



# HE Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy

Policy Details	
Policy Owner	Head of Higher Education & Access
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Approved by	Policies & Procedures Committee
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## 1. Statement of Intent

- 1.1 This policy aims to inform readers of the USP College process for accrediting previous academic study or work experience, or partial achievement of credit for taught modules, for the purposes of entry to a higher education programme.
- 1.2 The Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) process as defined in this document enables an individual to apply for exemption from study of module(s), and to be awarded credit for those module(s), based upon recognition of their previous study and/or experiential learning.
- 1.3 This policy highlights that USP College perceive a parity of the value of prior learning with learning through a formal programme of study.

## 2. Introduction and Purpose

- 2.1 Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) is a process by which academic credit and exemption from study may be given for module(s) by the official recognition of prior learning. Such exemption is a matter of academic judgement based on an assessment of the equivalence of learning. It also includes Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) and Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL). Applications for APL can include both APCL and APEL.
- 2.2 Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) is the recognition of prior learning which has taken place within a Higher Education provider, including USP College, and has resulted in a certificated award of credit.
- 2.3 Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) is a process that enables people of all ages, backgrounds, and attitudes to receive formal recognition for skills and knowledge they already possess. This recognition may be based on a wide range of experiences and achievements. Examples of APEL evidence include military service, freelance work, community leadership, industry certifications, and other forms of experiential learning.  
Such learning may take the form of:
  - a. organised prior learning where the learning has been assessed and where certificates are awarded on completion,
  - b. learning gained through unstructured experiences,
  - c. short courses; learning arising through leisure pursuits, work experience and family experiences.

## 3. Legislation and Guidance

- 3.1 This process links to the following legislation and guidance:
  - a. Office for Students (OfS) Regulatory Framework 2025
  - b. Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023
  - c. QAA Credit Transfer and Recognition Guidance 2024
  - d. Higher Education (Fee Limits) Regulations 2025

## 4. Linked Policies

- 4.1 This process links to the following college policies:
  - a. Admissions and Enrolment Policy
  - b. HE Collaboration Policy
  - c. HE Student Transfer Process Policy
  - d. Compliments and Complaints Policy
  - e. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
  - f. Fees, Loans & Refunds Policy
  - g. HE Assessment Board Terms of Reference

## 5. APL Process

- 5.1** This process is based on the key principles that decisions to grant APL are based on the achievement of learning and the evidence used to demonstrate the equivalence of learning.
- 5.2** For accreditation to be considered, the prior learning must be:
- Relevant – there must be an appropriate match between the evidence presented and the learning claimed
  - Sufficient – there must be enough evidence to demonstrate achievement of the learning claimed
  - Authentic – the evidence must be the result of the applicant's own work and experience
  - Current – the currency of the prior learning will be determined by the APL Assessor as appropriate for the programme.
- 5.3** Applications for APL should normally be made prior to enrolment on the level/Module(s) from which exemption is sought. Submission of an application for APL does not guarantee that exemption will be granted. This can either be at pre-entry of the programme or 30 working days before the start of the module.
- 5.4** APL applications may be submitted up to 2 weeks post-enrolment for late disclosures.
- 5.5** Exemptions cannot be granted for sections of a module; only full modules are considered.
- 5.6** Where credit is allocated to exempted modules or levels, this will be recorded on the student's record and indicated on the student's assessment transcripts.
- 5.7** When exemption is granted, credits must not be "double-counted" in the award of any further qualification. Whether gained at USP or another institution, credit can only be accumulated towards one single award.
- 5.8** Individuals who are wishing to apply for APL should have an initial discussion with the programme lead before progressing their application. This policy and associated forms can be found on the USP College website.
- 5.9** It is the responsibility of the individual to make the application using the APL application form (Appendix 1) and to supply the supporting evidence and/or portfolio requirements via the programme lead.
- 5.10** The evidence supplied by the applicant is used in a mapping exercise to establish the equivalence of learning for APCL and/or APEL. Based on the outcome of the mapping, the Head of Higher Education & Access will decide to approve or decline application.
- 5.11** It is the responsibility of the by Head of Higher Education & Access to notify individuals in writing of the outcome of their application. Where the decision is to reject the application clear reasons for the rejection will be given.
- 5.12** APL decisions are recorded on the student record system for reporting to assessments boards.
- 5.13** Appeals from applicants against the decision made by the Head of Higher Education & Access should follow the procedure for complaints set out in the colleges' Compliments and Complaints Policy. This can be found on the colleges' website.
- 5.14** APL outcomes will be reviewed annually including application statistics and feedback.

## 6. APCL Applications

- 6.1** For applications that are related to APCL academic judgement must be used to decide whether the academic content and learning outcomes of the certificated award used as evidence are equivalent to the standard of learning that would otherwise have been achieved from study modules from which the applicant seeks exemption.

- 6.2 The applicant is required to complete the APL form and specifically Part 1 A) Description of student's learning and Part 1 B) Mapping of previous study against proposed exempted modules.
- 6.3 A learner's prior studies submitted for APCL will only be considered if they closely match the content of the module(s) form which exemption is being sought. Where equivalency between the previous study and the USP module(s) cannot be established, no credit will be awarded under APL.

## **7. APEL Applications**

- 7.1 In cases related to APEL, academic judgement must be applied to the evidence supplied by the applicant to ensure equivalent learning outcomes are demonstrated.
- 7.2 Applicants must demonstrate that they have mapped the relevance and equivalency of their prior experiential learning against the learning outcomes of the level/module(s) for which exemption is sought.
- 7.3 The programme lead will make an initial assessment of the individuals who are planning to make an APEL application through an interview, to discuss their prior experience and establish whether they have the potential to make a full application through a portfolio.
- 7.4 The evidence for APEL applications is required in the form of a portfolio, the structure of which is determined by the Head of Higher Education & Access responsible for the programme in question. The portfolio supplement by one or a combination of other forms of assessment if required, such as a presentation, an interview, an extended CV giving details of prior experience, or the requirements to produce a piece of academic work to sit and examination at the appropriate academic level, otherwise known as bridging study.
- 7.5 As outlined in Appendix 1, particularly section 2B, the bridging study requirements should specify the format, length and assessment criteria.



Appendix 1 APCL & APEL Application Form  
**Accreditation of Prior Learning Application Form**

*To be completed prior to enrolment or within 30 Days of the Commencement of a module for which exemption is sought.*

*To be completed by the prospective student*

Applicant name:		Student ID Number:	
Course/module applied for:			
Date form completed:			
Proposed year/semester of entry/start date:			
Type of Accreditation applied for:	Accreditation of Prior <u>Credited</u> Learning (APCL) <input type="checkbox"/>	For Accreditation of Prior <u>Experiential</u> Learning (APEL): <input type="checkbox"/>	

1) Accreditation of Prior Credited Learning (APCL) for stage entry:

For entry to level 5 APCL must contain 120 Credits at Level 4 – which must include the following Core Module(s): [list]

For entry to level 6 APCL must contain 120 Credits at Level 5 – *which* must contain the following Core Module(s): [list]

*To be completed by the prospective student*

A) Description of student's learning:					
Dates credits achieved		Institution	Qualification <i>Level and course title</i>	Credit level (NQF)	Total NQF credits achieved <i>(in 15 credit increments)</i>
From	To				



2) For Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL):

**A) To be completed by the programme lead following discussion with the student and reviewing the presented evidence**

*Please list the evidence supplied (e.g. portfolio. employer's letter etc.)*

**B) For AP(E)L - AP(E)L Head of Higher Education & Access comments/recommendations:**

**C) For AP(E)L - AP(E)L Head of Higher Education & Access confirm Bridging Studies required:**

*Include format, length & assessment criteria*

**Commented [MB1]:** Hazel comment - programme leads?

Please confirm by ticking the box whether you have attached copies of	
• All relevant certification:	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Bridging assessment work	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please confirm that the prior learning evidenced was taken within the last 5 years	
If the prior learning was not taken within the last 5 years, what is the justification for accepting the currency of learning? (e.g. personal development portfolio, employer's letter)	

3) Summary:

To be completed by the Head of Higher Education & Access

4) List of Accompanying Documents:

Total credit imported	Level 4:	
	Level 5:	
Credit required to complete the programme	Level 4:	
	Level 5:	
	Level 6:	

Applicant's Signature: .....

Print Name: ..... Date: .....

Head of Higher Education & Access: ..... Print Name: ..... Date: .....

## Equality and Diversity Statement & Impact Assessment

USP College is committed to equality of opportunity. The aim is to create an environment in which people treat each other with mutual respect, regardless of: age, disability, family responsibility, marital status, race, colour, ethnicity, nationality, religion or belief, gender, gender identity, transgender, sexual orientation, trade union activity or unrelated criminal convictions.

This form should be used by managers and policy owners within their area of responsibility to carry out Equality and Diversity Impact Assessments (EDIAs) in relation to protected characteristics including, but not limited to: Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Marriage and civil partnership, Pregnancy and maternity, Race, Religion and belief, Sex, Sexual orientation. The word 'policy' is taken to include strategies, policies, procedures and guidance notes; both formal and informal, internal and external.

### 1. Name of Policy

HE Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy

### 2. Which of the following groups could be affected by this policy?

*(Tick all that apply)*

Students	√
Staff	√
Wider Community	

### 3. Complaints

Have complaints been received from anyone with one or more protected characteristic about the service provided? If yes then please give details.

N/A

### 4. The Impact

Four possible impacts should be considered as part of the assessment:

- a. **Positive Impact** - Where the policy might have a positive impact on a particular protected characteristic.
- b. **None or Little Impact** – Where you think a policy does not disadvantage any of the protected characteristics
- c. **Some Impact** – Where a policy might disadvantage any of the protected characteristics groups to some extent. This disadvantage may be also differential in the sense that where the negative impact on one particular group of individuals with protected characteristic is likely to be greater than on another.
- d. **Substantial Impact** – Where you think that the policy could have a negative impact on any or all of the protected characteristics. This disadvantage may be also differential in the sense that the negative impact on one particular protected characteristic is likely to be greater than on another.

Thought-provoking questions, which might help come to a decision about the impact of a policy on individuals with protected characteristics:

- e. Does policy outcomes and service take up differ between people with different protected characteristics?
- f. What key information do we have? Does data or engagement with people with protected characteristics give insights into areas of disadvantage, which relate to the policy area?
- g. If the policy is likely to have a negative impact on individuals, sharing particular characteristics what steps can be taken to mitigate these effects?
- h. Will the policy deliver practical benefits for certain groups?
- i. Does the policy miss opportunities to advance equality of opportunity and foster good understanding/ relationships between groups?
- j. Do other policies need to change to make this policy more effective?
- k. Is there any elements of the policy that could be unlawful under the Equality Act 2010?

Use the guidance provided above and complete the following table: **(Please Tick ✓)**

<b>Gender/Age</b>	Positive Impact	No or Little Impact	Some Adverse Impact	Substantial Adverse Impact
Gender		✓		
Age		✓		
<b>Disability</b>	Positive Impact	No or Little Impact	Some Adverse Impact	Substantial Adverse Impact
Visually Impaired		✓		
Hearing impaired		✓		
Physical Disability		✓		
Specific Learning Difficulties		✓		
Global Learning Difficulties		✓		
Autistic Spectrum Disorder		✓		
Any other disability – Various		✓		
<b>Other Factors</b>	Positive Impact	No or Little Impact	Some Adverse Impact	Substantial Adverse Impact
Race		✓		
Culture		✓		
Religious Belief		✓		
Sexual Orientation		✓		
Gender Reassignment		✓		
Marriage/Civil Partnership		✓		
Pregnancy /Maternity /Paternity		✓		

Please comment on any areas where some or substantial impact is indicated. Any resulting actions must be added to the below action plan.

**5. Is there anything that cannot be changed?**

What cannot be changed?	Can this be justified?	If so, how?
Not applicable		
E.g., Disabled people can be treated more favorably under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. If a policy appears to treat disabled people more favorably than other equality groups, the disadvantage may be justifiable		

Please list the main actions that you plan to take as a result of this assessment in your area of responsibility. (Continue on separate sheets as necessary)

<p><b>Action Plan:</b></p>
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