Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) practices at the Centre for Work Related Studies, University of Chester- a step by step guide

STEP ONE: INITIAL CONTACT

Student contacts CWRS with administrator: initial assessment of likely WBIS pathway by CWRS Director- assigned to a tutor, student registers.

STEP TWO: REGISTRATION AND BEGINNING STUDY

Student registers for WBIS and makes contact with their Personal Academic Tutor (PAT). The PAT facilitates learning on all core elements of the WBIS programme such as Self Review, APL claims, Negotiated Experiential Learning Modules (NELMs). For specialist ‘taught’ modules students work with a subject specialist tutor. Most students undertake ‘Self Review and Negotiation of Learning’.

This has four elements:

- Complete a CV focussing on learning achievements
- A brief description of current role
- Complete an Approved Studies Learning Agreement (ASLA) along with Learning Pathway Rationale (Appendix 1)
- Undertake an exercise in reflective learning

STEP THREE: STUDENT NEGOTIATES THEIR LEARNING

Student negotiates the ASLA with their PAT.

They negotiate the focus of award (and hence title). All titles begin with the ‘named award’ (eg Bachelor of Arts (BA)) followed by the focus followed by ‘(WBIS)’

Examples: BA Leadership and Management (WBIS), PG Cert. Hospitality Practice (WBIS)

The tutor asks the student about their experience/ knowledge, as well as the trajectory of the student’s career and what they want to learn.

This involves past formal learning, informal learning and non-formal learning. The decisions on what is relevant will be determined by the student’s desired award title (the past learning must be relevant to it) and the nature of the learning itself. Decisions have to be made by the tutor as to what any informal or non-formal learning is worth in terms of level and credit value. As a rule of thumb, extended professional experience or experience at a senior level is easier to translate into higher level learning (ie level 7) than limited/ low level experience. It is the role of the PAT to make such judgements. Very often students are advised to base their claim(s) on discrete aspects of their practice rather than review several years experience. The tutor will usually advise the student to focus on aspects of their practice where they feel there is scope for reflective learning.

At this stage the student also articulates areas where they would like new learning to occur. This might be in trans-disciplinary workplace projects (translated into credit bearing modules called Negotiated Experiential Learning Modules- NELMs) or ‘taught’ modules. Taught modules are named
and involve study in a particular subject. They can be in any subject as long as it is relevant to the needs of the student in the workplace and their agreed award title. Common examples include ‘Project and Programme Management’ and ‘Managing and Leading People’. Students are expected to complete such modules by means of experiential learning—either new learning or by the demonstration of past learning. Where it is not possible for the student to bring their own direct experiential learning into the module they are encouraged to draw upon the experience of others wherever possible. Very often students complete ‘named’ modules when they are preparing to assume a workplace role for which they have no formal education and training. For example someone who is about to become a budget holder for the first time might complete a module in Financial Management.

STEP FOUR: STUDENT FORMALISES THEIR LEARNING INTO A CREDIT BEARING AWARD

Student completes the ASLA, sends draft to tutor.

It may include claims for past learning—either ‘Certificated’ (Accreditation of Past Certificated Learning- APCL) ie recognised credit less than five years old or ‘Experiential’ (Accreditation of Past Experiential Learning- APEL). This can be Non formal or Informal Learning.

The rest of the pathway is comprised of compulsory elements (in full awards Research Methods and Dissertation equivalent), named ‘taught’ modules and/or current experiential learning modules (NELMs).

The student can include any module the University delivers provided it is at the appropriate level and relevant to their proposed award title. CWRS has many of its own modules developed over the years which in almost all cases meet the needs of students.

The Personal Academic Tutor scrutinises the student’s ASLA and returns it for final agreement and signing. The ASLA is then forwarded to the CWRS administrator.

STEP FIVE: SCRUTINY OF THE PROPOSED AWARD AND REGISTRATION

At monthly meetings all ASLAs are scrutinised by the tutor team to ensure the titles/awards are appropriate, the pathways coherent, the claims for past learning appropriate etc. This is then passed onto Registry who record the student’s curriculum.

STEP SIX: MAKING A CLAIM FOR PAST LEARNING

Student usually completes Self Review and then makes a claim for past learning. This can be undertaken in various ways

In the cases where the student has Certificated learning, all that is required is a transcript. Certificated learning is that bearing credit from an accredited source. Within the European Higher Education Area this is not a problem but outside we refer to NARIC to ensure it is genuinely credit bearing and we understand its value in relation to ECTS. The credit must be relevant to the proposed
award title, at the appropriate level and current. Current means it has been obtained within the last five years.

If the Certificated learning is not current the student has two options:

First, they can demonstrate their knowledge is current by writing a short review updating the material.

Or they can demonstrate how they applied the formal learning into practice. This then becomes a claim for past experiential learning.

If the claim is for past **Experiential** learning the student compiles a short portfolio to demonstrate the claims have a factual basis.

This is put into a folder along with a reflective review up to half the normal word length for an assignment.

The reflective review has three components:

In the first part the student describes the experience for which they are laying claim. This is cross referenced with the portfolio. In cases where the claim is based upon Non-formal learning the portfolio may only be a certificate.

In the second substantive part of the claim, the students reflects upon the learning gained from the experience. The reflective learning must include relevant, authoritative literature relevant to the learning experience. It is intended that learning is deepened and enhanced by the formal knowledge we have in the university- theory and empirical evidence.

The final part of the review summarises the learning and indicates how the student feels their practice is changed as a result of reflective thinking.

Claims for the past learning of learning for taught modules are assessed in a similar way although there is no portfolio. Instead the student completes a reflective review to meet the learning outcomes for the module by reference to past experience and the relevant literature.

**Points to note:** All claims for past learning are graded on a Pass/Fail basis only. Up- to two thirds of an award can be made on the basis of past learning but this excludes the final level (6) of a Bachelor Degree and half a Masters degree (45 credits ECTS). These elements must be comprised of new credit (ie current learning) although this can be experiential and are graded. The University regulations government claims for past learning are also appended ([Appendix 2](#)).

**STEP SEVEN: ASSESSMENT**

There is considerable tutor assistance throughout the process to help students write reflective reviews and guidance is given on suitable literature. In all cases formative assessment is available so that students unfamiliar with academic writing are able to meet its demands.

Submissions are assessed by the tutor. In the case of APCL claims the process is automatic following checks to ensure the details are correct. There is no fee for APCL claims.

APEL claims take more time to facilitate but fees are half those of regular (ie taught) modules. In the case of APEL claims the tutor completes the same feedback sheet used for all modules.
For all claims, APCL and APEL, a normal student assessment feedback sheet (Appendix 3) and an APL summary sheet is completed and passed to the Faculty APL coordinator who oversees the process to ensure accuracy and consistency (Appendix 4). All claims are then forwarded to Registry who record the award of credit which is confirmed following oversight by an independent external examiner and formally recorded at bi-annual Assessment Boards.
Appendix 1

Approved Studies Learning Agreement (ASLA)

This agreement is required for students studying on WBIS undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. It defines the approved studies within a single level of study, which has been negotiated between the student, the employer (where appropriate) and the University of Chester. Students must send a completed copy of this form to their Personal Academic Tutor (PAT). It is preferable to type into this form rather than write by hand.

Students who undertake the Self Review and Negotiation of Learning module should also include this document in their portfolio and complete Part B as the Learning Pathway Rationale (500 words maximum). Students not studying this module should use Part B to give a brief rationale as to their proposed pathway.

Part A: Approved Studies Learning Agreement
Please use the guidance notes overleaf on page 3 to complete this section.

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<th>Name of student</th>
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Current Job Title

Relevant Other Qualification/s

Title of WBIS Exit Award

Level of Study (4, 5, 6, 7)

Name of Personal Academic Tutor

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Module title and brief description of topic where applicable (e.g. for APEL and NELMs)</th>
<th>Credit rating</th>
<th>Proposed date of assignment submission</th>
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Part B: Supporting information or Learning Pathway Rationale

Please use guidance notes in Self Review and Negotiation of Learning Module Handbook.

Students studying the Self Review and Negotiation of Learning Module should use this section to write their Learning Pathway Rationale (500 words maximum), to reflect the above table. Other students should use this opportunity to give a brief rationale as to their chosen pathway.

Student signature _________________________________ Date ____________
Employer (if appropriate) _________________________________ Date ____________
UC representative _________________________________ Date ____________

This approved studies route has been approved by the Programme Team on ____________.
Signed .............................................................. PROGRAMME LEADER
All Credit achieved through APL will be logged in students’ records after confirmation by the SAB/PAB and subject to full payment of fees.
GUIDANCE NOTES for Part A:

This is a form that needs to be completed for each level of study and submitted to your tutor, both as part of your Self Review portfolio and as you embark upon subsequent levels. Its purpose is to give the WBIS Programme Team an idea of your proposed award title and learning pathway so that we can ensure that it is coherent and fit for purpose. Your personal tutor will help you negotiate your pathway each time and should be your first port of call for queries relating to this. After completing the initial boxes concerning your name, address and that of your employer, you need to indicate the following:

**Name of Personal Tutor.** This is your Personal Academic Tutor (or 'PAT'), typically the person who took you for your initial module (such as Self Review & Negotiation of Learning) and who takes responsibility for helping you negotiate your pathway.

**Current Job Title.** This is just to give the Programme Team an idea of what you do and whether your award title and pathway relate to this appropriately.

**Relevant Other Qualification/s.** For this, just include your highest (and/or most relevant) qualification so far, if applicable.

**Title of WBIS Exit Award.** This should be the award title agreed with your personal tutor e.g. B.Sc. Nursing Studies (WBIS), or MA in Public Sector Management (WBIS), etc.

**Level of study.** This will be undergraduate level 4, 5 or 6, or Master’s level (7), as appropriate.

**List of Modules (table).** In the table, accurately list the titles of the modules you wish to take for this level, with their credit value and the proposed submission deadline, if known, that you have negotiated with your tutor. If in doubt about some of the modules you wish to take, write ‘further modules to be negotiated’ in the last line; this is perfectly acceptable, though we do expect students to have identified the majority of their modules for the level concerned when they submit this form. Please also make sure you have at least the first two or three submission deadlines indicated.

For accreditation of prior certificated learning (APCL), please name the award and credit value accurately; for accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) please briefly identify the learning area for each claim that you propose to submit, with credit values.

For Negotiated Experiential Learning Modules (NELMs) please briefly indicate which area of learning or project you will be covering, again with the credit value clearly stated.
E8 Credit Exemption and the Assessment of Prior Learning

Unless otherwise specified in the formal documentation, students seeking registration for a University of Chester programme, pathway or course of study may apply for credit exemption, or credit for work-based activities, as part of the provision in question. In all cases of credit exemption, evidence must be provided to demonstrate that the learning for which a student claims exemption has been appropriately audited and attested.

University of Chester will award credit for prior learning where this learning is appropriate to the specified learning outcomes of a given module and, where appropriate, to a given programme, pathway or course as a whole. This learning may be certificated, experiential, higher education based or work-based.

If a student wishes to use a lower award of the University of Chester as credit for prior learning towards a higher award of the University, the student must normally surrender the lower award on registration for the higher award.

University of Chester recognises two main types of Accreditation of Prior Learning which may lead to credit transfer or exemption. The Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) is the assessment of certificated learning only. The Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) is the assessment of prior experiential learning only.

Credit shall only be awarded where evidence of achievement is provided and, where appropriate, assessed in relation to module and level equivalents.

In relation to all approved studies at Certificate, Intermediate, Honours and Masters levels, academic credit may be given on admission to a programme for:

(a) one or more modules within the limits specified in relation to an award (this can be for one or more modules);
(b) modules completed at University of Chester (and/or those accredited by University of Chester and delivered by its representatives);
(c) certificated modules completed at other recognised institutions;
(d) learning achieved outside formal teaching where evidence of the learning has been assessed in relation to module and level equivalents;
(e) learning achieved through formal teaching where evidence of the learning has been assessed in relation to module and level equivalents;
(f) learning on a parallel programme, pathway or course of study to that being undertaken at University of Chester.

Credit may, at the discretion of the University, be granted to students registered for a programme, pathway or course of study from that part thereof for which they can demonstrate prior achievement of the learning outcomes or their module and level equivalent. Credit may be granted for up to 50% of the amount required for an award, with the following exceptions:

(a) where a programme of study is designed for direct entry to Level 6 of an Honours degree (involving 120 credits at that level), the maximum credit exemption which may be granted shall be 25% of the credits required for that
level. Exceptionally, a student may seek admission with credit to a programme of study leading to a Level 6 award based on APL exceeding the normal maximum of 25% at Level 6 if:

i) the APL comprises additional University of Chester Level 6 credit which has been awarded for successful completion of Free Standing Modules, and,

ii) the University of Chester modules were undertaken within five years of the date of the final award, and,

iii) the APL credit does not exceed 50% of the credits required for the Level 6 award.

The marks gained for any Level 6 University of Chester Free Standing Module shall be included in the overall degree calculation. Students cannot, under any circumstances, use University of Chester Free Standing Module marks to replace marks for modules for which they were previously registered on an award-bearing programme.
(b) at Level 7, specifically in the case of an applicant with 120 credits or a postgraduate diploma which satisfies the programme’s learning outcomes, a candidate may be granted credit up to a maximum of 66.7% for the purpose of completing a Masters award with a 60-credit dissertation, for which the maximum permitted registration period shall be three years.

Students who have successfully completed 240 credits of certificated learning through study on a higher education programme at a recognised institution may be considered for admission to Level 6 of a programme at the University of Chester. Such students may not be eligible for any further credit exemption within the programme concerned.

To be eligible for a named award, a candidate shall have gained all the required credit points, whether by accredited prior or experiential learning or by the study and assessment of University of Chester’s modules.

A student admitted to direct entry to Level 6 (Honours level) shall normally have a maximum registration period of three years in order to complete the programme leading to an award. A student admitted to direct entry to Level 5 shall normally have a maximum permitted registration period of five years.
# Work Based & Integrative Studies – Postgraduate Assessment

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<th>Module Number</th>
<th>Module Title</th>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Student Number</th>
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<th>Title of Submission</th>
<th>PROVISIONAL GRADE</th>
<th>Confirmed Grade / External Examiner</th>
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<td>First Marker</td>
<td>Second Marker</td>
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**Module Tutor’s Comments (with reference to the Module Learning Outcomes)**

If marked ‘yes’, please develop your skills further by arranging either study skills tuition (contact student.skills@chester.ac.uk) or English for Academic Purposes tuition (contact eap@chester.ac.uk).

**Module Tutor’s Signature:**

Date:

**Second Marker’s Comments**

Second Marker’s Signature:

Date:

To learn how to make the most of this feedback, please visit [http://www.chester.ac.uk/cwrs/fb](http://www.chester.ac.uk/cwrs/fb).

Original: Module Tutor / Personal Academic Tutor. Copies to: 1. Learner, 2. Learner’s Personal File, 3. Module Assessment File, 4. Associate Tutor (if applicable)
Appendix 4

**Application for Accreditation of Prior Learning**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name</th>
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<th>Programme of study</th>
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**Application for Accreditation of Prior Credited/Certified Learning (APCL)**

**Definition:** Prior credited learning must be supported by a transcript indicating the number of credits, and the level of the credits, achieved, and the titles of the courses for which they were awarded. Certified learning must be accompanied by the certificate awarded for the qualification. In all cases, these must have been achieved within five years of the date of application. There is no charge for this.

Accredited or Certificated Learning achieved more than five years ago, and thus needing its currency demonstrating, may also be included on this form. There will be a charge for this.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awarding Body</th>
<th>Title of Certificate/ complete award</th>
<th>Credit Claimed</th>
<th>Date of Award</th>
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<td>Credits</td>
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**Application for Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)**

**Definition:** Prior experiential learning is achieved outside education or training systems but may be assessed and, if appropriate, recognized for academic purposes.

**Details of assessment of evidence submitted.**

Indicate the type of assessment(s) undertaken:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Mode</th>
<th>Second Marking Undertaken (Y/N)</th>
<th>Volume and Level of credit</th>
<th>Codes of specific modules exempted (optional)</th>
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Please enter your comments to support your decision for approval/rejection of the requested APL claim. If approved, please indicate by code the University of Chester modules the student may be exempted from through prior achievement.

Total Credit Claimed:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>APCL</th>
<th>APEL</th>
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Please list module codes with credit rating from which the student will be exempt, stating how credited and experiential learning relates to those modules.

Please attach a copy of the certificate/transcript used as evidence for the APCL application.

Faculty Academic Assessor’s Name

Faculty Academic Assessor’s Signature

Faculty Credit Co-ordinator’s Signature
Administration
The Faculty Credit Co-ordinator should undertake the following steps:

Step One
Copy of this form (if claim approved) to be sent to Registry Services - FAO Michelle Barrington-Black (UG), Penny Gibson (PG) or Graduate School - FAO Joanne Buckley (Research), for results to be included on the student’s transcript.

Step Two
Copy of this form (if claim approved) to be sent to Finance (FAO Sian Gee) for information or action. The student may be billed by accounts.

Step Three
The relevant Subject Assessment Board should be notified of the outcome of the APCL/ APEL claim. The Faculty Credit Co-ordinator should confirm the outcome of claim with the applicant. For successful APEL claims the Faculty Credit Co-ordinator should advise the student to contact the Department for further guidance on their programme of study.

To be completed by accounts:

Fees payable for assessing currency of transcript for APCL
£200 per claim

No charge is made when the transcript was issued within the last five years.

Fees payable for modules assessed through APEL
modules X £200 per 20 credits = £

The applicant is liable for this fee
The partner/employer is liable for this fee
(Insert partner/employer name here)
The Faculty is liable for this fee