

# Policy and procedure for the Assessment of Prior (Experiential) Learning (AP(E)L)

*[For the purposes of the processes described in this document, in Henley Business School the Programme Area Director will be fulfilling the functions of the School Director of Teaching and Learning.]*

## Terms of Reference

- 1 This document sets out the policy in relation to the transfer of credit, or granting of exemption from credit towards a University award.<sup>1</sup>
- 2 It also outlines the procedures to be followed for an individual student to seek to transfer credit or be granted exemption from credit, detailing the separate processes to be used in respect of:
  - Applications for assessment of prior learning (APL)
  - Applications for assessment of prior experiential learning (APEL)
- 3 The process for APL can also be used where a group of students from another institution transfer to the University.
- 4 Where it is expected on a regular basis that groups of students from the same institution will wish to transfer credit it is advisable to put in place an agreement with the originating institution to facilitate the movement of students and to ensure greater control over quality and standards. The approval process for such agreements is given in the *Policy and procedures for the design, approval and quality management of articulation and progression arrangements*.

## Definitions

- 5 Assessment of Prior (Experiential) Learning is the process whereby students can be given credit within their chosen programme of study for previous learning.
- 6 'Prior Learning' is previous study with an educational organisation which has been formally assessed and certified.
- 7 'Prior Experiential Learning' is non-certified acquisition of relevant skills and knowledge, gained through relevant experience, which is capable of being assessed and, where necessary, assigned a mark.

## Overarching policy

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<sup>1</sup> This document was approved by the University Board for Teaching and Learning at its meeting on 15 October 2008.

- 8 Appropriate reference to applications for assessment of prior (experiential) learning will be included in prospectuses and handbooks.
- 9 Normally a maximum of two-thirds of an undergraduate programme and one third of a postgraduate programme can be gained through APL or APEL.
- 10 Schools shall determine the maximum period of time that can elapse before APL and APEL cannot be given.
- 11 Ideally students should apply before entry to be considered for APL or APEL and not later than the fifth week of term. There should be the normal right to appeal.
- 12 It is at the discretion of the University and Schools to determine if APL or APEL are appropriate.
- 13 Where a student applies for APL or APEL in relation to particular modules but still wishes to receive teaching amounting to 120 or 180 credits for an undergraduate or taught postgraduate year respectively, this will be allowed. The student's classification will be based on:
  - all 'core' modules; and
  - the highest scoring optional modules
- 14 To a total of 120 or 180 credits (as appropriate) for that year. APL and APEL modules would be included in either (a) or in (b).

## Assessment of Prior Learning (APL)

- 15 Acceptance of prior learning for credit purposes is at the discretion of the University and its Schools, subject to the operation of a procedure for appeals set out at paragraph 26 below.

### Exemption and credit transfer

- 16 Certificated credit obtained from another institution can be recognised in one of two ways:
  - Exemption from individual modules within or from the whole of Part 1 of an undergraduate programme
  - Transfer of credit and marks in substitution for specific modules within an undergraduate or postgraduate programme
- 17 Exemption from individual modules is not normally permissible where the module contributes to the classification of an undergraduate qualification. Exemption is therefore likely to be restricted to Part 1 of an undergraduate programme.
- 18 Credit transfer applies in all cases where the module replaced contributes to undergraduate and postgraduate classification.

### Applications for individual exemption or credit transfer

- 19 Individual applications for exemption from modules or for transfer of credit in substitution for equivalent modules in programmes offered at the University of Reading should if possible, be dealt with prior to entry. Such applications should not normally be accepted beyond the end of the fifth week of the term in which the student entered.

- 20 The application form provided (Annex 1) should be used. Applicants applying directly through UCAS for entry to Part 2 of an Undergraduate degree programme do not need to complete Section A.
- 21 Applications should be supported by the relevant School Director for Teaching and Learning, or by a person nominated by the School Director. They should be submitted through the Sub-Dean to the Faculty Director of Teaching and Learning or his or her nominee for approval.
- 22 Applications should clarify whether they are for exemption (usually restricted to Part 1 undergraduate programmes) or credit transfer. In either case the proposal should make clear which modules (and their credit size) are to be exempted or to be replaced by transferred credit.
- 23 In all cases original or authenticated evidence should be submitted of the qualifications from which the proposed exemption or credit transfer arises.
- 24 In respect of credit transfer, original or authenticated evidence of the mark or marks to be transferred should also be included.
- 25 Wherever possible, the University of Reading modules assigned to students for exemption or for credit transfer should be mapped as closely as possible to individual modules with a corresponding credit weighting 'received' from an external institution (ie the grouping of 'received' modules together so providing a single mark for a complete Part should be avoided, if possible).
- 26 Once Faculty approval has been given the Faculty Director for Teaching and Learning or his/her nominee will notify the candidate, the School Director of Teaching and Learning and the relevant Admissions Tutor/Programme Director.
- 27 Applications may be rejected at any stage but the applicant will have the right of a single appeal to the next highest responsible authority, as follows:
  - Rejection by admissions tutor/programme director: to the School Director of Teaching and Learning
  - Rejection by the School Director of Teaching and Learning: to the Faculty Director of Teaching and Learning
  - Rejection by the Faculty Director of Teaching and Learning: to the Chair of the University Board for Teaching and Learning

#### **Time limit on acceptability of prior certificated learning**

- 28 It shall be for each School to determine for itself the period of time beyond which any prior certificated learning will not be acceptable for exemption or credit transfer.

#### **Acceptability of completed qualification and extent of credit**

- 29 It shall be in the discretion of the relevant School to recommend that credit obtained in a completed qualification (whether from this University or from another institution) should be used for exemption or transfer.
- 30 With the exception of past students of this University who hold a certificate or diploma in a subject and who wish to return to obtain a degree level qualification in that subject no credit transfer will normally be approved:
  - in respect of Higher (H) level undergraduate study
  - for more than 60 credits towards a Master's degree, 40 credits towards a Postgraduate Diploma and 20 credits towards a Postgraduate Certificate

- 31 In respect of exemptions, the student's record and transcript should indicate the amount of credit from which exemption has been granted for prior certification.
- 32 In respect of transferred credit, appropriate modules should be credited and the student's record and transcript should indicate these modules as transferred, and display the mark allocated by this University.

### **Allocation of marks to credit transferred**

- 33 Schools shall use their best endeavours to determine an appropriate mark in respect of credit transferred from other marking systems. A handbook of mark conversion schemes used within the University will be available for consultation in Faculty Offices.

## **Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)**

- 34 The assessment of prior experiential learning (APEL) is at the discretion of the University and the Schools.
- 35 The assessment of suitability for admission to the start of an undergraduate programme in respect of experience substituting in part or in whole for entry qualifications is normally outside the process, unless there is a specific module within a programme that is designed to assess prior experiential learning for subsequent progression and for which credit is provided.
- 36 At postgraduate level, APEL should be applied whether or not the applicant is seeking to obtain credit within a programme or solely to gain entry to that programme. The assessment of suitability for admission to a programme is otherwise at the discretion of the relevant School, and in respect of undergraduate admissions is subject to the University's Regulations for Matriculation and the General Entrance Requirements.
- 37 Where APEL is used as a method for assigning credit within a programme there must be one or more pre-existing or specially created modules within the programme to which credit for prior experiential learning can be assigned. In APEL there is thus no provision for exemption from modules, as there is in the Assessment of Prior Learning (APL). The process for considering applications for credit is set out at paragraphs 44–47 below. This process should be used appropriately in respect of applications which are solely for admission.
- 38 The evidence for acceptance of prior experiential learning must demonstrate that it meets the coverage of the relevant modules in terms of the outline content and assessable learning outcomes of the module, and is appropriate to the level of the module (ie Certificate, Intermediate, Higher or Masters).
- 39 APEL will normally be limited to a maximum of one third of a programme of study.
- 40 Although advice and guidance to a potential or actual student about APEL can be given without charge, the formal process of assessment will absorb University resources and will therefore be liable to a fee of up to 50% of the fee for the relevant module or modules. The fee shall be determined by the relevant School.
- 41 An appropriate method of assessment will need to be determined for each APEL application. If the assessment method in a pre-existing module is not appropriate, then a different method will be necessary and can include one or more of: the submission of a portfolio; essays; a written examination. Provision exists for a pre-

existing module to vary its usual form of assessment but in any such case this must be approved by the School Director of Teaching and Learning.

- 42 For each module assessed by means of APEL, either
- a percentage mark should be assigned where the module is used for classification or progression purposes

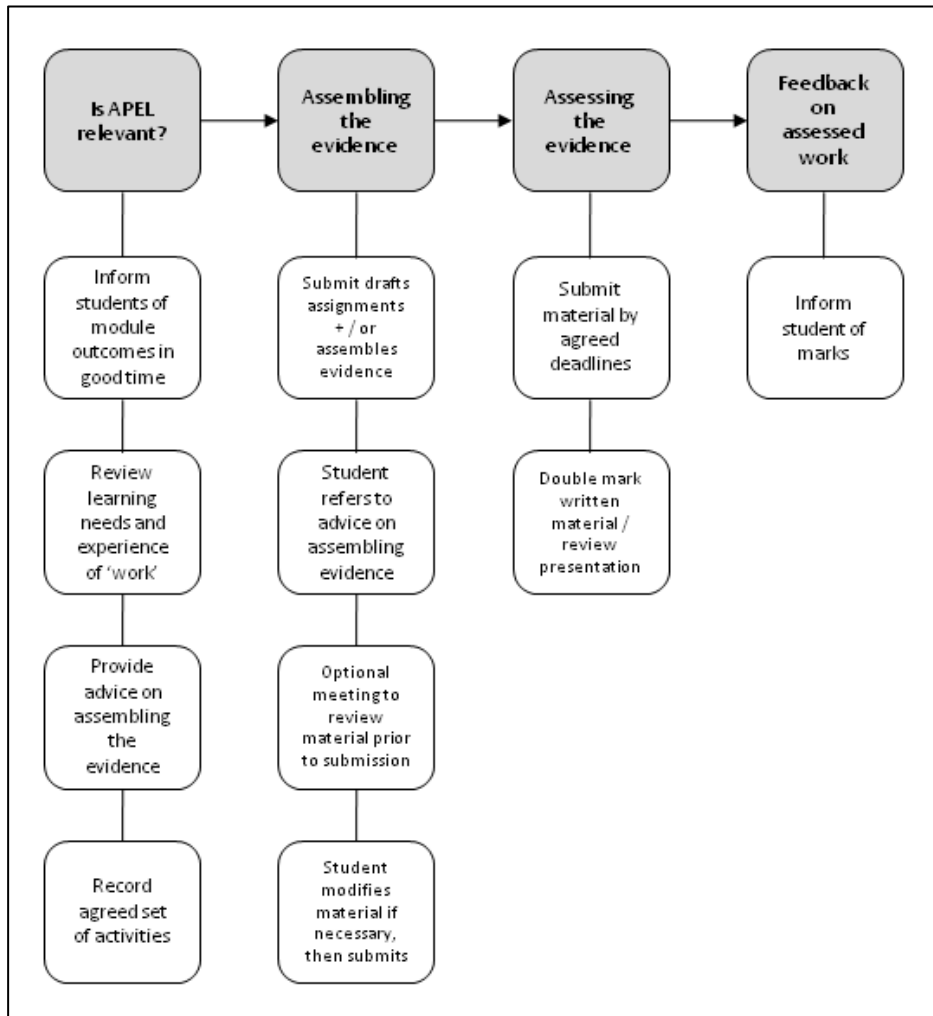
**or**

  - a pass/fail decision should be recorded where a percentage mark is not needed or appropriate.
- 43 The process of assessment and, where necessary, re-assessment, will be the same as that used for the programme as a whole, including the use of External Examiners.

### **Working with students in the APEL process**

- 44 The student considers the learning they have achieved in the past, as well as their present learning needs in the light of the learning outcomes of the programme they intend to study and of the modules within it. They conclude that they can realistically meet some or all of the learning outcomes using APEL. Sufficient time should be given for this. Ideally students should be informed about APEL at interview. Where a School/department/Faculty provides special information packs for mature students, or induction events, again these would be appropriate means of alerting students.
- 45 Advice and guidance at pre-entry stage is crucial and so each School should have an individual with direct responsibility for APEL. Following the interview an APEL co-ordinator (who is likely to be the Programme Director or the module convener) is assigned to the applicant to offer advice and tutorial support throughout the process.

- 46 The student assembles the evidence. The evidence is then submitted and assessed. The evidence is assessed by two internal markers [one of whom would not be the co-ordinator] and external examiners will be involved as appropriate. The normal process of assessment and re- assessment will apply.
- 47 Applications to undertake the APEL process may be rejected at any stage but the applicant will have the right of appeal to the next highest responsible authority



## Annex 1

# Recommendation for Approval of an Individual Application for Exemption or Credit Transfer in respect of Prior Learning (APL)

## Section A

To be completed by applicant (unless applying directly for Part 2 through UCAS):

<b>Name</b>	
<b>Address</b>	
<b>Programme applied for</b>	

I request exemption or credit transfer in respect of relevant modules in the above programme.

I enclose original or authenticated copies of transcripts or other evidence of modules taken at another institution and, where available, of the marks obtained in these modules.

<b>Signature</b>	
<b>Date</b>	

Please forward this form and attachments to the Admissions Tutor, Programme Director or Faculty Admissions Office as directed.

## Section B

**To be completed by Admissions Tutor or Programme Director as appropriate**

I recommend that the applicant named above be granted exemption and/or credit transfer in response of the following Part of or modules within the programme applied for on the grounds of the attached evidence of prior learning (tick as appropriate):

<b>Exemption from the whole of Part 1 of the undergraduate programme(s)</b>	
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<b>Exemption from the following modules in Part 1 of the undergraduate programme(s)</b>	
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University of Reading exempted modules		External modules offered for APL	
Code	Title	Code	Title

<b>Credit transfer in respect of the following Part 2 or postgraduate modules</b>	
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University of Reading modules		External modules offered for APL		Mark obtained
Code	Title	Code	Title	

<b>Signature</b>	
<b>Name</b>	
<b>Date</b>	

## Section C

**For completion by the School Director of Teaching and Learning**

Complete as appropriate:

<b>I support the above recommendation and forward it to the Faculty Director of Teaching and Learning</b>	
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<b>I do not support the above recommendation on the grounds below, and I am returning it to the admissions tutor/programme director to notify the applicant:</b>	
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<b>Signature</b>	
<b>Name</b>	
<b>Date</b>	

Please return to the admissions tutor/programme director or forward to the Sub-Dean for the attention of the Faculty Director of Teaching and Learning as appropriate

## Section D

**For completion by the Faculty Director of Teaching and Learning**

Complete as appropriate:

<b>I approve the above recommendation</b>	
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<b>I do not approve the above recommendation on the grounds below</b>	
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<b>Signature</b>	
<b>Name</b>	
<b>Date</b>	

<b>Date of notification to applicant, School Director of Teaching and Learning/admissions tutor/programme director</b>	
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## Section E

**To be completed once the approval of the Faculty and University Boards for Teaching and Learning has been obtained**

To: The Chair of the Board of Studies for .....  
The School Director of Teaching and Learning  
The Director of the International and Study Abroad Office (if relevant)  
The above proposal has been approved (subject to the following changes)\*

\*Delete as appropriate

<b>Signature</b>	
<b>Name</b>	
<b>Date</b>	