Annex R: Accreditation of Prior Experiential and Certificated Learning (APECL)

Introduction
This section of the Code of Practice provides guidance to Schools on the practice and operation of APECL.

1. General Statement
The University will operate a demonstrably transparent and rigorous APECL process that will recognise relevant learning obtained prior to the commencement of study at the University. Decisions regarding the awarding of APECL will be a matter of academic judgement.

1.1 The University also operates procedures relating to:
- Claims for mid-year transfer from a programme of study at another institution;
- Claims for entry with advanced standing, i.e. direct to Stage 2 or 3 of a programme;
- Claims for admission without the threshold entry qualifications.

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\(^1\) and applicants for Credit Transfer.

1.2 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 these terms 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.\(^2\)

---

\(^1\) 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. Admissions can advise on the Credit Transfer process.

\(^2\) See [http://www.qaa.ac.uk/AboutUs/glossary/Pages/glossary-a.aspx#a7](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/AboutUs/glossary/Pages/glossary-a.aspx#a7) (last accessed 10.07.14)
1.3 Parameters for APECL claims

1.3.1. 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 as detailed in Annex 3 of the University of Kent Credit Framework:

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

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

1.3.4. APECL will be awarded in a volume appropriate to the granularity of the programme in accordance with the limits detailed in 1.3.1-1.3.2 above;

1.3.5. APECL assessors should consider the full range of assessment methods so that the most appropriate is utilised for the student to 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.

1.3.6 Where the evidence relating to an applicant’s prior learning is submitted in a language other than English, the APECL assessor must either possess sufficient competence in the language in question in order to make an effective assessment or must direct the applicant to provide a translation into English of any prior assessed work submitted in support of the application.

1.3.7 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 School Disciplinary Committee for consideration under the Academic Discipline procedures.

1.3.8 Use of APECL as a means of transferring credit between two University awards is subject to the restrictions on ‘spent’ credit set out in the Credit Framework (see, in particular, clause 10.4.1.3 at [http://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/credit-framework/creditinfo.html#credittransfer](http://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/credit-framework/creditinfo.html#credittransfer)).

2 General Credit

2.1 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.

2.1.1 For example: a student gains a qualification in History, worth 120 credits at level 4 from a UK Higher Education Institution.

The General Credit value of this qualification is 120 credits at level 4. 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 4 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 the History part of the first year of the History and Politics programme. These 60 credits would be the Specific Credit value.

If the application for APCL were to a completely unrelated programme, e.g. Forensic Science, 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, such as research skills.

2.2 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.

2.3 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.

2.4 Kent recognise 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.

---

3 See [http://www.seec.org.uk/academic-credit/faqs](http://www.seec.org.uk/academic-credit/faqs) (last accessed 10.07.14)
3. Advice and Guidance

3.1 The University will provide clear and accessible information on the full procedures for the application, consideration and awarding of APECL. The University will also provide generic advice and guidance to applicants and academic staff on individual cases and to other stakeholders including external examiners regarding APECL in general.

3.2 The information and guidance provided by the University will state clearly the terminology, processes and procedures relating to the operation of APECL at Kent.

3.3 The University will make clear in its advice and guidance full details of the assessment process and requirements, including timescales, opportunities for resubmission, key School contacts and the process of notification of outcome.

3.4 The University will provide clear generic advice and guidance to all applicants and Schools.

3.5 In conjunction with the School, the University will ensure that accurate and timely feedback on the outcome of APECL claims is communicated to applicants.

3.6 The University may designate a specific department or section to carry out the functions set out at 3.1-3.5.

4 Responsibility of Schools

4.1 It is the responsibility of Schools to clarify and state in programme specifications which elements of the programme, if any, may not be subject to APECL. This is particularly pertinent for professionally accredited programmes.

4.2 The School should consider the suitability of assessment methods when deciding on the most appropriate form, on a case by case basis, in order that the student may demonstrate knowledge of the required learning outcomes. The nature and range of assessment required should be communicated clearly to the student.

4.3 The School should provide feedback to students on the outcome of the APECL assessment.

5 APECL in Collaborative Provision

5.1 Partner Colleges and Validated Institutions

Applications for APECL made by students studying for a University award at a Partner College or Validated Institution 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 (i.e. FEC or FGSC). All decisions will be reported to the APECL Board.

5.2 Programmes Leading to Dual Awards or Joint Awards

Recommendations by partner institutions for the award of credit awarded via APECL will be considered for approval by the relevant Faculty Committee (i.e. FEC or FGSC). All decisions will be reported to the APECL Board.
6. Procedure for the Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning

6.1 Application for APCL

6.1.1 A new applicant will notify Admissions of their intention to claim APCL. The claim will be passed by EMS to the relevant Admissions Officer in the new applicant’s School or Centre.

6.1.2 An existing student will notify their School/Centre of their intention to claim APCL. The claim will be passed to the relevant Programme Leader. The Programme Leader will carry out the role of the Admissions Officer, as set out below.

6.1.3 Early application is recommended for all APCL claims. Applicants must be aware of the admission deadlines for the programmes for which credit is being sought.

6.2 Assessment of the Claim

6.2.1 The Admissions Officer 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 Admissions Officer can ask the applicant to complete an APCL applicant form (form 1), in order to capture relevant information on their APCL claim.

6.2.2 In assessing the claim, the Admissions Officer can ask for advice if he/she feels it is a complex or unusual claim. Advice can be sought from the School Director of Education or the Programme Leader in the first instance. In cases of Postgraduate APCL the School Director of Graduate Studies can be consulted. If required, further advice can be sought from the APECL Board.

6.2.3 For each claim the rules regarding ‘spent’ credit must be considered. These can be found in the Credit Framework, section 10.4.

6.2.4 The recommendation of the Admissions Officer for the award of credit should be forwarded to the appropriate Faculty Committee for approval via the Faculties Support Office (fso@kent.ac.uk). Once a decision on the claim has been reached, the School and EMS will be informed by the Faculty Committee. Decisions may be taken by Chair’s action, where appropriate.

6.2.5 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 School of the outcome of the submission.

6.3 Completion of a Recommendation Form

6.3.1 The APCL Recommendation Form and mapping (form 2) should be completed by the Admissions Officer to indicate how the applicant’s prior learning meets the learning outcomes of the University module(s) concerned.

6.3.2 Recommendations should be made according to one of the following categories:

- **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.

---

4 Whether a claim is complex is for the person assessing the claim to determine.
6.3.3 A rationale should be provided for the recommendation 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.

6.3.4 Where the claim has been submitted by a new applicant to the University the APCL Recommendation Form should be passed by the Admissions Officer to the Faculty Committee via the Faculties Support Office for its consideration. The Faculty Committee will report its decisions to the APECL Board, the School 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.

6.4 Informed the Applicant

6.4.1 Once a decision is finalised the applicant is informed via an Admissions Offer letter. 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.

6.4.2 Where the applicant is an existing student, the Programme Leader should inform the applicant in writing, detailing the level/volume of credit to be awarded. 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.

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

6.4.4 If approved, the APCL will be recorded on the Student Data System by EMS for new students and by the Undergraduate Office for existing students in the Faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences and by the relevant School in the Faculty of Sciences.

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

6.5 Feedback

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

6.6 Reporting Decision to APECL Board

6.6.1 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 claims considered by each Faculty Committee will be provided to the APECL Board (i.e. no more than 10% of the total claims considered).

6.6.2 The APECL Board will not reverse decisions, but can make recommendations on future decisions.

7 Procedure for the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning

7.1 Application for APEL

7.1.1 Early application is recommended for all APEL claims. Applicants must be aware of the admission deadlines for the programmes for which credit is being sought.

7.1.2 Both new applicants and existing students should allow a minimum of six weeks and preferably one term to complete their APEL portfolio, and should consider the recommended timescales for APEL to ensure that there is sufficient time to have an APEL
claim approved before the module(s) they are claiming credit towards commence. Exact timing of an APEL claim varies depending on the nature of the claim and length of time required to collate the APEL portfolio.

7.1.3 If at any stage those considering a claim feel it is a complex or unusual application, advice can be sought from the School Director of Education or Programme Leader. If it is a postgraduate APEL claim advice can be sought from the Director of Graduate Studies. If required, advice can be sought from the APECL Board.5

7.1.4 The following procedure assumes that the assessment method used for the APEL claim will be a portfolio.

7.2 Initial Consultation

7.2.1 An initial consultation should be carried out between a suitable member of staff and the potential applicant. (This could be a Programme Leader or Admissions Officer).

7.2.2 For each claim the rules regarding ‘spent’ credit must be considered. These can be viewed on the University of Kent Credit Framework, subsection 10.4.

7.3 Portfolio Supervisor

7.3.1 The key roles of the portfolio supervisor will be i) to guide the applicant in developing their APEL portfolio against the learning outcomes; and ii) to assess the portfolio, ensuring it is complete and suitable.

7.3.2 The Admissions Officer for the School/Centre relating to the programme for which APEL is sought should identify a suitable APEL Portfolio Supervisor. This could be the Admissions Officer or a relevant subject specialist from the School/Centre.

7.4 Portfolio Development

7.4.1 The applicant will develop their portfolio over an agreed period of time. The Programme Leader of the programme for which credit is being sought should be contacted at development stage to ensure the APEL portfolio is suitable for submission, both in terms of academic requirements and subject area.

7.4.2 When the portfolio is complete the Portfolio Supervisor will complete the APEL Portfolio Supervisor Form (form 3) and will recommend whether the APEL portfolio has met the learning outcomes for the credit applied for.

7.5 Submission of Portfolio

7.5.1 Portfolios should, where possible, be submitted in an electronic format. If this is not possible then a hard copy should be submitted.

7.5.2 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).

7.5.3 The Portfolio Supervisor should submit the completed Portfolio Supervisor Form to the Faculties Support Office along with the portfolio.

5 Whether a claim is complex is for the person assessing the claim to determine.
7.6 Verification of APEL by the Faculty Committee and the APECL Board

7.6.1 The recommendation of the APEL Portfolio Supervisor must be verified by the appropriate Faculty Committee. Decisions will be reported to the APECL Board.

7.6.2 The Faculty Committee will reach a decision on the recommendation for the award of credit for the portfolio submission. The Portfolio Supervisor and EMS will be informed of the decision. For existing students the Faculty/School are informed.

7.6.3 If a large number of applicants seek entry with APEL onto the same Kent programme (i.e. from the same professional background), the Faculty Committee may stage a special approval meeting to consider them. This meeting would include members of the Faculty Committee and a subject specialist to view and consider portfolios and approve decisions.

7.7 Informing the Applicant

7.7.1 Once a decision is finalised the applicant is informed via an Admissions Offer letter. 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.

7.7.2 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.

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

7.7.4 If approved, the APEL will be recorded on the Student Data System by EMS for new students and by the School/Centre for existing students.

7.8 Feedback

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

7.9 Reporting Decision to APECL Board

7.9.1 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).

7.9.2 The APECL Board will not reverse decisions, but can make recommendations on future decisions.

8. Procedure for Establishing Articulation Agreements

8.1 The University will consider entering into articulation agreements with institutions that have satisfied the requirements for pre-collaborative institutional approval as set out in Collaborative Provision: Policies and Procedures: Part 1 - Development of New Collaborative Provision.

8.2 In an articulation arrangement, an assessment is made of the equivalence of the learning undertaken at another institution or with that required by a stage or stages of an appropriate programme of study at Kent, with the aim of securing direct entry with advanced standing.
via a suitable APL protocol for **an agreed cohort or cohorts** of students from the partner institution to a specified Kent programme.

8.2.1 Such APL protocols should be based on a mapping of the equivalence, in terms of level, volume and relevance, of learning outcomes arising from modules considered cognate between appropriate programmes at each party. The APL assessment must be undertaken by an appropriate member of academic staff in the subject area at Kent. Such assessments must comply with the limits on the amount of credit that might be awarded via APL as set out in Annex 3 of Kent’s Credit Framework for Taught Programmes.

8.3 **Quality Assurance**

8.3.1 Articulation arrangements must conform to the requirements of this Annex.

8.3.2 The School undertaking the APL protocol will be responsible for ensuring that it conforms to the requirements of Annex R. The Quality Assurance Office will advise on this process.

8.3.3 Any APL protocol must be ratified by the appropriate Faculty Committee of the University prior to the admission of any cohort of student to a Kent programme by this means.

8.3.4 Following the approval of the APL protocol, any amendments to the learning outcomes of any of the modules upon which the initial assessment of the equivalence of learning must be reported by the parties. Any such amendment will require reassessment of the APL Protocol and its reconfirmation by the appropriate Faculty Committee prior to the admission of further cohorts of students by this means.

9. **Further Guidance**

The following guidance documents are available to support the submission of APECL claims:

- Guidance for Applicants/Students
- Guidance for Staff
- Example Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) Portfolio