

Policy and Procedure for the Accreditation of Accredited Prior Learning (APL) for The Open University Awards (2025-26)

25th July 2025



Senior Leadership Responsibility	Adam Fahey
Policy Author	Matthew Twitchett
Roles Responsible for Reviewing	Executive Director Quality, Teaching and Learning.
Issue date of current version	18-9-24 (25-26 V1)
Date to be reviewed	August 2025
Type of Policy	Public

Significant changes following review of strategy

Page Number or Heading Name	Details of significant change	Changes made by
N/A	No changes as a result of review	Matthew Twitchett

This policy has been approved by The Open University through its Institutional and administrative revalidation complete in June 2023.

This policy is available in an alternative format on request including a word version.

Equality Impact Assessment

The aim of an equality impact assessment (EIA) is to consider the equality implications of any new or amended policy, procedure, practice, project, function on different groups of staff, students and visitors to the college. This EIA tool provides a simple framework that helps evaluate whether the change may inadvertently disadvantage protected characteristics and identify ways to proactively advance and promote equality.

You will need to consider each of the equations and provide information as to consideration and any changes made in relation to Equality, diversity and inclusion.

Date EIA completed.	25-7-25
Name of person responsible for completing the EIA	Matthew Twitchett
Role of person responsible for completing the EIA	Executive Director of Quality, Teaching and Learning
Who is affected by the policy / decision / change	Students and Staff employed
What's the reason for the new policy / change in policy, practice, process etc.	This is a yearly review and update required by awarding organisations

You will need to consider whether it's possible that the proposed new policy / change in policy /procedure/practice etc could discriminate or unfairly discriminate or disadvantage people. You should consider:

Who gets to participate	Who does not, or who now does not due to the changes proposed / made.
Who is at an advantage	Who is at a disadvantage, and again has this changed?
Who will benefit	Who will not benefit (or who did and now doesn't due to the changes proposed in policy
Who can access the policy	Who cannot, or now cannot.

Protected Characteristic	What degree of impact does the change have (score 1-5 with one being lowest impact and 5 being the highest)	What is a potential positive, neutral or negative impact? Include what you have considered. Are there any barriers?	What action will be taken to address any negative impact or remove any potential barriers identified? Note if we are not able to resolve anything identified.	Date by when and whom will this action be taken.
Age	1	None identified		
Disability	1	Some students may need support in understanding the policy and help in applying for APL. This will be provided by the student support teams in the College.	Students with an identified disability can seek support from a Carer/Parent or Guardian and the College applying for APL	As and when required
Gender (Sex)	1	None identified		
Gender Reassignment	1	None identified		
Marriage or Civil Partnership	1	None identified		
Pregnancy / Maternity	1	None identified		
Race	1	None identified		
Religion or Religious Belief	1	None identified		
Sexual Orientation	1	None identified		
Any other element that needs to be considered.	1	None identified		

Note:

1. The terms stated under protected characteristics are the terminology used in the Equality Act 2010.
2. As part of the policy approval process Executive Board will consider the EIA assessment and any potential barriers which we may not be able to overcome and whether the action proposed will mitigate sufficiently within legislation or whether we decide to not implement the new policy if the risk are significant. If the policy is approved the EIA is also approved.

South Essex College Group

Policy – Terminology

1. Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)

- 1.1 The process whereby previous learning that has occurred in any of a range of contexts (including school, college or university or through life and work experiences) is assessed by the College and recognised through the award of credit and/or exemption from a module or modules on a taught course of the College.
- 1.2 Relevant learning is either assessed on an individual basis or recognised as part of an approved exemption for those who hold a particular professional award or who have the requisite certified learning undertaken at another Higher Education Institution.
- 1.3 APL can be split further into the following types:

- **Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL)**

Prior certificated learning (PCL) involves prior learning (such as professional development awards or employment-based awards), at Higher Education (HE) level that has not been previously recognised via the award of credits or qualification(s) on the UK HE Qualifications Framework. Individual applicants may apply for exemptions from modules on taught courses at the College based on evidence of learning at HE level that has been formally assessed and certificated. The College expects that such applications will only be granted following a satisfactory mapping of learning outcomes for the modules for which exemption is sought and course aims against such prior certificated learning. This might require an applicant to provide a portfolio of evidence.

- **Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)**

Prior experiential learning involves prior learning gained through experience which can be assessed by academic staff of the College and formally recognised with the award of credit (or exemption from modules) towards a programme of study.

Applicants may apply for exemptions from modules on taught courses at the College based on evidence of learning arising from professional experience and related study or training which may not be formally certificated. This will require an applicant to provide a portfolio of evidence.

- 1.4 Credit Transfer is a system that allows credit awarded by one higher education body to be recognised and included towards the requirements for a programme at another higher education provider; or that allows credit gained on a particular programme to contribute towards the requirements of a different one.

2. Applications for APL (APCL & APEL)

- 2.1 An application must be made before the student commences study on the course into which they are seeking to transfer prior learning. Applications must consist of a written request, stating the College award in respect of which type of APL the student seeks, and documentary evidence of the learning, in the form of transcripts, certificates or other suitable evidence in the case of experiential learning.
- 2.2 A decision as to whether APL can be approved will depend both on the specific requirements and learning outcomes of each course and the details of each individual application.
- 2.3 Applicants should note that the award of specific credit via APL towards their intended course of study at the College may not necessarily directly reflect the value/level of the credit assigned to their current/previous qualification, i.e. it may be less.
- 2.4 Exemptions will not be considered for pre-requisites in certain disciplines where professional and statutory regulating body requirements apply (e.g., Health Professions Council, Institution of Engineering and Technology, Law Society).
- 2.5 Exemptions will only be considered for full courses / modules of study; not elements therein.
- 2.6 An applicant can present evidence gained at another external institution for APCL or APEL. The assessor will review this evidence as any other evidence supplied when mapped against the learning outcomes.

- 2.7 The applicant can provide evidence of a higher level which the assessor will consider as part of the APCL review process
- 2.8 The applicant will not receive a grade as a result of the review of evidence provided by the applicant. The application will either be approved or rejected accordingly

3. Applications for Credit transfer

- 3.1 If an applicant wishes to apply for credit transfer. The applicant's request must be made in writing, enclosing:
- (1) A certified copy of certificate(s) or parchment(s);
 - (2) A syllabus;
 - (3) A full record of academic results achieved;
 - (4) A completed application form and the request must include an academic reference from the institution which awarded the qualification.
- 3.2 Credit transfer cannot be used if the applicant has already applied for any other form of APL

4. 'Shelf-Life' of Learning

- 4.1 The time elapsed since the student undertook learning that forms the basis of an APL application is a relevant factor to be considered in each case. Normally, learning should have taken place within the five years prior to the enrolment date for the intended course of study.

5. Professional Taught Degrees a. Volume of APL in taught awards

- 5.1 It is important to note that the acceptance of APL towards The Open University taught awards is an admissions decision based on each individual case. The maximum volume of APL outlined below is provided for the guidance of applicants and departments but does not constitute an entitlement.
- 5.2 For specified teaching qualifications the maximum credit value permitted to be imported is one half of the volume of credit that is required to be studied for

the named University award.

5.3 Summary of requirements for admission via APL:

Award	Minimum credits which may be imported	Maximum credits which may be imported	Credits to be taken on Open University validated courses	Total credits for award
Professional Graduate Certificate in Education	60	60	60	120
Certificate of Education	60	60	60	120

Note: The Rules of Assessment specify the particular requirements for volume of credit at specific levels within each University award.

5.4 Calculation of degree results. In calculating the final degree result of a student who makes a successful APL application, any courses or modules from which the student is exempted on the basis of APL will be excluded from calculated averages or other methods used to determine the student's final degree result.

5.5 The transcript for a student who makes a successful APL application will indicate the elements of the course from which the student was exempted.

6. Procedure and monitoring of APL process

6.1 Applicants wishing to be awarded credit for APL will be advised in the first instance to discuss the matter with the HE Admissions Team, who will ensure that the applicant is given access to the Programme Specification, including the course structure and the rules of assessment and is informed of the College's APL policy and procedure.

6.2 The HE Admissions Team will verify that the application is in accordance with the policy. If it is not in accordance, the HE Admissions Office Team

will inform the student of the discrepancy in writing. Otherwise, the application will be passed to the Admissions Selector for the course concerned who will act as the APL assessor, or to the appropriate APL Panel where these exist.

6.3 The applicant will submit evidence of previous learning in the form of award certificate(s), transcript(s) or, in the case of experiential learning, a portfolio of evidence. This will be passed to the APL assessor / approval panel. The APL assessor / approval panel may request additional information, e.g. details of a course syllabus and/or the assessment methods.

6.4 The APL assessor / approval panel carries out the following actions to determine whether the student is eligible for APL towards an Open University taught award, documenting each action on the attached pro forma. They will:

- decide whether, in the case of APL, further evidence in a format specified by the admitting department is required, in addition to the student's initial submission, and inform the student if such evidence is required
- assess the evidence against the requirements and learning outcomes of the relevant degree course and the available constituent modules. They may consult with other members of academic staff as appropriate. Consideration should be given to:
 - subject content and knowledge
 - volume of learning
 - level of learning
 - evidence of achievement
 - currency of the student's knowledge in relation to the requirements of the course
 - restrictions imposed by Professional or Statutory Bodies, if applicable.
 - whether the student is required to present themselves for interview by the APL assessor or another appropriate member of staff, and make the necessary arrangements

- 6.5 If the AP(L assessor / approval panel decide that the student's application for APL is unsuccessful, this will be documented on the pro forma and a copy forwarded to the HE Admissions Team.
- 6.6 If the APL assessor / approval panel decide that the student's application for APL can be accepted they will make a recommendation to the appropriate Head of Department that a specific amount of credit (e.g. exemption from individual module(s) or exemption from a year of study) towards the relevant degree course should be awarded. The Head of Department will inform the APL assessor / approval panel of his/her decision. A copy of the pro forma will be forwarded to the HE Admissions Team.
- 6.7 Head of Department may delegate authority to approve a recommendation from an APL assessor / approval panel that a specific amount of credit should be awarded towards the relevant course.
- 6.8 The HE Admissions Team will inform the student of the decision, in writing.
- 6.9 Unsuccessful applicants have right to appeal or complain as stated in the admissions application appeals & complaints Policy.
- 6.10 Applicants do not have a right of appeal against the academic judgment of the College. However, if following receipt of feedback (as detailed above), an applicant feels that an error has occurred, they have the right to request a formal review of the selection decision and should refer to Higher Education Admissions Application Feedback, Appeals & Complaints Policy
- 6.11 APL updates and monitoring will be provided to the Quality Executive Board which meets fortnightly
- 6.12 This process and procedure will be reviewed on an annual basis and presented to HE Curriculum and Quality Committee.

End of Policy

