

Recognition of Prior Learning

Policy and Procedures for Partners

2026/27

Document owner: Academic Partnerships
Document type: Policy
Approval by: UEA Learning and Teaching Committee
Version number: 1
Due for review: 2026/27
Related documents: None

Version log

Date	Version no.	Summary of changes	Updated by	Approved by
August 2018	1	Clarification of maximum credit to be imported	Hannah Jackson	Joint Board of Study Chair's Action – 12 September 2018

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Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

1 Introduction and Definitions

The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) enables applicants and/or current students on taught courses to gain recognition for qualifications they have already achieved at other institutions or for learning they have gained from their experiences, for example in the workplace. It does this by providing exemption from some part(s) of the chosen course of study.

The Institution recognises prior learning in three ways:

- **Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)**
This is the process through which learning achieved outside education or training systems is assessed and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes.
- **Accreditation to Prior Certified Learning (APCL)**
Learning at higher education level, which has been formally achieved, but which has not been awarded credits or a qualification by a UK Higher Education Institution (HEI). For example, qualifications awarded by a non-UK higher education degree awarding body.
- **Credit Transfer**
Relates to learning formally achieved at the same qualification level, and awarded with credits or a qualification by a recognised UK HEI.

2 General Principles

The Institution's RPL prerequisites are that the prior learning is:

- Current – achieved within the last five years;
- Relevant – the subject area is appropriate for the course and the learning outcomes map onto module(s) that they are to be claimed against;
- Evidenced – transcripts or certificates for credit transfer/APCL and the production of a portfolio for APEL;
- At the required level – for credit transfer it needs to be comparable in level and academic standard with the content and learning outcomes equivalent to an award at the Institution;
- At same credit volume or higher than the modules being claimed against.

For postgraduate taught applicants: the maximum RPL (i.e., a combination of credit transfer, APCL and APEL) that may be granted is 50% of the total number of credit points required for an award.

For undergraduate/integrated master's applicants: the maximum RPL (i.e., a combination of credit transfer, APCL and APEL) that may be granted is 33% of the total number of credit points required for an award.

In addition:

- Exemptions may not normally be granted where a student has previously registered for and failed part of an award and wishes to seek readmission to the same or similar award.
- Institutions may not award exemptions for core modules except via a concession approved by the Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education Growth, Partnership and Flexible Provision.
- Institutions may not award exemptions for pre-requisites in certain disciplines e.g. where the modules are required for PSRB recognition or are needed for professional practice, unless the applicant can show that the identical modules have been completed elsewhere.
- The Institution decides how much credit to award an individual student via RPL, based on the level, extent and perceived relevance of the material (both knowledge and skills based) contained within the course/qualification offered by the applicant when compared with their intended course of study.

3 Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) Principles

Applicants must submit their APEL evidence at the same time as an application made via the recognised application route for the course.

APEL exemptions are not permitted for certain professional disciplines. Prospective students should contact the Institution to confirm whether the course will accept APEL exemptions.

	Bachelors and Integrated Masters courses	Postgraduate taught courses
Amount of APEL permitted	APEL exemptions may not be granted for more than 60 credits of the total number of credit points required for an award.	APEL exemptions may not be granted for more than 25% of the total number of credit points required for an award.
When combined with APCL and credit transfer	The maximum RPL (i.e. a combination of credit transfer, APCL and APEL) that may be granted is 33% of the total number of credit points required for an award.	The maximum RPL (i.e. a combination of credit transfer, APCL and APEL) that may be granted is 50% of the total number of credit points required for an award.
Consideration of applications	Level 4 – delegated to partner institutions Level 5 and above – Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education	Delegated to partner institutions

	Growth, Partnership and Flexible Provision.	
Timing	APEL applications may take up to 10 weeks to complete. All applicants should be advised of this and should be aware of semester restrictions concerning exemption for half year arrangements, especially if the intended course of study involves year-long modules.	
Fees	Partner institutions may charge an APEL assessment fee. Please contact the partner institution for further details	

4 APEL Application Process

APEL evidence will be assessed individually. Candidates must demonstrate that relevant, practical experience has been gained, and compile a portfolio of evidence using:

- (1) where applicable, confirmation by line-manager of job responsibilities and job description;
- (2) a record of achievements;
- (3) where applicable, details of specialist training/skills;
- (4) contact details of two referees, who can comment on the candidate's achievements;
- 5) documentation to demonstrate the learning outcomes achieved and the candidate's personal reflection of how the experience has furthered his/her understanding of the relevant subject area;
- (6) a completed application form.

The Institution will provide the applicant with the Course Profile for their intended course of study and applicants should indicate the relationship between the course profile and their portfolio of evidence.

The responsibility for assessing APEL cases shall be delegated to appropriate members of academic staff within the Institution. Following the consideration of their portfolio candidates may also be asked to interview.

The APEL interview may be recorded to enable interviewers to check the validity of their eventual assessments. The interview should focus on key, relevant learning experiences and candidates will be invited to give a detailed narrative account of the relationship between their prior learning and their intended course of study. The recommendations of the academic reviewers following the interview will be forwarded to the Head of HE or equivalent, or their delegated deputy.

The Head of HE or equivalent, or their delegated deputy will consider the evidence put forward by the applicant and the recommendations of the academic reviewers. They may approve and endorse the APEL at level 4, and will inform the candidate in writing and a copy will be sent to Academic Partnerships at UEA.

If no exemption is granted, based on the evidence presented, the Institution shall inform the applicant in writing and copy the letter to Academic Partnerships at UEA.

Records relating to the APEL assessment must be retained. The candidate should also keep the portfolio of evidence for future reference.

5 Accreditation to Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) and Credit Transfer Principles

Prospective students must note that credit is not guaranteed via **APCL** towards their intended course of study at the Institution, and where it is approved it may not directly reflect the value/level of the credit assigned to their current/previous qualification by the validating body, i.e., it may be less.

Institutions may not award exemptions for pre-requisites in certain disciplines e.g. where the modules are required for PSRB recognition or are needed for professional practice, unless the applicant can show that the identical modules have been completed elsewhere.

In cases of **credit transfer**, only marks awarded by the Institution for the course/award being studied will be included in the progression decisions, calculation and classification of the final award. Credit transferred from another HEI will be treated as though obtained on a pass/fail basis and is not used to calculate the final award.

	Bachelors and Integrated Masters courses	Postgraduate taught courses
Amount of APCL/ Credit Transfer permitted	For APCL and credit transfer for undergraduate Honours degree courses and Integrated Masters degrees, a candidate must normally attain the final 240 credits at the Institution (or the final 360 credits in the case of degree courses comprising 480 credits). Under exceptional circumstances, a concession may be granted for a candidate to be admitted to Year 3/the final year of a degree course.	Candidates may be granted APCL or credit transfer of up to 50% of the total number of credit points for an award. It will not be granted for the dissertation part of a course.
When combined with APEL	The maximum RPL (i.e. a combination of credit transfer, APCL and APEL) that may be granted is 33% of the total number	The maximum RPL (i.e. a combination of credit transfer, APCL and APEL) that may be granted is 50% of the total number of credit

	of credit points required for an award.	points required for an award.
Consideration of applications	Level 4 – delegated to partner institutions Level 5 and above – Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education Growth, Partnership and Flexible Provision.	Delegated to partner institutions
Timing	APCL applications may take up to 10 weeks to complete. All applicants should be advised of this and should be aware of semester restrictions concerning exemption for half year arrangements, especially if the intended course of study involves year-long modules.	
Fees	Partner institutions may charge an APCL assessment fee. Please contact the partner institution for further details	

6 Previous Study at the Institution

Where a student is permitted to top-up a qualification from the Institutions, the lower award is subsumed into the higher award when the higher award is conferred, in accordance with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree Awarding bodies. There is no requirement for a student to 'hand-in' the certificate for the lower award in these circumstances. The student transcript will indicate that the highest award incorporates any other awards for which RPL has been granted.

7 APCL and Credit Transfer Application Process

The applicant's request must be made in writing, enclosing:

- (1) A certified copy of certificate(s) or parchment(s);
- (2) A syllabus;
- (3) A full record of academic results achieved;
- (4) A completed application form and the request must include an academic reference from the institution which awarded the qualification.

All evidence should be sent to the Institution to accompany the submitted application.

The Institution will notify the candidate of the outcome in writing, and a copy will be sent to Academic Partnerships at UEA.

8 Complaints

A complaint against a judgement on an application for RPL will be treated in the same way as complaint with the admissions process, please see the Institutions Admissions Appeals and Complaints Policy.

9 Recording RPL

RPL is recorded in the Student's Record and on their Transcript.

APEL and APCL denote that credit was obtained elsewhere, whilst APL shows that a student previously studied at the Institution.

Summary of normal requirements for admission via APCL:

Award	Maximum credits which may be imported	Minimum credits to be taken on University of East Anglia validated courses	Total credits for award
Masters Degree	90	90	180
Graduate Certificate	30	30	60
Graduate Diploma	45	45	90
Bachelors Degree	120	240	360
Bachelors Degree (top-up)	0	120	120
Foundation Degree	120	120	240

This policy applies to UEA validated Awards at the following institutions:

City College Norwich

Colchester Institute

East Sussex College Group

Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts

South Essex College

The Royal Marsden School

University of East Anglia International Study Centre

West Suffolk College