



Accreditation of Prior Learning (Experiential and/or Certificated) - A Guide for Students/Applicants

1. Introduction

This document is to provide practical guidance to help students and applicants apply for credit through Accredited Prior Learning - whether that learning has been gained at another academic institution, through experience in the workplace, or another location. This document should be read in conjunction with the Accreditation of Prior Learning (Experiential and/or Certificated) Policy 2019.

2. What is the Accreditation of Prior Learning?

Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) relates to any previous learning which is either experiential or certificated by another institution:

Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)

This is the process by which credit is sought for learning that has not been assessed or awarded by an academic institution. Instead, it is learning which has been gained through a range of experiences. It is personal and sometimes unconsciously gained, often in the workplace. Skills, knowledge and abilities that come with this type of learning can be matched to those gained by traditional learning in academic institutions. This type of learning is most commonly gained in the workplace, but can also be sourced from volunteering, self-study or leisure activities.

Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL)

The process by which the University will formally assess and recognise learning that has been awarded and certified by another education or training provider. Most commonly, the University will need to see your certificates and transcripts to make this assessment

3. What can APL be used for?

APL can be used in several situations. Firstly, it can be used to demonstrate to the University that, despite not having traditional qualifications, you meet the entry requirements needed to begin a particular course. For example, you may not have a Bachelors degree needed to start a Masters course, but you have five or more years work experience which is relevant to that course. That experience can then be assessed to see if it can be accredited as an alternative to formal qualifications.

Secondly, you may feel that your experience or learning at another academic institution, covered the content of an individual module or group of modules. The APL process is a way for you to show that learning and potentially earn formal credit for it. This could result in you being exempted from a particular module, or even join the degree course in year two or three.

4. How do I apply for APCL?

If you have credit certificated and awarded by another academic institution, it could also be recognised by Bath Spa University. If the credit is of sufficient quantity and at the right level of achievement, it could allow you to enter the University with 'advanced standing', which means beginning your studies at Level 5 (year two) or Level 6 (year three) of a degree. To enter at Level 5 you would require 120 Higher Education credits, and entry at Level 6 would require 240 credits.

In the first instance, to find out if your prior credit can be used, you should speak to the Admissions Team. They will need to see your certificates and detailed transcripts of the prior certificated learning. The transcripts should include detail module descriptors and the amount of credit awarded.

5. How is prior certificated learning (APCL) assessed?

If the certificated learning meets a basic threshold (that it is relevant to the course applied for and was awarded in the last five years) Admissions will forward the detailed transcript to the course leader of the course you have applied for.

The course leader will map the contents of the transcript to ensure that the content, credit volume and the currency (age) of the learning matches the learning outcomes of the Bath Spa University course. The course leader will decide whether the prior learning is sufficient for entry to either Level 5 or 6 of the course.

6. How do I apply for APEL?

Assessing experiential learning is more complicated and there are four stages in the process.

Stage one is the initial discussion and the completion of the submission. In the first instance you should contact the Admissions Team for a preliminary discussion about your prior experiential learning. Admissions will then relay this to the course leader. If they agree to proceed with your application for APEL, you will be asked to complete five written tasks within a certain period of time, usually two weeks.

Admissions will send you the form to complete these tasks on. These tasks will enable you to demonstrate the suitability of your experience. The course leader may want to discuss the tasks with you first and offer guidance where necessary. You are welcome at any stage to contact Admissions or the course leader if you have questions or require further guidance. The five tasks to complete are:

1. A description of why you have applied for the course and how it relates to your prior learning (academically or experientially) - (250 words)
2. A summary of your experience and how it relates to the course of study - (250 words)

3. A reflection on what you have learnt from the experience - (250 words)
4. A consideration of how your experience has advanced your skills and knowledge and at what level - (300 words)
5. An essay on a topic of the course leader's choosing related to the programme - (300 words for undergraduate programmes, 1000 words for postgraduate). Admissions will liaise with course leaders on this topic before the form is sent to the applicant.

Stage Two is the assessment of those tasks. The course leader will assess the tasks and look at the following areas:

- Content: does the evidence presented in your written work indicate that you have acquired the types of knowledge/understanding/skills required?
- Level: does the evidence indicate that the learning has been at the same level required for entry to the course?
- Volume: does the evidence indicate that the learning has been of sufficient volume to deserve credit equivalent to the level required for entry?
- Currency: Is the learning still current? Five years is considered, in general, the maximum 'shelf life' of learning to be 'current'. However, learning in subjects where there has been rapid technological change will have briefer currency. The five year maximum can be extended if the learning is supported by evidence to show the applicant has maintained their knowledge/understanding.
- Authenticity: is the evidence presented authentic?

Based on this assessment, the course leader will make one of three recommendations: to accept the submission; to reject the submission; or to request further information/detail from the applicant.

Stage three requires a senior manager, responsible for admissions, to review the paperwork and recommendation. If the senior manager agrees with the recommendation, it will be signed off and returned to admissions. If the recommendation cannot be supported, it will be returned to the course leader for reconsideration.

Stage four is the notification of decision. Admissions will contact you to notify you of the final decision.

6. What should I include with my application for APL?

If you are applying for APCL (prior certificated learning), you should include any relevant certificates and detailed transcripts - from an academic institution or training provider - showing the modules completed, with descriptors of the modules and the value (in credit terms) of each module.

If you are applying for APEL (prior experiential learning), your written submission should be accompanied by a portfolio of evidence. This evidence could be anything that you have produced personally or been responsible for or involved in. The following list shows examples of what could be included:

- Documents - such as reports/plans/handbooks/publicity/articles that you have written
- Presentations you have made or written
- Budgets/forecasts

- Emails/correspondence
- Photographs
- Minutes from meetings with actions assigned to you

You could also include indirect evidence gathered from others about you, such as:

- Statements/letters/references from employers/colleagues/clients
- Certificates of attendance from courses
- Letters of employment
- Newspaper reports

It would help the course leader in their assessment if for each piece of evidence you explain/comment on why it is being included in your portfolio.

7. When do I need to submit my claim?

All claims must be submitted in advance of the start of the course or individual module. Sufficient time - at least three weeks - must be given for the assessment to take place.

8. Can I appeal the decision?

Yes, as long as the appeal falls within the scope of the [Appeals Procedure for Applicants](#)

9. Who do I contact if I have questions?

In the first instance you should contact Admissions on 01225 876180 or admissions@bathspa.ac.uk

10. Where is the full Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy?

The policy can be found on our website - here [\(the link will be added once the policy is approved\)](#)