**Liverpool Hope University**

# 

Academic Quality Handbook (QH11):

Policy on Accreditation of Prior Learning\*

\*This documentincludes Admission with Advanced Standing and Credit Transfer**.**

# Introduction and Definitions

* 1. This document sets out policies and procedures for the Accreditation of Prior Learning at Liverpool Hope University. Accreditation of Prior Learning allows students who are enrolling on award bearing taught programmes of study at the University to claim “credit” for previous learning. The previous learning must be relevant to the programme for which they are applying, and if their application is successful, the credit will count towards their chosen programme of study.
  2. Accreditation of Prior Learning is the generic term used for the award of credits on the basis of demonstrated learning which has taken place in the past.
  3. As set out in relevant national guidance[[1]](#footnote-1), there are two main categories within the accreditation of prior learning:-
* APCL– the Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning is a term which refers specifically to the recognition of certificated learning through the assignment of credit. This is learning which has been formally assessed by a recognised educational provider and for which an academic transcript or equivalent formal documentation is available.
* APEL–the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning – the formal recognition of prior learning gained through other experience, including paid or unpaid work, self-directed study, study for which no credit has been awarded or through leisure pursuits.
  1. Liverpool Hope will consider applications for APCL. The arrangements for this are set out in this policy.
  2. The University does not normally grant exemption of credit for prior experiential learning APEL, though it will take experience into account in determining suitability for admission to a degree. This may be particularly appropriate in the case of mature students.
  3. PHD degrees are outside the scope of policy because they are awarded solely on the basis of assessment of the thesis and there are no credit values attached to such programmes.
  4. Taught elements within a research degree, for example the EdD, constitute a progression requirement of the University and where approval for exemption from these is sought, this should be considered as an exceptional case and reviewed in accordance with clause 6.8 of this policy.
  5. In determining the maximum proportion of any award available for APCL the University has sought to balance the recognition of prior learning with a desire to ensure that awards from the University reflect sufficient evidence of study having been undertaken within the institution.

# Policy Statements

* 1. All applications for APCL must be made and approved prior to entry to the programme in question, unless the department concerned has agreed that exceptional circumstances apply. In all cases, APCL must be approved prior to starting the relevant unit / module(s) from which exemption is sought.
  2. Providing the applicant has successfully completed a module/programme of study, at a recognised educational institution, that is comparable in terms of content and credit to the unit/module(s) against which s/he is claiming exemption, an application can be made for exemption – see section 2.5
  3. No APCL award may be given which implies partial completion of a course unit. Credit can only be given for whole units/modules, where consideration has been given to mapping the Intended Leaning Outcomes of the unit to the evidence provided of prior learning.
  4. The University will award standard credit exemptions against the [National Professional Qualifications](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-professional-qualifications-frameworks) (NPQs)[[2]](#footnote-2) for entry onto a full Masters programme. NPQ qualifications will not be considered for entry to a PGcert or PGDip[[3]](#footnote-3). Please see Appendix 1 for the credit value for each NPQ certificate.
  5. The Assessment Criteria for judging APCL claims are:
     + **Authenticity** – is the evidence genuine, and is the achievement clearly the applicant’s own?
     + **Relevance and Validity** – is the learning demonstrated by the evidence relevant to the target programme of study at the University? This means it must be at the same level, meet similar learning outcomes, and cover a similar knowledge and skills base. The level, learning outcomes and knowledge base need not be identical but must be close to those in the target programme. Does the evidence support the claim? Is it relevant to the learning outcomes for the area(s) and are the learning, knowledge, skills and achievements demonstrated through the evidence at an acceptable level?
     + **Sufficiency** – is there sufficient evidence to support the claim?
     + **Currency** – is the learning current (i.e. the date of the qualification is still current; normally ten years is considered the maximum at which learning is still relevant. It should be noted that the decision in relation to currency is subject-specific and some learning may not be current much earlier than this. Conversely, in some cases older certified learning may be approved subject to the candidate being able to demonstrate continued engagement in the field, for example via relevant publications in the field, CPD or wider engagement with the relevant profession).
     + **Regulatory** – the applicant meets any wider regulatory / PSRB requirements.
  6. Maximum total APCL

Providing the applicant has successfully completed a module/programme of study at a recognised educational institution that is comparable in terms of content and credit to the units/module(s) against which s/he are claiming **exemption**, application can be made for **exemption** up to the following limits:

# Undergraduate

* + 1. The maximum total APCL which can be granted is normally **120** credits against a 360 credit (three year, full time) undergraduate programme[[4]](#footnote-4).
    2. APCL may be sought for exemption of credits against provision offered at Level C/4 (Year One) and Level I/5 (Year 2) dependent upon the Level and programme of study already completed (and in line with 2.4.1).
    3. APCL claims are most appropriate against entry into Level I(5). However, APCL applications into Level H(6) will be considered on a case by case basis by either a Special Cases Panel or, where appropriate, by the Associate Dean International, the Subject nominated representative and the Dean [or nominee] (where the applicant is from a recognized international partner and an extensive mapping exercise has taken place).

# Postgraduate

* + 1. For postgraduate study, the maximum credits which can normally be awarded under APCL is **60 or 50% of the award’s credit rating, whichever is the lower.** Exemptions from this maximum credit rule may be agreed in exceptional circumstances.
    2. Within postgraduate programmes APCL claims **may not** be made against the dissertation or consultancy project reports.
    3. Notwithstanding 2.6.5 APCL is not normally permitted into the MA Social Work because of the professional requirements of the Award. Individual requests may be considered on a case by case basis.

# Principles

* 1. Credits may be given for prior learning, where the level, standard, content and relevance of that learning are appropriate to a particular approved programme of study.
  2. Decisions regarding the accreditation of prior learning are a matter of academic judgment, with the main consideration being whether the prior learning is broadly equivalent to the learning that would otherwise have been assessed during the course unit.
  3. It is the responsibility of the applicant to make sure that all evidence and supporting application material is submitted in English. Translations into English must be certified, with original documents available on request. Overseas applicants may apply for APCL in the same way as UK and EU applicants. All qualifications and institutions will be checked by the University along with all other relevant requirements (such as visa and immigration conditions).
  4. All applicants for APCL must be treated equitably regardless of the sources of the prior learning that is being considered or the age, gender, marital status, ethnicity, disability, religious belief or sexual orientation of the applicant.
  5. Students can receive an exit award if they have APCL credit in their profile, providing their performance at the University also satisfies the award requirements of the Undergraduate or Postgraduate Degree Regulations.
  6. Special consideration needs to be given to students who have been granted the full amount of APCL on their entry programme but fail the minimum number of credits for the programme and have to be considered to receive an exit award. Departments/Schools will need to check that students have completed sufficient credits to leave the University with the relevant exit award; this means that at least half the taught credits of the exit award have been completed at the University (in line with the University’s Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Degree Regulations). If the student has not completed enough credits, they may only be eligible to receive a transcript of their results.
  7. The criteria against which APCL requests are judged are set out in Clause 2.5 so as to ensure that any student admitted is equipped and prepared to cope with the demands of their learning at Hope.
  8. Advanced Standing, recognizes former students of the University who wish to transfer credit to the same course they have already partially completed and have these credits accepted in order to complete that award. In this case the student’s previous record while at the University will be considered. Applications from students who did not leave the University in good standing will not be automatically rejected, but a measured case needs to be made to the Dean [or nominee] as to why such a student should be readmitted, and the Dean’s [or nominee’s] as decision in such a case will be ratified by the Chair of Academic Committee to ensure cross-faculty consistency and transparency (Further Guidance is found in Appendix 2 of this policy).

3.8.1 Students applying for Advanced Standing will be required to transfer all blocks of study that have previously been attempted and passed. Students will not normally be permitted to retake blocks of study already passed unless the subject judge that they do not fulfil the requirements detailed in 2.5 of this policy.

* 1. Applications for Credit Transfer enable credits from an alternative course at Hope to be accepted as part of a new course at Hope. Students wishing to apply for Credit Transfer should complete the appropriate form.
  2. There are no fees charged for the consideration of APL applications. However, if APCL is approved, the following fees will apply:
     + Credit from an approved Institute of Higher Education – no fee
     + Credit awarded from all other Education / Training Providers is calculated at 1 credit = £10[[5]](#footnote-5)
       - * 30 credits = £300.00
         * 60 credits = £600.00
  3. Applications for APCL are considered on academic grounds and, as such, no formal rights of appeal exist against the final decision of the University, as appeals cannot be made against decisions of academic judgment. Appeals may, however, be made in line with the University’s Appeals and Complaints Procedure on the grounds of procedural irregularity, the emergence of new material information or evidence of bias or prejudice.

# The Application Process – for prospective students4

* 1. Applications for APCL should be made prior to entry and applications are not normally expected to be made on-course. There is no deadline for applications for APCL prior to the start of the academic year, although all applicants are encouraged to apply as early as possible to allow sufficient time for the consideration of their request.
  2. Applications for APCL at undergraduate level should normally be made via UCAS. Other applications should consist of a written request, along with documentary evidence of the prior learning. This can be in the form of transcripts, certificates or other suitable evidence. There must be sufficient evidence such that the programme team can be confident in granting approval. Standard templates and forms are available to support applicants (further guidance and application forms can be found [here](https://www.hope.ac.uk/gateway/staff/governance/academicquality/accreditationofpriorlearning/)).

# Consideration of Applications

* 1. In all cases it is for the relevant Dean [or nominee] as, and the Dean [or nominee] as only, to authorize the award of credit via APCL. The Dean [or nominee] as will do so upon consideration of the recommendation from the appropriate subject assessor/panel (see below).
  2. Applications should be considered by an APCL subject assessor, normally the Head of Department or School, or a panel of academic staff members within the Department or School (depending on the circumstances of the individual Department or School). These staff members may include, for example, the programme director, course unit leader plus one other. Consideration of the applications should include a detailed/documented discussion of how the Intended Learning Outcomes of each unit, where APCL is to be applied, have been met though prior learning or equivalent experience.
  3. The Postgraduate / Undergraduate Director (or equivalent) is expected to provide advice and guidance to current students considering applying for APCL in relation to the programmes intended learning outcomes and evidence required for an application for APCL.
  4. The default assessor is the relevant Head of Department/School. Where a Faculty wishes to have in place other assessors, a list of those so authorized must be kept by the Faculty Executive Officer. Student administration will not progress APCL outcomes unless they carry the authorization of the Faculty Dean [or nominee].

# Assessment of Applications

* 1. A decision regarding whether an application for APCL can be approved will depend on the requirements and specific learning outcomes of the particular programme as well as the details of the individual application.
  2. If the APCL assessor decides that further evidence is required in addition to the applicant’s initial submission, they should inform the student as soon as possible regarding the particular evidence required.
  3. If the assessor decides that they wish to see the applicant to ascertain additional information in support of the application, arrangements for an interview should be made as soon as possible.
  4. When assessing the evidence against the requirements of the intended learning outcomes of the programme and particular course unit, the assessor should consider the following:-
     + - * Subject content and knowledge
         * Volume of learning
         * Level of learning
         * Evidence of achievement
         * Any particular restrictions imposed by Professional or Statutory Bodies, if applicable.
  5. The assessor should refer to the characteristics of the Quality Assurance Agency’s (QAA) [qualification descriptors](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/qualifications-frameworks.pdf?sfvrsn=170af781_14) to the level of work or course unit to assess whether it is acceptable.
  6. An application for APCL should not be approved until the criteria as outlined in 2.5 are satisfied.
  7. The University reserves the right to terminate an application for study if the applicant is found to have omitted relevant facts or information in connection with their application or who has falsified or plagiarised any part of their application, both for initial applications for a place at the University and for APCL.
  8. Exceptionally, individual applications may be received where the level of APCL sought falls outside the norms established by this policy. Such applications, together with the supporting evidence, should be submitted using the standard templates. These should then be considered on a case by case basis. Initial consideration will be by the Head of Department or School, who will make a recommendation to the Dean of Faculty [or nominee]. Any decision made by the panel in respect of exceptional applications should be managed in accordance with [7] below.

1. **Outcome of Applications** 
   1. A successful application for APCL does not guarantee an offer of a place on a programme. Meeting entry criteria does not guarantee an offer and admissions tutors choose from a pool of eligible applicants in any given year.
   2. Decisions about APCL applications should be relayed to the School/Programme Administrator, applicants should be informed and the normal processes for an application to study should be followed.
   3. Records of decisions relating to APCL applications should be maintained by the relevant Department/School (and details of numbers of applications received, granted and refused, etc. retained for information). Monitoring should take place, normally at Department/School level and within Student Administration, to ensure that the criteria for APCL remain objective and are being fairly and consistently applied. It is important that the progress of students admitted with APCL is monitored, so that information is built up on the suitability of particular qualifications for the granting of credit exemption. This could be covered in Department/School annual reviews of programmes or via a separate report.
   4. Student Administration should record successful applications for APCL as a credit on the student’s record on the student information system. Unsuccessful applicants should be advised of the reasons for the decision and, where appropriate, given an indication of any further evidence which might be required to come to a final decision.
   5. In the case of credit bearing CPD programmes, the nominated CPD administrator should record successful applications for APCL as a credit on the student’s record on the Student Information System (SITs).
2. **Awarded Credit**
   1. Any credit awarded through APCL is treated in the same way as credit awarded through the normal taught route, except that it does not contribute to the calculation of the final award. It will also be represented as ‘Prior Learning’ on the student’s academic transcript.
   2. Particular consideration will need to be given to the case of students who have been granted the full amount of APCL on their entry programme but fail the minimum number of Liverpool Hope credits for the award and are consequently considered for an exit award.
3. **Entry**

Students entering directly into Level I or Level H of an Undergraduate degree or partway through a Postgraduate degree, will not have had the induction that students normally receive at the beginning of their studies. The University has established a process by which all students entering at Level I or H of an Undergraduate degree, or partway through a PGT degree, are invited to a specially designed full induction session with the Gateway team, which covers all the information normally given in the Level C sessions and more. Each Department receiving a student with APCL must further ensure that the student receives all appropriate advice relating to subject-specific matters. In particular, Departments should consider carefully whether there are any health and safety implications of allowing students to be exempted from particular units/modules on the basis of APCL. The decision on whether evidence of previous knowledge/experience satisfies departmental safety requirements should be made by the Programme Lead and relevant Health and Safety Officer.

1. **Exemptions from elements of programmes for students registered at Liverpool Hope** 
   1. Students registered on a programme of study at Liverpool Hope may, with the permission of the Head of Department/School and subject to the arrangements for student exchange, be exempted from part of their approved programme of study and be permitted to study abroad or at another university provided that:
      * the courses proposed to be taken are relevant and that their outcomes coincide with those of the Liverpool Hope programme and are of at least equivalent credit value and level
      * that the requirements for minimum amounts of credit to be undertaken at Liverpool Hope are satisfied
      * that the requirement for 50% of the assessment for the award to be conducted by Liverpool Hope is satisfied and that the marks achieved whilst undertaking an exchange are imported for the purposes of the award and formally ratified by the relevant Progression and Award Board.
   2. Such exemptions should normally be granted in the second year of an undergraduate programme provided that any prerequisites for the programme are satisfied. The approval of the exam board is also required for study abroad for part of the second year where marks from assessments contribute to the classification.

# APPENDIX 1: Credit Exemption for National Professional Qualifications

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| **Title of National Professional Qualification** | **Number and level of credits** |
| National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership (NPQML) | 30 credits at Level 7 |
| National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership (NPQSL) | 30 credits at Level 7 |
| National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) | 60 credits at level 7 |
| National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership (NPQEL) | 60 credits at level 7 |

# APPENDIX 2 - Additional Guidance

# Visiting Students

Applications from Visiting Students who request transfer to a Liverpool Hope University programme of study following completion of or during their visiting placement may be considered through the APCL process. In such cases, previous study at their original home institution (based on an academic transcript) and/or other evidence, as well as study undertaken as a visiting student at Hope, may be taken into account in making the APCL assessment. Note: the assessment regime for visiting students may vary from those of full- time Liverpool Hope students. Any variation approved for a particular student while under the visiting student regime must be taken into account when assessing work undertaken at Hope as part of the APCL application

# Students who have credits from Hope for the course they wish to rejoin

Students who have credits from the University and who wish the University to accept these credits as part of their course when they return to study for a higher award (e.g. an Honours degree) within the same cycle (i.e. undergraduate or postgraduate) should apply for Advanced Standing. Outcomes may differ for students who exit in good academic standing and those who exit because of ‘failure to progress’.

1. **Students who wish to transfer credits as part of their course**

Students who wish to transfer credit from one program at Hope to another program and have these credits accepted as part of their new course should complete the appropriate Credit Transfer form. Outcomes may differ for students in good academic standing and those who do not.

# Double Counting

APCL can be granted for all learning from other educational institutions, even if that learning has already resulted in the award of a qualification similar to, or the same as, the qualification which the student is seeking to be awarded by the University. Similarly, the University places no restrictions on other institutions awarding qualifications on the basis of credits or qualifications gained at Liverpool Hope.

APCL from a Liverpool Hope qualification may however not be used to count towards a second Liverpool Hope qualification which is both at the same level and in a similar subject to the first e.g. a student who has left with a BA Honours in Music (as an example) would not be able to count APCL from this course towards a second BA Honours in Ancient Music.

# Articulation agreements

Articulation describes a formal relationship between two linked programmes, provided by two institutions. The successful completion of a named programme (or part of a programme) in one institution is recognised as providing the basis for entry with advanced standing to a named programme in the second institution (i.e. one awarding institution recognises the credit awarded by another). Articulation agreements are dealt with under the procedures for collaborative provision and are recorded in the Register of Collaborative Provision. They sit outside this policy.

1. <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/accreditation-prior-learning-guidelines.pdf?sfvrsn=edadf981> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Full mapping of the NPQ qualifications has been completed by the School of Teacher Education and approved by the Chair of Academic Committee [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This does not affect exit routes from the specific Masters programmes - please refer to [PGT Academic Regulations](https://www.hope.ac.uk/media/gateway/studentgateway/supportandwellbeing/studentadministrationdocuments/UAR10%20The%20Classification%20of%20Taught%20Postgraduate%20Awards.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Please refer to Academic regulations “Framework of Qualifications”; students studying on the International Professional Certificate in Professional Practice (level 6) may be granted exemption from up to 30 credits via APCL [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. In some cases, for example, CPD programmes, the fee may be reduced at the discretion of the Dean. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)