

Accreditation of Prior Learning (Experiential and/or Certificated) Policy

1. INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITIONS

- 1.1 This policy sets out the University's arrangements and processes for the accreditation of prior learning (APL).
- 1.2 Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) can relate to learning which is either experiential or certificated:
 - Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)
The process by which the University formally recognises prior learning gained through previous experience, including employment (paid or unpaid), self-study or leisure activities.
 - Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL)
The process by which the University formally recognises learning that has been assessed and certified by another education or training provider.
- 1.3 APL can be used by applicants and students who can evidence their prior learning or experience to demonstrate that their knowledge and skills meet the requirements for entry to a course of study, or claim exemption from a part of that course. Applicants should be aware that courses with professional accreditation may have a requirement that students hold a particular formal qualification. In those circumstances, APL will either not apply, or the maximum amount of APL awarded may be reduced.
- 1.4 Not all of the principles and limitations, set out below, apply to both the situations described in paragraph 1.3. For example, an applicant using APEL to apply to join the start of a course will not have to demonstrate how the learning outcomes have been met for particular modules, whilst those seeking exemption from part of a course will.
- 1.5 APL can be applied to all BSU taught undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. It allows the University to acknowledge the wider skills, experience and qualifications which students can bring with them when they start a course of study and to encourage the wider participation of students from non-traditional learning backgrounds with varying experiences of education.
- 1.6 The correct application of APL avoids unnecessary duplication of learning, whilst ensuring that credit is only awarded after a robust examination of evidence of successful attainment has been completed.

- 1.7 Credit Transfer - the process by which credit awarded (and certificated) by one higher education provider is recognised by another and is included towards the requirements for a course of study – may be used by students for entry to the second (Level 5) or third (Level 6) year of a three year degree course. To enter at Level 5 a student would require 120 credits, and entry at Level 6 would require 240 credits. These credits would need to be mapped against the BSU modules following a process outside the scope of this policy. For general guidance, see Section 5 below.
- 1.8 Applicants applying for entry to Postgraduate courses can apply to transfer Level 7 credits. The credits would also need to be mapped against BSU modules by the course leader.
- 1.9 Internal Credit Transfer – It should be noted that current enrolled students wishing to transfer to another course, or change the weighting of their combined course, will need to complete a transfer of award form. All transfers will need to have approval from all course or subject leaders involved. Student Services will check that students have the necessary credit points and have completed any necessary core modules before the transfer between BSU courses can take place. Internal course transfer is out of scope of this policy.

2. PRINCIPLES OF THE POLICY

- 2.1 Scrutiny of applications for APL, for the purpose of entry to a course of study, or for the recognition of credit toward an award, will be undertaken by academic staff with appropriate subject, discipline and/or professional expertise.
- 2.2 Decisions on prior learning are a matter of academic judgement. The main consideration will be whether the prior learning is equivalent, in the main part, to the learning outcomes required to begin the proposed course of study, and/or is equivalent to the level of modules that would have been otherwise studied. Decisions must be authorised by the appropriate senior manager with responsible for Admissions.
- 2.3 Academic staff will assess prior learning in line with this policy and in accordance with the [Admissions Policy](#). All applications for APL must be assessed consistently and equitably regardless of the sources of the prior learning, and based upon evidence provided by the applicant. All applicants must also be treated equitably regardless of their age, gender, marital or civil partnership status, ethnicity, disability, religious belief, sexual orientation or pregnancy, maternity or paternity status.
- 2.4 APL is accepted by BSU to encourage the wider participation of students from non-traditional learning backgrounds with varying experiences of education.
- 2.5 BSU will only award credit once demonstrable learning has been established. The experience in itself is not sufficient. The responsibility lies with the applicant for APL to provide supporting evidence.
- 2.6 Processes for the assessment of prior learning (set out below) provide an institutional level framework for students and academic staff within which to work. However, there may be individual programme-level variation depending upon the specific requirements of courses. Professional Services and Academic staff will work with APL applicants to guide them through

any variations. An example of a variation could be where a particular programme requires a specific qualification for professional accreditation.

3. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

- 3.1 In order to demonstrate the currency of the learning, students and applicants can normally only seek to claim prior experiential and/or certificated learning accumulated within a maximum of five years prior to the start date of the programme of study applied for. However, the five-year maximum can be extended if the learning is supported by evidence to show the applicant has maintained their knowledge/understanding, for example by working in a sector directly related to the proposed course of study.
- 3.2 Assessment of prior learning can only take place before entry to the course of study (in the case of APEL), or before the start of an individual module (in the case of APCL). Sufficient time must be allowed by the applicant for the assessment of prior learning to be completed. This period should be no less than three weeks.
- 3.3 APCL credit can only be given in place of whole modules that were successfully completed. No APCL will be given towards partial completion of a module or for a module that was condoned (i.e. not passed).
- 3.4 Maximum APL credits allowed for taught programmes:

Course	Level	Total Number of Credits	Max credits APCL permitted
Foundation degree	5	240	120
Honours degree	6	360	240
Honours degree with professional placement year	6	480	240
Integrated Masters	7	480	240
Postgraduate Certificate	7	60	30
Postgraduate Diploma	7	120	60
Masters (Taught)*	7	180	120
Masters (Research)	7	180	60

*See paragraph 3.6

- 3.6 In general, the maximum number of APL credits allowed for taught Masters courses is 120. However, there may be exceptions to this general rule where the maximum number APL credit

is reduced to 90 credits. This exception is to ensure that all students have completed any compulsory and/or core content of the course. The course leader will consider this aspect, and feed back to applicants, at the Initial Discussion stage (see paragraph 5.4 below) of the application for APL. If the course leader decides that the prior learning sufficiently covers compulsory/core modules, then 120 credits can be awarded. However, if the prior learning is insufficient, then a maximum of 90 will be awarded.

- 3.7 As per the Academic Regulations, a maximum of two-thirds of an overall award can be granted through APCL or APEL. As such, an undergraduate student who has entered with advance standing directly into level 6 will not be eligible for an Ordinary Degree.
- 3.8 Only marks from modules studied at BSU are used to calculate the degree classification. No marks from APCL credits earned at another institution will be used to calculate the final award classification.
- 3.9 It is possible for students to use APEL for advanced entry to Levels 5 or 6 of an undergraduate course. Applicants seeking direct entry to Levels 5 or 6, based on APEL, must demonstrate how their experiential learning matches the intended learning outcomes of the relevant modules. Course leaders/tutors will provide guidance to applicants on how this can be presented.

4. DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS

- 4.1 Higher and degree apprenticeships combine work with study, and students usually study part-time whilst working. The aim is to gain relevant professional skills and/or qualifications alongside an academic qualification. Typically, apprenticeships take between one and five years to complete.
- 4.2 Direct entry to Level 5, 6 or 7 of a degree apprenticeship can be approved through either accreditation of prior certified learning (Bachelors Degree, Foundation Degree, HND, HNC and/or Higher Apprenticeships); or accreditation of evidenced prior experiential learning.

5. APPLICATION PROCESS FOR APL

- 5.1 All applications for accreditation of prior learning should be:
 - made on the appropriate form;
 - accompanied by evidence; and
 - approved by an academic with relevant experience in the field of study with the decision authorised by an appropriate senior manager responsible for Admissions.
- 5.2 In all cases, applications must be submitted by the applicant to the Admissions Service, which will forward them to course leaders/tutors. In the case of claims for certificated learning, evidence should include a detailed academic transcript including module descriptors showing credit accumulated. The credit should have been earned within a maximum of five years prior to the start date of the programme of study applied for. In the case of claims for experiential learning, a submission including a summary of the applicant's experience; a reflection on how the relevant experience relates to the chosen course of study; and how learning outcomes have been met through that experience, should be submitted. This should be prepared in conjunction with the course leader/academic.

5.3 There are four stages in the process to approve APL:

- Initial discussion regarding the application
- Recommendation for APL
- Formal approval of the recommendation
- Notification of decision

5.4 Initial discussion

If the claim is for APEL, eligible applicants/students will be invited by the Admissions Service to complete an Experiential Learning form, which - once complete - will be forwarded to the course leader. In the case of experiential learning claims, an outline of the potential claim should be submitted by the Admissions Service, via email, to the course leader. The course leader should be available to applicants to offer support, guidance and respond to questions where necessary. In the least, the Admissions Service and course leaders should highlight the APL Student guidance document. In the case of APCL claims, the applicant should forward an academic transcript of the relevant learning to the Admissions Service.

5.5 Recommendation for APL

The course leader/ tutor will make an assessment based on the claim forwarded to them by the Admissions Service. Once the assessment has been made, the course leader/tutor will record their recommendation on the relevant form provided by Admissions. Guidance for academic staff on how to make the assessment is provided in a separate document.

5.6 Formal Approval of Recommendation

The recommendation form and the supporting documentation, used by the course leader/tutor to make the assessment should be returned to Admissions, who will forward it to the appropriate senior manager. If the senior manager agrees with the recommendation, then the form will be signed off and Admissions informed. If the recommendation cannot be supported, it will be referred back to the course leader/tutor for further discussion.

5.7 Notification of Decision

The decision to formally approve or reject an application will be notified to the applicant by Admissions and the application form and evidence added to the applicant's student record. Any appeal against the decision must be within the scope of the [Appeals Procedure for Applicants](#).