

SRC OU Recognition of Prior Learning Guidelines

The guidelines below are to be read and used in conjunction with SRC RPL policy. This document will be reviewed in line with RPL policy review dates.

Southern Regional College provides a student-centred environment that is responsive to the academic and vocational requirements of individuals of all ages and backgrounds, in which they may be empowered to reach their full potential. To widen participation in learning the College recognises the value of previous learning and experience. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) (i.e. that which is certificated), Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL), Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) are included in the formal approach of such recognition. The guidelines are informed by the DfE working group on APL and QAA (Quality Assurance Agency) UK Quality Code for Higher Education, the general principles apply to all HE candidates, but processes may be shaped by awarding body requirements.

Prior informal/non-formal learning is learning based on experience. It includes all learning which you have done up to this point which has not already been formally assessed. This includes prior learning gained through life and work experiences (paid and voluntary), as well as prior learning gained through community-based learning, workplace learning and training, continuing professional development and independent learning. The APL process will allow the learning you have gained from experience to be recognised and counted.

Two forms of prior learning are recognised:

1. **Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL)** – This is learning associated with a structured, formal course of study, which has already been assessed and accredited, either in higher education or by a professional body.
2. **Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)** – this is learning acquired through life, work experience and study not previously attested through formal education or certification.

To be given credit on a programme, such previous learning needs to be at the appropriate level or have potential to reach that level with further study and reflection.

Students who are able to demonstrate that they have already fulfilled some of the learning outcomes of the programme by means other than attendance on the planned programme, and will be able, by completing the remaining requirements, to fulfil the learning outcomes of the programme and attain the standard required for the award, may be admitted with advanced standing, thus exempting them from some modules or stages of the programme.

If the student's prior learning is not certificated, the college itself will assess the student's learning directly, either by requiring the applicant to take the normal assessments of the programme or by some other appropriate form of assessment.

A student admitted on the basis of uncertificated learning and experience or through prior certified learning is subject to the same principles of admission as all other students on that programme. Subject to the requirements of any Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body

(PSRB) requirements the partner institution has discretion to admit a student with exemption from certain elements of the programme or with specific credit.

Students are actively encouraged by College HE Lecturers to avail of APCL/APEL/RPL as part of the admissions process and criteria for making and supporting their claims for APL/APEL/RPL prior to admission.

Students may be awarded Recognition for Prior Learning (certified, experiential or uncertified), towards the requirements of a named award up two-thirds of the total credit requirements for that award.

Two-thirds of RPL is only permitted for full, three-year bachelor's degrees (360 credits) or full Masters Degrees (a minimum of 180 credits) and not sub-awards, where the usual maximum is 50%.

Performance in work for which an award of credit for prior learning has been made is not taken into account in the calculation of the final award. This means that Recognition for Prior Learning (certified, experiential or uncertified) is **not** permitted at **level 6** of a Bachelor's degree **or** for the thesis/dissertation module, where students are expected to complete 120 credits to gain the award.

RPL allows for candidates to enter stage 2 or stage 3 of an undergraduate qualification based on completion of an appropriate certificated qualification from a recognised UK HE programme of study within 16 years. For more guidance see [Credit transfer | Open University](#)

With stage exemption of this kind, it will be recorded on the student's transcript that stage exemption was awarded, but credit for the stage(s) from which the student was exempted would not be transferred to OU validated awards.

Supporting documentation:

- Application for Accreditation of Prior Learning (Higher Education)
- Application for Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (Higher Education)

Links to other policies:

- HE Admissions Policy and Admissions Criteria

RPL/APEL/APL Procedures

There are five stages to the process, as shown in the chart below:

Stage 1: Information and individual advice on RPL/APEL/APL
Stage 2: Guidance on planning an RPL/APEL/APL claim

Stage 3: Producing a claim
Stage 4: Assessing a claim in line with Awarding Organisation (AO) requirements
Stage 5: Claim Outcomes: Recording the outcome and notifying the student and the AO if applicable

These stages may involve Course Coordinator/APEL Advisor, Subject Expert, Curriculum Area Manager, Quality Manager **and** HE Teaching and Learning Advisor. Academic or Campus Services Admissions staff will be involved in advising and guiding students to prepare evidence of learning and will not be involved in the assessment process.

Claims for RPL/APEL/APL will be judged on level, relevance, status, authenticity and currency. It is the student’s responsibility to provide College with relevant details of previous attainments and unit/module learning outcomes.

Level. Level is defined in accordance with the National Qualifications Framework/Academic Framework generic level descriptors for defining accepted tiers of learning achievement. In assessing the level of prior learning from institutions outside the UK, assistance will be sought from recognised authoritative public sources, such as UK National Agency for the recognition and comparison of international qualifications and skills (UK NARIC).

Relevance. For recognition of achievement, the prior learning must be relevant to the target programme of study. This means that it must be at a similar level, must have similar learning outcomes, and cover a similar knowledge and/or skills base. The level, learning outcomes and knowledge/skills base need not be identical, but they must be close enough to those in the target programme to allow the student to progress without the need to repeat the exempted study.

Status. Status refers to certificated learning (APL) only and requires that the learning has been assessed according to relevant criteria, and that the result has been formally documented, normally through the medium of a transcript or official letter. If status is uncertain, the student may be asked to provide additional evidence e.g. through a reflective statement.

Authenticity. The assessor will satisfy themselves that the evidence, e.g. certificate belongs to the student by seeing the original, or if it was in a different name, by also evidence of change of name e.g. a marriage certificate.

Currency. For prior learning to be current it would need to have been achieved relatively recently. The definition of currency may vary from vocational area to vocational area (subject to subject) and may need careful evaluation prior to the award of APL/APEL/RPL. Evidence of continuing relevant/academic activity between the learning and application may be required in support of a claim for the currency of the learning.

No APL/APEL/RPL recognition may be counted towards the requirements of more than one academic award of the same type at the same level.

Stage 1 Information and individual advice on APL/APEL/RPL - provided by academic course team at application stage.

This involves students systematically reflecting and assessing their prior achievements and experiences to select those where significant, relevant learning occurred. Individual applicants will receive clear guidance on the rationale for their evidence of learning and advice on its compilation and desired overall structure, for example mapping to learning outcomes or performance indicators. Submission and assessment procedures will be clearly stated and will include provision for discussion of a draft prior to formal submission.

Stage 2 Guidance on planning an APL/APEL/RPL claim - provided by academic course team at application stage including a subject expert.

Applicants will be advised in each case as to what would comprise adequate evidence of prior learning. A claim for APL for entry is to be supported by a Portfolio of Evidence of Learning including a Personal Reflection and examples of evidence to authenticate your claim. Additional material may be required. The Portfolio should contain:

- Title page
- Table of contents
- Curriculum Vitae
- Employment History (including a detailed workplace reference)
- Education and Training History (including a description of training)
- Training and Professional Qualifications (certification)
- Personal Reflection
- Other evidence – this may include informal Learning Activities, e.g., conferences/workshops etc.
- a summary of the learning of knowledge and/or skills claimed;
- reflection on the learning claimed in relation to the target programme;
- a summary of evidence against each element of learning or learning outcome, cross referenced against the full evidence;

Evidence may include:

- work/practice-based documents;
- reports on observations of practice;
- video/audio tapes, with commentary and analysis related to achievement of learning outcomes;
- analytic and evaluative description of practice;

- statements from supervisors in relation to aspects of practice;

Students must state how they will collect, and present evidence required for accreditation.

Complete Appendix 1 and 2.

Stage 3 Producing a claim – Subject expert/Course Coordinator with student prior to enrolment on programme of study

For APL students will be required to map previous certificated achievement against elements of the qualification to which they intend to enrol. The attached form (appendix 1) may assist this process.

For APEL, clear statements need to be submitted, identifying the learning, expressed in precise terms to claim possession of knowledge and skills. Students will collect and collate evidence to support the statements. Evidence will be presented in a structure appropriate to the elements of/the qualification being claimed, normally in the form of a portfolio. Students are advised and encouraged to present relevant and concise portfolios. The attached form (appendix 2) should be used for this process

Stage 4 Assessing a claim - portfolio claim reviewed formally as part of an APL Board comprising Course Coordinator/APEL Advisor, Subject Expert, Curriculum Area Manager, Quality Manager and HE Teaching and Learning Advisor

All applications shall be formally considered by an APL Board including at least two members of staff and should normally be drawn from:

1. Quality Manager
2. Course Coordinator /APL Adviser
3. Subject Expert
4. Curriculum Area Manager
5. HE Teaching and Learning Advisor

Applicants seeking exemption based on prior experiential learning may be invited to attend for interview by the APL Board. A record of the interview shall be made using a form (documentation included at Appendix 3, 4 and 5). All claims will be decided as follows: Approved/ Insufficient Evidence/Not approved.

Assessment methods may vary but will include assessment of documentation against element of/qualification being claimed, oral questioning or demonstration of skills. Whatever manner of assessment is used, it must be such that the judgement made can be considered by representatives of the awarding organisation e.g. external verifiers, moderators or examiners with the same degree of confidence as other more traditionally assessed performances.

Allegations of fraudulent applications

At Stage 4, it is the responsibility of the Board to fully assure that all information provided by the student is accurate, valid and authentic. Assurance will be sought from the applicant at interview if further follow up is required when assessing evidence for APL/APEL/RPL.

Stage 5 APL/APEL/RPL Claim outcomes - portfolio claim reviewed formally as part of an APL Board comprising Course Coordinator/APEL Advisor, Subject Expert, Curriculum Area Manager, Quality Manager and HE Teaching and Learning Advisor.

Claims may be approved or not approved. The student will be informed.

Approved claims will go forward to the awarding organisation with other assessed work for external scrutiny if required, accompanied by relevant APL/APEL/RPL documentation.

Not approved claims will be returned to the student, with either a requirement for further evidence in particular aspects of the claim (to be detailed) or to recommend that APL/APEL/RPL is unlikely to be awarded with the reasons explained in detail. Partially approved claims may be awarded where specific elements are supported by evidence. The student will be informed.

Applicants shall be informed of the outcome following the Board's decision in a timely basis using Appendix 6.

Where a claim has been determined as a) 'insufficient evidence' or b) 'not approved', applicants shall be provided with detailed feedback including, in respect of a), identification of those areas where the claim has been deemed deficient and, in respect of b), clear explanation for the claim being determined 'not approved'.

Where the decision is of insufficient evidence, there shall be one opportunity for the candidate to provide additional evidence to the Board if this is considered necessary and appropriate, within a timeframe determined by the Board.

All successful claims for admission to a programme or exemption from a module(s) or part of a programme shall be reported to the relevant Subject/Course Committee and shall be reported by the Course Director/coordinator at the January/June Progress/Examination Board.

The decision of the Board (Partner Institution as defined in Section 22.6 OU Regulations) shall be final (no right of appeal except on grounds of procedural irregularity). Students should follow the Academic Appeals Process.

The Assistant Director Further, Higher Education and Quality Improvement monitors and evaluates the use and impact of APL/APEL/RPL. This is evaluated annually and feedback provided to the Director of Curriculum.

Accreditation

Approved claims may not be included in the calculation of the award classification.

Appendix 1

Accreditation of Prior Learning/Recognition of Prior Learning (Higher Education)

Student:

Course applied for:

Course studied to date:

Learning already achieved:

Date of achievement:

Course studied to date:	Course applied to:
Unit or Modules completed from: <i>Unit or Module Title and learning outcomes</i>	Mapping to unit or modules: <i>Unit or Module Title and learning outcomes</i>
Credit:	Credit:

The modules above have been examined and cover similar or the same learning outcomes.

Authorised by the Quality Manager

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 2

Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (Higher Education)

Student:

Application:

Course studied to date:

Experience achieved:

Dates of experience:

Experience claimed	Mapping to modules: <i>Unit or Module Title and learning outcomes</i>
Credit:	Credit:

The experience above covers similar or the same learning outcomes.

Authorised by Quality Manager

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 3

APL ASSESSMENT / INTERVIEW PRO-FORMA

SOUTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE INSTRUCTIONS TO APL BOARD /INTERVIEWERS

Where an applicant is not to be interviewed, the pro-forma should be used for recording assessment of the evidence presented and the decision of the APL Board / Subject Selectors. The form shall be signed by each participating member of staff.

Where an applicant is to be interviewed, at least two members of academic staff should be present, and the form signed by each.

Sections A, B, E & F should always be completed. If an applicant is interviewed, section C must be completed. If the applicant is seeking exemption from an individual module(s) or entry via Advanced Standing, section D must also be completed.

SECTION A: Candidate details

Name of candidate: _____

Title of course applied for: _____

Mode of attendance (P/T or F/T): _____

Date of interview (if applicable): _____

Evidence presented (certificated/experiential): _____

Exemption sought - admission / module(s) _____

SECTION B: Evaluation of evidence presented (certificated or experiential learning)

NOTE: Appendix 4 may be used for detailed assessment of a portfolio of evidence.

A copy of the evidence produced for the interview should be retained by the APL Board.

Appendix 4

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT OF APEL PORTFOLIOS

SOUTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

PROGRAMME:

1. Description of experience (10%)
 - 1.1 **Clarity** in terms of:
 - a) Specification of amount of time devoted to the activity.
 - b) Precision of description of activity
 - 1.2 **Relevance** in terms of:
 - a) Linkage to learning outcomes of Teaching and Training Studies course units.

2. REFLECTION ON EXPERIENCE (30%)
 - 2.1 **Depth**, in that the reflection:
 - a) Moves from the anecdotal/personal to make generalisations.
 - b) Moves from the descriptive to the analytical and evaluative levels.
 - c) Demonstrates change in behaviour because of reflection on experience.
 - 2.2 **Breadth** in that it:
 - a) Relates to each of the learning outcomes identified.

3. DESCRIPTION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES (30%)
 - 3.1 **Specificity** in terms of:
 - a) Clear identification of changes in knowledge, understanding or competence
 - b) Currency: the learning outcomes are relevant now

4. EVIDENCE (20%)
 - 4.1 **Relevance** insofar as it:
 - a) Is clearly linked to the learning outcomes identified above.
 - b) Is relevant today: evidence of *recent* application where learning outcomes were acquired some time ago.
 - 4.2 Authenticity in that:
 - a) The evidence demonstrates that the student did what is claimed.

5. PORTFOLIO (10%)
 - 5.1 **Organisation** in terms of:
 - a) Clear mapping of experience → reflection → learning outcomes → evidence
 - 5.2 **Clarity** in terms of:
 - a) Accessibility to non-specialists
 - Only for subject-specific credit

Appendix 5

Module Exemption

ONLY to be completed for candidates applying for APL to gain exemption from an individual module(s). Please indicate how the candidate’s prior learning or prior experiential learning meets the relevant learning outcomes for each module for which an exemption is sought.

Title and code of module for which an exemption is sought:	Outline of evidence presented by candidate that he/she has met the learning outcomes of the module	Module exemption recommended? Yes/No

Appendix 6

Recommendations of APL Board

Please add any additional information you feel may be relevant when considering this applicant's request for APL.

Overall Recommendation:

Approved	
Insufficient evidence	
Not approved	

Signature: _____ Position: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Position: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Position: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Position: _____ Date: _____