

QUALITY ASSURANCE HANDBOOK 2018/19**SECTION I: ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR LEARNING**

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Introduction

- I1 Where the University is satisfied that an applicant has fulfilled some of the progression and assessment requirements of a programme of study by means other than attendance on the course and should be able, by completing the remaining requirements, to fulfil the course learning outcomes and attain the standard required for the award, that applicant may be admitted to any appropriate point in the course. This is known as accreditation of prior learning (APL).

These regulations are informed by:

- UK Quality Code Part A: Setting and maintaining academic standards
- UK Quality Code Chapter B6: Assessment of students and the recognition of prior learning

- I2 There are two types of prior learning, each with four routes by which the learning may be recognised as follows:

Prior Learning

- (i) Credit Transfer
- (ii) Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)

Routes

- (iii) claims for mid-year transfer from a course of study at another institution;
 - (iv) claims for entry with advanced standing, i.e. direct to stage 2 or 3 of a course;
 - (v) claims for admission without the threshold entry qualifications;
 - (vi) claims for exemption from units
- 13 The requirements may be fulfilled either through certificated learning at another institution or through work experience or study which has not been formally recognised.
- 14 For each unit delivered by the University, there is an approved set of learning outcomes, which describe the knowledge and skills a student is required to demonstrate on successful completion of the unit. Where an applicant can demonstrate that s/he has already achieved the relevant knowledge and skills for a unit, or for a whole stage of study, s/he may be admitted with specific credit awarded (i.e. they will not be required to undertake those units for which the outcomes have already been achieved).
- 15 Where credit is awarded through either credit transfer or APEL it shall be clearly recorded and as such will not be given a mark. APL will not be used to calculate any indicator score or award classification.
- 16 Credit will be awarded only where the outcomes demonstrated meet those required by the course or some part of the course to which the claimant is applying or on which they are registered and where the learning is current. Where the claim is for admission without the threshold entry qualifications, the prior achievement of the claimant should be equivalent to the normal expectation of achievement at entry.
- 17 Prior achievement may be credited for any units on the University's further and higher education courses, including taught postgraduate courses.
- 18 The recognition of prior achievement and the assessment of claims in respect of University courses are at the sole discretion of the University. The award of credit may therefore be conditional upon a student taking a prescribed route or a particular combination of units from a course of study where multiple options are available.
- 19 Applicants seeking recognition of credit must apply prior to admission to the course. Any credit awarded will be at the discretion of the Head of the School in which the applicant is applying to study and must be awarded prior to enrolment. The Head of School must clearly state the volume and level(s) of all such credit awarded.

Credit Transfer

- 110 Applicants who have completed the whole or part of a course of further or higher

education at an institution in the UK may be admitted with specific credit at an appropriate point, where learning equivalent to that required on a University course can be evidenced.

- I11 The student will be required to present a transcript or record of achievement and evidence of the material covered (e.g. formal documentation of the curriculum undertaken and credits achieved). Copies of coursework completed may also be requested.
- I12 The University retains the right to require further assessment of a student where the evidence presented does not cover certain knowledge or skills which are required.
- I13 Learning for which credit is claimed must be current. Certificated learning must normally have been gained within the five years immediately preceding admission. However, if the student can demonstrate that the learning has remained current, for example through the circumstances of his/her employment, credit may be awarded for previous learning.
- I14 The maximum credit that may be recognised under this mechanism is two-thirds of the credit required for the award.

Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)

- I15 Where a student has relevant knowledge and skills and where these can be assessed appropriately, experiential learning may also be accredited¹. Learning may have been achieved through paid employment, voluntary work or industrial training or study of any kind which was not formally assessed or certificated.
- I16 The following principles apply:
 - (i) The applicant is responsible for identifying the relevance of any knowledge and/or skills he/she has and for providing appropriate documentary evidence.
 - (ii) A claim must include a clear statement of what was learned and its relevance to the unit or course of study in question as well as appropriate supporting evidence.
 - (iii) The course team is responsible for determining and specifying requirements in relation to a particular course of study.
 - (iv) Credit will be awarded where the learning identified matches or is equivalent to that required by the course or unit for which credit is being claimed.
- I17 Where credit is claimed through both credit transfer and accreditation of prior experiential learning, the principles outlined for experiential learning will apply with the addition that the evidence provided must include evidence as indicated in section I11 above.

¹ Accreditation does not include English language

- I18 The maximum credit awarded under this mechanism cannot be more than half of the total credits required for the award.
- I19 A student is not eligible for an exit award where their credit awarded under this mechanism comprises more than half of the credits required for that exit award.
- I20 Where appropriate, both admission with advanced standing and exemption from certain units may apply. This means that a student may be admitted at stage two of a degree course and also be exempt from certain units at Level 5, where he/she is deemed already to have met the requirements of those units.

Application Process

Mid-year transfer from a course of study at another institution

- I21 Applicants who wish to transfer from another institution should contact the University Admissions department, who will ensure that the enquiry is passed to the relevant Course Leader or representative to discuss the nature of the course of study undertaken so far, and to consider how learning achieved maps against the requirements of the University course.
- I22 Because of the nature of such transfers, no time restrictions are imposed, however transfers are not normally considered mid-unit. Course Leaders (in consultation with the relevant unit tutors) will have the discretion to vary the assessment requirements for transferring students to ensure that they can demonstrate all outstanding learning outcomes.
- I23 Assessment of the claim will take place prior to enrolment in accordance with the provisions set out in sections I34 and I36 below.

Entry with advanced standing (i.e. directly in to stage 2 or 3 of a course)

- I24 Claims for admission with advanced standing may be made at the point of application by any applicant who believes him/herself already to have fulfilled some of the requirements of the first stage of the course to which he/she is applying. Exceptionally, an applicant who has accepted an offer of a place may submit a claim for direct entry to a higher level, where he/she believes him/herself to have met the requirements of the first stage(s). Applicants who wish to apply for entry with advanced standing should follow the same procedure as those submitting a claim at the point of application (the offer of a place at the University will remain unaffected and will stand pending the outcome of this claim).
- I25 If a request for entry to a higher level is received after an applicant has accepted an offer, the request will be sent on to the relevant Course Team for assessment prior to enrolment in accordance with the provisions set out in sections I34 and I36 below.

Claims for admission without the threshold entry qualifications

- I26 Where an applicant believes him/herself to have met threshold entry standards even

though he/she does not (and will not, at the point of entry) hold the appropriate certificated qualifications for entry to the course to which he/she is applying, they should inform the University at the point of application.

- I27 Claims will be assessed in accordance with the provisions set out in sections I34 and I36 below. This may result in the applicant being asked to present additional evidence at interview or that no decision is taken regarding whether or not to make an offer until further evidence has been provided.
- I28 Where an admissions tutor identifies that a student does not have, and will not have at point of entry, the threshold entry qualifications, he/she should record the details of the decision to admit the student without threshold entry qualifications, which will be returned to the Admissions department for processing.
- I29 If an applicant without threshold entry qualifications is identified by Admissions staff when processing offers, they will contact the admissions tutor and request full details of the decision prior to making any offer on behalf of the University.

Claims for exemption from units

- I30 Applicants seeking exemption from individual units must apply prior to admission to the course.
- I31 Assessment of the claim will take place, in accordance with the provisions of sections I34 and I36 below, before the start of the semester in which the unit(s) is/are to be delivered.
- I32 Such claims will be subject to the regulations on double counting as detailed in section I14 above.

Assessment of Prior Achievement

- I33 The admissions tutor is responsible for determining the relevance of any prior achievement in the case of entry with advanced standing or without threshold entry qualifications. The Course Leader is responsible for recommending the accreditation of individual units. In each case the responsible member of staff will take advice from other staff as appropriate (e.g. responsibility for investigation and assessment may be delegated to the unit leader.) The Head of School will receive the Course Leader's (or nominee's) recommendation and will hold final responsibility for approving or rejecting the claim on behalf of the University and will notify the University Admissions department accordingly.
- I34 The results of any formal assessment carried out by the University as part of the admissions process will be presented to the relevant Board of Examiners for confirmation.

Presentation of Evidence

- I35 When a claim for APL is made, the member of staff responsible for considering the case will determine, in consultation with relevant colleagues, the nature of the evidence required to demonstrate equivalent learning to that required by the course.

In the case of certificated learning, this will usually include documentary evidence of qualifications achieved or a transcript of results and course handbooks or unit outlines as appropriate. In the case of experiential learning, this will include a written account of the knowledge and skills acquired, including a statement demonstrating how the learning relates to the requirements of the unit or stage from which the student is seeking exemption. It may also include employer references or testimonials and job descriptions.

- I36 It is the responsibility of the applicant to present all documentary evidence in English. Documentation that has been translated must be certified by an appropriate authority.
- I37 For both experiential and certificated learning, examples of work, such as artefacts, designs, drawings, artwork, reports, essays, project plans or articles may be required.
- I38 In determining the nature and range of evidence appropriate to support a claim the member of staff responsible will consider:
- i) Acceptability – is there an appropriate match between the evidence to be presented and the learning to be demonstrated? Is the evidence valid and reliable?
 - ii) Sufficiency – is there sufficient evidence to demonstrate fully the achievement of the learning claimed?
 - iii) Authenticity – is the evidence clearly related to the applicants' own efforts and achievements?
 - iv) Currency – does the evidence relate to current learning?
- I39 There may be some cases where evidence is more appropriately provided in other ways, for example by holding an interview with the applicant or observing their performance of an activity (e.g. conducting an interview or giving a presentation) or by requiring the applicant to undergo a formal assessment, which may or may not be identical with that required of students already enrolled on the course.
- I40 The member of staff responsible will then advise the applicant of the requirements and will give guidance, if necessary, on the units towards which credit is sought and offer advice on the methods of presentation.
- I41 The applicant will present his/her evidence at an interview with a member of staff nominated by the Course Leader or admissions tutor as appropriate, with the approval of the Head of School. Exceptionally, a postal interview may be conducted.
- I42 Assessment is carried out by mapping the evidence of achievement provided against the learning outcomes expressed in unit descriptors for the course to which admission is sought or on which a claimant is already registered. Statements of professional competency required by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies should be applied where appropriate. Assessment is a matter of academic judgement and as such is not subject to appeal.

Assessment Outcomes

- I43 Where a claim is for mid-year transfer, admission without threshold entry qualifications or entry with advanced standing, the outcome is approved by the Head of School in accordance with the provision outlined in section I34 above.
- I44 The outcome of the assessment of the claim will be confirmed by the admissions tutor and stored as a Clearance Check in the SITS student records database. The decision will be sent to the Admissions department who will be responsible for processing the decision and notifying the appropriate bodies (such as UCAS).
- I45 Where the claim is for exemption from one or more units, the member of staff responsible for conducting the interview and assessing the claim will record details of the decision via MyRecords, which will in turn be stored as a Clearance Check in the SITS student records database.
- I46 The Campus Registry will enter the details onto the SITS student records database and inform Student Records of the volume of credit applied. The Campus Registry will notify the claimant of the outcome in writing to provide a record of any credit granted. Credit awarded in this way will have a suffix.
- I47 The member of staff responsible for conducting the assessment will, where appropriate, notify the claimant of the opportunity or requirement to present additional evidence.

Additional Evidence

- I48 Where an applicant can demonstrate achievement of all but a few learning outcomes of a unit, some further tasks may be set by the University to permit demonstration of the outstanding learning outcomes, such that the applicant can be awarded the full credit for the unit.
- I49 In addition, where an applicant needs to gain no more than 20 credits to permit entry at the beginning of stage 2 or 3 of a course of study, the University may, at its discretion, set some further tasks to permit the applicant to demonstrate achievement of the outcomes pertaining to the outstanding credit to permit entry with advanced standing.
- I50 The methods used to gain this further evidence will vary according to the applicant and the nature of the outstanding outcomes to be demonstrated. The course team will determine the precise method(s) to be used in each case and how the outcomes are to be assessed.
- I51 The following methods may be used to allow applicants to present additional evidence:
- i) independent project work;
 - ii) access to conventional assessment tasks for units where appropriate e.g. essays, viva voce, examination;
 - iii) direct access to the delivery of a unit as a non-graduating student.

Recording of decisions and monitoring of awards

- I52 Detailed records of any credit awarded against prior learning will be kept by the Campus Registry and reported to the Board of Examiners.

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