

Accreditation of Prior Learning and Student Transfer to Another Provider Code of Practice (Higher Education)

Review

Formal Review Cycle	3 years		
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Procedure Owner	Higher Education Operations Lead		
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Approvals

Board of Corp Y/N	N	Committee		Date Board approved	
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Change History

Version	Date Reviewed/ Revised	Description of Change	Reviewed by	Approved by
1	Nov 2022	New procedure	ELT	
2	March 2025	New code of practice		

Accreditation of Prior Learning and Student Transfer to Another Provider

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This is a Code of practice for City of Sunderland College, trading as Education Partnership North East (which includes Sunderland College, Hartlepool Sixth Form College and Northumberland College). These colleges will be referred to as “the College” throughout this document.
- 1.2 This Code of Practice sets out the key principles and processes relating to recognition of prior learning which for the purpose of Higher Education will be referred to as accreditation of prior learning (APL).
- 1.3 Accreditation of prior learning is the opportunity for students to be credited for learning they have done before they started on the programme. The aim is to avoid duplication of previous learning and ensure students have attained the learning outcomes for their award. Prior learning may be certificated or experiential. For example, students may have been certificated for a HNC and are applying to a Foundation Degree programme.
 - 1.3.1. **Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL)** – By claiming credits against:
 - successful completion of a certificated and relevant programme of study, or
 - successful completion of part of a relevant programme of study where credits have been awarded, at least at the equivalent level.
 - 1.3.2. **Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)** – By claiming credits against relevant work or life experience or other uncertificated learning in which the acquisition of skills or knowledge at the equivalent level to the higher education programme has been gained.

2. Scope

- 2.1 The Code applies to all programmes on credit bearing Higher Education provision at the College.
- 2.2 It applies to:
 - The application for accreditation of prior learning
 - The evidence required
 - Rights and responsibilities
 - Submission and timescale
 - Fees and charges
 - Student transfer from the College
- 2.3 It provides information on the process for gaining accelerated entry based on:
 - Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) – by claiming credits.
 - Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) – by claiming credits against relevant work or life experience or other uncertificated learning.
- 2.4 The code of practice is written with regard to the codes and regulations as defined by the following awarding organisations:
 - University of Cumbria
 - University of Hull

- Pearson
- NCFE

3. Underpinning principles

- 3.1. Decisions about the accreditation of prior learning take account of The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the Higher Education Credit Framework for England: guidance on academic credit arrangements in higher education in England. [The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies \(qaa.ac.uk\)](http://qaa.ac.uk).
- 3.2. Decisions about the accreditation of prior learning are assessment decisions, and not simply admission decisions.
- 3.3. The principles associated with assessment apply equally to processes for APL including: transparency, fairness, consistency, reliability, and validity.
- 3.4. Assessment of claims for APL must confirm the level, volume, currency and relevance of the claim.
- 3.5. The principles of internal and external moderation of APL apply.
- 3.6. All decisions regarding APL should be recorded on the standard forms to ensure due process has been followed.
- 3.7. EPNE, through the Higher Education Academic Panel, is the final arbiter of accreditation of prior learning for all credit bearing Higher Education provision at the College, except for NCFE programmes where accreditation of a whole unit or more is sought. Please see guidance pages for more information.
- 3.8. The College values diversity and inclusion and is committed to promoting equal opportunities and eliminating discrimination. Therefore, everyone will apply and administer this procedure fairly and consistently to ensure that there is no discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital and civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

4. APL limitations

- 4.1. For University of Hull provision, the maximum credit that can be awarded under APL is generally no more than 50% of their final level of a programme of study and the last 60 credits must be delivered at the College. For example, an application for APL onto a Foundation Degree will not normally be granted beyond the first 180 credits of the award.
- 4.2. For University of Cumbria provision, a maximum of 160 credits can be awarded towards a Foundation Degree, whilst 60 credits can be awarded towards a Top-up degree. The remaining credits must be delivered at the College.
- 4.3. For NCFE and Pearson provision, APL awards must not exceed 50% of the total credit required for the qualification.
- 4.4. Credit can only be given for whole modules, and applicants/students must attend all scheduled modules until formal approval is given for any exemption from a module.
- 4.5. Credit which has previously been used to award a 'qualification', must not be used towards credit for another qualification at the same level, unless it is recognised as credit for direct entry to the next level of study i.e. credits awarded on a Higher National Certificate or Certificate in Higher Education (Level 4) may not be used towards another Certificate in Higher Education, but can be used towards a Higher National Diploma, Foundation Degree, Diploma in Higher Education or Honours degree.
- 4.6. APL credit will not be used in the classification calculations on EPNE awards.

5. Application process for accreditation of prior learning

5.1. The below table outlines 6 stages relevant to the application process for accreditation of prior learning:

Stage 1	Applicant discusses interest in applying for APL with programme leader.
Stage 2	Applicant submits a fully completed accreditation of prior learning application form (Appendix 1), with associated evidence, to the programme leader no later than 2 months before the course start date.
Stage 3	The programme leader reviews the evidence and, where required, supports the applicant in the completion of the accreditation of prior learning mapping document.
Stage 4	The programme leader approves the evidence, adds an assessment statement to the application form, and the claim including any supporting evidence is submitted to the Higher Education Academic Panel for approval via governance@sunderlandcollege.ac.uk .
Stage 5	The Higher Education Academic Panel reviews the application and approves or rejects the application. This is recorded in a Record of Decision (Appendix 2) which is shared with the programme leader and associated student.
Stage 6	Where an application has been approved, the student will be enrolled to the relevant programme and level, except for NCFE programmes where APL is used for a whole unit or more (see guidance pages).

6. Evidence required for accreditation of prior learning

- 6.1. The College must be able to assure itself that any APL claim is acceptable, sufficient, authentic, and current.
- 6.2. Evidence within a claim must be presented so that the Higher Education Academic Panel can determine the extent to which the evidence matches the learning outcomes for that specific module.
- 6.3. Credit is not normally awarded for learning that has taken place more than six years previously, and in the case of some awards the currency of learning may have a shorter shelf life.
- 6.4. Certificated Learning:
 - 6.4.1. Certificated learning claims must be supported by the official transcript made by the awarding body of the original qualification. This should include any guidance explaining the allocation of credit and the grading scheme of the awarding body.
 - 6.4.2. Where credit has not yet been confirmed, academic references from the awarding body must be supplied and any offer made must be conditional.
- 6.5. Experiential Learning:
 - 6.5.1. Experiential learning claims must be supported by a portfolio of evidence.
 - 6.5.2. The most successful APEL cases are those where a supportive portfolio of evidence is provided with detailed and comprehensive information regarding the claim. Often portfolios seen by the HE Academic Panel have included several types of evidence to support an applicant's learning and achievements, together with commentaries and proof of authenticity. Examples may include:
 - A professional narrative/essay on the learning you have gained
 - Samples of work
 - Practice-based documents
 - Reports on observations of practice
 - Video/audio tapes with commentary and analysis related to achievement of learning outcomes

- Witness testimonies from relevant people such as line managers, colleagues, those who can confirm your achievement/learning gained
- 6.6. The claim must always be accompanied by an assessment statement from the programme leader. Copies of meeting minutes with the relevant programme leader are particularly useful. This can reassure the HE Academic Panel that particular attention has been given to ensure that, should the accreditation be granted, the applicant or enrolled student would be able to cope with the demands of the programme.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

7.1. Applicant/student

7.1.1. It is the responsibility of the applicant/student to:

- Fully complete the APL Application Form and Mapping Document as in Appendix 1.
- Submit their APL application to the programme leader, inclusive of all information required by the Code no later than 2 months before the course start date.

7.2. Programme leader

7.2.1. It is the responsibility of the programme leader to:

- Meet with the applicant/student prior to the completion of an APL claim to provide information, advice, and guidance regarding the APL claim process (see Appendix 3).
- Meet with the applicant/student prior to the completion of an APL claim to clarify the range and type of evidence required and to assist in the completion of the mapping document.
- Provide the student with the learning outcomes for each module that the applicant/student wishes to make a claim against.
- Complete the APL application assessment statement within 20 working days of the initial request being made by the applicant/student.
- Send the fully completed application to governance@sunderlandcollege.ac.uk.

7.3. Higher Education Operations Lead

7.3.1. It is the responsibility of the Higher Education Operations Lead to:

- Ensure that programme leaders are trained in the code of practice.
- Support programme leaders to implement the code of practice and ensure clarity.
- Liaise with awarding bodies to support the smooth running of this code of practice.

7.4. Higher Education Academic Panel

7.4.1. It is the responsibility of the Higher Education Academic Panel to:

- Review all APL applications and confirm outcome of application to the applicant and Programme Leader via a Record of Decision (Appendix 2).
- Ensure parity of decisions based on evidence provided for APL applications.
- Report on outcomes of APL applications to the Higher Education Board annually, or as required.

7.5. Higher Education Quality Panel

7.5.1. It is the responsibility of the Higher Education Quality Panel to:

- Assess the validity, reliability and fairness of assessment methodologies for APL.
- Quality assure APL assessment methods to ensure compliance with institutional policy and regulatory requirements.
- Oversee complaints regarding APL according to the EPNE Academic Appeals Code of Practice.

7.6. Higher Education Board

7.6.1. It is the responsibility of the Higher Education Board to provide oversight to the College's APL Code, and receive annual reports on statistics related to the number of students enrolled and students who receive APL.

8. Submission and Timescales

- 8.1. All APL claims must be submitted to the respective programme leader using Appendix 1 no later than 2 months before the course start date.
- 8.2. Upon submission the claim the programme leader will record the date of the application and email confirmation of receipt to the applicant/ student.
- 8.3. The programme leader will review the evidence, complete the APL application assessment statement within 20 working days of the initial request being made by the applicant/student and send the fully completed application to governance@sunderlandcollege.ac.uk.
- 8.4. All applications will be reviewed by the HE Academic Panel.
- 8.5. The applicant and programme leader can expect a formal written outcome from the claim within 20 working days of submission of the fully completed APL application to the Panel. This will be formatted as a Record of Decision as in Appendix 2.
- 8.6. Should an applicant not receive a response within 20 working days, they should contact their programme leader.

9. Fees and Charges

- 9.1. No fee is charged by EPNE for an applicant/student to make an APL application.
- 9.2. No fee is charged by EPNE to process accelerated entry onto a programme.
- 9.3. Applicants/students will be liable to pay the full tuition fee for the level of programme studied, regardless of credit transfer. However, students who are granted direct entrance to a higher level than the start of the programme are only required to pay for that level of study. For more information, please see EPNE's HE Fees Policy.
- 9.4. A successful APL application could have an impact on Student Finance loan entitlement due to the reduction in the number of credits taken. It is the responsibility of the applicant/student to liaise with the programme leader and Student Loans Company for advice.

10. Student transfer

- 10.1. EPNE will take all reasonable steps to facilitate the timely transfer of students from EPNE's higher education provision to other providers.
- 10.2. Students who wish to transfer can request their programme information which will be required by the receiving provider. This request should be made at least 20 working days prior to the intended transfer date to ensure timely processing and provision of necessary documentation. Additionally, reasonable steps to complete a notification of academic progress to the student will be taken by Exams.
- 10.3. EPNE does not take responsibility for the completion of the required paperwork for the receiving institution.

11. Data Protection

- 11.1. All information concerning APL applications remains confidential to those processing the application. Data will not be released to any third party without the express agreement of the applicant, except in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and Data Protection Act (DPA 2018).
- 11.2. Where an APL applicant is applying to join an EPNE programme, they will be asked to consent to EPNE processing their information by signing a student declaration (see appendix 1).
 - 11.2.1. EPNE is defined as a public body and has a legal duty to protect information and lawfully and equitably process that information under the GDPR and DPA 2018.
 - 11.2.2. A refusal to have information processed will lead to the application being declined.

12. Complaints regarding Accreditation of Prior Learning

- 12.1. An applicant who is not already enrolled on an EPNE programme can lodge an appeal using the EPNE Academic Appeals Code of Practice.
- 12.2. A student who is enrolled on an EPNE programme can lodge a complaint using the EPNE Academic Appeals Code of Practice.

13. Monitoring and Review

- 13.1. Statistics related to the number of students enrolled and students who receive APL are reported on an annual basis to the Higher Education Board.
- 13.2. This procedure will be reviewed every three years unless changes to legislation requires earlier review. The effectiveness of this procedure is reviewed through:
- Feedback from applicants/students on the effectiveness of the code of practice.
 - Feedback from staff on the effectiveness of the code of practice.
 - Feedback received from awarding bodies and from external review activities.
 - Review of applications through APL with a report going to the HE Board.

14. Guidance Pages

13.1. University of Hull

13.1.2 Applications for the University of Hull provision will follow the University's [Code of Practice: Accreditation of Prior Certificated and Experiential Learning](#).

13.2. University of Cumbria

13.2.1 Applications for University of Cumbria provision will follow the University's academic regulations: [Academic Regulations \(cumbria.ac.uk\)](#) and [Appendix 6 \(cumbria.ac.uk\)](#).

13.3. Pearson

13.3.1 External examination of APL evidence will be considered in the same way as traditional evidence for the same qualification.

13.3.2. When approving credits, these will generally be made at Pass level however the HE Academic Panel may still consider awarding at Merit or Distinction level.

13.4. NCFE

13.4.1. Where APL is used for a whole unit or more, advice will be sought from a qualified APL Advisor.

15. Equality Impact Assessment

Have you sought consultation on this code of practice? Details:	Staff consultation via formative feedback mechanisms. Student consultation within governance structure.
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Could a particular group be affected (negatively or positively)?	Impact Y/N	Description of Impact	Evidence	Mitigation/ Justification
Protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010				
Age	Y	Students who meet entry requirements must be accepted onto a programme. Consideration on potential impact should be given when a student does not meet the entry criteria and could secure a place via the non-standard entry process.		Staff training to include E&D compulsory training and refresher training. Other training programmes such as unconscious bias training should be delivered. Reports will monitor the 'rejection' of APL applications to ensure they are assessed and consistency applied.
Disability	Y			
Gender Reassignment	Y			
Marriage and Civil Partnership	Y			
Pregnancy and maternity	Y			
Race	Y			
Religion or belief	Y			
Sex	Y			
Sexual Orientation	Y			
Additional characteristics to consider				
Young Persons in Care & Care Leavers		As above		As above
Young Carers & Care Givers		As above		As above
Young Parents		As above		As above
Youth Offenders		As above		As above
Those Receiving Free School Meals		As above		As above
If there is no impact, please explain:				

Appendix 1 - Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL): Student Application Form

Please fully complete this application form and submit to the relevant programme leader no later than 2 months before the course start date.

Section 1: Applicant details

Name: _____

Student ID: _____

Email Address: _____

Home Address: _____

Nationality: _____

Section 2: Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) application

2.1 Full title of the programme that you are applying to study at Education Partnership North East (EPNE):

2.2 Name of the awarding body (for example, Pearson):

2.3 For applications regarding prior certificated learning, please complete the below table:

Qualification title	Awarding Institution	Year achieved

2.4 Clearly state below which modules, levels and credits you wish to be exempt from studying and whether it is based on certified or experiential learning:

Module Title	Credits	Level	Certificated	Experiential
<i>Example: Skills, Research and Reflection</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>

2.5 State the amount of credits at each level being claimed for consideration of recognised prior learning:

Level 4	Level 5	Level 6

Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL): Mapping Document

This mapping document must be completed for *each* module that exemption is being sought. Clear explanation is required to evidence how the claim for credit maps across to the learning outcomes of the programme being applied for. The respective programme leader will support you in the completion of this mapping document. Please add further rows as required.

Module details: <ul style="list-style-type: none">List the module title, level, credits and learning outcomes for module(s) that you are applying for exemption from.	Evidence map: <ul style="list-style-type: none">For certificated learning, list the module title, level, credits and module learning outcomes from modules you have studied previously.For experiential learning, provide a clear explanation of how your experiences map to the module learning outcomes listed in the previous column.
Module Title: Level: Credits: Module Learning Outcomes:	
Module Title: Level: Credits: Module Learning Outcomes:	
Module Title: Level: Credits: Module Learning Outcomes:	
Module Title: Level: Credits: Module Learning Outcomes:	
Module Title: Level: Credits: Module Learning Outcomes:	

Section 3: Student Declaration

The information provided is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand that seeking to gain advanced by providing false or misleading information makes me liable to action against me under EPNE's Higher Education Academic Misconduct Policy.

I acknowledge that it is my responsibility to ensure that I have fully completed this form and that supporting evidence (for example, scanned copies or photographs of my certificate, results transcript or other documentary evidence) is attached to support my application. I consent EPNE to contact any awarding body or employer named in this application to clarify or request further information to process my application.

By submitting this form and any information supplied I agree that EPNE can utilise this data for educational purposes and store it for up to 6 years after the current academic year.

Student signature: _____

Date: _____

Please email your application and supporting documents to the programme leader.

Once the programme leader has added their assessment statement in Section 4, your application will be considered by EPNE's Higher Education Academic Panel.

Section 4: Programme Leader's Assessment Statement

Please include comments on the following:

- The applicant's ability to study at the accelerated point of entry.
- Whether exemption from studying any of the modules listed in 2.4 would hinder the student's ability to study future modules.
- Whether you are satisfied that prior learning meets the requirements for accreditation of prior learning.
- Whether evidence is sufficient, reliable and current and that you have seen appropriate evidence.

Programme leader name:	Signature:	Date:

Appendix 2 - Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL): Record of Decision

Section 1: Applicant details

Name: _____

Student ID: _____

Programme title: _____

Amount of credit exempted by APL

	Total number of credits at level 4 for which APL is granted:	Total number of credits at level 5 for which APL is granted:	Total number of credits at level 6 for which APL is granted:
APCL			
APEL			

Section 2: Rationale for APL Decision

Module(s) passed (and credits attained) by the APL applicant:	EPNE module(s) granted exemption by APL:
Rationale for Decision:	

Modules not exempted:

Module Code	Title	Level	Semester

Part 3 – Checklist

The following questions are intended to help those considering APL applications:

	YES	NO	N/A	Comments
Has a full transcript and syllabus information been received for certificated study?				
Are you satisfied with the documentary evidence (portfolio) for APEL, and are competencies and outcomes from the learning clearly defined?				
Does the evidence confirm that the applicant has completed what they claimed?				
Is there evidence that the learning is current to the standards of the academic subject and any professional requirements?				
Is there a clear match of previous learning to those of the core modules from which specific credit exemption is sought?				
Are the knowledge, skills and competencies at the level at which credit is sought?				

Are all module prerequisites sufficiently evidenced to satisfy requirements of the next stage modules?				
Are regulations regarding minimum credit to gain the EPNE programme adhered to?				
Is there a need for additional evidence in support of the credit (APCL) claim?				
Is there a need for additional evidence in support of the experiential (APEL) claim?				
Is the applicant required to attend an interview or undertake any additional work in support of the credit claim?				

Part 4 – Declaration

I confirm that full and appropriate consideration has been given to the learning achieved by the applicant to recommend the candidate for APCL or APEL as indicated above.

Signature of Chair of the HE Academic Panel: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 3 – Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) Student Guide

Section	Details
Introduction	Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) allows you to gain credit for learning you have already completed before starting your current programme. This helps avoid repeating learning and ensures you meet the learning outcomes for your award. Prior learning can be either certificated or experiential.
Types of APL	<p>Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL): Credits awarded for previously completed and relevant certificated programmes of study.</p> <p>Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL): Credits awarded for relevant work or life experience where skills or knowledge equivalent to higher education have been gained.</p>
Application Process for APL	<p>Stage 1: Discuss your interest in applying for APL with your programme leader.</p> <p>Stage 2: Submit a fully completed APL application form, with associated evidence, to your programme leader at least 2 months before the course start date.</p> <p>Stage 3: The programme leader reviews the evidence and supports you in completing the APL mapping document, if required.</p> <p>Stage 4: The programme leader approves the evidence, adds an assessment statement to the application form, and submits the claim to the Higher Education Academic Panel for approval.</p> <p>Stage 5: The Higher Education Academic Panel reviews the application and approves or rejects it. The decision is recorded and shared with you and the programme leader.</p> <p>Stage 6: If approved, you will be enrolled in the relevant programme and level.</p>
Evidence Required for APL	<p>Certificated Learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Official transcript from the awarding body of the original qualification. - Guidance explaining the allocation of credit and the grading scheme. - Academic references if credit has not yet been confirmed. <p>Experiential Learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Portfolio of evidence including: - Professional narrative/essay on the learning gained. - Samples of work. - Practice-based documents. - Reports on observations of practice.

Section	Details
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Video/audio tapes with commentary and analysis. - Witness testimonies from relevant individuals.
Roles and Responsibilities	<p>Applicant/Student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete the APL Application Form and Mapping Document. - Submit the application with all required information to the programme leader. <p>Programme Leader:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide information, advice, and guidance on the APL claim process. - Assist in completing the mapping document, if required. - Approve the evidence and submit the application for review. <p>Higher Education Academic Panel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review all APL applications and confirm the outcome. - Ensure parity of decisions based on the evidence provided.
Submission and Timescales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Submit your APL claim to the programme leader using the APL application form no later than 2 months prior to the course date. The programme leader will review the evidence, add an assessment statement and submit the application for review to the Higher Education Academic Panel within 20 working days. - Expect a formal written outcome within 20 working days of the programme leader submission.
Fees and Charges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No fee is charged for making an APL application. - Full tuition fees apply for the level of programme studied, regardless of credit transfer.
Impact on Student Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A successful APL application may affect your Student Finance loan entitlement due to the reduction in the number of credits taken. Consult with the programme leader and Student Loans Company for advice.