

Accreditation of Prior Learning (Experiential and/or Certificated)

Policy

Principles

- to promote lifelong learning;
- to support widening participation;
- to develop employability; and
- to increase opportunities for partnership working.

These principles are consistent with the University Strategic Plan 2006/07 – 2008/09, and they support the particular strategic objectives around working in partnership (6); and ensuring equality of opportunity and widening of access (7).

The University may award credit for successfully assessed experiential learning and/or for learning accredited by other institutions of higher education or other bodies recognised by the University for this purpose.

Scrutiny of prior learning for the purpose of the recognition by the University of credit toward a named award should be undertaken by academic staff within Schools in accordance with the procedures. Such staff shall have appropriate subject, discipline and/or professional expertise and should have regard for the University information and guidance on accreditation of prior learning.

Accreditation may be used for:

- admission to a programme of study;
- awarding credit to allow admission to a programme of study at a point subsequent to initial entry (advanced standing);
- the recognition of credit toward an award of the University.

Fees

In respect of HEFCE-funded programmes, an applicant should not usually be charged a fee for consideration of their application. Programmes not funded by HEFCE may charge a fee and the applicant should be made aware at the outset of their application of this.

Guidance for Staff

All recommendations for accreditation of prior learning should (1) be made on the appropriate form; (2) be based on a evidence that is attached to the claim; and (3) be approved. In some cases, claims may be submitted by the applicant to Registry, who will forward them on to course leaders/tutors; however, it may be appropriate in some cases for applicants to present course leaders/tutors with their claim and evidence direct. In the case of claims for certificated learning (APCL), evidence should include a detailed academic transcript. In the case of claims for experiential

learning (APEL), a portfolio should be submitted, to include student reflection on how the relevant learning outcomes have been met, job descriptions and independent corroboration.

Stages in the Process are detailed below:

[Stage 1:](#) Initial discussion regarding the application for APL

[Stage 2:](#) Recommendation for APL

[Stage 3:](#) Consideration of evidence provided by the applicant

[Stage 4:](#) Formal approval

[Stage 5:](#) Notification of decision

Other relevant forms and processes (Topping Up to Higher Award /Changing Programme)

Applications from internal students who wish to **top up to a higher award** should also follow the procedures set out below, as the University requires that credit achieved at the lower award must be formally approved for transfer to the student's higher award record.

Stage 1: Initial discussion regarding the application for APL

It is the student's responsibility to make a claim for APL. In brief, the student should complete either a Certificated Learning or Experiential Learning form, which should be submitted to the Registrar. In the case of certificated claims the form should be submitted together with an academic transcript of the relevant learning. In the case of experiential claims, an outline of the potential claim should be submitted, following which the applicant will be referred to the course leader for detailed advice about compiling a portfolio of evidence. The course leader/tutor should usually provide support to students wishing to make such claims. The course leader/tutor should usually make guidance available to students on the verification of professional expertise and currency of prior learning.

(Students who have withdrawn or deferred, and return to complete the same award within three years, do not need to make an application for APL. However, those who return after a period of three years should make an application for APL in order for their modules to be reviewed for relevance to the current programme.)

Stage 2: Recommendation for APL

Following receipt of a claim, Registry will forward evidence to the relevant course leader / admissions tutor to make an assessment, together with one of the following forms on which the tutor should specify the recommendation.

- Undergraduate Credit Transfer Form (Certificated Learning)
- Undergraduate Credit Transfer Form (Experiential Learning)

Guidelines have been drawn up to assist the assessment of APL claims and completion of forms. For detailed academic advice about assessment, please contact the tutor.

Bath Spa University will accept credit from any of the institutions within the WVLLN. The maximum amount of credit (by volume and level) that can be awarded through APL is determined by the tutor.

Stage 3: Consideration of evidence provided by the applicant

The paperwork provided by the applicant should be forwarded to the Registrar. Guidance on the assessment of claims is provided below.

Stage 4: Formal approval by the course/subject leader

Registry will meet with the course/subject leader regularly to establish: (1) claims which may be formally approved and signed off at that point; (2) claims which require further evidence from the applicant or tutor.

Stage 5: Notification of decision

When the claim has been formally approved, Registry will send a copy of the signed form to the applicant, and also to the Finance office to make any adjustments to tuition fees. The original form and evidence will be passed to Registry, for input to the student's record as soon as possible. The Registrar has final approval for all decisions.

Guidance for Staff on procedures for internal students topping up to a higher award

Topping Up to a Higher Award is the process for students who wish to complete their lesser award (e.g. an HND) but also complete the higher award (e.g. Degree).

There are two stages to the Top Up process:

1. Application and decision about acceptance
2. Credit Transfer

1. Application and decision about acceptance

Students should be advised to register their intent to top up as soon as they have confirmed their final semester module registrations (normally at the beginning of their final semester).

Registry should record their admissions decision on the Top Up Application itself. Any conditions of offer should be clearly and concisely worded (no more than 20 words), as this text will need to be copied into a letter to the applicant. Registry will then notify the applicant of the decision and any conditions of entry.

2. Credit Transfer

Registry will check that students have the necessary credit points for transfer of students between BSU courses.

Guidelines for assessment of claims for APCL

The following questions (taken from the University of Gloucestershire) should be posed when making an assessment of a claim for certificated learning. The questions will hopefully prove helpful to anyone involved in any stages of the assessment and approval process.

1. Are the modules proposed for credit based on modules which are equivalent in content? Assumptions may be made from module titles, but provision of detailed programme content is more helpful. Where this evidence has not been provided and/or is not available from a website, Registry is available to contact the applicant for it. In most cases, exploration of the prior institution's web site should provide supplementary detail about module content.

2. Are the modules proposed for credit based on modules which are equivalent in level? For example, an entry level qualification such as an A Level or an NVQ L3 should not be accepted for APL against a Bachelor degree qualification; similarly, Certificate of HE level learning (level 4) should not be accepted against DipHE level learning (level 5). More information about the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications may be found on the [QAA](#) website; information about the National Qualifications Framework may be found on the [QCA](#) website. [UK Naric](#) provides information about overseas qualifications.

3. Are the modules proposed for credit based on modules which are equivalent in volume/credit value? Different institutions employ different credit rating systems so the proportion of the programme that has been completed may also need to be taken into consideration. It is normal practice to count up or down to the nearest complete module value (e.g. 12 or 15 points).

Credit must always be given against whole modules. **The Course/subject leader will not approve credit against parts of modules** (e.g. half of a skills module).

Where an applicant has evidenced prior learning for part of a module it may be possible to offer him/her an additional piece of assessment work to make up the shortfall. The recommendation for credit may be noted, but should not be formally proposed on the form until that work has been satisfactorily completed. A supporting statement should also be appended to the form.

4. Are the modules proposed for credit based on prior learning that is current? If learning was achieved ten or more years ago (or even less depending on the particular programme applied for), the applicant should provide evidence that he/she has maintained and updated those skills in a professional environment. In these cases it is helpful for the course leader to append a supporting statement to the claim form to confirm that this additional evidence has been considered. Alternatively, it may be more helpful to advise the student to switch the claim to one for experiential learning - in which case they should be referred to the course leader for advice in compiling a portfolio

5. Has the applicant met all the compulsory and core module requirements for the proposed level of entry? Where possible, 'specific module' credit should be recommended for modules considered to be compulsory or core equivalents. **Specific, or module, credit** is credit awarded for achieving particular learning outcomes that are relevant to a particular module. It is helpful to annotate the applicant's transcript to indicate where there is broad equivalence with a specific UoG module. It is also helpful to note in the 'Additional information' section any

modules that the student will need to take to make up the shortfall in requirements for their level of entry.

6. Is the applicant on the 'right track' for the named award in terms of the volume of credit proposed? For example, for Single Honours, the student will eventually need the equivalent of 20 specific or pathway credits in order to graduate; for a Major award the student will need at least 15; for a Joint award the student will need 10; and for a Minor award the student will need 5. Either **'specific'** or **'pathway'** credit may count toward the named award.

'Pathway' credit is credit awarded for achieving learning outcomes relevant to a named course of study. It should be recommended in cases where the applicant has prior learning in a related subject area/course, but that learning cannot be mapped against a specific module listed on the course map. Please note, however, that it is helpful to avoid recommending a volume of pathway credit that exceeds the total value of any compulsory and core modules the applicant is going to be required to take at UoG. Otherwise the volume of credit given — for example 120 L1 — may confuse the student into thinking that he/she has 'completed' that level.

7. Does the applicant have prior learning at, for example, degree level, but that learning is in an unrelated subject/course? In these cases, **'general'** credit may be awarded. **General credit** is credit awarded for achieving learning outcomes that are not directly relevant to the named course of study, but relevant to the overall award. Please note, however, that it is helpful to avoid recommending a volume of general credit that exceeds the value of any compulsory and core modules the applicant is going to be required to take.

8. Are the modules proposed for credit based on modules which have been completed and passed? (If the recommendation is based on a mixture of completed and incomplete modules, it may be sensible to record it on two separate forms — one for credit based on modules passed, ready for approval/signing off; and one for those pending submission of further evidence.) **The Course/subject leader will not normally accept externally condoned or compensated modules.**

9. Are the modules proposed for credit based on modules which have been studied at the institution for which evidence has been provided? The Course/subject leader will not normally accept externally assessed APL. Original evidence must always be supplied for staff to make their own assessment.

10. Is the total value of the credit proposed within the maximum amount approved in the regulations? This is normally no more than 66% of a course.

11. Is the total value of credit proposed clearly noted? The total value of credit for each level should be noted in the total boxes, and should be consistent with information noted in the 'Additional Information' section at the bottom of the form.

12. If the claim is to be rejected, is there sufficient, clear feedback to return to the applicant? Is that feedback phrased in such a way as to make it clear whether the applicant should abandon their claim or resubmit with further evidence?

For additional note:

1. The transcript or other evidence provided should include clear confirmation of the institution of study; (validating body); course/programme title studied; student

name; dates of study; modules passed and credit points achieved; and/or final award. Vigilance should be exercised where any of the above details are omitted, and additional evidence normally sought. If there are any queries about the authenticity of the transcript (including if the applicant now bears a different name to the one listed on the transcript), Registry will need to note that approval is pending sight of the original document or other evidence.

2. **The form should confirm the award against which the credit is recommended.** If the applicant/student changes their programme of study, or requests a change to a lesser award, the credit may no longer be valid.
3. **Forms should be completed carefully and clearly.** Following approval by the Registrar, this document is copied to the applicant, and to the offices of Finance and Registry, so it is important to ensure that the information will not be misunderstood.
4. If the applicant is not registered on SITS, the applicant should be queried to check that a formal application to the course is in progress.
5. The form should be signed by the course leader/module tutor who has assessed the evidence; checked and signed by the Registrar.