

UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

**POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR THE  
ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR LEARNING (APL)**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Terminology

The following terminology is used in this document:

**APL – Accreditation of Prior Learning.** This is an umbrella term for the process by which institutions of Higher Education give credit against learning achieved by an individual before entry to a programme of study. The term encompasses both Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) and Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL).

**APCL – Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning.** This term denotes the recognition of learning that has been previously assessed and certificated by an education provider (for example, by another institution of Higher Education).

**APEL – Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning.** This term denotes the recognition of learning acquired outside formal education and training systems (for example, through work experience).

**Direct Entry.** This term is used to describe the process by which applicants for Undergraduate courses via UCAS are permitted to enter a programme of study at an advanced point of entry (for example, year two) on the basis of their previously completed studies and/or experience.

**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.

**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). **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.

### 1.2 What is the Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)?

For the purpose of this document, the Accreditation of Prior Learning, or APL, signifies the 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). 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 as defined in this document does **not** apply to the assessment of an individual's prior learning and/or experience for the purpose of **entry** to a programme of study, only to the assessment of their eligibility for **entry with credit**.

Whether an 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.

## **2. WHEN IS AN ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR LEARNING (APL) CLAIM NOT REQUIRED?**

APL is only required in certain circumstances and should not be confused with other procedures within Admissions and Academic and Student Administration. This section sets out those circumstances in which the APL process does not apply and therefore in which the applicant will not be required to make an APCL or APEL claim.

### **2.1 The applicant is requesting entry to a course on the basis of non-standard qualifications and/or experience**

The assessment of an applicant's eligibility to enter a programme of study on the basis of non-standard qualifications and/or experience is not a matter for APL. Unless the applicant is also requesting exemption from a module or modules of a course run at the University of Birmingham (in which case they would be required to make a separate APCL or APEL claim) their application for admission will be assessed independently of the University's APL process.

### **2.2 The applicant is requesting Direct Entry to level I (Intermediate), or H (Honours), of an Undergraduate degree course at the point of application.**

If an applicant is requesting direct entry to a year other than the first year of a standard Undergraduate degree (that is, entry to a level other than level C or Certificate level) at the point of application they should indicate their desired year of entry in the 'point of entry' section of the UCAS (The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) application form. The applicant's request will be considered in conjunction with their application for admission.

Applicants requesting exemption from less than a year or level of study (for example, exemption from 40 credits at level C) will be required to make an application for APL in the normal way. Applicants requesting exemption from undergraduate level courses that do not recruit via UCAS will also be required to make a separate application for APL.

Queries about the Direct Entry process should be directed to the relevant admissions tutor and/or the Admissions Office (refer to section 3 for more information about Direct Entry).

### **2.3 The student undertook but did not complete studies at the University of Birmingham no more than two years ago and now wishes to restart the same programme of study.**

For example, a student completed 120 credits of a 180-credit Masters course in September 2007 and is asking to return and complete the course in September 2009.

If an individual left the University no more than two years ago after partially completing a programme of study and now wishes to restart the same programme it may be possible for Academic and Student Administration (ASA) to reactivate their existing student record, provided that they have not been awarded an alternative qualification for their previous study, and that the College who run the programme agrees. As the original start date for the programme would still apply, it is essential for the College to check that the maximum period of registration has not expired. **It will not be possible to reactivate an individual's record who was required to withdraw through academic failure. It will also not be possible to reactivate an individual's record if the uncompleted programme in question has since been restructured or withdrawn.**

### **2.4 The University of Birmingham awarded the student a qualification no more than two years ago and the student wishes to return to study for a higher award of the same course.**

For example, a student was awarded a PG Dip in Autism (Adults) in July 2007 and wishes to return and study for the MEd in Autism (Adults) in September 2009.

If an individual left the University no more than two years ago having been awarded a qualification and now wishes to return to study for a higher award of the same programme of study it may be possible for Academic and Student Administration (ASA) to directly transfer them to the higher award, provided that they return the degree certificate for their original award to ASA, and that the College who run the programme agrees to the transfer. **It will not be possible to make a direct transfer if the programme in question has since been restructured or withdrawn.**

### **2.5 The student wishes to transfer credits gained at the University of Birmingham into a degree offered by another Higher Educational Institution.**

Students requesting information about previous studies taken at the University of Birmingham for the purpose of APCL at another Higher Educational Institution should contact the Academic and Student Administration (ASA) section to obtain an academic transcript rather than Admissions.

**In circumstances other than those stated above the applicant will be required to make an application for Accreditation of Prior Learning or APL after first making a separate application for admission. Applicants who are unsure as to whether an APL claim is required are advised to contact the Admissions Manager responsible for APL for advice.**

## **3. DIRECT ENTRY**

Applicants requesting exemption at the point of application from a year or level of study of an Undergraduate degree offered at the University of Birmingham, and recruiting via UCAS, are not required to make a separate claim for APL. Instead the relevant admissions tutor and/or staff within Admissions assess the applicant's request for direct entry in conjunction with their application for admission. However, APCL regulations concerning the validity, currency, sufficiency and authenticity of the applicant's previous studies still apply in the case of direct entry (see Section 4). That is,

- There must be an appropriate match in both level and content between the applicant's previous studies and the year or level of study for which they are seeking exemption. The admissions tutor must ensure that the learning derived from these previous studies is equivalent to that of the learning that might otherwise have been achieved by following the full programme of study.
- The applicant's previous studies must have been taken recently enough to still be of value. As a general rule qualifications which are more than five years old are unlikely to be considered
- The applicant must provide sufficient evidence of their previous studies to support their request for direct entry. For example, an academic transcript and course syllabus..

Regulations allow for entry into each year of a degree programme, although in practice it is unusual to allow entry to the final year. It is possible to grant credit for (and therefore grant exemption from) up to two thirds of a programme.

### **3.1 Direct Entry Procedures**

#### **3.1.1 Applicant**

The applicant must indicate their desired year of entry in the 'point of entry' section of the UCAS application form. Prior to submitting their UCAS application the applicant is strongly advised to contact the relevant admissions tutor to discuss the feasibility of making a claim for direct entry for a particular course. The admissions tutor will be able to advise the applicant if

- a) They will consider claims for direct entry to a particular course
- b) Their claim might be appropriate

**However, the applicant should be aware that recommendation to pursue a claim for direct entry does not guarantee that the claim will be successful.**

It is the responsibility of the applicant to submit evidence in support of their claim for direct entry. Supporting evidence is likely to include an academic transcript and course syllabus, but the relevant admissions tutor will advise the applicant of the specific documentation required.

### **3.1.2 Admissions**

If an applicant requests a different point of entry on their UCAS application form, the relevant Admissions Officer will make an initial assessment of the form as usual and will highlight the point of entry information for the attention of the Admissions Tutor. If there is insufficient supporting evidence of the applicant's previous study the Admissions Officer should inform the admissions tutor of this and the applicant should be asked to provide additional evidence.

If the admissions tutor decides to grant the applicant direct entry to another year or level of the course the relevant Admissions Officer will amend the applicant's student record in Banner to reflect the new point of entry. The Admissions Officer will also amend the point of entry in the offer letter sent to the applicant.

Any queries about APL regulations pertaining to the decision to grant a student direct entry to a programme of study should be referred to the Admissions Manager with responsibility for APL.

### **3.1.3 Admissions Tutor**

It is the responsibility of the Admissions Tutor to inform applicants seeking direct entry if such a claim is appropriate in their case and to advise them accordingly. It is also the responsibility of the Admissions Tutor to assess an applicant's claim for direct entry in conjunction with their application for admission to a course and subsequently to inform Admissions of their decision. The applicant's claim for direct entry cannot be assessed until such time as the applicant provides the admissions tutor with adequate supporting evidence of their previous studies.

### **3.1.4 Limitations**

Direct entry is not appropriate for every programme run at the University of Birmingham. Nor will it be appropriate in every case. Hence applicants seeking direct entry to a year or level of a course other than the first year (level C) are advised to contact the relevant admissions tutor for advice prior to completing their UCAS application form.

Although regulations allow for exemption from up to two thirds of a programme, entry to the third year of a three-year degree programme is unlikely to be permitted (with the exception of International Direct Entry Agreements, where separate arrangements exist).

Applicants for direct entry are still expected to meet the minimum stated entry requirements of the course for which they are requesting partial exemption. For example, if the entry requirements ask for a minimum of ABB at A Level the applicant is expected to offer these grades.

Direct entry is only appropriate for those seeking exemption at the point of application from a whole year/level of an Undergraduate programme recruiting via UCAS. Applicants seeking exemption from less than a year/level of study (for example, from 40 credits at Certificate level), and those seeking exemption from Undergraduate level courses offered at Birmingham and not recruiting via UCAS (for example, Ad Cert and BPhil courses) are required to make an application for APL in the normal way.

Although direct entry is a separate process from APL, APL regulations concerning the validity, currency, sufficiency and authenticity of the applicant's previous studies still apply (see 3). Consequently applicants should only be permitted direct entry to a programme of study if both the College and Admissions are satisfied that the applicant's previous studies are equivalent

to the learning that would otherwise have been achieved by following the complete programme of study. The applicant is expected to demonstrate equivalency and currency by providing sufficient evidence of their previous study.

#### **4. ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR CERTIFICATED LEARNING (APCL)**

The Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (or APCL) denotes the recognition of learning that has been previously assessed and certificated by an education provider (for example, by another institution of Higher Education).

An APCL claim is only required in certain circumstances and should not be confused with other procedures within Admissions and Academic and Student Administration. See Section 2 for those cases in which applicants are not required to make an APL claim (be it an APCL or an APEL claim).

The following section is concerned with the University's Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) policy and procedures. **Information about Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) policy and procedures can be found in Section 5.**

##### **4.1 Credit Values and Levels of Awards**

Applicants for APCL must determine the credit value and level of study of their previous qualification/s prior to making a claim (for example, 40 credits at Masters level). This information is required in order to complete the APCL application form.

Only previous studies taken at the same level as (or higher than) the University of Birmingham course for which the applicant is requesting partial exemption will be considered for APCL. For example, it is not possible to make an APCL claim for exemption from a University of Birmingham module worth 20 credits at level H (Honours) on the basis of a previously awarded 20 credits at Level I (Intermediate). However, an applicant could make a claim for a Level I module on the basis of a previously awarded 20 credits at level H or 20 credits at Level M (Masters), provided that there is a match in terms of module content and it can be demonstrated that the learning outcomes of the Birmingham module have been met.

Applicants are welcome to make a claim for exemption from a University of Birmingham module on the basis of previously accrued credit with a value greater than that module. For example, an applicant could claim exemption from a Birmingham module worth 20 credits on the basis of a previously completed module worth 40 credits. However, they are not permitted to claim exemption from the same module on the basis of a previously completed module worth 15 credits because **exemption from part of a module is not permissible under APL regulations.**

A table showing the levels of study of some common awards is attached in **Appendix A**. For comparison purposes a separate table illustrating the credit requirements of a number of awards offered by the University of Birmingham can be found in **Appendix B**. Applicants who are unsure of the credit value and level of their prior qualification/s must contact the institution where their studies were completed for advice before making a claim.

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/>

##### **4.2 Limitations on APCL**

###### **4.2.1 Introduction**

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 the applicant is making a claim is relevant to the programme of study s/he has applied for at the University of Birmingham. The applicant must be able to demonstrate that there is an appropriate match in both level and content between their previous studies and the Birmingham module or modules for which they 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.** The applicant must provide enough evidence to demonstrate fully the achievement of the credit being claimed.
- **Authenticity.** The evidence should be clearly related to the applicant's own efforts and able to be verified as such.

The Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning is not appropriate for every programme offered by the University of Birmingham. Nor will it be permitted in every case. Completion of an APCL application form does not guarantee that exemption will be granted.

#### 4.2.2 Equivalency

It is the responsibility of the applicant to check that their previous studies were taken at the same level as (or higher than) the University of Birmingham qualification they wish to claim credit towards. If the applicant's prior learning was taken at a lower level than the Birmingham award for which they are seeking exemption the University will be unable to consider a claim for APCL.

The applicant must also ensure that the credit value of their previous studies is equivalent to (or higher than) the module/s of the Birmingham qualification for which they are seeking exemption. For example, since APL regulations permit exemption from whole modules only, previous studies with a value of 20 credits can only be used to make an APCL claim for a University of Birmingham module worth 20 credits or less.

The University is only able to consider an applicant's previous studies for APCL if they closely match the content of the University of Birmingham modules from which the applicant is seeking exemption. In assessing an APCL claim the University will wish to consider if the stated learning outcomes of the module/s from which the applicant is requesting exemption have been adequately met by his or her previous studies. Consequently exempted module/s (be they core or option modules) stated on the APCL decision form will only be those offered within the **current** programme of study for which the applicant has applied and is seeking partial exemption.

Where it is determined that there is not equivalency between the applicant's previous studies and the Birmingham module/s no award of credit can be made by the University.

#### 4.2.3 Currency

If the applicant's previous studies are more than five years old but they still wish to make a claim for APCL they should contact the admissions tutor of the Birmingham programme into which they wish to import credit prior to making an application. He or she will be able to assess the currency of the applicant's prior learning and advise them if it is worth pursuing a claim. **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.**

#### 4.2.4 Maximum Amount of Credit which can be imported via APCL

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.**

The exception to this are Postgraduate Research programmes containing taught elements. The maximum amount of credit that can be imported into these programmes via APCL is one-third of the qualification.

See 5.1.2 of the University's Regulations,  
[http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/docs/regulations\\_part5.pdf](http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/docs/regulations_part5.pdf)

#### 4.3 APCL Costs

Although an applicant does not receive formal tuition during the process of making an APCL claim, additional support is given to them during this time for which a fee of £25 is charged. This fee is non-refundable should the APCL claim be unsuccessful. (Please note, there is no fee charged for claims made on the basis of previous qualifications/modules obtained/taken at Birmingham).

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

#### 4.4 How and When to Make a Claim for APCL

Individuals who wish to make a claim for the Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning are required to complete an APCL application form (see Appendix C). The application form is available to download from <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/students/admissions/apl-form.pdf>. Alternatively a paper application form can be obtained from the Admissions Manager with responsibility for APL.

Individuals who wish to make an application for APCL must first make an application for admission to the University of Birmingham course they wish to claim credit towards. For example, if they are requesting exemption from modules of a Masters course run at Birmingham they must make an application for admission to this Masters course via the Admissions Office before making an application for APCL. If they are requesting exemption on the basis of studies previously completed at the University of Birmingham this means making a new application for admission to the course they wish to claim credit towards.

Applications for APCL should ideally be made prior to the commencement date of the University of Birmingham course the applicant is claiming credit towards (ideally one month before). For example, if the course is due to commence on 30 September the Admissions Manager should receive the application no later than 30 August. **We cannot guarantee that APL applications received late will be processed in time. It should also be noted that it is not possible to request exemption from Birmingham modules that the applicant has already begun to study.**

It is 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.

#### **4.5 Completing the APCL Application Form**

Guidelines for completing the APCL application form are available (see 'Guidelines for Students Making an Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) claim')

If applicants wish more than one period of study to be considered for APCL they are required to complete a separate section B of the application form for each certificated course they have studied (See Appendix C)

Applicants who are unsure whether or not their previous studies are a close enough match to the University of Birmingham qualification towards which they are claiming credit are welcome to contact the relevant course Admissions Tutor for an informal discussion prior to submitting a claim for APCL. Other queries concerning the completion of the APCL application form should be addressed to the Admissions Manager with responsibility for APCL.

#### **4.6 Assessment of APCL Claims**

##### **4.6.1 Initial Processing of the Application**

Upon receipt of the application form the Admissions Manager with responsibility for APL will ensure that there is sufficient evidence to process the claim. If the application form is incomplete, if the applicant has failed to enclose adequate supporting documentation or if there are any queries about the applicant's previous studies the Admissions Manager will contact the applicant. The application will not be processed until such time as the applicant has provided the required evidence.

In some circumstances it may also be necessary for the Admissions Manager to contact the applicant's prior Educational Institution for information about their studies. For example, more detailed evidence about course content than is available in a standard course syllabus may be required.

Once the Admissions Manager is happy the application for APCL is complete, the application form will be sent to the relevant admissions tutor or APL contact within the College along with an APCL decision form (see Appendix D). The admissions tutor/College APL contact will make an initial assessment of the application and determine if there is sufficient supporting evidence to enable him or her to make a decision. If not they will ask the Admissions Manager to request additional evidence from the applicant, or make further enquiries themselves as appropriate.

##### **4.6.2 Decision Making**

The relevant admissions tutor and/or College APL contact will assess the APCL claim and, once they have made a decision, complete the APCL decision form (see Appendix D) and return it to the Admissions Manager along with the APCL application papers. If credit is to be awarded, they will state on the decision form the amount and level of credit to be granted, the amount of credit to be completed for award of the University of Birmingham qualification and the title and codes of any modules from which the applicant is to be exempted. For example, a College might decide to award an applicant 40 Masters level credits towards a PG Dip, which would exempt the applicant from taking specified modules worth 40 credits, leaving them 80 credits to successfully complete in order to be awarded the PG Dip.

##### **4.6.3 Notification of the Decision**

The Admissions Manager will notify the applicant of the College's decision in writing. If the application for APCL is successful the letter will state the amount of credit to be awarded and the titles of any exempted modules as outlined in the paragraph above.

These exempted modules will be entered into the applicant's student record as APL modules by staff within Academic and Student Administration and will appear as such on student transcripts. Modules exempted via APCL appear on student transcripts as a 'Pass' but without a mark.

The Admissions Manager will copy the decision letter to colleagues in Academic and Student Administration and the Finance Office so that the applicant's tuition fees can be adjusted. If the application is unsuccessful reasons for the decision will be given in the letter.

If the APCL claim is successful Admissions will be unable to send the applicant a decision letter until such time as they are holding an unconditional offer of a place on the University of Birmingham course they are claiming credit towards.

Due to the varied nature of APCL claims decision times will vary. However, as a guide applicants should expect to receive a decision on their application in approximately 4-6 weeks (provided the application is complete when it is received by Admissions). If no decision is received within this time applicants are welcome to contact the Admissions Manager with responsibility for APL to check on the status of their application.

#### **4.7 Reduction in Tuition Fees**

It is current University policy to reduce a student's tuition fees by the cost of any modules exempted via APCL. The University reserves the right to review this policy at any time.

If an applicant's APCL claim is successful their tuition fees will be reduced by the cost of any exempted modules. However, if the applicant is awaiting the outcome of an APCL claim at the point of registration they are required to pay the full tuition fee on time. If they are subsequently awarded credit towards a degree they will receive a refund for the cost of any exempted modules.

Academic and Student Administration will calculate any reduction in tuition fees **after** an APCL decision letter has been sent to the applicant by the Admissions Manager with responsibility for APL and their student record will be adjusted accordingly.

#### **4.8 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.

Applicants whose claims for APCL are unsuccessful 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 the applicant subsequently obtains additional documentation pertaining to their prior certificated study which supports their claim. A request for a formal review of the decision should be made in writing and addressed to the Admissions Manager with responsibility for APL.

#### **4.9 Degree Classification**

Degree classification will be determined pro rata. Only credit gained through study on the University of Birmingham programme for which exemption has been granted will count towards degree classification. For example, if a student is permitted exemption from 40 credits of a Masters qualification via APCL, leaving them 80 credits to complete for the award, only those 80 credits will count towards degree classification. This applies whether the student's previous credit, on the basis of which APCL has been granted, was completed at the University of Birmingham or at another institution.

However, the applicant's previously completed studies must have been passed with satisfactory grades to be eligible for APCL. Please see 5.1.2(c) of the University's Regulations, at [http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/docs/regulations\\_part5.pdf](http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/docs/regulations_part5.pdf)

## **5. ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING (APEL)**

### **5.1 Definition of APEL**

The Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning or APEL is the process by which credit is given for learning acquired outside formal education and training systems (for example, through work experience). It requires a judgement to be made about the level of knowledge and skills acquired through life, work experience (paid or unpaid) and non certificated study and their appropriateness for credit and exemption from part of a course.

**The APEL process does not apply to the assessment of an individual's prior experience for the purpose of entry to a programme of study, only to the assessment of their eligibility for entry with credit.**

### **5.2 Methods of Assessment**

Although less easy to assess than prior certificated learning, there are various methods Colleges can use to evaluate prior experiential learning and determine whether an applicant has met the learning outcomes of the module/s for which they are seeking exemption. One of the most commonly used assessment tools in Higher Educational Institutions is a portfolio of evidence, and it is proposed that this method be employed to assess APEL claims at the University of Birmingham. A portfolio must be well organised and presented. It must also demonstrate (via commentary and analysis) that the applicant has considered the relevance and equivalency of their prior experiential learning to the appropriate learning outcomes and mapped that experiential learning against the stated learning outcomes of the programme for which exemption is being sought. Since it is the achievement of learning, or the outcomes of that learning, that is being accredited rather than the activity of learning itself, it is not enough for the applicant to list examples of their prior experiential learning – they must also show that they have reflected on the learning being described.

It is up to each College to determine the structure of the APEL portfolio they wish to use as an assessment tool. They will need to make decisions with regards to organisation, word limit, nature and volume of evidence required etc. If Colleges are prepared to consider APEL applications for their courses they are strongly advised to draw up a portfolio model for usage so that APEL claimants have adequate information about what is expected of them prior to making an application for APEL. Admissions must be made aware of portfolio models agreed at College level. Colleges may also wish to supplement the portfolio with other assessment tools as appropriate. For example, interviews, references, diagnostic test(s), pieces of work or special assignments. Again they should inform Admissions of their intention to use these assessment tools. The APEL applicant must be made aware from the outset of all methods of assessment to be used by Colleges in the evaluation of their claim.

**It is recommended that Colleges carry out an initial assessment of any candidate wishing to pursue a claim solely on the basis of experiential learning, as a way of ensuring that only applicants with a good chance of being awarded credit proceed to portfolio. It is considered good practice for a College to conduct an interview with the prospective APEL applicant at this initial assessment stage whenever practical, as this is an opportunity to discuss the applicant's previous experience in detail and also articulate the amount of work involved in portfolio production.**

### **5.3 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 APEL is being sought for the award of academic credit the University must make certain that the learning derived from prior experiential 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 APEL claim meets the following criteria:

**Validity.** The evidence must show that the prior experiential learning for which the applicant is claiming credit is relevant to the programme of study they have applied for at the University of Birmingham. The applicant must be able to demonstrate that there is equivalency between their previous experience and the Birmingham module or modules for which they are seeking exemption and prove that they have met the learning outcomes of each module.

**Currency.** Prior experience must have been gained sufficiently recently to still be of value. The time limits on experiential learning will vary according to subject area but experience that is more than five years old may not be considered. For APEL claims continuity of experience is particularly important. That is, the experience being considered for the award of credit must have continued up to the present time with no significant breaks.

**Sufficiency.** The applicant must provide enough evidence to demonstrate fully the achievement of the credit being claimed.

**Authenticity.** The evidence should be clearly related to the applicant's own efforts and able to be verified as such.

It is vital that applicants seeking APEL are made aware of the amount of work that may be involved in making a claim from the outset. The College should be able to provide the applicant with information about portfolio production (required content, structure, word length) on request, and also about any supplementary methods of assessment used by the College. The applicant must be made to realise that APEL is not a soft option, that it requires the confidence and ability to work independently and that completion of a portfolio does not guarantee that credit will be awarded. If the applicant is fully informed as to the nature and demands of a APEL claim they will be able to judge whether it would be easier for them to take the module or modules rather than seeking exemption via the APEL process.

#### **5.4 Fees/Cost**

See section 4.3

#### **5.5 Procedures for Making an APEL Claim**

It is proposed that applicants contact the appropriate Tutor in the first instance to establish whether an APEL claim is appropriate – the Tutor must make an initial assessment of the relevancy of the individuals' prior learning to the learning outcomes of the modules for which they are seeking exemption. If, after the Tutor has considered this information (and possibly interviewed the candidate), it is recommended that the applicant produce a portfolio for assessment. The Tutor must check that the applicant is holding an Unconditional offer of a place (or is to be offered an Unconditional offer) on the University of Birmingham course which they are claiming credit towards before starting work on the portfolio.

As per the process for APCL, students making an APEL application must not do so until after they have made an application for admission to the Birmingham course they wish to claim credit towards.

If advised to do so by the Tutor, the applicant will need to formally submit the portfolio of evidence. This needs to be sent to the Admissions Manager with responsibility for APL in the first instance. The Admissions Manager will forward to the Tutor for formal assessment.

4.6.2 – 4.9 then applies.

## **6. APL: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **6.1 Applicant**

#### **6.1.1 General**

a) It is solely the responsibility of the applicant to identify if a claim for APL might be appropriate in their case. It is not the responsibility of the University to determine if an APL claim is appropriate as a result of the assessment of an individual's application for admission. An application for admission to a course is completely separate from an application for APL and the onus is on the applicant to apply for both if applicable.

It should be noted that, although those seeking Direct Entry to an Undergraduate course administered via UCAS do make this request in conjunction with their application for admission, it is still the responsibility of the applicant to indicate that they wish to be considered for Direct Entry by entering their desired year of entry on their UCAS application form. It is not the responsibility of the University to determine if Direct Entry is appropriate as a result of the assessment of an individual's application for admission.

b) In order to identify if APL might be appropriate in their case the applicant is expected to find out about the structure and content of the University of Birmingham course for which they are seeking exemption prior to making a claim for APL. If they have any queries about the APL process, or their suitability for making an APL claim, they should contact the Admissions Manager with responsibility for APL for advice in the first instance.

c) Applicants for APL must ensure that they apply for admission to the University of Birmingham course for which they are seeking exemption prior to making an application for APL.

d) Applicants for APL should ensure that they make a claim as early as possible and normally no less than one month prior to the commencement of the programme for which exemption is being sought. If their course is being studied part time then this should be up to one month prior to commencement of each year of study.

e) Applicants must complete the APL application form in full and ensure that they provide appropriate and sufficient supporting documentation, plus the required application fee.

f) Applicants are required to provide details of all previous studies they wish the University to consider for APCL (or previous experience for APEL) on their application form. Any previous studies or experience not stated on the APCL or APEL application forms will not be considered, even if they are studies which the applicant has completed at the University of Birmingham.

g) Applicants who are still awaiting the decision of an APL claim at the point of registration are required to pay their full tuition fees. If they are subsequently awarded APL they will receive a refund for the cost of any exempted modules.

#### **6.1.2 Specific to Applicants for APCL**

a) Applicants are expected to provide sufficient evidence of the structure, level and content of their previous studies to enable the University to make a decision on their application for APCL. If applicants are not in possession of this evidence prior to making a claim they are expected to contact the institution where their previous studies were completed in order to obtain this evidence.

b) Applicants are expected to consider if their previous studies are likely to be a match (in terms of both content and level of study) for the University of Birmingham module/s for which exemption is sought prior to making a claim for APCL. Applicants should bear in mind that only those previous studies considered to be an appropriate match are eligible for APCL and

that consequently APCL should not be claimed on the basis of unrelated studies. Likewise it is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that their previous studies were taken at the same level or higher than the Birmingham module/s from which they are seeking exemption. If the applicant is unsure as to the appropriateness of their claim they are advised to contact the Admissions Manager with responsibility for APL and/or the relevant Admissions Tutor for advice.

c) Applicants who intend to make an APCL claim on the basis of previous studies that are more than five years old should consult with the relevant Admissions Tutor to determine whether a claim is still appropriate. If applicants are advised to pursue a claim on the basis of studies that are out-of-date they will be required to complete an additional statement of currency to be submitted with their APCL application form.

### **6.1.3 Specific to Applicants for APEL**

a) Applicants making an APEL claim must understand that it is the outcomes of any learning gained via experience that might be accredited and not just the activity of learning itself. Therefore reflection on their learning will be required as part of the APEL application process.

b) Applicants making an application for APEL must be aware of the demands of submitting such a claim at the outset. They must understand that if they are subsequently advised to produce a portfolio of evidence to support their APEL claim they will primarily be required to work independently to produce this portfolio.

c) Applicants seeking APEL are advised to contact the relevant Tutor in the first instance, so that an initial assessment can be carried out as to whether the applicant is eligible to pursue such a claim and proceed to portfolio.

d) Following an initial assessment, applicants will be expected to follow the appropriate portfolio model, plus complete any other assessments (including interviews) deemed appropriate by the College.

e) Applicants may only start work on an APEL portfolio if this has been agreed with the relevant College, and once they hold and have accepted an unconditional place on the University of Birmingham course for which exemption is sought.

f) Applicants who proceed to portfolio are expected to liaise with their specified APEL Portfolio contact within the College in order to obtain guidance and to agree a deadline for submission.

g) Applicants for APEL must be aware that the production of a portfolio, or completion of any other assessments required by the College in order to evaluate an APEL claim, does not guarantee that credit will be awarded.

## **6.2 Admissions/ASA**

### **6.2.1 General**

a) The Admissions Manager with responsibility for APL will advise applicants regarding APL regulations and the procedures for making a claim for credit. S/he will liaise with the relevant admissions tutor or College APL contact as appropriate.

b) The Admissions Manager will carry out the initial processing of APL applications, including the administration of the application fee.

c) The Admissions Manager will check the APL decision received from the College (including verifying that the module information provided is accurate) and raise any queries as appropriate.

d) The Admissions Manager will notify the applicant of the decision by letter. If the application is successful the letter will state the amount of credit to be awarded, the titles and codes of

Birmingham module/s the applicant is to be exempted from and the total amount of credit required for the completion of the award. The letter will be copied to colleagues in ASA and the Finance Office.

e) ASA will record the APL modules against the student's record in Banner, once the applicant has been Unconditional Accepted, and email the applicant details of their revised tuition fee liability.

If the application is unsuccessful the applicant will be notified of the reasons for the decision in the letter.

### **6.2.2 Specific to APCL**

a) The Admissions Manager will check that evidence of previous studies provided with the application for APCL is sufficient for the application to be considered. If additional evidence or clarification is required s/he will inform the applicant.

b) If the applicant's claim is based on previous studies completed at Birmingham the Admissions Manager will check that there is a record of the applicant's completed modules on the Banner database and print a copy of the record to go with the application form.

c) The Admissions Manager will check that the applicant holds an unconditional offer of admission before confirming the award of credit.

### **6.2.3 Specific to APEL**

a) Following initial assessment, the College will notify the applicant if they will be able to proceed to portfolio.

b) The College will check that the student holds an Unconditional offer (or is to be made an Unconditional offer) prior to informing them that they can proceed to portfolio. If the applicant is not allowed to proceed to portfolio the College will notify them of the reasons for the decision.

c) On receipt of the applicant's APL application form and portfolio, the Admissions Manager will send to the College along with an APEL decision form for completion.

## **6.3 College**

### **6.3.1 General**

a) The relevant Admissions Tutor or College APL contact may be required to respond to initial queries about the applicant's eligibility for APL – either from the Admissions Manager or from applicants themselves.

b) If the applicant's studies are outside normal currency limits the relevant Admissions Tutor or College APL contact will advise the student if they are willing to consider their claim. If so the applicant will be required to complete a statement of currency.

c) The College will ensure that information about course structure is available to potential APL applicants, either via the College web pages or on request.

d) The relevant Admissions Tutor or College APL contact will complete the APL decision form and return it to the Admissions Manager with responsibility for APL. The level and amount of any credit to be awarded, the credit required for the award and the titles and codes of the exempted modules must be stated on the decision form, as must reasons for the decision.

e) In the event of an appeal, the relevant Admissions Tutor or College APL contact will review the APL application in light of the new evidence provided by the applicant.

### **6.3.2 Specific to APCL**

a) In the event that the applicant supplies insufficient evidence for a decision to be made the relevant Admissions Tutor or College APL contact will inform the Admissions Manager. Either they or the Admissions Manager will contact the applicant (or the institution where their previous studies were completed) to obtain additional evidence.

b) The relevant Admissions tutor or College APL contact will evaluate the applicant's previous studies against the learning outcomes of the modules for which they are seeking exemption. Only if they are satisfied that the applicant's prior certificated study is equivalent to that of the learning that might otherwise have been achieved by following the full programme of study will credit be awarded.

### **6.3.3 Specific to APEL**

a) The College will ensure that APEL applicants who are allowed to produce a portfolio receive adequate guidance about what is required before starting work (structure, word length etc.) They will support the applicant (within specified boundaries) with the production of their portfolio.

b) The College will notify APEL applicants and Admissions of any additional assessment tools to be used when assessing APEL claims (e.g. interviews, diagnostic tests, special assignments)

c) The College will notify APEL applicants of any costs(??) in addition to the APEL application fee.

d) The College will ensure that that applicants are fully aware of the demands of an APEL claim prior to application and they understand that completion of a portfolio does not guarantee that exemption will be granted.

e) The College will make an initial assessment to determine if the applicant should proceed to portfolio.

f) On submission of the portfolio the College will determine if the evidence provided demonstrates that applicant has met learning outcomes of the Birmingham modules for which exemption is sought.

## APPENDIX 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

## APPENDIX 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

## APPENDIX C



4642 Credit  
Transfer App form

**APPENDIX D**

**ADMISSIONS OFFICE**

**ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR CERTIFICATED LEARNING (APCL) DECISION FORM**

Once completed please return this form to:

The Admissions Manager (APL)  
Admissions Office  
C Block, Aston Webb Building

**SECTION A: TO BE COMPLETED BY THE ADMISSIONS MANAGER.**

**THE FOLLOWING APPLICANT/STUDENT HAS APPLIED FOR APCL:**

Admissions Serial Number/Registration Number

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Name

--

Qualification Obtained

--

Programme of Study at Birmingham towards which credit is being claimed

--

**MODULES COMPLETED**

Completed at The University of Birmingham

Completed outside the University of Birmingham

Module Code							Module Title	Level	Credits

**SECTION B: TO BE COMPLETED BY THE ADMISSIONS TUTOR.**

Number of credits to be imported into University of Birmingham programme

Level of study of imported credits

Level C  
(Certificate)

Level I  
(Intermediate)

Level H  
(Honours)

Level M  
(Masters)

Number of credits to be completed for award of the University of Birmingham qualification

**EXEMPTED UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM MODULES**

*\* PLEASE NOTE, it is essential that you state the titles and seven digit Banner codes of any exempted Birmingham modules below. That is, exempted module/s from the Birmingham course for which the applicant holds a current application NOT previously completed modules on the basis of which an APCL claim is being made. If you do not provide this information Admissions will be unable to process the decision form. The maximum amount of credit that can be imported via APCL is two-thirds of the qualification.*

Module Code							Module Title

**PLEASE GIVE REASONS FOR YOUR DECISION BELOW**  
(continue on the additional sheet if necessary).

Admissions Tutor's Signature ..... Date .....