

GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS MAKING AN ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR CERTIFICATED LEARNING (APCL) CLAIM

The following guidelines should be used in conjunction with the APCL Application Form. They are designed to explain the University's Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) policy and procedures and to help you complete the APCL form.

1. Do I need to make an APCL claim?

An APCL claim is only required in certain circumstances and should not be confused with other procedures within Admissions and Academic and Student Administration. Please study the following list carefully to find out if APCL applies in your case. If you are still unsure whether you need to make a claim you are welcome to contact the Admissions Manager with responsibility for APL for advice.

You do **not** need to make an APCL claim if

1. You are requesting **entry** to a course on the basis of non-standard qualifications rather than **entry with credit**. Unless you are asking to be exempted from a module or modules of a course offered by the University of Birmingham (in which case a claim for APCL would be required) your application for admission will be assessed by the relevant admissions tutor independently of the University's APCL process.
2. You are requesting direct entry to years two or three (that is, to levels I, Intermediate, or H, Honours) of a standard Undergraduate course. In this case you should indicate your desired year of entry in the 'point of entry' section of the UCAS application form and the relevant admissions tutor will assess your request in conjunction with your application for admission. Queries about this process should be directed to the relevant admissions tutor and/or the Admissions Office.
3. You intend to transfer previous studies taken at the University of Birmingham into a course offered at another Educational Institution and are requesting evidence of these studies from Birmingham. In which case you should contact the Academic and Student Administration section.
4. You undertook but did not complete studies at the University of Birmingham no more than two years ago and left the University, but now wish to restart the same programme of study. For example, you left the University after completing 120 credits of a MEd started in September 2007 and are asking to return and complete the MEd in September 2009. In this case your existing student record could be reactivated by Academic and Student Administration (ASA), provided the College who run the programme agrees and you have not been awarded an alternative qualification for your previous study. (Please note, it is not possible to request a reactivation of your previous record if you were required to withdraw due to academic failure).
5. You were awarded a qualification by the University of Birmingham no more than two years ago and now wish to study for a higher award of the same course. For example, you were awarded a PG Dip in Autism (Adults) and wish to return and study for the MEd in Autism (Adults). In this case you could be directly transferred to the MEd by Academic and Student Administration (ASA), provided the College who run the programme agrees and you return the degree certificate of your original award to ASA.

In all other circumstances you will need to make a claim for APCL.

2. What is the Accreditation of Prior Learning?

The Accreditation of Prior Learning, or APL, is a process by which this University (and many others) gives credit against learning achieved by an individual before entry to a programme of study at Birmingham.

Such prior learning may have been previously assessed and certificated by an education provider (for example, by another institution of Higher Education). In which case recognition of this kind of learning is known as the Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning or APCL. It may also have been acquired outside the formal education and training systems (for example, through work experience) and would therefore be recognised by the process of Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning or APEL.

The APL process does **not** apply to the assessment of your prior learning and/or experience for the purpose of **entry** to a programme of study, only to the assessment of your eligibility for **entry with credit**.

Whether your APL claim is based on prior certificated learning or prior experiential learning, it is important to realise that it is the achievement of learning, or the outcomes of that learning, that is being accredited rather than the activity of learning itself.

The scope of these guidelines is APCL. If you wish to make a claim for the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) please contact the Admissions Manager with responsibility for APL for further advice.

3. What is Credit?

Credit provides a means of quantifying learning outcomes achievable in a given number of notional hours and at a given level. Learning outcomes are used to identify whether students have demonstrated through assessment the minimum level of learning required to pass a module and thus gain the required credit. In this way previous learning can be identified which can be assessed and 'credited' against an award. APCL is the process by which an applicant's previously accrued credit is assessed to determine whether it can be used to gain exemption from modules of a programme of study at the University of Birmingham.

4. What is a module?

A module is a component of a course with its own approved aims and objectives and assessment methods. Modules normally consist of 10 or 20 credits and are taken at specified levels (for example, a module might be worth 20 credits at Masters level). **Please note that credit cannot be given for part of a module.** For example, it is not possible to request exemption from half of a 40 credit module on the basis of a previously completed module worth 20 credits.

5. Credit Values and Levels of Awards

In order to complete your APCL application form you will need to know the credit value and level of study of your previous qualification. Below you will find a table showing the levels of study of some common awards. For comparison purposes you will also find a separate table illustrating the credit requirements of a number of awards offered by the University of Birmingham. If you are unsure of the credit value and level of your prior qualification you are advised to contact the institution where your studies were completed for advice.

Further information about frameworks for Higher Education qualifications can also be found on the QAA (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education) and QCDA (Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency) websites: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk> and <http://www.qcda.org.uk>

Table A

Award	Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) Level of Study
University Certificate	Level C (Certificate)
Cert HE	Level C (Certificate)
Stage 1 of a Bachelors Degree*	Level C (Certificate)
University Diploma	Level I (Intermediate)
Dip HE	Level I (Intermediate)
Foundation Degree	Level I (Intermediate)
Stage 2 of a Bachelors Degree*	Level I (Intermediate)
Graduate Certificate	Level H (Honours)
Graduate Diploma	Level H (Honours)

Ad Cert	Level H (Honours)
BPhil	Level H (Honours)
Stage 3 of a Bachelors Degree*	Level H (Honours)
PG Cert	Level M (Masters)
PG Dip	Level M (Masters)
MA	Level M (Masters)
MSc	Level M (Masters)
MEd	Level M (Masters)
PhD	Level D (Doctoral)

*A Stage is the equivalent of 1 year's full-time study

Table B

University of Birmingham Qualification	Credits Required for Award of Qualification
University Certificate	60 credits
University Diploma	60 credits
Ad Cert	60 credits
Graduate Certificate	60 credits
Cert HE	120 credits
Graduate Diploma	120 credits
Dip HE	240 credits
Foundation Degree	240 credits
Bachelors degrees (unless specified otherwise below)	360 credits
Bachelors degrees with an additional year in industry or year abroad	480 credits
BPhil	120 credits
Undergraduate Masters (MEng, MSci)	480 credits
Undergraduate Masters with an additional year in industry or year abroad	600 credits
PG Cert	60 credits
PG Dip	120 credits
Taught Postgraduate degree (MA, MSc, MEd)	180 credits
MPhil (one-year programme)	180 credits
MRes (one-year programme)	180 credits
PhD	540 credits

6. Limitations on Credit

The University is concerned to ensure that all students meet a required standard on its awards and that all students are treated equitably. Where APCL is being sought for the award of academic credit the University must make certain that the learning derived from prior certificated study is equivalent to that of the learning that might otherwise have been achieved by following the full programme of study. Consequently it must be satisfied that the evidence submitted in support of an APCL claim meets the following criteria:

- **Validity.** The evidence must show that the prior learning for which you are making a claim is relevant to the programme of study you have applied for at the University of Birmingham. You must be able to demonstrate that there is an appropriate match in both level and content between your previous studies and the Birmingham module or modules for which you are seeking exemption.
- **Currency.** Prior learning must have been gained recently enough to still be of value. The time limits on learning will vary according to subject area but qualifications more than five years old are unlikely to be considered.
- **Sufficiency.** You must provide enough evidence to demonstrate fully the achievement of the credit being claimed.

- **Authenticity.** The evidence should be clearly related to your own efforts and able to be verified as such.

Please note it is your responsibility to check that your previous studies were taken at the same level as (or higher than) the Birmingham qualification you wish to claim credit towards. For example, if you are seeking to bring previously accrued credit into a BPhil you must ensure that your prior learning was taken at level H (Honours) or above. If your prior learning was taken at a lower level than the Birmingham award for which you are seeking exemption we will be unable to consider your claim for APCL.

If your previous studies are more than five years old but you still wish to make a claim for APCL you should contact the admissions tutor of the University of Birmingham programme into which you wish to import credit prior to making an application. He or she will be able to assess the currency of your prior learning and advise you if it is worth pursuing a claim. If you are advised to do so you will be required to provide a statement of currency on your APCL application form. **However, recommendation to pursue an APCL claim on the basis of studies that are more than five years old does not guarantee that exemption will be granted.**

The maximum amount of credit that can be imported into an award via APCL is two-thirds of the qualification. For example, a maximum of 120 credits towards a 180 credit Masters degree. This excludes any compulsory dissertation or thesis elements stated in the programme requirements for which exemption will not be granted. **Two-thirds is the upper limit and as such does not reflect the standard amount of credit awarded by the University.**

7. Fees/Cost

Although you do not receive formal tuition during the process of making an APCL claim, additional support is given to you during this time for which a fee of £25 will be charged. Please note that this fee is non-refundable should your APCL claim be unsuccessful. **There is no charge if you only want qualifications obtained, or modules taken, at the University of Birmingham to be taken into consideration.**

If your APCL claim is successful your tuition fees will be reduced by the cost of any exempted modules. However, if you are awaiting the outcome of an APCL claim at the point of registration you are still required to pay your full tuition fee on time. If you are subsequently awarded credit towards a degree you will receive a refund for the cost of any exempted modules. Academic and Student Administration will calculate any reduction in your tuition fees **after** an APCL decision letter has been sent to you by the Admissions Manager and they will adjust your student record accordingly.

8. How and when to make an APCL claim

If you wish to make a claim for the Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning you will need to download an APCL application form from <http://www.marketing.bham.ac.uk/admissions/apl-form.htm>. Alternatively you can request a paper application form from the Admissions Manager with responsibility for APL.

You must not make an application for APCL until **after** you have made an application for admission to the University of Birmingham course you wish to claim credit towards. For example, if you are requesting exemption from modules of a Masters course run at Birmingham you must make an application for admission to this Masters course via the Admissions Office before making an application for APCL. If you are requesting exemption on the basis of previous studies completed at the University of Birmingham this means making a new application for admission to the course you wish to claim credit towards.

You should apply for APCL no less than one month prior to the commencement date of the University of Birmingham course you wish to claim credit towards. For example, if the course is due to commence on 30 September the Admissions Manager should receive your application for APCL by 30 August. If the course is studied part time over more than one year then you should make a claim for APCL up to one month prior to the commencement of each

year of study. We cannot guarantee that APL applications received late will be processed in time. It should be noted that it is not possible to request exemption from Birmingham modules that you have already begun to study. It is also important to realise that an application for admission to a course is completely separate from an application for APCL and each application will be assessed individually on their merits.

9. Completing the APCL application form

Section A

In Section A of the form please give your personal details (name, address, ID number etc.) and specify the University of Birmingham course you wish to claim credit towards. For example, if you wish to claim credit towards a MEd in Autism (Adults) based on a Masters level course completed at another institution then you should write 'MEd Autism (Adults)' here. As mentioned above, you must have already made a separate application for admission to the University of Birmingham course. Please also state the month and year of entry you have applied for.

Section B

In Section B please provide details of the prior certificated learning for which you are claiming credit. You will need to provide details of **all** previous studies that you wish to be taken into consideration for your APCL claim, including any studies undertaken at the University of Birmingham. If you want more than one period of study to be taken into consideration you will need to complete a separate Section B for each certificated course you have taken.

You will need to give the name and address of the institution where your previous studies were taken. You will also need to provide the title and qualification of the certificated course you studied, dates of study and the date when the qualification was awarded. If you did not complete the course please indicate this on the form and list the individual module or modules you did complete in section B (2).

Please list the title, credit value, level and date of completion of all modules undertaken as part of your previous studies in section B (2). Remember that we will only be able to consider modules taken at the same level as the University of Birmingham qualification towards which you are claiming credit, and that these modules must closely match the content, and meet the learning outcomes, of any Birmingham modules for which you are seeking exemption. If you are unsure of the level and credit value of your previously completed modules, you are advised to contact the Institution where they were studied for advice. Likewise if you are unsure whether your previous studies are a close enough match to the Birmingham qualification towards which you are claiming credit you are welcome to contact the relevant admissions tutor for an informal discussion prior to making an application for APCL.

In section B (3) you are asked to provide details of the structure of your previously completed course. You must specify the duration of the course (for example, two years full-time study). If you studied a module or modules from the course but did not complete it then you should specify the duration of the module/s instead.

You must also state the level at which your previous studies were taken. The levels used on the APCL application form are taken from the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). You will find the FHEQ levels of a number of qualifications in Table A in section 5 of these guidelines. If you are unsure of the credit value and level of your prior qualification you are advised to contact the institution where you took your previous studies for advice.

Finally, you should indicate the number of credits required for the award of the qualification for which you studied. For example, if you were studying for a PG Dip at the University of Birmingham you would be required to achieve 120 credits. For comparison purposes, Table B in section 5 illustrates the credit requirements of a number of qualifications offered by the University of Birmingham. However, you should be aware that there might be variations with regards to the credit requirements for qualifications offered by other Higher Educational institutions. If in doubt you should contact your prior educational institution for advice before making a claim.

Section C

Once you have completed sections A and B of the form you must ensure that you provide the supporting evidence requested in Section C. **You will need to enclose with your application descriptions of any courses or modules completed outside the University of Birmingham.** For example, this documentation should provide information about the overall aims of your previously studied course, show the content of each module taken as part of the course and describe the methods of assessment used. This is the kind of information that might be available in a course handbook or brochure. It may also be available on the institution's website. If so, you are welcome to specify the web address where we can obtain this information in Section C (1). Otherwise you should request the required documentation from your prior educational institution.

You must also enclose proof of the completion of any studies completed outside the University of Birmingham. We require certified copies of your university transcript and, if you were awarded a qualification, degree certificate. You do not need to provide original documents at this stage but we may ask to see them for verification purposes at a later date. If you do send original documents please note that we will be unable to return them to you by registered post. **If your previous studies were taken at the University of Birmingham you do not need to provide proof of completion unless we ask you to do so after assessing your application.**

If your claim is on the basis of qualifications obtained more than 5 years ago, you will need to provide a statement explaining why you believe your prior learning is still current for the purpose of credit transfer. You should describe ways in which you have kept your previous studies up-to-date, for example via work experience, and demonstrate how this subsequent learning relates to your studies. Please ensure that you provide dates for any subsequent learning you are asking us to consider. Please note, we may ask you to submit additional documentation in support of this statement at a later date.

Before returning the APCL application form to the Admissions Manager please ensure that you have completed the form in full and enclosed the required supporting documentation and a cheque for £25 in payment of the application fee (if making a claim on the basis of studies from outside the University of Birmingham). Cheques should be made payable to the 'University of Birmingham' (please write your University ID number on the back of the cheque). This fee is non-refundable should your APCL claim be unsuccessful. You are strongly advised to complete the Application Checklist on the APCL form since failure to supply adequate evidence will mean that we are unable to process your claim.

Please return the completed APCL application form plus supporting evidence and your application fee of £25 to:

The Admissions Manager (APL)
Admissions Office, C Block Aston Webb Building,
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 2TT.

10. What happens after we receive your application for APCL?

Once the Admissions Manager has received your application for APCL it will be checked to make sure that there is sufficient evidence to allow us to process your claim. If the application form is incomplete or if you have failed to enclose adequate supporting documentation we will contact you to let you know. Likewise if there are any queries about your previous studies to be resolved before processing your claim we will contact you for more information. Your application will not be processed until such time as you have provided us with the required evidence.

In some circumstances it may also be necessary for us to contact your prior Educational Institution for information about your studies. For example, we may need to ask them to

provide more detailed evidence about course content than is available in a standard course syllabus.

Provided the Admissions Manager is happy that your application for APCL is complete, your application form will be sent to the College along with an APCL decision form. The admissions tutor/contact will make an initial assessment of your application and determine if there is sufficient supporting evidence to enable him or her to make a decision. If not we will contact you to request additional information.

The relevant admissions tutor will assess your APCL claim and inform the Admissions Manager of the decision. The Admissions Manager will notify you of the College's decision in writing. If your application for APCL is successful the letter will state the amount of credit to be awarded and the titles of any exempted modules. These exempted modules will be entered into your student record as APL modules by staff within Academic and Student Administration.

The Admissions Manager will copy the decision letter to colleagues in Academic and Student Administration and the Finance Office so that your tuition fees can be adjusted accordingly. Academic and Student Administration will also email you details of your revised tuition fee liability. If your application is unsuccessful reasons for the decision will be given in the letter.

Please note that if your APCL claim is successful we will be unable to send you a decision letter until such time as you are holding an unconditional offer of a place on the University of Birmingham course you are claiming credit towards.

Due to the varied nature of APCL claims it is difficult to give a precise turnaround time for decisions. However, as a guide you should expect to receive a decision on your application in approximately 4-6 weeks. If you have not received a decision within that time you are welcome to contact the Admissions Manager to check on the status of your application.

Appeals

The University will not review an APL decision where the grounds for requesting a review are simply that the applicant disagrees with the academic judgement that has been applied, and where there is no evidence that the correct procedures have not been followed. The University shall not be obliged to consider an appeal simply on the grounds that the applicant is unwilling to accept the original decision not to grant credit, and seeks to overturn that decision.

If your claim for APCL is unsuccessful you may only request a review of the decision on the basis of additional evidence that was unavailable at the time of the application. **For example, if you subsequently obtain additional documentation pertaining to you prior certificated study which supports your claim.** This request should be made in writing and addressed to the Admissions Manager with responsibility for APL.