

## Accreditation of Prior Learning and Credit Transfer Policy

### 1.0 Introduction and background

- 1.1 Accrediting prior experience or study and the ability to acknowledge study previously awarded credit are concepts that lie at the heart of the credit transfer system. These acknowledge that learning which has taken place outside the classroom and/or credits gained in one learning environment may be valuable when studying for an award of the University.
- 1.2 APL can be based on certificated (APCL) or experiential (APEL) learning. APCL refers to learning that has been certificated by organisations or institutions that do not reflect the FHEQ. Credit transfer refers to learning that has been certificated by organisations or institutions that do reflect the FHEQ.
- 1.3 Requests for APCL, APEL or credit transfer should be made by prospective students at the point of application.

### 2.0 Purpose and scope

- 2.1 This policy details the principles which underpin the accreditation of prior certified or experiential learning or the process of credit transfer.
- 2.2 This policy is relevant to applicants on all programmes at the University of Northampton and to home and international admissions. It is also relevant for programmes delivered in collaboration with Partners.

### 3.0 Definitions

- 3.1 Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) – the overriding term for APCL and APEL
- 3.2 Accreditation of Prior Certified Learning (APCL) – The process through which the University of Northampton awards specific credit to students for learning which is at higher education level but which has not led to the award of credits or qualifications positioned on the relevant higher education qualifications framework (in our case the FHEQ).
- 3.3 Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) – The process through which the University of Northampton awards specific credit to students for learning that has been gained through work or other life experiences that are relevant to the student's intended programme of study.

- 3.4 Credit transfer – The process through which the University of Northampton awards specific credit to students for learning that has been recognised and certificated (either through the award of credits or the award of a qualification) by a UK higher education degree-awarding body in accordance with the relevant higher education qualifications framework (in our case the FHEQ).
- 3.5 Advanced standing – The situation in relation to credit transfer where a learner is formally recognised as having already achieved some of the learning outcomes required to achieve an award.
- 3.6 Specific Credits – Credits which are able to be matched against specific learning outcomes or modules.
- 3.7 For the purposes of this policy, where an individual role is named this refers to that role or a nominee.

**4.0 Key principles**

**4.1 Basis for APL/Credit Transfer**

- 4.1.1 APCL, APEL and Credit Transfer can be requested for learning at Level 4, Level 5 and Level 7.
- 4.1.2 APCL and Credit Transfer can be requested for learning at Level 8.
- 4.1.3 APL or Credit Transfer must be made on learning that meets the key principles of APL:

Principle	Definitions/Requirements
Equivalent	The learning derived from experience and/or prior certificated study must be judged broadly equivalent to that of the learning that might otherwise have been achieved by following the validated programme of study. For direct entry to level 5 (except in the case of modules which are a requirement for professional accreditation), equivalence need be demonstrated only with regard to volume and level, provided the achievement of learning outcomes which are prerequisite to further study can be demonstrated.
Appropriate	There is an appropriate match between the evidence presented and the learning being demonstrated. The evidence is valid and reliable. The level of learning is appropriate.

Sufficient	There is sufficient evidence to demonstrate fully the achievement of the learning claimed. The learning is sufficient in terms of credit volume.
Authentic	The evidence is authentic i.e. clearly and demonstrably related to the applicant's own efforts and achievements.
Current	The evidence being assessed relates to current learning. In claims for APCL, APEL and credit transfer the certificated or demonstrable learning must normally have taken place within five years preceding the date of application for accreditation. For APEL claims this is particularly the case in subject areas where the knowledge base and practices are rapidly developing.

- 4.1.4 The decision-making process used to assess a claim for APL/credit transfer, and the outcomes of this process, must be transparent and demonstrably rigorous and fair.
- 4.1.5 APL/credit transfer claims must be made in the English Language.
- 4.1.6 If supporting documentation (e.g. certificates, transcripts) are not in English they must be accompanied by an officially translated copy
- 4.1.7 Claims for exemption from professionally accredited courses must take account of the professional body's regulations and the context within which the learning to be credited has taken place.
- 4.1.8 Applications for APL/credit transfer will normally be made by prospective students at the point of application to a UON programme of study and must be recorded before a student commences study at UON. Applications for APL/credit transfer made by current students must be submitted and formally approved prior to registration on the module for which exemption is sought.
- 4.1.9 APEL does not involve pass/fail assessment. The process determines, on the basis of experiential learning, whether the candidate qualifies for the award of a specified amount of credit at a stated level. Credit resulting from an APEL claim will be awarded only on the basis of demonstrable learning and not on the basis of experience itself.
- 4.1.10 To support an APCL/Credit Transfer claim, an applicant must provide information on the level of the award, module(s) or short course in accordance with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications together with the date of

completion of the award, module(s) or short courses. Consideration of such claims will then consider whether:

- the prior study is sufficiently recent to meet the current learning outcomes of the UN programme;
- the combination of APCL/Credit Transfer and modules to be studied at the University will together constitute a coherent programme of study which will meet the programme learning outcomes, as specified in the programme specification;
- the APCL/Credit Transfer is sufficiently equivalent to the learning outcomes of module(s) for which the student/candidate may consequently be awarded specific credit;
- sufficient information is available on the academic value and level of previous study.

## **4.2 Use of APL/Credit Transfer**

4.2.1 Normally, credit is awarded for not less than 1 module and no more than two thirds of the award for which a student registers.

4.2.2 Credit awarded through APL/Credit Transfer will not be graded or counted in the grading or classification of awards. The APL/Credit Transfer must be clearly identified in all documentation including student results records and transcripts.

4.2.3 A successful claim for APL/Credit Transfer permits:

- entry onto a programme with advanced standing (i.e. direct entry to level 5 or 6); or
- exemption from specific modules.

4.2.4 Credit Transfer claims for recognition of learning that has previously been accredited in the award of a qualification, credit or other form of certification and is subsequently being presented for recognition in a second qualification, or part thereof, will be considered as follows:

- Credits certificated as part of an award (except Honours Degree) may contribute towards a higher award but not towards another award of equivalent or lower status.
- Credits not certified as part of an award may be used to satisfy the credit requirements of any award for which the credit learning is deemed relevant.

At module level the credits may be kept and used to satisfy the credit requirements of any award for which the credit learning is deemed relevant.

- At Honours Degree level any surplus credit or credit at level 4 not contributing to the award classification may be used towards a further award at the same level. The credits which contributed to the award classification are considered spent in the certification of the award and cannot be used a second time towards any further award.

4.2.5 Where a student meets learning outcomes through APCL/Credit Transfer, but there is a mismatch in credit volume, the APEL process may be used to bridge the difference if the student has relevant experience in relation to the module, and provided a critical reflective account or equivalent of the experience is produced.

4.2.6 Students are excluded from being awarded APL/Credit Transfer in respect to, Professional Practice modules, principal modules and level 6 modules.

4.2.7 APL or Credit Transfer will not normally be awarded for a research methods module previously undertaken; students will normally be expected to take the research methods module at the University of Northampton.

4.2.8 Exceptionally advanced standing may be awarded to registered practising nurses/midwives who return to study a second nursing specialty.

4.2.9 APL or Credit Transfer claims will not be considered against a previously studied University of Northampton module that has been failed as the learning outcomes will not have been achieved.

### **4.3 Applicant Complaints and Appeals**

4.3.1 Complaints and Appeals against APL or Credit transfer will be addressed through the Applicant Complaints and Appeals Policy. There is no right to appeal against the academic judgement taken in respect of an APL or Credit Transfer claim however it is possible to complain or appeal against the process.

### **4.4 Advanced Standing Agreements**

4.4.1 The APL/Credit Transfer procedure is not necessary where the APCL or Credit Transfer is part of an advanced standing agreement (i.e. an articulation or

recognition agreement) or a joint or dual award (where APCL/Credit Transfer is being awarded for prior study at the partner institution).

## **5.0 Key responsibilities**

- 5.1 The Admissions Teams (Home and International) have primary responsibility for the APL and Credit Transfer policy and processes including, but not limited to, processing APL or Credit Transfer forms, offering guidance to applicants, assessing the level of qualifications, processing acceptances and rejections and providing training to tutors.
- 5.2 If an enrolled student requests APL or Credit Transfer, the Student Desk and Student Records Teams are responsible for processing the request, liaising with Admissions as necessary.
- 5.3 Academic staff have responsibility for assessing APL or Credit Transfer claims by mapping against the relevant modules and/or against the programme as a whole.
- 5.4 The APL Panel are responsible for the final approval and rejection of APL applications.
- 5.5 The Faculty of Health and Society APL Panel is responsible for the final approval and rejection of APEL claims against pre-registration provision. These decisions will be noted in APL Panel meeting minutes.
- 5.6 Applicants have responsibility in ensuring that they provide all relevant information as part of their submission.

## **6.0 Links to related UN Policies/Guidance/Regulations**

- 6.1 Admissions Policy
- 6.2 Applicant Complaints and Appeals Policy

## **7.0 Links to related external documents (e.g. QAA)**

- 7.1 UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance

## **8.0 Appendices**

- 8.1 Summary Sheet

## Summary Sheet:

<b>Policy Title:</b>	
Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) and Credit Transfer Policy	
<b>Purpose of Policy and to whom it applies (please specify cohorts):</b>	
<p>This policy is intended for staff involved in admission processes and for students wishing to apply for credit in recognition of prior learning. It applies to all students who are applying to study on programmes of study at the University of Northampton. It is also relevant for students studying on programmes run in collaboration with EWO organisations.</p> <p>This policy is aligned with the UK Quality Code.</p>	
<b>Owner and Department:</b>	
Dawn Mains, Head of Admissions, Student and Academic Services	
<b>Principal contact:</b>	
Dawn Mains, Head of Admissions	
<b>Dissemination and implementation plan:</b>	
Via SEC and SSECs Via the web	
<b>Date of initial committee approval (state committee name):</b>	27.02.13 (AQSC)
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