



## University Code of Practice Accreditation of Prior Certificated and Experiential Learning

**Document Reference:** Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)  
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**Originator:** Learning and Teaching Enhancement

**Application to collaborative provision:** **Mandatory**

**Responsibilities:** Heads of Schools - Deans  
Admissions Office – Partners  
Graduate School

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**Applications for exemptions to:** ULTC  
**Report Exemptions to:** ULTC

**Further information:** UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B6: Assessment of students and the recognition of prior learning (QAA: Oct, 2013); Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education (QAA: Oct, 2013)

### Summary/ Description:

This document sets out revised guidance and expectations for staff determining applications for the accreditation of prior learning, both certificated (APCL) and experiential (APEL). It applies to applicants, to the University and to registered students.

**Version 2 09 (April 18)** makes the following changes:

- Replaces Learning Enhancement and Academic Practice (LEAP) with Learning and Teaching Enhancement (LTE)

**Version 2 08 (April 16)** makes the following changes:

- Updates the APL maxima table (para. 13) to include the Professional Doctorate.
- Replaces Head of Department and departments with Head of School and schools

**Version 2 07 (Aug 15)** makes the following changes:

- Updated to reflect change to LEAP and references to UK Quality Code

**Version 2 06 (Sep 12)** makes the following changes:

- Mandatory requirement that there is one locus of decision-making for APL claims in instances where the same programme is delivered by multiple partners (para. 6)
- Updates para.14 to include taught masters degrees and research masters degrees
- Explanatory note added to clarify that APL must not be a substitute for, or undermine, the decisions of Boards of Examiners (para. 15)

- Makes clear that APL can only be granted for modules for which credits have been awarded (para. 16)
- Explanatory note added to make clear that additional information may be added to annexe 1 and that the Faculty of Health and Social Care is permitted to use its own version of annexe 1 (para. 26)
- Explanatory note added to make clear that professional body requirements may override the University's 'currency' upper threshold (para. 32)
- Makes clear that partners provide an overview of APL procedures in the Partner Quality Enhancement Report (para. 39)

**Version 2 05 (Feb 11)** incorporates the following changes:

- Updates the code with reference to the new committee structure

**Version 2 02** (Sep 06) is the result of an extensive review by a working group reporting to QSC which also involved recommendations from Academic Board and the Entry Qualifications Group. It includes a form – annexe 1- which must be completed as a means to record APL decisions.

**Version 2 03** (Oct 06):

- clarifies the right of appeal (para. 28)
- reduces the amount of permitted APL for the New Route PhD to reflect the reduction in the number of research training credits for the degree introduced Sep 07 (QH:B11)

This university Code has been written in accordance with the approach approved by ULTC to enhance clarity involving the following terminology:

**must** = mandatory      **should** = advisable      **may** = desirable.

Where these terms are used they are emphasised in bold.

**This document is available in alternative formats from  
Learning and Teaching Enhancement**

# University Code of Practice Accreditation of Prior Learning

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## INTRODUCTION

1. This Code is informed by the Guidelines on APL published by the QAA in September 2004 and is consistent with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B6: Assessment of students and the recognition of prior learning (QAA: Oct, 2013) and Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education (QAA: Oct, 2013).
2. The following sets out the University's expectations relating to the accreditation of prior learning (APL), both certificated and experiential (APCL and APEL), and provides guidance to staff responsible for making decisions in individual cases. The document must be read subject to the University Programmes Regulations applicable to the award.

## AUTHORITY

3. University Learning and Teaching Committee is the final arbiter of the interpretation and application of this code of practice.

## APPLICATION TO COLLABORATIVE PROVISION

4. The University defines 'collaborative provision' as provision delivered in whole, or in part, by the staff of a partner or organisation (whether FE institution or other, whether publicly funded or not) irrespective of the location or mode of delivery, and leading to credit or an award of the University of Hull.
5. Partners **must** have in place procedures for determining applications for APL equivalent to those set out in this Code, and which reflect the University's minimum

expectations as to the amount of learning which may be accredited towards a given award of the University.

6. Where the partner has been granted admissions devolution by the University the partner is authorised to make the final decision for APL applications relating to any programme which the partner has University approval to deliver. Where devolution has not been granted the final decision **must** be made by the relevant University academic school. In instances where the same programme is delivered by multiple partners there **must** be one locus of decision-making for APL claims regardless of the number of partners delivering that programme.

## TERMINOLOGY

7. The University recognises APL in two situations:
  - (a) accreditation which will permit entry only at the beginning of a programme - referred to as 'matriculation' or 'general credit'
  - (b) accreditation which permits entry to a programme at a later stage or with exemption from some aspects of the programme on the basis that the APL demonstrates achievement of some of the intended learning outcomes of the programme - referred to as 'specific credit'. Specific credit is also referred to as 'classifiable credit' where it contributes to the final classification of an Honours degree. Only credit earned on modules/programmes leading to credit or an award of the University of Hull is classifiable. This code deals with specific credit. General credit for entry purposes is considered by the admissions tutor and where a candidate does not meet the approved entry requirements a case is made to the dean for approval.

The scope of admissions regulations notwithstanding this Code of Practice refers solely to the form of APL referred to in Section 7(b) above.

8. Accreditation of prior learning is based on the identification and recognition of equivalence between an applicant's prior learning and the provision offered at the University of Hull. The University recognises the following as appropriate for accreditation as prior learning:
  - Credits awarded by the University of Hull through a programme leading to a University of Hull award or individual University modules (whether delivered by University staff or staff of a partner)
  - Credits or accredited learning awarded by a recognised UK or overseas higher education institution
  - Other certificated learning (eg from a professional body)
  - Experiential (non-certificated) learning.

## PROGRESSION AGREEMENTS

9. This code applies to the consideration of applications for APL by individuals - whether applicants to the University, or current students. It does not apply to applicants seeking APL through a 'progression agreement' between the University and another body - whether UK-based or based overseas, although the principles applied to progression agreements are comparable to those for individual APL applications. A progression agreement is valid only if it has been approved in accordance with the relevant code of practice. Opportunities for progression agreements **must** be discussed with the Academic Partnerships Office at the earliest time. The University's approved progression agreements are published in the University's Register of Collaborative Provision.

## **APL LIMITATIONS**

10. University Programmes Regulations define the limitations which the University deems appropriate for consideration of APL applications. These limitations apply to all University of Hull awards irrespective of whether the provision leading to the award is delivered by the University or collaboratively by a partner. The following details the limitations.

### **Whole modules**

11. Accreditation **must** only be granted in respect of whole modules.

### **Reuse of credit**

12. Credit which has previously been used - or 'cashed in' - as part of an award (whether awarded by the University of Hull or another degree awarding body) **must not** be used towards a further award unless the first award forms a recognised stage of the second award. For example, credits comprising a Certificate in HE (level 4) may not be used towards a second Certificate, but may be used towards a Diploma or Honours degree. A Foundation Degree can be used to permit entry to the Honours stage of an Honours degree.

## APL Maxima

13. The University limits the amount of an award which may be achieved through APL and requires that candidates must at least complete the final stage of the award sought (with limited exceptions). The following maxima apply:

Award	Credits for award	APL Permitted	Final stage
University Certificates & Diplomas ('minor awards')	60	0	(single stage)
Certificates in HE	120	60	(single stage)
Diploma in HE	240	120	Diploma stage
Foundation Degree	240	180	Final 60 credits of Intermediate stage
Honours degree	360/480	240/360	Honours stage
PG Certificate/Graduate Certificate	60	0	(single stage)
PG Diploma/Graduate Diploma	120	60	Diploma
PGT Masters	180	120	Masters
Research Masters	180	90	Masters
MRes	180	60	Thesis
Masters/PhD by thesis	40/60 PGTS (+ thesis)	20/40 (PGTS only)	Thesis
Professional Doctorate	80-180 (+ thesis)	40-90 (up to 50%)	Thesis

14. University regulations provide that for Honours degrees, taught masters degrees, and research masters degrees, degree classification must be based on credit awarded only by the University (defined as including credit awarded through a programme delivered by a partner but leading to a University of Hull award).
15. APL **must not** be granted towards an award in the same subject where the applicant has failed the programme of study leading to the award through which the prior learning was achieved. For example, an applicant who achieves 160 credits but fails the Diploma stage of their degree **must not** be granted APL for those 160 credits towards the same degree (or a Diploma or Ordinary degree). If the student had withdrawn at this stage (before submitting all of their assessments and before the meeting of the Board of Examiners) the credits may be considered for accreditation toward that same programme of study at a later date.

### Explanatory note

*\* The University has a rule that the life of credits is 9 years although the Admissions Tutor may, at their discretion, reject an APL application if the experience or study used in the APL application is less than 9 years old but judged to be insufficiently current to enable the student to undertake, or re-start, their desired programme.*

*\*APL must not be a substitute for, or undermine, the decisions of Boards of Examiners. Checks should be made on SIS or on previous minutes of Boards of Examiners to ensure this is upheld in an instance where a student withdraws from, and returns to, the same programme.*

16. APL can only be granted for modules for which credits have been awarded.

## **DECISION MAKING PROCESS**

### **Decision making authority**

17. The decision whether to accredit prior learning is a matter of academic judgement to be made within University regulations and the requirements of this code of practice. The award of University of Hull credit is delegated to faculty deans by Senate for the purposes of practical implementation of APL. For Graduate School PGTS modules the Research Degrees Committee is responsible for determining applications.
18. Deans are responsible for identifying staff who will make decisions in individual cases. Each decision **must** be considered by no fewer than two members of staff, one of whom **should** be the school Admissions Tutor. Both **should** have received such staff development as deemed appropriate by the dean and the Head of the Admissions Office. Particular attention should be paid to the complexity of advising on, and evaluating, applications for APEL. Schools may wish to establish an APL Board or equivalent to make decisions.
19. Deans **should** inform the Head of the Admissions Office of staff responsible for APL decisions within the faculty.
20. For programmes involving more than one school, the relevant dean (or deans) **must** agree the allocation of responsibilities so that it is clear to both staff and applicants how applications will be processed and who has authority to decide.

### **Applications**

21. Applications, whether by applicants to the University or current students, **must** be made to the school (or schools) responsible for the programme of study to which the APL application relates. An application **should** be acknowledged in writing within three working days, and include guidance to the applicant on how long the school expects to take to determine the application. Applications for Graduate School PGTS modules must be made to the Graduate School.
22. Applications for APL can be made retrospectively by current students although applications cannot be made after a student has already taken the first piece of summative assessment in the module(s) from which s/he wishes to be exempted by APL. Consideration of the merits of a retrospective application **should** include taking into account the applicant's attendance and submission record on the programme of study to date.
23. For applicants to the University to whom the UCAS system applies - any applicant for a full-time degree programme for September start (other than Nursing) - the APL application **must** be submitted directly to the relevant school for consideration alongside the UCAS application. Any applications for APL received directly by the University Admissions Office **must** be forwarded to the relevant academic school.
24. Schools **must** determine whether there are periods of the year during which they will not accept applications for APL. Where this is the case the school **must** inform the University Admissions Office.

25. Where an application is rejected the applicant **must** be informed of the reasons for rejection, and **should** be provided with guidance on alternative options.

### Communication of decisions

26. Where a school is satisfied that it is able to make a decision on an application for APL, the school **must** inform the University Admissions Office of the decision regarding undergraduate and taught postgraduate cases or the Graduate School regarding research degree/PGTS cases) using Annexe 1 of this code. The Admissions Office/Graduate School is responsible for informing the applicant in writing of the decision - whether acceptance or rejection. Schools **must not** formally communicate the decision to the applicant. All decisions must be notified to Student Services Directorate.

#### Explanatory note

- *Additional information may be appended to annexe 1 in consideration of an APL claim as deemed necessary by those judging the application but sections of annexe 1 may not be removed*
- *The Faculty of Health Sciences may continue to use its own variant of annexe 1 on these grounds*

27. Only credit earned on a University of Hull award is classifiable. Where a decision to accept an application involves accreditation of classifiable credit, the school **must** attach a copy of the applicant's official transcript recording the marks awarded for the modules relevant to degree classification. The original mark awarded for classifiable credit **must** be used in determining the applicant's degree classification.

### Complaints and appeals

28. A registered student who wishes to challenge a decision relating to his/her APL application **must** do so by lodging an appeal to the Secretary of the Student Progress Committee (taught provision) or Research Degrees Committee (research provision) within 10 working days of being notified in writing of the decision. The appeal will be considered in accordance with the University Regulations on Academic Appeals and Queries.

### Registration

29. Student Services Directorate **must** be informed, through the standard registration process, of students joining the university as a result of an APL application. The School **must** enter the information on the SIS detailing the applicant's module exemptions, and the module mark for accredited modules if the credit has been awarded by the University of Hull and is classifiable (see para. 7 above).

### EVIDENCE REQUIRED

30. In order to accredit prior learning, the school **must** assure itself that the learning derived from the prior certificated study and/or experience is equivalent to that of the learning that might have been achieved by following the exempted element(s) of the programme of study to which the applicant seeks admission. What constitutes equivalence is a matter of academic judgement.
31. Applicants are responsible for providing the school with all relevant evidence to support the application for APL, whether certificated or experiential.

32. Evidence **must** accord with the following principles:

- **Acceptability:** there must be an appropriate match (in terms of breadth and depth of content) between the evidenced learning and the modules against which credit is being claimed. This is a matter of academic judgement.
- **Sufficiency:** the credit achieved through APCL, or the extent of experiential learning, must be sufficient to support the volume of credit claimed at the correct level. All learning outcomes on the module applied for must be demonstrated in the application. This is a matter of academic judgement.
- **Authenticated:** through objective evidence from a source other than the applicant - such as an official transcript or programme specification
- **Currency:** the prior learning **must** be no greater than nine years old, and within that timescale, sufficiently contemporaneous to be still relevant to the subject.

Explanatory note

\* *Currency: The University limit is an **upper** threshold and it is permissible for professional body requirements to override this.*

### APCL

33. In determining an application for APCL, the school **should** consider the official transcript (and diploma supplement if available) produced by the HEI or other issuing body which awarded the credit. There may be instances where the applicant has not yet completed modules to be reported on a transcript, (i.e. the applicant has completed one or more certificated modules but has not completed the certificated stage). In these cases academic references from the previous university will be the main form of evidence, and any offer would be conditional.

34. In addition the school **should** consider:

- An academic reference from an appropriate person at the relevant HEI.
- Relevant programme and module specifications/handbooks, including, where necessary, the mapping of specific learning outcomes. (Schools **must** provide appropriate support to applicants to conduct the mapping of learning outcomes of the prior learning to those of the programme of study in question. Annexe 1 **should** be used for this purpose)
- Regulations or policies explaining the allocation of credit and grading scheme of the relevant HEI (this may be provided as part of the official transcript).

35. An applicant may have completed a module in the subject specialist area within the discipline, but the school may not offer that subject specialism. Where appropriate, this learning may be accredited if the applicant can demonstrate that the learning outcomes achieved on the module meet programme learning outcomes on the programme applied for.

### APEL

36. Decisions **must** be based on a portfolio of evidence which reflects the principles set out in para. 32 above. Prior to an application being submitted informal discussion **should** take place between the school and the applicant to clarify the range and type of evidence likely to be available and its potential appropriateness bearing in mind that collating such evidence, and evaluating it, is likely to be time consuming both for the applicant and for the academic school. During such informal discussion the school **should** ensure that the applicant is provided with the relevant module specifications.

37. In evaluating evidence of APEL particular attention **should** be paid to:
- Identifying relevant experience and the learning achieved from that experience
  - Assessing the comparability of learning to the University module learning outcomes (taking into account module content, level and temporal equivalence bearing in mind the notional 10 learning hours per credit of academic programmes)
  - Ensuring that if accreditation is granted it is likely that the applicant will be able to cope with the demands of the programme.

### **MONITORING AND REVIEW**

38. Schools are responsible for monitoring applications for, and decisions relating to, APL including tracking the performance of candidates admitted with APL.
39. Faculties are responsible for providing an overview of the operation of APL procedures through the Academic Monitoring and Review Process (AMRP). Partners are responsible for providing an overview of APL procedures in the Partner Quality Enhancement Report.