



## ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR LEARNING POLICY

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Applicant Services

Jan 2016

Approved Academic Board Jan 2016

## VERSION CONTROL

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PURPOSE/CHANGE	AUTHOR	DATE
Original document approved at Academic Board	Registrar & Director of Student Administration/Senior Officer (Collaborative Provision), Quality Assurance & Enhancement	December 2015
Amended sections following actions from June Academic Board: 4.2; 6.2 and 6.4	Registrar & Director of Student Administration	29 June 2016
Amended sections in line with the Admissions Policy 3.2, 5.3 and 7.1	Acting Head of Admissions	15 December 2016
Changed mentions of Admissions to Applicant Services	Senior Applicant Services Officer (Operations)	20 October 2017

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1.** The University appreciates that not all prospective students meet the standard entry criteria for its courses, but that such applicants may have achieved equivalent learning outcomes through other qualifications, self-directed study, and/or professional experience. The University has, therefore, developed a policy and procedure that provides prospective students with the opportunity to demonstrate how they meet the entry criteria in other ways. This process is referred to as the **Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)**.
- 1.2.** In its broadest sense, Accreditation of Prior Learning refers to the recognition of previous certificated learning and/or learning experience undertaken by a student and/or applicant. This recognised learning can also be given a ‘credit-value’, which may permit a prospective student to commence a course of study at a later stage, or with some credits exempted. This is sometimes referred to as entry with advanced standing, which may enable a student direct entry into Level 5 or Level 6 of an undergraduate degree, or exemption from the ‘Certificate’ stage or ‘taught’ components of a Level 7 (postgraduate) qualification.

## 2. Types of Accreditation of Prior Learning

APL encompasses credit transfer, APCL, and APEL processes.

### 2.1. Credit Accumulation Transfer Scheme (CATS)

The Credit Accumulation Transfer Scheme (CATS) allows applicants to use previously gained qualifications, which are recognised/positioned within the higher education qualifications framework (FHEQ), towards credit accumulation at the University. For example, where the applicant has achieved a Diploma in Higher Education from another degree-awarding body, s/he may be permitted direct entry into Level 6 of a Falmouth University award; in this instance, 240 credits would be transferred and accredited to the student record at Levels 4 and 5. The eligibility criteria and restrictions governing the transfer of credit under CATS are the same as those applied to all APL applications. The University must therefore ensure that credit transfer is applied fairly and consistently for all its courses, with due consideration for the currency, volume, and relevancy of the credit transferred.

### 2.2. Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) and Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)

Prospective students who do not meet the standard entry criteria may be eligible for admission, with or without advanced standing, via the APCL and/or APEL process. The definition of each of these processes is as follows:

- **Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL)** is the recognition of *formally assessed and certificated learning* by an educational institution or education/training provider that is not recognised/positioned within the higher education qualifications framework.
- **Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)** is the formal recognition of prior learning achieved through *other experience*, such as profession, voluntary work, and/or self-directed study.

## 3. APL with advanced standing: general and specific credit

- 3.1.** APL may also be used for entry with advanced standing. Applicants may make a claim for credit as part of their APL application to enable them to enter the intended course of study at a later stage or with some credits exempted at the point of admission. It is for the University to determine whether the applicant’s claimed credit is comparable with the course/module learning outcomes against which accreditation of prior learning is sought.

- 3.2.** General credit is the total amount of credit that an applicant possesses by virtue of their prior learning at another educational institution, all of which is eligible for consideration at the point of application. However, general credit makes no commitment about the use of that credit by the University towards one of its own courses/qualifications and it is for the University to determine what proportion of that credit is relevant to the applicant's intended course of study.
- 3.3.** Specific credit is the proportion of general credit that is *relevant* to the University award and level of study for which the applicant has applied. Only the University may award specific credit and applicants should be aware that the University's credit-value might not directly correlate with the value/level of general credit that is being claimed by the applicant and/or assigned by another awarding body/educational institution and/or training centre.

#### **4. Accreditation of specific credit: eligibility criteria and restrictions**

- 4.1.** In addition to the criteria outlined in this policy, individual courses may have further restrictions and conditions pertaining to the amount of specific credit that may be claimed through APL; these criteria will be published in the entry requirements for that particular course.
- 4.2.** Specific credit for prior learning will not be awarded where the credit being claimed is for the 'dissertation' or 'final project' component of a taught postgraduate programme. Where the credit being claimed is for a course that is accredited by another Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB), the University must ensure that the PSRB will accept the credit before approving the claim. In all cases, the University must be satisfied that prior learning remains 'current'. Where the student's prior qualification(s) was awarded more than five years prior to the date of application, the applicant may be required to demonstrate that the learning achieved from the course/qualification has been actively applied and updated.
- 4.3.** In order to confer an award, the University must deliver and assess a minimum of 120 credits at the highest level of the award. The maximum amount of specific credit that may be awarded by the University, in respect of each award/qualification, is outlined in the table below:

Award title	Maximum number of specific credits permitted for exemption at point of admission
Foundation Degree	120
Bachelor Degree with Honours	240
Master Degree	60
Master of Fine Art	120

- 4.4.** Specific credit is unmarked and does not count towards the final classification of the University award.
- 4.5.** The awarding of specific credit for part of a module is **not** allowed.
- 4.6.** Where the student does not complete a minimum of 120 credits that have been formally delivered and assessed by the University, an Assessment Board would typically offer an unclassified exit award (as per the Academic Regulations). However, where all or some of these credits have been awarded under APL, the student may only be eligible for a transcript of their results.

#### **5. Assessing applications for APL**

- 5.1.** All applicants are required to complete the relevant sections of the APL Application Pro-forma, which will always require the applicant to give a reflective account of the learning achieved. In addition, the applicant may be asked to provide further evidence (e.g. course syllabi, portfolio, assessed performance, interview) and/or complete an assessment task, all of which will be considered and processed in accordance with the APL Procedure.

**5.2.** An applicant's prior learning is assessed on the *learning achieved* from the qualification and/or experience, **not** the qualification and/or experience itself. The University will:

- scrutinise the authenticity, sufficiency, currency and relevancy of prior learning;
- where appropriate, give the applicant an appropriate assessment task from which the authenticity, currency, and relevancy of the applicant's claimed learning can be determined; and
- where appropriate, determine the number of specific credits to be awarded to the applicant at stage and module level.

**5.3.** All applicants are entitled to receive feedback on their application, irrespective of whether their application was successful. Feedback will be given, in writing, at the applicant's request in accordance with sections 18.4 and 18.5 of the Admissions Policy available on the [Student Regulations web page](#). Further verbal and/or written feedback on an APL application is available upon request.

## **6. Using Falmouth University credit as the basis for re-admission**

**6.1.** Where a student has received an interim/exit award from the University and wishes to return with the intention to use the accumulated credit as the basis for claiming entry with advanced standing onto a University course/qualification at an equivalent or higher level, then the student may be considered for re-admission via credit transfer (CATS).

**6.2.** Re-admission is normally only considered under the following circumstances:

- where a minimum period of one year has elapsed between the student withdrawing their registration and applying for re-admission; and
- where the interim/exit award was conferred within the last five years.

Where the student's prior qualification(s) was awarded more than five years prior to the date of application, the applicant may be required to demonstrate that the learning achieved from the course/qualification has been actively applied and updated.

**6.3.** Further restrictions, as outlined in section 4 of this policy, may or may not apply, depending on the course, level, and volume of credit being claimed for transfer; as such, applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

**6.4.** Students are not permitted re-admission if they have previously withdrawn from that course in the same academic year; students must re-apply in accordance with the University's Admissions Policy available on the [Student Regulations web page](#).

**6.5.** Where the student was classified as a 'fail' at an Assessment Board, or was expelled from the University on academic grounds, re-admission and the transfer of specific credit is at the discretion of the Head of Subject.

**6.6.** Re-admission to the University using previously accumulated University credit is permitted only once.

**6.7.** APL credit awarded by the University may not be used for credit transfer and re-admission.

## **7. Fees/associated costs**

**7.1.** The University charges an administration fee for APEL applications for advanced standing, which contributes towards the additional time required to properly support, assess, and process such applications. These fees and any other associated costs are published on the University Applicant Services web-pages and communicated to the prospective student at the point of application.

**8. Monitoring and review of the APL policy**

- 8.1.** The University's APL policy, procedures, and guidance are monitored and reviewed by the Academic Quality & Standards Committee (AQSC).
- 8.2.** Additionally, each Course Team is expected to design, develop, and keep under review, an assessment strategy for APL applications. The APL assessment strategy should be submitted to External Examiners for consideration and comment as part of the annual oversight and monitoring of the course.

**9. Appealing the outcome of an APL application**

An applicant may lodge an appeal only on the grounds of a procedural irregularity. The applicant must submit their appeal to the Head of Applicant Services within 20 working days from the date of the outcome correspondence.

**10. Progression, articulation, and 'top-ups'**

- 10.1.** Applicants and staff should note that the University may have collaborative agreements in place that permit students from a particular institution/awarding body to apply for entry, or be admitted, to a course of study with or without advanced standing. Such agreements are managed under the University's Collaborative Provision Policy and Procedures, and include the following types of provision:

- Progression agreements, which formally recognise the successful completion of an award or qualification studied at another provider as suitable for entry to the University, with or without advanced standing, thereby providing a basis for individual applications to the course.
- Articulation, which grant and guarantee progression with advanced standing onto a Falmouth University course for students who have successfully completed a programme of study at an approved partner organisation.
- 'Top-up' options, which may form part of the terms for franchised provision and/or dual/double degrees (e.g. 2 years at a partner FE college followed by a 1 year 'top-up' option at the University).

- 10.2.** The above agreements supersede the requirement for the student to undertake the APL procedure, provided the intended enrolment date is within the period permitted in the terms of the Memorandum of Agreement for that collaborative partnership.