

Accreditation of prior learning policy for research provision

Policy and Procedure for the Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning (AP(E)L)

SECTION A: POLICY

1. Applications

- i. An application for AP(E)L should normally be made before the student commences study on the course into which s/he is seeking to transfer prior learning.
- ii. Applications must consist of a written request, stating the University award in respect of which the student seeks AP(E)L, and documentary evidence of the learning, in the form of transcripts, certificates or other suitable evidence in the case of experiential learning.
- iii. A decision as to whether AP(E)L can be approved will depend both on the specific requirements and learning outcomes of each course and the details of each individual application.
- iv. Applicants should note that the award of specific credit via APL towards their intended course of study at the University may not necessarily directly reflect the value/level of the credit assigned to their current/previous qualification, i.e. it may be less.
- v. Exemptions will not be considered for prerequisites in certain disciplines where professional and statutory regulating body requirements apply (e.g., Health Professions Council, Institution of Engineering and Technology, Law Society).
- vi. Exemptions will only be considered for full courses / modules of study; not elements therein.

2. 'Shelf-Life' of Learning

- i. The time elapsed since the student undertook learning that forms the basis of an AP(E)L application is a relevant factor to be considered in each case. Normally, learning should have taken place within the five years prior to the enrolment date for the intended course of study.
- ii. Note: attention should also be paid to the University Policy on **The re-use of credit** (pdf) from University or external sources towards University of Essex awards.

3. Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Degrees

a. Volume of AP(E)L in University taught awards

- i. It is important to note that the acceptance of AP(E)L towards University taught awards is an admissions decision based on each individual case. The maximum volume of AP(E)L outlined below is provided for the guidance of applicants and departments but does not constitute an entitlement.
- ii. For taught postgraduate awards a student may seek to import learning to a maximum of one third of the volume of credit that is required to be studied for the named University award.
- iii. For undergraduate awards of over 240 credits a student may seek to import learning to a maximum value of two thirds of the volume of credit that is required to be studied for the named University award.
- iv. For undergraduate awards of 240 credits or less the maximum credit value permitted to be imported is one half of the volume of credit that is required to be studied for the named University award.
- v. For specified teaching qualifications the maximum credit value permitted to be imported is one half of the volume of credit that is required to be studied for the named University award.

Summary of requirements for admission via AP(E)L:

Award	Maximum credits which may be imported	Minimum credits to be taken on University of Essex validated courses [1]	Total credits for award [2]
Masters Degree	60	120	180
Postgraduate Diploma	40	80	120
Graduate Diploma	40	80	120
Postgraduate Certificate	20	40	60
Graduate Certificate	20	40	60
Postgraduate Certificate in Education	60	60	120
Professional Graduate Certificate in Education	60	60	120
Certificate of Education	60	60	120
CHEP (Certificate of Higher Education Practice)	30	30	60
Honours Degree	240	120	360
Ordinary Degree	200	100	300
Foundation Degree	120	120	240
Diploma of HE	120	120	240
Certificate of HE	60	60	120

1 Note: The Rules of Assessment specify the particular requirements for volume of credit at specific levels of the FHEQ within each University award.

2 Note: Where individual awards have a higher credit total (e.g. Honours degrees with 480 credits) the maximum import thresholds outlined above continue to apply.

b. Calculation of degree results

In calculating the final degree result of a student who makes a successful AP(E)L application, any courses or modules from which the student is exempted on the basis of AP(E)L will be excluded from calculated averages or other methods used to determine the student's final degree result.

c. Transcripts

The transcript for a student who makes a successful AP(E)L application will indicate the elements of the course from which the student was exempted.

4. Research Degrees

a. Volume of AP(E)L in University research awards

- i. It is important to note that the acceptance of AP(E)L towards University research awards is a decision based on each individual case. A student may not have their minimum period reduced to any less than three terms, based on evidence of previous learning.

SECTION B: PROCEDURE

Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Degrees

1. Applicants wishing to be awarded credit for AP(E)L will be advised in the first instance to discuss the matter with the Admissions Office, who will ensure that the applicant is given access to the Programme Specification, including the course structure and the rules of assessment and is informed of the University's AP(E)L policy and procedure.

2. The Admissions Office will verify that the application is in accordance with the policy in Section A. If it is not in accordance, the Admissions Office will inform the student of the discrepancy in writing. Otherwise, the application will be passed to the Admissions Selector for the course concerned who will act as the AP(E)L assessor, or to the appropriate AP(E)L Panel where these exist.

3. The applicant will submit evidence of previous learning in the form of award certificate(s), transcript(s) or, in the case of experiential learning, a portfolio of evidence. This will be passed to the AP(E)L assessor / approval panel. The AP(E)L assessor / approval panel may request additional information, e.g. details of a course syllabus and/or the assessment methods.

4. The AP(E)L assessor / approval panel carries out the following actions to determine whether the student is eligible for AP(E)L towards a University of Essex taught award, documenting each action on the attached pro forma. S/he will:

- a.** decide whether, in the case of APL, further evidence in a format specified by the admitting department is required, in addition to the student's initial submission, and inform the student if such evidence is required
- b.** assess the evidence against the requirements and learning outcomes of the relevant degree course and the available constituent modules. S/he may consult with other members of academic staff as appropriate. Consideration should be given to:
 - i. subject content and knowledge
 - ii. volume of learning
 - iii. level of learning
 - iv. evidence of achievement
 - v. currency of the student's knowledge in relation to the requirements of the course
 - vi. restrictions imposed by Professional or Statutory Bodies, if applicable.
- c.** decide whether the student is required to present themselves for interview by the AP(E)L assessor or another appropriate member of staff, and make the necessary arrangements

5. If the AP(E)L assessor / approval panel decide that the student's application for AP(E)L is unsuccessful, this will be documented on the pro forma and a copy forwarded to the Admissions Office.

6. If the AP(E)L assessor / approval panel decide that the student's application for AP(E)L can be accepted they will make a recommendation to the appropriate Deputy Dean Education (or in the case of partner institutions, the Dean of Academic Partnerships) that a specific amount of credit (eg. exemption from individual module(s) or exemption from a year of study) towards the relevant degree course should be awarded. The Dean will inform the AP(E)L assessor / approval panel of his/her decision. A copy of the pro forma will be forwarded to the Admissions Office.

7. Deans may delegate authority to the Heads of Undergraduate and Graduate Admissions to approve a recommendation from an AP(E)L assessor / approval panel that a specific amount of credit should be awarded towards the relevant degree course.

8. The Admissions Office will inform the student of the decision, in writing and will copy the letter to the Registry and the Systems Administration Office (or equivalent offices at partner institutions), the latter office to undertake appropriate actions on the student's computerised record.

Research Degrees

- 1.** Applicants wishing to be awarded credit for AP(E)L will be advised in the first instance to discuss the matter with the Graduate Admissions Office, who will ensure that the applicant is given access to the Programme Specification, including progression and award criteria, the rules of assessment (where applicable) and is informed of the University's AP(E)L policy and procedure.
- 2.** The Graduate Admissions Office will verify that the application is in accordance with the policy in Section A. If it is not in accordance, the Graduate Admissions Office will inform the student of the discrepancy in writing. Otherwise, the application will be passed to the Admissions Selector for the course concerned who will act as the AP(E)L assessor, or to the appropriate AP(E)L Panel where these exist.
- 3.** The applicant will submit evidence of previous learning in the form of award certificate(s), transcript(s), work produced to date and supervisory board report(s) or, in the case of experiential learning, a portfolio of evidence. This will be passed to the AP(E)L assessor / approval panel. The AP(E)L assessor / approval panel may request additional information, e.g. previous institution's confirmation criteria, department's milestones.
- 4.** The AP(E)L assessor / approval panel carries out the following actions to determine whether the student is eligible for AP(E)L towards a University of Essex research award, documenting each action on the attached pro forma. S/he will:
 - a.** decide whether, in the case of APL, further evidence in a format specified by the admitting department is required, in addition to the student's initial submission, and inform the student if such evidence is required
 - b.** assess the evidence against the progression requirements of the relevant degree course. S/he may consult with other members of academic staff as appropriate. Consideration should be given to:
 - i. confirmation of PhD status
 - ii. milestones required
 - iii. training needs
 - iv. supervisory capacity of the department
 - c.** decide whether the student is required to present themselves for interview by the AP(E)L assessor or another appropriate member of staff, and make the necessary arrangements
- 5.** If the AP(E)L assessor / approval panel decide that the student's application for AP(E)L is unsuccessful, this will be documented on the pro forma and a copy forwarded to the Graduate Admissions Office.
- 6.** If the AP(E)L assessor / approval panel decide that the student's application for AP(E)L can be accepted they will make a recommendation to the appropriate Deputy Dean Education (or in the case of partner institutions, the Dean of Academic Partnerships) that the minimum period should be reduced by a specific number of terms. In line with the Policy in Section A, the minimum period must not be reduced to any less than three terms. The Dean will inform the AP(E)L assessor / approval panel of his/her decision. A copy of the pro forma will be forwarded to the Graduate Admissions Office.
- 7.** Deans may delegate authority to the Graduate Director and Graduate Admissions to approve a recommendation from an AP(E)L assessor / approval panel that the minimum period be reduced and previous learning be used towards the relevant degree course.
- 8.** The Graduate Admissions Office will inform the student of the decision, in writing and will copy the letter to the Registry Research Team and the Systems Administration Office (or equivalent offices at partner institutions); the latter office to undertake appropriate actions on the student's computerised record.