

# Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning



## Guidance Notes for Applicants

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## Section A – Introduction

This booklet is a guide for students wishing to claim Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) using prior certificated learning.

## Section B – Background

The University has adopted a **Modular Course Structure and a Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme** (known as **MODCATS**) for the delivery of its courses.

All taught courses at the University of Central Lancashire **operate under the MODCAT scheme**. Student's progress towards a target award through the study of credit rated course modules. The scheme of accumulating credits to obtain an award provides for a **great deal of flexibility in study patterns** allowing students more mobility between programmes and modes of study within the University and **greater opportunity of transfer between institutions** without loss of credit already gained.

**A module is a component of a course** with its own approved aims and objectives, learning outcomes and assessment methods.

A number of **credits are allocated to each module at a level appropriate to its content** and learning objectives. Students must complete the required number of modules at the required levels in order to complete their course.

For example, the **minimum number of credit points required for these University awards** is as follows:

• Bachelor degree (Honours)	360 credits - 18 modules
• Bachelor degree (non-Honours)	320 credits - 16 modules
• Dip HE	240 credits - 12 modules
• Foundation Degree	240 credits - 12 modules
• Cert HE	120 credits - 6 modules

## Section C – What Is APL?

A major benefit of the MODCAT scheme for students is that they can **bring forward previous learning** (academic, professional or experiential) for accreditation within their chosen programme of study thereby achieving recognition for what has already been learned. This is what is meant by the term **Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)**.

APL is a process which aims to **recognise learning in whatever context** it has taken place. It is based on the premise that **learning can be identified, measured, assessed and accredited** within academic programmes, regardless of the context in which it is acquired.

Within this overall definition, **two** forms of prior learning are recognised:

- **Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (AP(C)L)**, which is learning associated with a **structured, formal course of study** which has been assessed and accredited either in higher education or by a professional body.

- **Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)**, which is learning acquired through **personal development or work experiences and informal or training study** not previously attested through formal education/certification.

**To be given credit on a programme**, prior certificated or experiential learning needs to be at an **appropriate Higher Education level**. If in doubt as to whether or not your prior learning is at an appropriate level to count for credit, **consult the APL Co-ordinator** and they will be able to assist you. **(Contact information on Page 7)**

## **Section D – What is Credit?**

Credit is an **educational currency** which provides a measure of learning achieved at a given level.

**Notionally, 10 hours of student effort equates to one credit.**

**120 credits** represent the normal workload for a full-time programme of study in the standard academic year (comprising the autumn and spring semesters). **This amounts to some 36 to 42 hours of study per week** (inclusive of class content, practicals, field work, private study etc.).

**20 credits** is the standard size of a module with 10 credits representing a half module and 40 credits a double module. **Normally, 120 credits are taken in an academic year by full time undergraduate students** but part-time students may complete their programme on a module by module basis, taking up to a maximum of 90 credits (4.5 modules) each year.

**For postgraduate study**, 60 credits are normally required for a Post Graduate Certificate, 120 for a Post Graduate Diploma and 180 for a Master's degree.

## **Section E - Course Specific and Module Specific Credit**

The University makes a distinction between **Course Specific and Module Specific Credit**. Not all credit can count, even if it is at the right level, as there **has to be relevance towards your programme of study**. For example, credits gained in the subject of History will have limited, if any, relevance to a Physics programme.

Another example would be a student who has **studied Shakespeare** during year one of their English Literature course at another University. The student wishes to continue their study at UCLan and **may be allowed to transfer these credits** even though the UCLan based course has studied Renaissance Poetry in year one instead.

### **Module Specific Credit**

This is where **learning has been undertaken and shows an exact match with the learning outcomes** of a specific module taught at UCLan. These modules can be core, optional or elective.

### **Elective Credit**

Elective components of a programme **do not require subject relevancy for credit to count**. If the amount and educational level of the previous learning is equivalent to the number and level of elective credits being claimed, there does not have to be a match in terms of a subject area. You will be able to use **HE level credit towards your programme by counting them as APL electives**.

### Example of Elective Credit

A student has **credits in Zoology from another University** and is currently **studying an English and Education Studies** Combined Honours programme at UCLan. This student would be **eligible to claim credit** (up to two elective modules), even though the **Zoology credits do not specifically relate** to either of the chosen subject areas or to any modules listed in the Electives Catalogue.

## **Section F – Restrictions to the Award of Credit**

If a **qualification is a general requirement for admission** to a programme, it **cannot be used** to claim credit. Some **professional and statutory bodies will not allow APL** in any circumstances or may restrict it. It's worth asking the APL Team for more details.

**The award of credit will be reviewed** if a student **changes his/her target award** and may be withdrawn. **An individual module** may not be **simultaneously associated with two or more awards**. E.g. there can be no **“double counting”** of modules. A student who is awarded credit **may be excluded from certain course modules** containing a substantial **element of commonality** with the accredited modules - this is to prevent repetition of the same learning.

Students who are **repeating a year, in full**, on the same programme **cannot use credits from the failed year** to satisfy any part of the repeat year programme - this does **not**, however, apply to students who **change their programme of study**.

Full time students who wish to retain their full time status must be registered **to study at least 5 modules** in any academic year.

The **maximum amount of credit** which can be awarded for prior learning is **generally set at two-thirds of the credit required** to complete the course. However, where an **equal or higher level qualification already awarded is presented for accreditation towards a lower level or equal level programme of study**, the maximum APCL is set at **one-third** of the overall credit requirement for the new award.

## **Section G - Applying for credit with Certificated Learning (APCL)**

**If you wish to receive accreditation for prior certificated learning you should apply as soon as possible after enrolment and no later than 6 weeks after the start of teaching.**

**Do not assume that a conversation or E-mail exchange with your course team or APL Unit will result in APL being awarded.**

**You must follow the procedures and complete the necessary paperwork.**

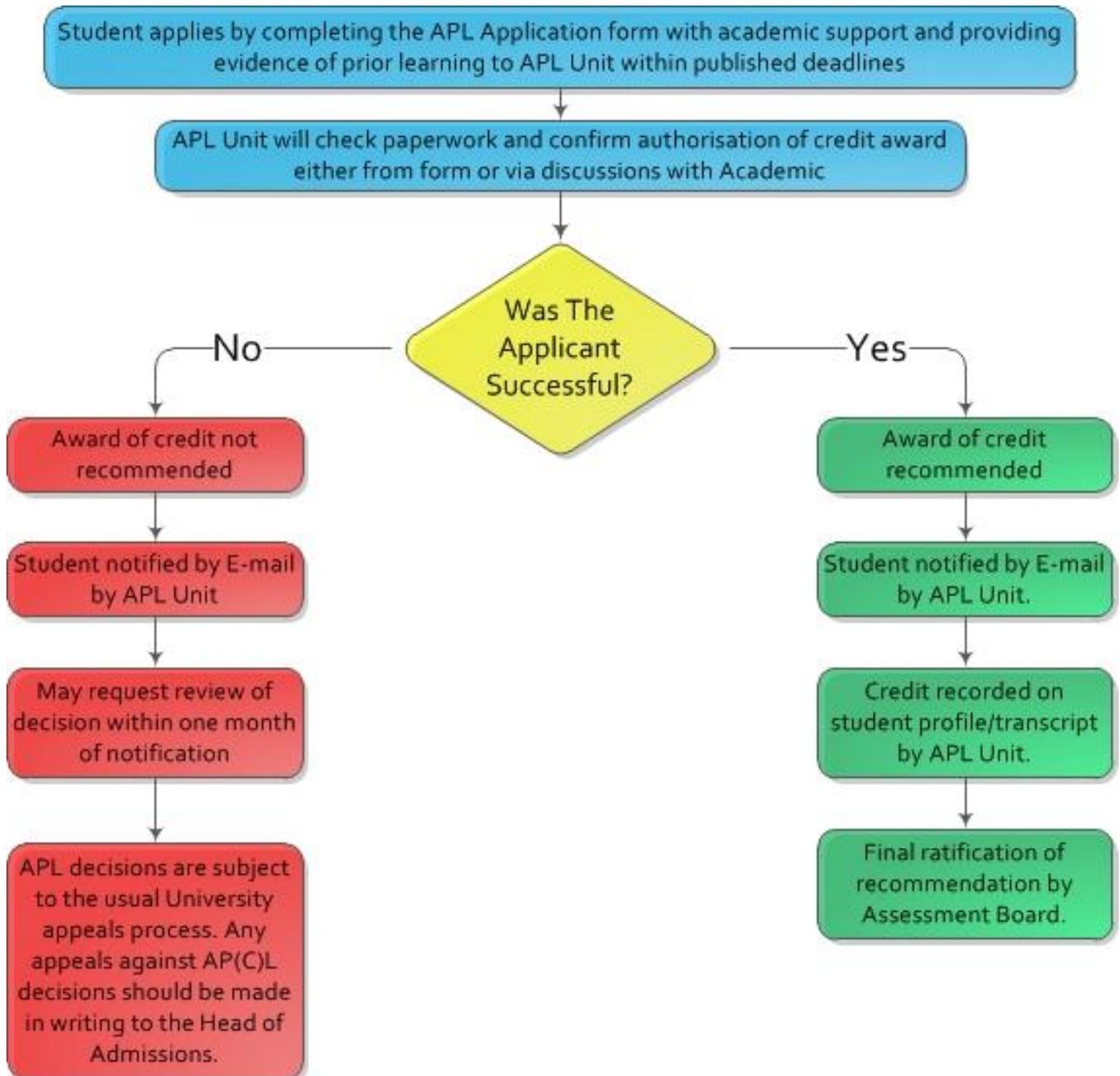
The procedure is as follows:

1. Make an **appointment with Course Leader or Personal Tutor** to discuss whether APL is available and appropriate for you.
2. Complete the **APL Application** form indicating which modules you wish to claim for. **If you are unsure, ask the academic** supporting your claim for advice.

3. When you return the application forms **you must attach a copy or copies of transcripts, or certificates as proof** of the awards obtained: original(s) must be made available if requested.
4. **Return the application form** and copy certificate(s) etc. to **the APL Unit** in the first instance.

This process is summarised in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1. Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (AP(C)L) Process**



## **Section H – Assessment of Claims**

The member of staff responsible for assessing APL will:

- **Scrutinise** your application form.
- Recommend **whether credit should be awarded** and if the total and level is appropriate to the course.

If the award of credit is based on **previous UCLan study, it will retain its grade** unless the applicant is entering at Final year stage. If it is credit from outside UCLan, it will be recorded as non-graded (NG) credit. This means that it will not be assigned a percentage mark and will not, therefore, be included in any classification calculations. Please discuss the potential impact of ungraded APL on your final classification calculations with your academic advisor.

**A notification of the assessor's decision will be sent** to you and your student record will be updated, if appropriate.

If the **application for credit is not approved**, you may request that the Academic Assessor(s) **review their recommendation, but only on the basis of additional evidence** which was not available at the time of application.

**This request must be put in writing to the APL Co-ordinator within 21 days** of notification of the decision not to award credit. However, the **appeals** procedure for both APCL and APEL recommendations **follows the same principles as for taught modules**. An appeal **cannot therefore be made against the academic judgment of the assessors**, properly exercised. The procedure for appealing can be found on the [Academic Regulations page of the UCLan web page](#).

In determining the credit which can be awarded in individual cases, assessors will pay regard to:

- **Level rating:** is the **level of the prior learning submitted equivalent** to the level of the credit claimed?
- **Amount:** is the **amount of prior learning submitted equivalent to the volume of study hours** i.e. credits being claimed?
- **Content / Learning outcomes:** has the **applicant matched his/her prior learning to the specific learning outcomes of the module(s) claimed?** Or demonstrated **the same level and volume of learning in the case of unnamed elective credit?**
- **Shelf-life:** **how recent is the prior learning that is being presented?** Is it still current / relevant to the subject now? There are no fixed rules about how recent the prior learning has to be, and **questions of currency will be individually assessed.**
- **Quality of application:** is it **coherently presented with all the relevant information** (including documentary evidence where appropriate)?

**It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide the necessary evidence to support their claim, not the university.**

## **Section I - Charges**

The **University does not charge a fee for the assessment of claims** made on the basis of **certificated learning**.

## Section J – What Next?

If you decide, after reading this information, to proceed with your claim for APCL, **please follow the instructions above** and return your APL claim and evidence to:

**APL Unit**  
**University of Central Lancashire**  
**The Admissions Office**  
**Foster 110a**  
**Preston**  
**PR1 2HE**  
**Tel:** 01772 895008  
**Fax:** 01772 894954  
**Email:** [aplunit@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:aplunit@uclan.ac.uk)

## Section K – Examples of Credit Equivalencies

*This is not a complete listing and is for guidance only\* – claims will be assessed on an individual basis.*

<u>Qualification</u>	<u>Equivalency</u>
NVQ Level 2	GCSE Level (no credit )
NVQ Level 3	'A' Level (no credit )
NVQ Level 4	Degree Level 4/5 Credit varies.
CACHE Advanced Diploma in Childcare	Degree levels 4/5 (120 credits)
OU Support Teacher's Assistant	Degree Level 4 (60 credits )
Certificate in Education	Degree Levels 4/5 (180 credits)
Edexcel (BTEC) National Certificate/Diploma	'A' Level (no credit)
Edexcel (BTEC) Higher National Certificate	Degree Levels 4/5 (160 credits)**
Edexcel (BTEC) Higher National Diploma	Degree Levels 4/5 (240 credits)**

Note: 120 credits is equivalent to one year of full time study.

\* As mentioned, **this is not a complete listing**. Therefore, if you have a **qualification not listed here**, get in contact with the **APL Unit** using the contact information detailed above and they will be able to assist you.

\*\* **Some HNC/HND programmes contain credits gained at level 3** – pre HE level. Therefore, **AP(C)L claims using these qualifications will not necessarily award the full amount of credit** detailed above.

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Created by Ashley James Bates, updated on 24/03/2015.