

Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning (APEL)

Policy and Guidelines

October 2018

What is APEL?

It is possible that there may be aspects of your course that you feel you have already covered as part of another training course or as a result of previous experience in employment or elsewhere. In some circumstances it is possible to have this prior learning recognized through the award of credit which will exempt you from identified elements of the course. This is Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning (APEL)

The process used by the Minster Centre to accredit previous learning is set out below and is informed by the Quality Assurance Agency (2004) Guidelines on the accreditation of prior learning.

Limits of APEL

You can only apply for learning to be credited that relates to whole modules, weekend training sessions or other complete components of the course, such as the Mental Health Familiarization Placement (MHFP). You cannot apply for credits to exempt you from part modules. Exemptions will not normally be given for experiential aspects of the course such as Experiential Training Group or for Practicum modules of the MA Professional Practice in Psychotherapy and Counselling.

For those wishing to register with UKCP the total credits applied for cannot exceed 50% of the credits of the full 4 year Psychotherapy training programme (of which the MA Integrative Psychotherapy and Counselling forms the final 2 years).

There is no APEL option for applications to the BACP Accredited Diploma in Counselling beyond the first year. This is because the first year forms such a substantial part of the accredited course and includes more than a third of the teaching hours.

APEL Application Process

You will need to demonstrate that the learning is relevant and equivalent to the learning you would have achieved if you had successfully undertaken the element of the course you wish to be exempted from.

You will also need to demonstrate that the learning is up to date and recent. This is usually interpreted as learning gained in the last five years – although ongoing practice and CPD building on study undertaken a longer time ago will also be considered.

You are advised to raise the possibility of APEL at your selection interview when the interviewers, who are senior members of the course staff, will be able to provide preliminary advice on the evidence needed and strength of proposed claim. If you decide to apply for APEL credits later in the course please approach your Head of Year or Course leader for advice before completing the APEL application form (which is available on the Intranet).

APEL applications must be made at least 3 months before the relevant module is due to be taken and ideally before the start of the year in which the module is normally taken.

You will need to submit an APEL application form to the Registrar together with a portfolio of evidence. The evidence can be of two main types of learning:

- learning gained as a result of a formal higher education course (sometimes known as Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning)
- Learning gained as result of less formal study/experience which might include work or voluntary experience, short courses, research or writing, etc.

If you are applying on the basis of learning that was undertaken as part of a formal course you will need to include in the portfolio copies of any course transcripts or certificates issued, the syllabus covered, information on the level of study, any assessed work submitted and the assessment marks and feedback you received. You will also need to include a detailed reflective narrative of 1-2000 words for each module for which you are seeking exemption describing your own sense of how the learning you achieved meets the learning outcomes specified.

If you are applying on the basis of previous experiential learning the portfolio needs to contain evidence proving that you undertook the employment or activity with dates and supporting references. You also need to produce a detailed narrative of 3000-4000 words describing what you learnt and how it matches the proposed aims, outcomes and skills of the module in question.

Please note that in both cases you are aiming to demonstrate your own learning and its relevance to the aspect of the course you wish to be credited for rather than simply describe the experience or course you participated in.

Fee

The fee to assess an APEL application is £150 per full module, £50 per weekend and £25 for the MHFP. Payment must be received together with the application. If the application is successful, you will be exempt from the module(s) and no tuition fee will be charged for the module(s). You will not be allowed to attend modules you have been credited for. The fee is not returnable if the application is unsuccessful.

Assessment

The objective of the APEL assessment is make sure that the applicant has achieved an equivalent standard of training, skills development, body of knowledge and personal development to the standard expected of students who successfully complete the relevant modules. Your submission will be reviewed by a panel normally consisting of your Course leader/Head of year and a tutor who is experienced in the topic you are seeking to be credited for. The panel may ask for further information or for a meeting with you. They will assess your application on the basis of:

- Acceptability - the evidence is relevant to the module for which credit is sought and is valid and reliable.
- Sufficiency - the evidence demonstrates the learning achieved.
- Authenticity - the evidence demonstrates the applicant's own achievement.
- Currency - the evidence demonstrates learning that has (normally) been undertaken in the last five years or, if it was undertaken longer ago that there has been ongoing practice or CPD building on earlier learning.

Outcome of Applications

If your application is approved, the module credits will be assigned to you and you will be exempted from the module or modules for which APEL has been approved. You will not receive a grade for the APEL module(s). If there is an overall grade assigned for the course, it will be calculated on the basis of the modules actually studied.

If your application is not approved, you will be provided with feedback on the decision of the Accreditation Review Panel. This may take the form of a decision that APEL cannot be granted or further guidance in order to make a future application for. You may appeal against a decision not to accredit prior learning using the appeal procedure for academic decisions.

In order to ensure the assessment process is fair a representative sample of the assessed evidence will be moderated, and also made available to the External Examiner prior to confirmation at the Assessment Board.