



## **ALRA'S APL POLICY**

Accreditation of Prior Learning - policy and procedural guidance

For particular qualifications this general policy and guidance is always subject to the relevant assessment regulations of the validating institution/awarding body.

### 1. Introduction and Definition

Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) is the generic term used for the award of credits on the basis of demonstrated learning that has occurred at some time in the past, prior to the current programme of study. This document outlines policy and gives general guidance on APL for advanced standing or credit/unit exemption within the Foundation degree, undergraduate degree, masters degree and diploma programmes delivered by the ALRA.

Within APL there are two main categories:

- APCL - the Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning, i.e. learning for which certification has been awarded by an educational institution or another education/training provider;
- APEL - the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning, i.e. uncertificated learning gained from experience. Prior learning, which may be capable of assessment and accreditation, may have been gained in a number of ways, for example:
  - in paid work;
  - in unpaid work;
  - as a result of courses attended in educational establishments or at work;
  - through self-directed study;
  - through leisure pursuits;

### 2. Principles

Where credits are given, they should be given for learning, not for experience alone. The resulting units passed/credits achieved are of the same value as those gained by study at ALRA. Credits/units may be given for prior learning, where the level, standard, content, relevance and currency of that learning are appropriate to a particular programme of study but all evidence must be documented thoroughly and all cases must have the agreement of the awarding body via the agreement of the University Moderator. Units may be awarded at pass grade only. No APL award may be given which implies partial completion of a course unit. Credit or a pass can only be given for whole course units. It is the student's responsibility to prepare an application and submit adequate documentation. Advice and guidance is encouraged and may be sought from ALRA staff.

### 3. Procedure

The APL process may involve the following:

- advice and guidance;
- assessment of documentation;
- decision making;
- monitoring progression.

### 3.1 Advice and guidance

When the school receives an enquiry about, or request for, APL, a member of staff, usually the Head of Acting, acts as adviser. If the school is prepared to consider APL, the adviser's role is to give initial advice on the nature of APL, the requirements of the award for which APL is being sought and information on the procedure.

3.2 Assessment of documentation for APCL. The student produces relevant supporting information, which must include, a transcript of previous study, a syllabus. Assessed work and/or evidence from diagnostic assessment may also be included. The admissions tutor/programme leader will check the authenticity of the documentation produced, seeking advice where necessary from the Head of Acting.

- 3.2.1 There must be an appropriate match in both the level of study and the breadth of content between the applicant's previous studies and the year of study for which they are seeking exemption.
- 3.2.2 The applicant's previous studies must have been taken recently enough to still be of value. NB\*\*- qualifications which are more than ten years old are unlikely to be considered
- 3.2.3 The applicant must provide sufficient documentary evidence of their previous studies to support their request for entry to the course.
- 3.2.4 Marks or grades will not be transferred with the credit and therefore any credit imported at admission will not be counted towards the classification of an award
- 3.2.5 The Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning is not appropriate for every programme offered by ALRA. ALRA does not permit that APCL will be allowed in every case, or that the completion of an APCL application form guarantees that exemption will be granted.
- 3.2.6 The amount of credit that can be carried forward will be determined by the validating HEI regulations and procedures. For St Mary's University awards, the process can be found here: <http://www.stmarys.ac.uk/about/docs/2014-april-credit-transfer-procedure.pdf>
- 3.2.7 Students who are given exemption for postgraduate programmes may be exempted from taught modules only. The Head of Acting will use precedents and previous experience of students with similar qualifications to determine whether the prior learning is acceptable, again seeking advice where necessary. In cases of doubt (such as marginal academic standard or where

there is little previous knowledge or experience of the qualification) the claim for APL should be submitted to the University Moderator. In assessing the documentation, the Moderator will take into account the level, standard, content, relevance and currency of the prior learning.

### 3.3 Decision making

In most instances, curriculum areas are the best judge of whether prior learning is of a suitable type and standard for entry to a programme with credit or unit exemption. The programme leader, in consultation with subject specialists and the Head of Acting, will normally make the final decision, based on assessment of the documentary evidence.

Departments may accredit prior learning, based upon precedents and previous experience of similar qualifications, to award credits and give exemption from individual course units up to a maximum as follows:

<b>Undergraduate Level</b>	
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
Foundation Degree	up to 80 credits with no more than 20 credits at HE level 5
BA / BSc Ordinary Degree	up to 200 credits at HE level 4 and HE level 5
<b>Postgraduate Level</b>	
Postgraduate Certificate	up to 30 credits
Postgraduate Diploma	up to 60 credits
Master's Degree	up to 90 credits

The key reason for limiting the amount of credit/unit exemption is the risk of a mismatch between the student's prior learning and the structure and organisation of the department's curriculum.

The decision on an APL application should normally be communicated to the applicant within 10 working days of submission of the documentation. Any appeal should be made using the normal college academic appeals procedure.

The result of any APL decision will be passed to the Admissions department at St Mary's University.