaching.
- Classification is based on new learning only.
- The award transcript details APCL/APEL.
- A charge will be made for APEL claims.

3. Process of Developing a Claim

- The applicant is responsible for providing certificated or portfolio evidence. The Admission Tutor will notify the Faculty APEL Adviser if there is a need to obtain further evidence.
- As soon as the APEL Adviser receives completed applications they are signed and sent to a central administrator. The information is entered daily onto a central record also used by Admissions.
- In most cases the APEL Adviser approves the proposed transfer of credit although where APEL is concerned or a complex claim arises, this will be dealt with by the Accreditation Sub-committee which meets regularly and frequently.

4. APEL Assessment

- Most claims are assessed using a portfolio.
- The subject specialist will assess and will arrange for a second marker to also assess.

- The Accreditation Sub-committee approves the claim.
- The claim is assessed using a standard set of approved criteria.

5. Learner Support

- Admission tutors support applicants and may refer to the APEL Adviser for further information.
- The Admission Tutor will inform the applicant of progress with the claim.
- The Admission Tutor will map the prior learning to the modules for the Award and ensure that it is made clear which modules will be studied thereafter.

6. Contacts

University Contact Centre
 Telephone: 0845 271 3333
 Web: www.anglia.ac.uk

Cranfield University

1. The Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL)

Cranfield University is a wholly postgraduate institution and will only consider applications for the Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) at Masters Level. Decisions on such applications are a matter of academic judgement. Cranfield University is of the view that the learning experience derived from undertaking a postgraduate degree is an holistic experience and that reducing the experience by accrediting parts of the degree should be kept to a minimum. APCL will only be granted for full modules; partial module exemption will not be considered. There are maximum levels of APCL that may be granted towards an award.

2. The Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)

Cranfield University does not offer APEL routes for exemption from modules but do for entry as we take people with appropriate levels of "relevant" experience in place of formal academic qualifications.

3. Contacts

Further information on the application process and levels of APCL that may be granted towards an award can be obtained from the appropriate Head of Registry.

Cranfield Campus
 Telephone: 01234 754158
 Shrivensham Campus
 Telephone: 01793 785767
 Web: www.cranfield.ac.uk

Norwich University College of the Arts

1. Introduction

Norwich University College of the Arts operates its undergraduate and postgraduate courses within credit-based, unitised frameworks, which allows students some flexibility in the content and structure of their studies. The University College is also concerned with offering students a degree of mobility in their studies, by recognising learning they may have completed elsewhere, before enrolling at Norwich University College of the Arts. This process is referred to as the Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) which has two distinctive strands.

It is important that applicants engaging with the processes associated with prior accreditation are able to identify any relevant evidence as part of the process of making an application to the University College as this information may impact upon the units and level at which they may eventually enter their chosen course of study. Should an applicant's previous study specifically relate to course units they wish to undertake, the University College may approve an admission with credit under the terms and conditions of this policy.

2. The Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL)

APCL relates to certificated learning completed through an earlier course of study. If an applicant previously completed a course which is relevant to their proposed course of study at Norwich University College of the Arts they should make this clear when they apply for admission. To be eligible for consideration of the award of credit in this way, applicants must be able to submit certification, which demonstrates success in a final assessment for that course or part of that course, as well as information on the content of their previous courses/learning. This information should be as comprehensive as possible and include a transcript of previous educational achievement, outline syllabus followed and be accompanied by original certification with regard to units passed or grades achieved. The certificated learning must be current (i.e. normally completed within the last 5 years). Simple participation in a course or an Attendance Certificate is not sufficient for the purposes of APL.

3. The Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)

Norwich University College of the Arts' APEL process does not award academic credit for experience alone but for relevant learning which can be demonstrated to have been achieved through that experience and where suitable milestones can be evidenced. Applicants are required to prepare an individual case for the awarding of credit arising from their learning experiences. This normally means that an applicant prepares a portfolio of evidence in which their claim is justified in detail.

The portfolio of evidence submitted must be relevant to the area of study, demonstrating the equivalent learning which applicants have undertaken. This portfolio of evidence is then submitted to the University College for assessment and the possible award of academic credit. Assessment of APEL portfolios is undertaken in line with the University College's existing assessment procedures. For the

purposes of awarding credit, portfolios will be assessed by an internal assessment panel and may be subject to external examination or moderation as part of a consideration of a wider assessment cohort. The assessment team will advise the University College APL Panel of an appropriate credit value for the portfolio submission.

4. Awarding of Credit

Credit may be given for learning which can be shown to be generally relevant to the course being applied for. To claim credit, the applicant must be able to evidence that the previous experience or learning is pertinent to the proposed course of study in terms of content, level or transferability. Credit is awarded for learning which is equivalent to particular course units. To claim credit, the applicant must be able to evidence that the previous experience or learning matches the proposed course of study in terms of unit content and learning outcomes.

Awarding of credit will be at the discretion of the University College APL Panel in their consideration of claims. Unsubstantiated claims or claims judged to be unrelated to the proposed course of study will not be considered.

5 Policy and Principles

- The amount of prior learning that can be accredited is determined by the APL Panel on the merits of individual claims made by applicants.
- APL will not be permitted to final year students (i.e. BA Year 3 or FdA Year 2).
- Normally the maximum permitted Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) including Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) for undergraduate courses is 50% of Level 1 credits (60 credits) and 50% of Level 2 credits (60 credits).
- For undergraduate BA (Hons) courses, including 'top up' years, applicants with appropriate certification (APCL) or significant professional or industry experience (APEL) may be considered for up to 240 credits e.g. for those applicants holding a DipHE or FdA qualification.
- For Foundation Degree (FdA) courses, applicants with appropriate certification (APCL) or significant professional or industry experience (APEL) may be considered for up to 120 credits e.g. for those applicants holding a Cert HE or equivalent qualifications.
- For taught postgraduate courses APEL and APCL applications will be considered on an individual basis.
- The period of time for which credit remains valid is normally within 5 calendar years from the award of that credit.
- Credit will only be awarded for completed units or modules, i.e. where assessment has been successfully completed and credit awarded. Applications based on claims for partially completed units or modules will not normally be eligible for consideration by the APL Panel.
- Fees and Costs - normally, there is a £25 fee for applicants wishing to make an application for entry through the APL process; the fee contributes to the cost of any guidance and advice towards the preparation of the application and its subsequent assessment.

- a. The fee is non refundable.
- b. Normally, there is no cost associated with making an application to study at the School utilising previously achieved credits or APCL.
- c. There are no reductions in the amount of tuition fees paid at undergraduate or postgraduate level as the School does not operate a fee-per-unit structure.

6. Management Information

- Students who have received credit as a result of the APL process will not be subject to any limitations on progression or interim awards as a result of the credit granted.
- Internal assessment and external examining of students who have received APL will take place in accordance with the School's standard procedures as outlined in the Staff Handbook on Quality Management and Enhancement.
- The performance of students who have been granted APL will be monitored and compared with the performance of students without APL for management information purposes.
- APL will be clearly indicated on students' transcripts.
- Staff involved in the APL process will receive training in respect of their individual roles.

7. Contacts

Telephone: 01603 610561

Email: info@nuca.ac.uk

Web: www.nuca.ac.uk

The Institute of Continuing Education of the University of Cambridge

1. Credit Transfer

The Institute of Continuing Education of the University of Cambridge allows students to transfer credit into an award that they have achieved at another HE Institution provided they meet the following criteria:

- the credit transferred does not make up more than 50% of the Institute award.
- the credit is not more than 6 years old (however the "life" of credit can be prolonged by putting it towards an award - please see section 2.14.4 of the Student Handbook for further details - www.cont-ed.cam.ac.uk/pdfs/handbook.pdf).
- there is no significant academic overlap between the modules that students are studying with the Institute and also between the content of Institute modules and the credit being transferred in.
- when students apply to transfer credit into a named award and to count that credit towards core modules an academic would be asked to decide whether the transferred credit could be substituted for the core credits.
- if students are transferring into a Diploma or higher award they must take the majority of higher credits with the Institute.

2. Contacts

For more information please contact the relevant Academic Programme Manager for the course you are studying.

Web: www.cont-ed.cam.ac.uk/courses/

The Open University

1. Introduction

The Open University offers a rich range of courses of varying sizes (using the CATS points system) which students can study either through designated pathways towards named awards or through an individually chosen pathway to the BA/BSc Open degree.

Courses are offered at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. Students require 300 points to get a degree without honours, including a maximum of 120 points at Level 1 and a minimum of 60 points at Level 3. Students require 360 points to get an honours degree, including a maximum of 120 points at Level 1 and a minimum of 120 points at Level 3.

Prior learning for credit transfer purposes is described as certificated learning (APCL). Experiential learning is described as the accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL). The University uses the term credit transfer, and not advanced standing.

2. Policy and Principles

- a. Up to two-thirds of a qualification may be by certificated credit transfer. For our undergraduate Honours degree this allows for a maximum award of 240 points. The maximum award does however vary on the OU's named Honours degrees, depending upon the structure of the degree. For other qualifications (e.g. Masters), the norm is usually up to one-half.
 - b. APEL is assessed via APEL modules, not by credit transfer.
 - c. As the OU does not award free standing APEL credit, APEL and APCL are not normally combined.
- Currency – The 'shelf life' of prior learning depends upon the subject being studied. For some, it may be 3 - 5 years; for the open degree, the University will consider allowing credit transfer for any certificated learning from 1971 onwards.
 - Timing – There are no restrictions on when can a claim be made although students are advised to apply for credit transfer before they register for study in order to ensure that they do not study a module for which they subsequently receive credit transfer.
 - Classification – Credit transfer is not graded and does not count towards the classification of a degree.
 - Transcript – The University requires a transcript of previous certificated learning when considering applications for credit transfer.

- Fees – The University does not currently charge for the consideration of certificated learning for credit transfer purposes. Because APEL is undertaken through the study of a module, the module fee is applied.

3. Process of Developing a Claim

- Responsibility for deciding whether or not to apply and for providing the correct information is with the student. Once received by the University, the claim will be progressed by staff who take into account the University's rules and regulations pertaining to the particular award.
- The timescale for approval depends upon the time of year and upon the nature of the claim.
- The University has a series of precedent awards against which central staff can take the decision whether or not to award credit. The precedent awards have been approved by the University Awards Committee and ultimately the Senate. Claims that are not against the precedent awards are considered by academic staff within the Faculties.

4. APEL Assessment

- The University has a number of courses offering APEL routes, so the APEL is assessed as a part of a module.
- Courses that want to make use of APEL or that have APEL versions indicate this in their proposal for their assessment strategy. This is then approved for quality assurance purposes by the University Assessment Policy Committee and thence to the Awards Committee.

5. Learner Support

As the APEL courses are designed around the nature of APEL, the student is fully supported in all aspects of the course.

6. Contacts

For information about APEL or admissions
 The Student Registration and Enquiry Service
 Telephone: 0845 3006090
 Email through www.open.ac.uk
 The Credit Transfer Centre
 Telephone: 01908 653077
 Web: www.open.ac.uk/credit-transfer

The University of Bedfordshire

1. The Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)

- The University may accredit prior learning undertaken elsewhere when such learning can be shown to have delivered the appropriate level and amount of study and to have achieved the intended learning outcomes of a specific unit or part of one of its own courses, thereby preparing the student suitably for subsequent parts of the course.
- APL may comprise accreditation of prior certificated learning (APCL) and/or accreditation of prior experiential or otherwise unassessed learning (APEL). Procedures for considering APL applications are determined by the Academic Board and issued by the Registry. A tariff of fees for the consideration of applications for APEL is issued by the Registry.
- Credit for prior learning, whether certified or experiential, may count towards the requirements of a named award up to the following maxima, unless varied by a validation panel on behalf of the Academic Board.

2. Policy and Principles

How much can be claimed for (a) certificated (b) experiential (c) a combination of certificated and experiential

<i>APL Maxima</i>	<i>Credits</i>	<i>Level</i>
Certificate of Higher Education	60	4
Foundation Degree	120	4
Diploma of Higher Education	120	4
Diploma in Professional Studies/Professional Practice	60	
Unclassified degree	120	4
	60	5
Honours Degree	120	4
	120	5
Postgraduate Certificate	30	7
Postgraduate Diploma	60	7
Masters Degree	90	7

- Claims should be made at point of entry
- Classification – No marks/grades are awarded for APL
- Transcript – APL appears as APL credit on student transcript
- Fees – Variable according to size and type of claim

3. Process of Developing a Claim

- Responsibility for progressing a claim lies with the student supported by staff.
- The timescale for approval of credit to be transferred is variable depending on size of claim and subject area.
- The proposed transfer of credit is approved by the Exam Board on recommendation of the Field Chair.

4. APEL Assessment

- The APEL claim is assessed in various appropriate ways including by internal examiner and exam board.
- The claim is assessed by the Internal Examiner.
- The claim is approved by the Exam Board.
- The claim is quality assured by equivalence of Learning Outcomes.

5. Learner Support

- Support is available depending on the subject area.
- The claimant is kept informed at various points in the process depending on subject area.
- APEL claims are integrated into a modular or unitised course of study.

6. Contacts

A full list of University contacts re APCL and APEL or admissions are available from:

The Admissions Department

Student Centre

University of Bedfordshire

Park Square,

Luton LU1 3JU

Telephone: 01582 489286

Web: www.beds.ac.uk

The University of Hertfordshire

1. Introduction

The University operates a course structure based on 15 credit modules for its campus-based provision. Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) may contribute to the credit for a university award and the limit on the amount of APEL that can count in this way has been removed. The University also recognises Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) where credit will have been obtained from another awarding body. This may also contribute to the credit for a UH award, but there are limits to the amount.

As well as APEL and APCL, credit from credit bearing short courses or from accredited external provision may be recognised.

Credit bearing courses may be accredited at 5, 10, 15 or 30 credits; the latter two are to allow for existing modules that are also offered as short courses.

Any credit gained may be considered for an award. For a named award, the credit must map directly onto the learning outcomes for that award and in practice it is more likely that credit accrued in this way will be recognised through an Open Studies award.

2. Policy and Principles

- There is no limit to the amount of APEL that may contribute to an award but there are limits to the amount of APCL – e.g. 240 credits for a Bachelors Degree with Honours and 120 credits for a Masters degree.
- Generally any learning that can be demonstrated through the APEL process is relevant regardless of how distant in time the learning experience occurred. However, there will be circumstances where APEL credit towards a named award needs to be current, for example in many health areas where skills and knowledge must reflect current practice. It is for subject leaders to make this judgement in the context of a particular APEL claim.
- There are no restrictions on when an APEL claim can be made.
- Credit awarded through APEL is not graded. So if APEL credit contributes to the credit that would be used for classification purposes (e.g. any level 3 credit for a Bachelors degree) then the award cannot be classified. The University is currently considering a proposal to permit classification to be based on at least 90 credits for Bachelors awards and 120 credits for a Masters award, thereby allowing up to 30 and 60 credits respectively of unclassified APEL to contribute to a classified award.
- The University transcript simply records the total APEL or APCL credit.
- Fees for APEL vary across the institution but we are in the process of developing a fees model which will apply across the University.

3. Process of Developing a Claim

- The candidate is responsible for preparing the evidence, although the evidence is prepared in a supportive environment (see 5 below).
- There is no set timescale.
- Credit must be formally approved by a Board of Examiners.

4. APEL Assessment

- Candidates are encouraged to submit products or outputs from their working experience as evidence of learning (rather than traditional portfolios) along with a brief commentary explaining how the material addresses specific learning outcomes.
- A claim will be assessed by an APEL specialist with subject specialist input as required.

- Claims are formally approved by the Board of Examiners for the Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme.
- All claims are made against a University set of generic learning outcomes to ensure robustness and reliability of a claim. Structured interviews (see below) are recorded and may be used both as a reference by the candidate and by the external examiner.

5. Learner Support

Candidates register on a special module (zero credit rated) which enables them to access the University's MLE, Study Net, to network with other candidates and easily maintain contact with tutors. Each candidate will have a structured interview at the start of the process and one further structured interview towards the end.

6. Contacts

University Admissions Office
 University of Hertfordshire
 College Lane, Hatfield
 Hertfordshire AL10 9AB
 Telephone: 01707 284800
 Fax: 01707 284870
 Email: admissions@herts.ac.uk
 Web: www.herts.ac.uk

University Campus Suffolk

1. Introduction

University Campus Suffolk (UCS) is a company wholly owned by the University of East Anglia and the University of Essex. UCS has a central hub in Ipswich consisting of two Faculties – Health, Wellbeing and Science and Arts, Business and Social Sciences. UCS students also study at five colleges in the region, West Suffolk College, Otley College, Lowestoft College, Suffolk New College (also in Ipswich) and Great Yarmouth College.

All courses of UCS, wherever delivered, are subject to the same academic frameworks and the same policies and procedures. This includes the UCS policy on the Accreditation of Prior Learning. The policy defines two main categories:

- APCL – the Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning, that is, learning for which certification has been awarded by an educational institution or another education/training provider.
- APEL – the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning, that is, uncertified learning gained from experience. The credit is given for evidence of learning, not just an experience alone.

Transfer of credit gained in another institution is considered on a case by case basis and is dependent on the nature of the course into which the credit is being transferred. Credit is only given for complete modules, never parts of modules.

- Specific credit may be given for learning which is equivalent to particular course modules. To claim specific credit, the applicant must show that the previous learning or experience matches the content and learning outcomes of the module(s).
- General credit may be given from previous learning which can be shown to be generally relevant to the course being studied. To claim general credit the applicant must be able to show that the previous learning is appropriate to the programme of study in terms of content, level and quality.

Wherever possible, applicants are encouraged to claim specific credit, but the general credit option is used where appropriate.

2. Policy and Procedure

- The actual amount of prior learning that can be accredited is approved for each course at validation. In some cases, regulations (usually external) stipulate that no prior learning is accredited. In general, though, the maximum permitted accreditation of prior learning is 50% of the total course credits. Of this 50%, a maximum of half (i.e. 25% of the total course credits) can be by APEL.
- For degree programmes it is recognised that students may apply with prior certification up to 240 credits e.g. a DipHE, and this is permitted.
- Currency: The period of time for which credit remains valid is discipline specific. Decisions on the 'shelf life' of credit to be awarded must be made at course level and are normally approved at validation. Generally, learning related to subject specific credit should have occurred in the past five years.
- Timing: There are no restrictions on when a claim can be made.
- Exceptions: Exceptions to the normal amount of accreditation of prior learning usually occurs when regulations do not allow such learning to be taken into account. An example of this would be where students have to demonstrate practical skills.
- Classification: Only modules studied in UCS relevant to the named award will be used to determine classification. This is also due to the fact that while APCL and APEL modules are awarded credit, they are not graded.
- Transcript: The transcript will indicate that a module was credited by APCL or APEL.
- Fees: There is no charge for APCL. For APEL the applicant must enrol on the relevant module and pay the normal fee for that module. The fee covers the cost of any guidance towards the preparation of a portfolio and its assessment.

3 Process of Developing a Claim

- The student must make an initial approach. In the case of the Faculty of Health, Wellbeing and Science this must be to the APL Coordinator – a named person who process all applications for the Faculty, in all other cases the approach is the Course Leader.

- The presentation of original documentation of prior certificated learning or the provision of a portfolio of evidence for APEL is the responsibility of the applicant. Tutors will provide guidance, especially for APEL in the mapping of experience with module learning outcomes and the sufficiency of evidence.
- Applications will be raised prior to the commencement of the relevant module and the approval of the transfer of credit is by the Assessment Board just after the end of the module. It is part of the standard agenda for any Board to report on APL and to confirm that all claims have been taken through the due process.

4. APEL Assessment

- APEL claims for a module are assessed through the presentation of a portfolio of evidence to demonstrate that the candidate has achieved the learning outcomes for that module.
- Assessment of the portfolio is the responsibility of the module leader and should be moderated by a second marker according to the UCS Assessment Moderation Policy. Portfolios are also available for moderation by the External Examiner.
- The claim is approved by the relevant Assessment Board, which must be satisfied that due process has occurred.
- Quality assurance is through compliance with stipulated procedures and moderation by a second marker and the External Examiner.

5. Learner Support

- Tutorial support may be from the module leader or other module contributors. In the case of the Faculty of Health, Wellbeing and Science, there is also general support from an APL coordinator.
- The Learner is kept informed through regular meetings with a tutor and/or the APL coordinator. Confirmation of the award of credits for a module by APL will be via the results letter that students receive within days of the meeting of the Assessment Boards.
- As stated above, APEL can be applied for, up to 25% of the full credits, remembering that this can only be for full modules. Thus for an Honours Degree of 360 credits, the maximum claim could be for 90 credits, although in reality most degrees consist mainly of modules of 20 credits, which would mean up to 4 modules could be claimed by APEL.

6. Contacts

Further information can be obtained from:

Head of Quality	APL Coordinator
University Campus Suffolk College	Faculty of Health, Wellbeing and Science
Waterfront Building	University Campus Suffolk
Neptune Quay, Ipswich	Telephone: 01473 296612
Suffolk IP4 1QJ	
Telephone: 01473 234741	
Email: info@ucs.ac.uk	
Web: www.ucs.ac.uk	

Academic Director
Faculty of Arts, Business and Social Science
University Campus Suffolk
Telephone: 01473 296562

Student Support
Lowestoft College
Telephone: 01502 583521

Student Advice Team
Otley College
Telephone: 01473 785543
Email: he@otley.ac.uk

Student Support
Suffolk New College
Telephone: 01473 235432
Email: info@suffolk.ac.uk

Student Support
West Suffolk College
Telephone: 01284 701311

Student Support
Great Yarmouth College
Telephone: 01493 419244

The University of East Anglia

1. Introduction

The following guidelines aim to clarify the position concerning cases of APCL/ APEL as defined by the University but additional, more specific guidelines may be used in certain Schools where approved by the University Learning and Teaching Committee.

2. APCL Principles

- Specific credit may be awarded for courses which form a substantial part of a degree/higher education qualification, that carry a credit-rating and are clearly comparable in level, academic standard, content and learning outcomes to an equivalent award at UEA.
- Applicants must note that the award of specific credit via APCL towards their intended course of study at UEA may not necessarily directly reflect the value/level of the general credit assigned to their current/previous qualification by the validating body, i.e. it may be less.
- Exemptions are not awarded for courses/qualifications that were awarded five years ago or longer, prior to the enrolment date for the intended course of study, unless the candidate can provide supporting evidence which gives an account of ways in which learning achieved through the course/qualification has been applied actively and updated within the past five years.
- Schools may not award exemptions for core modules.
- Schools may not award exemptions for pre-requisites in certain disciplines at UEA, e.g. where the modules are required for Law Society recognition or are needed for professional practice, unless the applicant can show that the identical modules have been completed elsewhere.
- For undergraduate Honours degree courses, a candidate must normally attain the final 240 credits at UEA (or the final 360 credits in the case of degree courses comprising 480 credits). Under exceptional circumstances, a concession may be granted for a candidate to be admitted to Year 3/the final year of a degree course.

- Postgraduate students may be granted APCL for 50% or less towards the total number of credit points for an award. APCL shall not be granted in respect of the dissertation component of a course.

3. Application Process

The applicant's request must be made in writing, enclosing:

- A certified copy of certificate(s) or parchment(s).
- A syllabus.
- A completed application form, which asks for a transcript of the subjects taken, a full record of academic results achieved and contact details of an academic referee at the institution which awarded the qualification.

All applications should be sent to the relevant School /Faculty Admissions Officer.

- It should be noted that alternative APL application procedures are in place in NAM and EDU, and that these Schools have delegated authority to approve applications on behalf of the University Learning and Teaching Committee.

Procedure for the approval of APCL:

- For Undergraduate Candidates:
Direct entry to Year I; Direct entry to Year II (Spring (Spring Semester) or Year II Semester) (Autumn Semester)
Delegated to Schools Learning and Teaching Committee
- For Postgraduate Candidates:
Exemption for 50% or less towards the total number of credits for an award
Delegated to Schools

Requests for approval/concessions to Learning and Teaching Committee should be sent to the following:

- Undergraduate and Postgraduate applicants: Learning, Teaching and Quality Office
- UEA staff or their immediate family: Admissions and Outreach Office

The University will charge an APCL assessment fee (a flat rate of £60). If the application is successful, the candidate will be charged a fee for the award of exempted credit, i.e. £20 per 20 credit exemption. Therefore: Total Cost = Tuition fee for the outstanding credits/modules required + Fee for the award of credit + The APCL assessment fee. The APCL assessment fee is not refundable.

APCL applications may take up to 6 weeks to complete. All applicants should be advised of this and should be aware of semester restrictions concerning APL for half year arrangements, especially if the intended course of study involves year-long modules.

The School/Faculty Admissions Office will notify the candidate of the outcome in writing if the application is considered within the School and a copy will be sent to the appropriate personnel in the Registry. If the application is considered by the Learning and Teaching Committee, the appropriate contact in the Registry will write to the student and copy the letter to the School/Faculty.

4. APEL Principles

- APEL exemptions are not normally awarded for certain professional disciplines. Applicants should consult the relevant School for further advice.
- APEL applications will be assessed individually. Candidates must demonstrate that relevant, practical experience has been gained and compile a portfolio of evidence using:
 - a. Where applicable, confirmation by line-manager of job responsibilities and job description.
 - b. A record of achievements.
 - c. Where applicable, details of specialist training/skills.
 - d. Contact details of two referees, who can comment on the candidate's achievements.
 - e. Documentation to demonstrate the learning outcomes achieved and the candidate's personal reflection of how the experience has furthered his/her understanding of the relevant subject area.
 - f. A completed application form.

In the first instance, applicants should contact the relevant Faculty Office and obtain the programme specification for the intended course of study. Candidates should indicate the relationship between the programme specification and their portfolio of evidence and may consult the appropriate Course Director/School/Faculty Admissions Officer for advice.

The responsibility for assessing APEL cases shall be delegated to two members of the academic staff within the relevant School(s), who will interview candidates on the basis of their portfolios. The APEL interview may last up to an hour and may be tape recorded to enable interviewers to check the validity of their eventual assessments. The interview should focus on key, relevant learning experiences and candidates will be invited to give a detailed narrative account of the relationship between their prior learning and their intended course of study. The assessors should forward their joint recommendations to the Head of School.

The School/Faculty must retain all records relating to the APEL assessment. The candidate should also keep the portfolio of evidence for future reference.

The Head of School will consider the evidence put forward by the applicant and the recommendations of the assessors. The Head of School may approve and endorse the APEL exemption on behalf of the School Board, inform the candidate in writing and copy the letter to the relevant personnel:

- Undergraduate and Postgraduate applicants: Learning, Teaching and Quality Office.
- UEA staff or their immediate family: Admissions and Outreach Office.

If the Head of School agrees with the assessors' judgement that no exemption should be granted, based on the evidence presented, the School/Faculty shall inform the applicant in writing.

- For postgraduate applicants, APEL exemptions may not be granted for more than 25% of the total number of credit points required for an award.
- For undergraduate applicants, APEL exemptions may not be granted for more than 60 credits of the total number of credit points required for an award.

The University will charge an APEL assessment fee (a flat rate of £120). If the APEL application is successful, the candidate will be charged a fee for the award of exempted credit, e.g. £20 per 20 credit exemption. Therefore: Total Cost = Tuition fee for the outstanding credits/modules required + Fee for the award of credit + The APEL assessment fee. The APEL assessment fee is not refundable.

APEL applications may take up to 10 weeks to complete. All applicants should be advised of this, and should be aware of semester restrictions concerning exemption for half year arrangements, especially if the intended course of study involves year-long modules.

- Postgraduate applicants: the maximum APL (i.e. a combination of APCL and APEL) that may be granted is 90 credits, or 50% of the total number of credit points required for an award.
- Undergraduate applicants: the maximum APL (i.e. a combination of APCL and APEL) that may be granted is 50% of the total number of credit points required for an award.

5. Contacts

The University of East Anglia
Norwich NR4 7TJ
Telephone: 01603 456161
Web: www.uea.ac.uk

The University of Essex

1. Introduction

Applicants to the University who believe they may be eligible for AP(E)L will be given the opportunity to have their prior learning assessed and accredited towards the relevant taught degree course. Unless stated otherwise, the procedures and guidance below apply equally to both APL and APEL. Senate has delegated to the Undergraduate and Graduate School Boards the authority to approve local AP(E)L policies proposed by departments or other teaching units of the University, or by the University's collaborative partners, within the overall framework of this procedure. The University uses the terms APL, APEL and AP(E)L as described in the Glossary of terms attached to this document.

2. Policy and Principles

Application for AP(E)L should normally be made before the student commences study on the course into which s/he is seeking to transfer prior learning.

- Applications must consist of a written request, stating the University award in respect of which the student seeks AP(E)L, and documentary evidence of the learning, in the form of transcripts, certificates or other suitable evidence in the case of experiential learning.
- A decision as to whether AP(E)L can be approved will depend both on the specific requirements and learning outcomes of each course and the details of each individual application.
- 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, i.e. it may be less.
- Exemptions will not be considered for prerequisites in certain disciplines where professional and statutory regulating body requirements apply (e.g. Health Professions Council, Institution of Engineering and Technology, Law Society).

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

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 the five years prior to the enrolment date for the intended course of study.

Attention should also be paid to the University policy on the re-use of credit from University or external sources towards University of Essex awards.

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.

- For taught postgraduate awards a student may seek to import learning to a maximum of one third of the volume of credit that is required to be studied for the named University award.
- For undergraduate awards of over 240 credits a student may seek to import learning to a maximum value of two thirds of the volume of credit that is required to be studied for the named University award.
- For undergraduate awards of 240 credits or less the maximum credit value permitted to be imported is one half of the volume of credit that is required to be studied for the named University award.
- For specified teaching qualifications the maximum credit value permitted to be imported is one half of the volume of credit that is required to be studied for the named University award.

Summary of requirements for admission via AP(E)L

<i>Award</i>	<i>Maximum Credits which may be imported</i>	<i>Minimum Credits to be taken on University of Essex validated courses</i>	<i>Total Credits for Award*</i>
Masters Degree	60	120 (Level 7)	180
Postgraduate Diploma	40	80 (Level 7)	120
Graduate Diploma	40	80 (Level 6)	120
Postgraduate Certificate	20	40 (Level 7)	60
Graduate Certificate	20	40 (Level 6)	60
Postgraduate Certificate in Education	60	60 (Level 7)	120
Professional Graduate Certificate in Education	60	60 (Level 6)	120
Certificate of Education	60	60 (Level 4 or above)	120
Certificate of Higher Education Practice (CHEP)	30	30 (Level 7)	60
Honours Degree	240	120 (Level 6)	360
Ordinary Degree	200	100 (min. 60 at Level 6)	300
Foundation Degree	120	120 (Level 5)	240
Diploma of HE	120	120 (Level 5)	240
Certificate of HE	60	60 (Level 4)	120

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

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.

Transcripts

The transcript for a student who makes a successful AP(E)L application will indicate the elements of the course from which the student was exempted.

3. Procedure

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 given access to the Programme Specification, including the course structure and the rules of assessment and is informed of the University's AP(E)L policy and procedure.

The Admissions Office will verify that the application is in accordance with the University policy. If it is not in accordance, s/he will inform the student of the discrepancy in writing. Otherwise, the application

will be passed to the member of the academic staff responsible for admissions into the course concerned, or to the appropriate AP(E)L Panel where these exist.

The applicant will submit evidence of previous learning in the form of award certificate(s), transcript(s) or, in the case of experiential learning, a portfolio of evidence. This will be passed to the AP(E)L assessor/approval panel. The AP(E)L assessor/approval panel may request additional information, e.g. details of a course syllabus and/or the assessment methods.

The AP(E)L assessor/approval panel carries out the following actions to determine whether the student is eligible for AP(E)L towards a University of Essex award, documenting each action on the attached pro forma. S/he will:

- Decide whether, in the case of APL, further evidence in a format specified by the admitting department is required, in addition to the student's initial submission, and inform the student if such evidence is required.
- Assess the evidence against the requirements and learning outcomes of the relevant degree course and the available constituent modules. S/he may consult with other members of academic staff as appropriate. Consideration should be given to:
 - Subject content and knowledge.
 - Volume of learning.
 - Level of learning.
 - Evidence of achievement.
 - Currency of the student's knowledge in relation to the requirements of the course.
 - Restrictions imposed by Professional or Statutory Bodies, if applicable.
- Decide whether the student is required to present themselves for interview by the AP(E)L assessor or another appropriate member of staff and make the necessary arrangements.

If the AP(E)L assessor/approval panel decide that the student's application for AP(E)L is unsuccessful, this will be documented on the pro forma and a copy forwarded to the Admissions Office.

If the AP(E)L assessor/approval panel decide that the student's application for AP(E)L can be accepted they will make a recommendation to the appropriate Faculty Dean that a specific amount of credit (e.g. exemption from individual module(s) or exemption from a year of study) towards the relevant degree course should be awarded. The Dean will inform the AP(E)L assessor/approval panel of his/her decision. A copy of the pro forma will be forwarded to the Admissions Office.

The Admissions Office will inform the student of the decision in writing and will copy the letter to the Registry and the Systems Administration Office (or equivalent offices at partner institutions), the latter office to undertake appropriate actions on the student's computerised record.

4. **Contacts**

Undergraduate Admissions Officer

University of Essex

Wivenhoe Park

Colchester, CO4 3SQ

Telephone: 01206 873778 (UK); +44 1206 873778 (international)

Email: admit@essex.ac.uk

Web: www.essex.ac.uk

Appendices

1. List of Higher Education Institutions and Further Education Colleges in the East of England
2. Glossary of definitions, terms and acronyms
3. Credit and qualifications frameworks - an overview
4. NICATS summary of generic level descriptors
5. Specimen Initial Assessment of Prior Certificated/Uncertificated and Experiential Learning form
6. Example completed Initial Assessment of Prior Certificated/Uncertificated and Experiential Learning form
7. Web links to information about APEL/APCL, qualifications and credit

Appendix 1

Higher Education Institutions

Anglia Ruskin University
 Cranfield University
 Norwich University College of the Arts
 Open University
 Royal Veterinary College
 University of Bedfordshire
 University of Cambridge
 University Campus Suffolk
 University of East Anglia
 University of Essex
 University of Hertfordshire
 Writtle College

Further Education Colleges¹

Bedfordshire

Barnfield College
 Bedford College
 Dunstable College
 Shuttleworth College

Cambridgeshire

Cambridge Regional College
 College of West Anglia²
 Huntingdonshire Regional College
 Peterborough Regional College

Essex

Braintree College
 Chelmsford College
 Colchester Institute
 Epping Forest College
 Harlow College
 South East Essex College
 Thurrock and Basildon College

Hertfordshire

Hertford Regional College
 North Hertfordshire College
 Oaklands College
 West Herts College

Norfolk

City College Norwich
 College of West Anglia²
 Easton College
 Great Yarmouth College

Suffolk

Lowestoft College
 Otley College
 Suffolk New College
 West Suffolk College

¹ This list does not include Sixth Form Colleges

² Campuses in both Cambridgeshire and Norfolk

Appendix 2

Glossary of definitions, terms and acronyms

APL/APCL	<i>The Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning. The identification and recognition of existing certificated learning as relevant to be used as part of a new qualification or award</i>
Accreditation	<i>The process of awarding formal recognition, expressed as a volume and level of credit, to a given body of learning</i>
Accumulate	<i>Build up credit to achieve a qualification (eg honours degree = 360 credits)</i>
AEL	<i>The Accreditation of Experiential Learning (as distinct from 'Prior') ongoing throughout the programme of study</i>
APEL	<i>The Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning. The identification, assessment and formal acknowledgement of learning achieved through work or life experience</i>
AP(E)L	<i>The Accreditation of Prior Certificated and Experiential Learning. A term used when including both Certificated and Experiential Learning</i>
Assessment regulations	<i>Rules governing assessment including pass marks and other grades of assessment, number of credits needed to complete an award or to progress to the next stage of an award.</i>
CATS	<i>The Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme is the generic term used to describe the transfer of credit between higher education institutions</i>
Certificated learning	<i>Learning which has been formally assessed by examination, essay, project or other means and for which a certificate and/or transcript has been given</i>
CPD	<i>Continuing Professional Development</i>
Credit	<i>A numerical value given to a unit of learning on the basis that 1 credit equals 10 notional hours of learning</i>
Credit value	<i>Indicates the volume of learning or 'how much' learning is expected. For example, 20 credits describes 200 hours of learning</i>

Credit level	<i>Indicates the relative level of difficulty of learning or 'how hard' it is. For example, learning at level 5 (equivalent to the second year of a full time degree) is 'harder' than learning at level 4 (equivalent to the first year of a full time degree).</i>
Credit transfer	<i>A way of using credit gained in one higher education institution to transfer to another higher education institution or from one programme of study to another. This means that learners do not have to study the same learning twice</i>
HEIs	<i>Higher education institutions - this includes universities and colleges of higher education</i>
Learning outcomes	<i>Express learning achievement in terms of what the student will know, understand or be able to do, on successful completion of a module, unit or qualification. A unit/module/qualification will normally have several learning outcomes</i>
Level descriptors	<i>Learning becomes more difficult at each level of study (for example, each subsequent year of study on a full time degree course) of an award. Level descriptors are used to facilitate course/ programme design by demonstrating the differences in achievement at each level</i>
Notional hours of learning	<i>The number of hours a student will need to spend, on average, in a range of activities, including all teaching, self study and assessment, to achieve the learning outcomes</i>
Qualification descriptors	<i>Exemplify the learning outcomes of the main qualification at each level and demonstrate the nature of change between qualifications at different levels</i>
Recognition of prior learning (RPL)	<i>This is the term used by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) in the context of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) to describe 'a method of assessment (leading to the award of credit) that considers whether a learner can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills they already possess and do not need to develop through a course of learning.'</i>
Transcript	<i>The formal, detailed record of a student's achievements issued by a higher education institution which typically, will show modules titles, credit value and level, marks and grades achieved</i>
Uncertificated learning	<i>Describes learning which has been undertaken and for which no certificate or transcript has been awarded and that usually has not been formally assessed</i>

Appendix 3 Credit and qualifications frameworks - an overview

NVQs	Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF)			Level	Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) Qualifications and indicative credit ¹
	Award 1-12 credits	Certificate 13-36 credits	Diploma 37 or more credits		
5	BTEC Advanced Professional City & Guilds			8	Professional Doctorates eg Edd/DBA - 540 Doctoral Degrees eg PhD, DPhil (Not credit based)
	BTEC Advanced Professional City & Guilds National Proficiency Tests Council (NPTC) Institute of Leadership & Management (ILM)			7	Masters Degrees eg MA, MSc - 180 Postgraduate Diplomas and PGCE Diploma - 120 Post Graduate Certificate - 60
4	BTEC Professional City & Guilds National Proficiency Tests Council Institute of Leadership & Management			6	Bachelors Degree eg BA(Hons), BSc(Hons) - 360 Graduate Certificates and Diplomas - 120
	BTEC Professional City & Guilds National Proficiency Tests Council Institute of Leadership & Management			5	Foundation Degrees (Fd) - 240 Diplomas of Higher Education (DipHE) - 240 Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) - 240 ²
	BTEC Professional City & Guilds National Proficiency Tests Council Institute of Leadership & Management			4	Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE) - 120 Higher National Certificates - 120
3	14-19 Advanced Diplomas ³ BTEC Nationals, City & Guilds, NPTC, ILM Advanced Apprenticeships A Levels ³			3	Access to HE Diploma - 60
2	14-19 Higher Diploma ³ BTEC Firsts, City & Guilds, NPTC, ILM Apprenticeships GCSEs (A-C grades) ³			2	
1	14-19 Foundation Diploma ³ BTEC Introductory, City & Guilds, NPTC, GCSEs (D-G grades) ³			1	
	BTEC Certificate in Life Skills and Certificates in Skills for Working Life City & Guilds National Proficiency Tests Council			Entry	

¹ The FHEQ is a qualification framework and indicative credit volumes are shown here for information only.

² Some higher education institutions recognise 180 credits for Higher National Diploma qualifications.

³ A Levels, GCSEs and 14-19 Diplomas are placed here to give an indication of level although they are not yet fully integrated within the QCF.

Appendix 4

NICATS summary of generic level descriptors

The level descriptors should be seen as a developmental continuum in which preceding levels are necessarily subsumed within those which follow. Learning accredited at the following levels will reflect the ability to:

- Entry level** *Employ recall and demonstrate elementary comprehension in a narrow range of areas, exercise basic skills within highly structured contexts and carry out directed activity under close supervision.*
- Level 1** *Employ a narrow range of applied knowledge, skills and basic comprehension within a limited range of predictable and structured contexts, including working with others under direct supervision, but with a very limited degree of discretion and judgement about possible action.*
- Level 2** *Apply knowledge with underpinning comprehension in a number of areas and employ a range of skills within a number of contexts, some of which may be non-routine and undertake directed activities, with a degree of autonomy, within time constraints.*
- Level 3** *Apply knowledge and skills in a range of complex activities demonstrating comprehension of relevant theories; access and analyse information independently and make reasoned judgements, selecting from a considerable choice of procedures in familiar and unfamiliar contexts and direct own activities, with some responsibility for the output of others.*
- Level 4** *Develop a rigorous approach to the acquisition of a broad knowledge base; employ a range of specialised skills; evaluate information, using it to plan and develop investigative strategies and to determine solutions to a variety of unpredictable problems; operate in a range of varied and specific contexts, taking responsibility for the nature and quality of outputs.*
- Level 5** *Generate ideas through the analysis of concepts at an abstract level, with a command of specialised skills and the formulation of responses to well defined and abstract problems; analyse and evaluate information; exercise significant judgement across a broad range of functions; and accept responsibility for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes.*
- Level 6** *Critically review, consolidate and extend a systematic and coherent body of knowledge, utilising specialised skills across an area of study; critically evaluate new concepts and evidence from a range of sources; transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills and exercise significant judgement in a range of situations; accept accountability for determining and achieving group and/or personal outcomes.*
- Level 7** *Display mastery of a complex and specialised area of knowledge and skills, employing advanced skills to conduct research, or advanced technical and professional activity; accepting accountability for all related decision making including use of supervision.*
- Level 8** *Make a significant and original contribution to a specialised field of inquiry demonstrating a command of methodological issues and engaging in critical dialogue with peers; accepting full accountability for outcomes.*



THE LLN FOR THE EAST OF ENGLAND

INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF PRIOR CERTIFICATED / EXPERIENTIAL AND OTHER LEARNING

This form is typical of the template that most Higher Education Institutions (such as Universities) will use to collect initial information from you about possible prior learning. It may be useful to you when you are thinking about applying for a course of study at a University or College, as it will help you to see your prior learning more clearly in the context of your application. You should therefore enter **all** the learning you have achieved. For information, level 3 corresponds with pre-higher education learning such as A Levels and National Diplomas. Levels 4 and above are higher education levels, which correspond with full-time years of higher education qualifications. Don't worry if you don't have all the details, such as the level and volume of credit, as you can discuss this detail and other issues such as the relevance and currency of the learning with the admissions tutor concerned. This template is also available on the MOVE website at www.move.ac.uk.

Name:

Proposed Award:

Certificated Learning

Please detail here all accredited learning for which you have been assessed (through examination for instance) and for which you have received a certificate and/or transcript

Award/Qualification e.g. HNC Engineering or Diploma in Nursing	Where taken	Date Completed	Volume of Credit							
			Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7			
Total Credit										

Other Learning

Please detail here courses for which you may have received certificates but which were not assessed in a formal way. This may include training courses taken at work, continuing professional development, adult learning courses, any other learning in an informal setting

Course/qualification name/description	Where taken	Date Completed	Volume of Credit							
			Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7			
Total Credit										

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Partially Completed Learning

Please detail here accredited university or college courses which you did not fully complete

Course/qualification <i>e.g. partially completed HNC/HND/Fd</i>	Where taken	Start Date	Withdrawal Date	Reasons for withdrawing	Volume of Credit				Total Credit
					Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	
Total Credit									

Experiential Learning

Please detail here any roles and responsibilities, which you think are relevant to your award and which may be used as part of a claim for experiential learning

Role	Company/Organisation	Start Date	End Date	Responsibilities

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THE LLN FOR THE EAST OF ENGLAND

INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF PRIOR CERTIFICATED / EXPERIENTIAL AND OTHER LEARNING

This form is typical of the template that most Higher Education Institutions (such as Universities) will use to collect initial information from you about possible prior learning. It may be useful to you when you are thinking about applying for a course of study at a University or College, as it will help you to see your prior learning more clearly in the context of your application. You should therefore enter **all** the learning you have achieved. For information, level 3 corresponds with pre-higher education learning such as A Levels and National Diplomas. Levels 4 and above are higher education levels, which correspond with full-time years of higher education qualifications. Don't worry if you don't have all the details, such as the level and volume of credit, as you can discuss this detail and other issues such as the relevance and currency of the learning with the admissions tutor concerned. This template is also available on the MOVE website at www.move.ac.uk.

Name: *Bernie Billingham***Proposed Award:** *BA (Hons) Landscape Architecture***Certificated Learning**

Please detail here all accredited learning for which you have been assessed (through examination for instance) and for which you have received a certificate and/or transcript

Award/Qualification e.g. HNC Engineering or Diploma in Nursing	Where taken	Date Completed	Volume of Credit				
			Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7
Cert HE Horticulture	Templeton FE College	July 1999		90	30		
Access Course in Art & Design	Templeton FE College	July 2001	60				
Total Credit			60	90	30		

Other Learning

Please detail here courses for which you may have received certificates but which were not assessed in a formal way. This may include training courses taken at work, continuing professional development, adult learning courses, any other learning in an informal setting

Course/qualification name/description	Where taken	Date Completed	Volume of Credit				
			Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7
Garden History and Design – 8 week adult education course	Templeton Sixth Form College	June 2002					
Computer Aided Design for gardeners (2 day in-house course)	Landscape Gardens Ltd	August 2002					
Managing a small business	Templeton Sixth Form College	Dec 2002					
Total Credit							

Partially Completed Learning

Please detail here accredited university or college courses which you did not fully complete

Course/qualification <i>e.g. partially completed HNC/HND/Fd/BA(Hons)</i>	Where taken	Start Date	Withdrawal Date	Reasons for withdrawing	Volume of Credit					Total Credit
					Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	
BA (Hons) Architecture	University of North Ridings	Sept 2003	July 2004	Personal	120					
Total Credit					120					120

Experiential Learning

Please detail here any roles and responsibilities, which you think are relevant to your award and which may be used as part of a claim for experiential learning

Role	Company/Organisation	Start Date	End Date	Responsibilities
Head Gardener	North Riding Park Hotel	August 2004	Feb 2006	For planning, planting and budget for all 5 acres of garden
Landscape Artist	Self Employed	March 2006	Ongoing	Running own landscape gardening business - including finance, marketing, garden design, planting and sub contracting building work

Appendix 7

Web links to information about APEL/APCL, qualifications and credit

www.move.ac.uk

The MOVE website has a range of related documentation available as pdf files to download

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/QualificationsExplained/index.htm>

Direct Gov – Qualifications Explained

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/apl/APL.pdf>

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) – Guidelines on the Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/england/credit/creditframework.pdf>

QAA – Higher education credit framework for England: guidance on academic credit arrangements in higher education in England - August 2008

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/EWNI08/FHEQ08.pdf>

QAA – The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland August 2008

http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_20515.aspx

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) – Claiming Credit – Guidance on the recognition of prior learning within the Qualifications and Credit Framework

http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_8150.aspx

http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_19674.aspx

QCA – Qualifications and Credit Framework

<http://www.cityandguilds.com/cps/rde/xchg/SID-3F792701-36FF60A6/cgonline/hs.xml/20016.html>

City & Guilds – Skills for a brighter future

<http://www.learn-direct-advice.co.uk/helpandadvice/whichcourse/acqual/>

Learn Direct - Careers Advice

www.seec-office.org.uk/SEEC%20FE-HECLDs-mar03def-1.doc

Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (SEEC)– Level Descriptors for Further and Higher Education

http://www.nicats.ac.uk/about/prn_tlevl_descriptors.pdf

The Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (NICATS) Level Descriptors

<http://www.scqf.org.uk/AbouttheFramework/LevelDescriptors.aspx>

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework – Level Descriptors

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/glacier/qual/compare>

Warwick Institute for Employment and Research - Comparing qualifications across countries (UK and Ireland)

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