



Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy

Introduction

1. This document sets out the policy and procedures for the Accreditation of Prior Learning at Spurgeon's College (the College). Accreditation of Prior Learning allows students who are enrolling on award bearing programmes of study at the College 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 (APL) is the generic term used for the award of credits on the basis of demonstrated learning which has taken place in the past.
3. The College will consider applications for APL. The arrangements for this are set out in this policy.
4. PhD degrees are outside the scope of policy because they are awarded, by a validating partner, solely on the basis of assessment of the thesis and there are no credit values attached to such programmes.
5. The College has sought to balance the recognition of prior learning with a desire to ensure that awards from a validating partner reflect sufficient evidence of study having been undertaken within the College.
6. No APL 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 Learning Outcomes of the unit to the evidence provided of prior learning.

Accreditation of Prior Learning: Categories

7. Applicants may apply for admission with advanced standing, having undertaken study or learning elsewhere, or previously at Spurgeon's. The maximum number of credits for which exemption may be given normally will fall into two categories and are as follows:

Undergraduate Level	
Certificate of Higher Education	up to 40 credits
Diploma of Higher Education	up to 80 credits with no more than 20 credits at HE level 5
BA Ordinary Degree	up to 200 credits at HE level 4 and HE level 5
BA Honours Degree	up to 240 credits with no more than 20

	at HE level 6
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Postgraduate Level	
Postgraduate Certificate	up to 30 credits
Postgraduate Diploma	up to 60 credits
Master's Degree	up to 90 credits
Professional Doctorate	up to 120 credits

Principles

8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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 APL in the same way as UK and EU applicants. All qualifications and institutions will be checked by the College along with all other relevant requirements (such as visa and immigration conditions).
11. All applicants for APL will 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.
12. Students can receive an exit award if they have APL credit in their profile, providing their performance at the College also satisfies the award requirements of the Undergraduate or Postgraduate Degree Regulations.
13. Special consideration will be given to students who have been granted the full amount of APL on their entry programme but fail the minimum number of credits for the programme and have to be considered to receive an exit award. The College will check that students have completed sufficient credits to leave the College with the relevant exit award; this means that at least half the taught credits of the exit award have been completed at the College (in line with the 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.
14. Applications for APL are considered on academic grounds and, as such, no formal rights of appeal exist against the final decision of the College, as appeals cannot be made against decisions of academic judgment. Appeals may, however, be made in line with the College's Academic Appeals Procedure on the

grounds of procedural irregularity, the emergence of new material information or evidence of bias or prejudice.

The Application Process – for prospective students

15. Applications for APL must normally be made prior to entry and applications after enrolment will only be considered on an exceptional basis. There is no deadline for applications for APL 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.
16. Applications for APL 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 Academic Director can be confident in granting approval.

Consideration of Applications

17. In all cases authorisation of award of credit via APL is a matter to be determined solely by the Academic Director. The Academic Director will do so upon consideration of the recommendation from the appropriate subject assessor/panel (see below).
18. Applications should be considered by an APL subject assessor, normally the Director of Undergraduate Studies or the Director of Postgraduate Studies (as appropriate), or a panel of academic staff members within the College if the Director of Undergraduate Studies or the Director of Postgraduate Studies were unavailable. These staff members may include, for example, the unit/module tutor for one of the subjects for which APL is requested, plus two other academics. Consideration of the applications should include a detailed and documented discussion of how the Intended Learning Outcomes of each module, where APL is to be applied, have been met through prior learning or equivalent experience.
19. The Director of Undergraduate Studies or the Director of Postgraduate Studies is expected to provide advice and guidance to current students considering applying to an another institution for APL, in relation to the programme's intended learning outcomes and evidence required for an application for APL.

Assessment of Applications

20. A decision regarding whether an application for APL 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.
21. If the APL 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.

22. 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.
23. 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
24. The assessor should refer to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications to assess whether the level of the prior learning is acceptable.
25. The College 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 College and for APL.
26. Exceptionally, individual applications may be received where the level of APL 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 Director of Undergraduate Studies or the Director of Postgraduate Studies (as appropriate), who will make a recommendation to the Academic Director. Any decision made by the panel in respect of exceptional applications should be managed in accordance with paragraphs 27-29 below.

Outcome of Applications

27. Decisions about APL applications will be relayed to the Admissions Department, applicants should be informed and the normal processes for an application to study should be followed.
28. Records of decisions relating to APL applications will be maintained by the Registry (and details of numbers of applications received, granted and refused, etc. retained for information). Monitoring will take place, normally by the College's Admissions Committee, to ensure that the criteria for APL remain objective and are being fairly and consistently applied. It is important that the progress of students admitted with APL is monitored, so that information is built up on the suitability of particular qualifications for the granting of credit exemption. This should also be reviewed by the Academic Quality Assurance Committee and form part of its report to the Academic Board.
29. Registry will record successful applications for APL as a credit on the student's record on the student information system. Unsuccessful applicants will 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.

Awarded Credit

30. Any credit awarded through APL 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.
31. Particular consideration will need to be given to the case of students who have been granted the full amount of APL on their entry programme but fail the minimum number of credits for an award and are consequently considered for an exit award.

APEL – Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning

32. The College recognises that students, particularly mature students, enter higher education with an extensive range of expertise, skills and knowledge derived from a variety of professional, vocational, community, leisure and personal contexts. APEL provides students with the opportunity to have their prior experiential learning assessed and included within their validated programme. APEL will normally only be granted in the case of programmes with a practical or vocational element.
33. Enquiries about APEL claims can be referred to the relevant Programme Director in the first instance. All decisions to grant APEL will be considered, assessed, recorded and communicated according to the principles laid down in paragraphs 8-14 above and according to the processes laid down in paragraphs 15-29.

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