ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR EXPERIENTIAL AND CERTIFICATED LEARNING (APECL)

JANUARY 2015
# ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR EXPERIENTIAL AND CERTIFICATED LEARNING

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UNIVERSITY OF KENT

Accreditation of Prior Experiential and Certificated Learning (APECL)

Note: The following guidance has been taken from the Code of Practice for Taught Programmes and most specifically Annex R of the Code of Practice (Accreditation of Prior Experiential and Certificated Learning (APECL)). The Code of Practice for Taught Programmes can be read at http://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/taught/annexr.html

1.0 Introduction

This guidance is designed to provide Colleges with guidance on the practice and operation of APECL at the University of Kent.

The University operates a transparent and rigorous APECL process which recognises relevant learning obtained before a student begins studying with the University. Decisions regarding the awarding of APECL are a matter for academic judgement. The Accreditation of Prior Experiential and Certificated Learning will accommodate claims for exemption from certain modules within a programme of study and should follow the guidelines below. Note: A distinction should be made between applicants for APECL and applicants for Credit Transfer.

1.1 Definitions

APL  Accreditation of Prior Learning

APEL  Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning

APCL  Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) defines APCL and APEL as follows:

APL - Accreditation of prior learning: the identification, assessment and formal acknowledgement of learning and achievement that occurred at some time in the past (perhaps as the result of a previous course, self-directed study, or active experience), which is taken into account when admitting a student to a course of study.

APCL - Accreditation of prior certificated learning: the identification, assessment and formal acknowledgement of learning and achievement that occurred at some time in the past prior to entry to a course of study, and for which the learner was awarded some form of official recognition.

APEL - Accreditation of prior experiential learning: the identification, assessment and formal acknowledgement of learning and achievement that occurred at some time in the past prior to entry to a course of study, but not in the context of formal education or training.

1.2 APECL Claims – Credit Limits

The maximum limits on the amount of APECL that can be claimed per academic stage and per programme of study will be the same limits as permitted for credit transfer. In order to qualify for a University of Kent qualification, students claiming APECL must obtain the following volumes of credit on University of Kent programmes:

1 Students currently in full time study at another university who wish to transfer to Kent via UCAS are considered as Credit Transfers and, therefore, are not subject to the APECL process. The University of Kent Admissions Office can advise on the Credit Transfer process.
## Award

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Award</th>
<th>Minimum Credits to be obtained on University of Kent Programme of Study</th>
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<tr>
<td>BTEC Higher National Certificate (120 credits in total)</td>
<td>60 credits at level C or above</td>
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<tr>
<td>BTEC Higher National Diploma</td>
<td>120 credits at Level I or above</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foundation degree</td>
<td>120 credits including at least 90 at level I or above</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honours degree</td>
<td>120 credits including at least 90 at level H or above</td>
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Exemption from part of a programme of study is, in all cases, at the discretion of the University.

### 1.3 Key considerations

The awarding of APECL will not carry any numerical mark and will not contribute to the overall stage average of degree classification.

The minimum volume of credit which may be awarded for any APECL claim is five credits.

APECL assessors should consider the full range of assessment methods so that the most appropriate is used so that the student can demonstrate their skills and knowledge against the required learning outcomes. The following QAA identified criteria should be considered:

- **Acceptability** – is there any appropriate match between the evidence presented and the learning being demonstrated? Is the evidence valid and reliable?

- **Sufficiency** – is there sufficient evidence to demonstrate fully the achievement of the learning claimed?

- **Authenticity** – is the evidence clearly related to the applicants' own efforts and achievements?

- **Currency** – does the evidence relate to current learning? Where professional bodies and/or Schools have specific requirements and/or time limits for the currency of evidence, certification or demonstration of learning, these should be made clear and transparent.

Any work submitted by an applicant in support of an APECL submission that is found to contain elements of plagiarised work will be discounted. Where plagiarism is suspected in a submission from a University-registered student, the work in question will be referred to the College Disciplinary Committee for consideration under the Academic Discipline Procedures.

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2 Note – this reflects Edexcel’s credit/level requirements for new HNs from September 2010. For BTEC awards commencing up to 31 December 2010, please refer to the University of Kent Credit Framework Annex 3 which can be found at [http://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/documents/quality-assurance/credit-framework/creditinfoannex3.pdf](http://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/documents/quality-assurance/credit-framework/creditinfoannex3.pdf)
1.4 Advice and Guidance

Advice and guidance on the APECL process is available from the University. Colleges should contact the relevant Partnership Development Officer for help in accessing this advice.

1.5 The Role of the Academic School

It is the responsibility of the University’s Academic Schools and those in the Colleges who devise new programme specifications to state which elements of a programme, if any, may not be subject to APECL. They should also consider the suitability of the assessment methods to ensure that students can demonstrate the achievement of the required learning outcomes. The nature of this assessment should be clearly communicated to students. Schools and Colleges must also ensure that students receive prompt feedback on the outcomes of the APECL process.

1.6 The Role of College Staff

Applications for APECL made by students studying for a University award at a Partner College will have their application assessed and a decision made by the relevant Programme Leader/Admissions Tutor for the programme in question. Recommendations will then be considered for approval by the relevant Faculty Committee (normally the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee). Decisions will then be reported to the APECL Board.

2.0 Procedure for the Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning

2.1 Applications for APCL

Applicants should notify the relevant College Programme Leader of their intention to claim APCL whether they are new or continuing students. The Programme Leader is responsible for the assessment of the claim. Students are advised to give at least six weeks notice of their intention to claim APCL and should be aware of the admission deadlines for the programmes for which credit is being sought.

2.2 Assessment of the Claim

The College Programme Leader will assess the claim for APCL and, if considered appropriate will make a recommendation for the award of credit based on the available evidence. The Programme Leader can ask the applicant to complete an APCL applicant form (see http://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/index.html) in order to capture relevant information for their APCL claim. The Programme Leader can seek advice on the claim from the University School Liaison Officer, the Director of Learning and Teaching in the relevant Academic School or their Partnership Development Officer.

For each claim the rules regarding ‘spent’ credit must be considered – see http://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/credit-framework/creditinfo.html (sub-section 10.4).

Once a recommendation on the claim has been reached the Programme Leader should forward their recommendation to the appropriate Faculty Committee for approval via the Faculties Support Office (fso@kent.ac.uk). Decisions may be taken by Chair’s action where appropriate. Once the decision has been made, the College will be informed by the Faculty Committee.
Claims submitted by existing students should be forwarded by the Programme Leader to the appropriate Faculty Committee for approval via the Faculties Support Office (fso@kent.ac.uk). The Faculty Committee will inform the College of the outcome of the submission.

2.3 Completion of a Recommendation Form

For each claim the Programme Leader should complete an APCL Recommendation Form (see http://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/index.html). This form requires the Programme Leader to indicate how the applicant’s prior learning meets the learning outcomes of the University module concerned by mapping the learning outcomes of the module against the student’s previous learning. The Programme Leader can make one of three decisions:

- **APPROVED** - Where a claim can be approved.
- **HOLD** - Where further information is to be sought or a condition is placed on the claim.
- **REJECTED** - Where a claim is not acceptable.

A rationale should be provided for the decision made. The onus is on the applicant to provide supporting information to resolve a claim that has been put on hold due to a request for clarification or a condition being placed on it.

The APCL Recommendation Form should be passed by email to the Faculty Committee via the Faculties Support Office for its consideration. The Faculty Committee will report its decisions to the APECL Board, the College and EMS. The Faculty Committee will keep a log of all decisions made in order to enable data on the decision to be added to the APECL List maintained by the APECL Board. This list acts as a monitoring mechanism for APECL at the University.

If approved, the APCL will be recorded on the Student Data System by Admissions for new students on franchised programmes and by the Partner College Administration Team for new students on validated programmes and all existing students.

Credit awarded for APECL will be recorded as such on the student transcript.

2.4 Informing the Applicant

Once a decision is finalised the applicant should be informed by the Programme Leader in writing. If a claim is rejected or put on hold the applicant should be informed in writing as to why and what the next action should be.

If a claim has been rejected then any resubmission of the APCL claim must be made before the beginning of the module(s) for which credit is sought.

Feedback should be provided to the applicant on request if their claim is rejected. An opportunity to resubmit the claim should be offered and supported.
3.0 Procedure for the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning

3.1 Application for APEL

Early application is recommended for all APEL claims. Applicants should usually allow up to a term to complete their APEL portfolio and should allow time for this to be assessed before the start of the module in question. The Programme Leader can seek advice at any time on the claim from the University School Liaison Officer, the relevant Director of Learning and Teaching or their Partnership Development Officer.

The procedure laid down here assumes that the assessment method used for the APEL claim will be a portfolio.

3.2 Initial Consultation

An initial consultation should be carried out between a suitable member of staff and the potential applicant – this is likely to be the Programme Leader. For each claim the rules regarding ‘spent’ credit must be considered. These can be viewed on the University of Kent Credit Framework at http://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/credit-framework/creditinfo.html; (sub-section 10.4.). Following this meeting the College will appoint a Portfolio Supervisor which should be the Programme Leader, another member of staff teaching on the programme.

3.3 Portfolio Supervisor

The portfolio supervisor is responsible for

i) guiding the applicant in developing their APEL portfolio against the learning outcomes

ii) assessing the portfolio and ensuring it is complete and suitable.

3.4 Portfolio Development

The applicant will develop their portfolio over an agreed period of time. If the Portfolio Supervisor is not the Programme Leader of the programme for which credit is being sought, they should be contacted at development stage to ensure the APEL portfolio is suitable for submission, both in terms of academic requirements and subject area. When the portfolio is complete the Portfolio Supervisor will complete the APEL Portfolio Supervisor Form (see http://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/index.html) and will recommend whether the APEL portfolio has met the learning outcomes for the credit applied for.

3.5 Submission of the Portfolio

Portfolios should, where possible, be submitted in an electronic format. If this is not possible then a hard copy should be submitted. Two copies of the portfolio should be produced; one for the Portfolio Supervisor, and one for the appropriate Faculty Committee. These must both be submitted to the Portfolio Supervisor, who will arrange for one copy to be submitted to the Faculty Committee via the Faculties Support Office (fso@kent.ac.uk). The Portfolio Supervisor should also submit the completed Portfolio Supervisor Form to the Faculties Support Office along with the portfolio.

3.6 Verification of APEL by the Faculty Committee and the APECL Board

The recommendation of the APEL Portfolio Supervisor must be verified by the appropriate Faculty Committee. Decisions will be reported to the APECL Board.
The Faculty Committee will reach a decision for the award of credit for the portfolio submission and the Portfolio Supervisor, College and Admissions will be informed of the decision. If a large number of applicants seek entry with APEL onto the same Kent programme (i.e. from the same professional background), it is recommended that an approval meeting is held. This meeting would include members of the Faculty Committee and a subject specialist to view and consider portfolios and approve decisions.

3.7 Informing the Applicant

Once a decision is finalised the applicant is informed via the Programme Leader or College Admissions Team. If a claim is rejected or put on hold the applicant should be informed in writing as to why and what the next action should be.

Where the applicant is an existing student, the Programme Leader should inform the student in writing, detailing the level/volume of credit to be awarded. If a claim is rejected or put on hold the student should be informed in writing as to why and what the next action should be.

If a claim has been rejected then any resubmission of the APEL claim must be made before the start of the module(s) for which credit is sought. If approved, the APEL will be recorded on the Student Data System by the Partner College Administration team for both new students and existing students.

3.8 Feedback

Feedback should be provided to the applicant on request if their claim is rejected. An opportunity to resubmit the portfolio should be offered and supported.

3.9 Reporting Decision to APECL Board

The decision will be recorded by the Faculty Committee. Decisions will be reported to the APECL Board, to identify trends and to help target advice and guidance. A sample of the portfolio submissions considered by each Faculty Committee will be provided to the APECL Board (i.e. no more than 10% of the total claims considered). The APECL Board will not reverse decisions but can make recommendations on future decisions.

4.0 Additional Guidance

Additional advice and guidance for students can be found on the University website at:

And for staff at:

There is an example APEL portfolio at:
GENERAL AND SPECIFIC CREDIT

General Credit may be defined as follows:

“All assessed learning can be awarded credit. The credit gained is a general recognition of assessed learning at specified levels. It is general credit. When the credit is recognised through the admissions procedure of an HEI as directly contributing to a programme it becomes specific. The change in designation from general to specific relates directly to the relevance of the learning to the proposed programme.”

General credit therefore represents the whole of the learning achieved on an accredited course. An honours degree would have a General Credit value of 360 credits. Specific Credit is the volume and level of credit which can be used from the General Credit value for Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning into another course.

For example: a student gains a qualification in History, worth 120 Credits at Level C from a UK Higher Education Institution.

The General credit value of this qualification is 120 credits at Level C. If the applicant requests APCL on the basis of this to a similar Kent degree programme in History, it is probable that all of the General Credit value could be recognised. However if the applicant requests APCL with the same Level C qualification to a Kent degree programme in History and Politics, only a limited amount of the credit might be recognised. This would be determined by the academic staff mapping between the external and Kent programme/module learning outcomes to identify how much credit could be used for APCL. It may be that 60 credits of the History qualification could be used for APCL. These 60 credits would be the Specific Credit value.

If the application for APCL were to a completely unrelated programme, i.e. Forensic Science, then it is less likely that any of the General Credit could be recognised as Specific Credit, since it may not be possible to map the learning outcomes from the external History course to the Forensic Science learning outcomes. There may be exceptions to this if a programme has modules covering more generic skills i.e. research skills.

For APEL a General Credit value can be awarded to the APEL Portfolio submitted. As with APCL, if appropriate, the General Credit value can then be used in its entirety if it can be mapped to the learning outcomes of the module(s) for which credit is being claimed. Again as with APCL it may be that only a specific amount of the General Credit can be mapped to the learning outcomes of the module(s) for which credit is sought.

For all APECL claims it should be noted that the Kent Credit Framework and programme rules may limit the amount of credit than can be applied for. Kent recognises the validity of studies undertaken at other UK Higher Education Institutions, therefore, it will normally recognise the General Credit value of qualifications obtained from these institution.

Note, however, that it cannot be assumed that the General Credit value can automatically be fully recognised as credit into a Kent award. A mapping must first be carried out to determine what level and volume of credit can be used for an APECL claim. In addition the Kent Credit Framework and programme rules may limit the amount of credit that can be used for APECL.

The specific credit value can never exceed the general credit value of the qualification being used to apply for APCL.
APPENDIX 2

Membership and Terms of Reference of the Accreditation of Prior Experiential and Certificated Learning (APECL) Board

Membership of the APECL Board

Chair (Dean – to rotate annually between the three Faculties)
Head of EMS
Quality Assurance Office Manager
One Admissions Officer representative from each Faculty (or a nominated substitute) (N.B. there should be both undergraduate and postgraduate representatives included)
External Adviser to the APECL Board, (nominated by the Board)

Total members including Admission Officer substitutes: 7

Permanent nominees can represent members listed above. If a nominee is to attend on behalf of a member, their name should be notified to the Secretary to the Board.

In attendance:

Secretary to the APECL Board (appointed by the Academic Registrar)

At the first meeting of the APECL Board membership must be agreed (including any nominees to attend on behalf of the above members). Any changes to membership must be agreed by the APECL Board.

Terms of Reference of the APECL Board

1. To monitor, review and record all decisions of the Faculties in relation to APEL and APCL, and consider them for consistency and in line with good practice.
2. To receive statistics on APECL claims and decisions recorded by the University, to support monitoring and review.
3. To advise on decisions made by the Faculty Committees and provide guidelines for future decisions if appropriate (to ensure consistent decision making).
4. To review, enhance and monitor University of Kent policies in relation to APECL, to consider them in respect of national policy changes in relation to APECL and the credit framework. To consider any proposals for new processes that may be submitted to enhance policies and procedures in relation to APECL.
5. To consider proposals and to offer advice and guidance on the recognition of awards and qualifications for direct entry into named programmes (sometimes known as APECL protocols).
6. To consider training requirements of the University in relation to APECL.
7. To undertake other responsibilities as may be determined from time to time.

The Board will normally be Chaired by a Dean of the Faculty (or his/her nominee) on an annual rotation. The Board will operate under a quorum of four members, and will meet a minimum of once a term. Additional meetings of the Board to be arranged if required.

N.B. The APECL Board cannot overturn APECL decisions retrospectively.