



## Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy

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### Amendment History

Revision Summary	Date Approved	Author

**Irish Baptist College**  
**Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy**

**Introduction**

1. Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) is the generic term used for the award of credits on the basis of demonstrated learning which has taken place in the past.
2. APL allows students who are enrolling on undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes of study at the College to claim ‘credit’ for previous learning. The previous learning must be relevant to the programme for which they are applying, and if their application is successful, the credit will count towards their chosen programme of study.
3. Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) is the process where credit is sought for learning which has not previously been assessed and awarded credit by an academic institution or professional organisation. It is learning which has taken place from a range of experiences or informal (non-credited) study or research.
4. The College will consider applications for APL/APEL. This document sets out the policy and procedures for APL/APEL at Irish Baptist College (the College).
5. The College has sought to balance the recognition of prior learning with a desire to ensure that awards from the College or a validating partner reflect sufficient evidence of study having been undertaken within the College.
6. No APL/APEL award may be given which implies partial completion of a course module/unit. Credit can only be given for whole modules/units, where consideration has been given to mapping the Intended Learning Outcomes of the module/unit to the evidence provided of prior learning.

**Maximum Credits for [APL/APEL](#)**

7. Applicants may apply for admission with advanced standing, having undertaken study or learning elsewhere, or previously at the College. The maximum number of credits for which exemption may be given are as follows:

<b>Undergraduate Level</b>	<b>Students normally get 120 credits per year – 360 credits are needed to achieve the BTh/BD Degree</b>
Certificate of Higher Education	up to 60 credits
Diploma of Higher Education/Foundation Degree	up to 120 credits with no more than 30 credits at HE Level 5
BTh/BD Degree	up to 240 credits with no more than 30 at HE Level 6

<b>Postgraduate Level</b>	<b>180 credits are needed to achieve the MTh</b>
Master's Degree	up to 80 credits

## Principles

8. Credits may be given for prior learning, where the level, standard, content and relevance of that learning are appropriate to a particular approved programme of study. A maximum time limit of 7 years should normally apply between award and consideration of APL/APEL.
9. Decisions regarding the accreditation of prior learning are a matter of academic judgment, with the main consideration being whether the prior learning is broadly equivalent to the learning that would otherwise have been assessed during the course module/unit.
10. It is the responsibility of the applicant to make sure that all evidence and supporting application material is submitted in English. Translations into English must be certified, with original documents available on request. Overseas applicants may apply for APL/APEL in the same way as UK applicants. All qualifications and institutions will be checked by the College along with all other relevant requirements (such as visa and immigration conditions).
11. Students can receive an exit award if they have APL/APEL credit in their profile, providing their performance at the College also satisfies the award requirements of the Undergraduate or Postgraduate Degree Regulations.
12. Special consideration will be given to students who have been granted the full amount of APL/APEL on their entry programme but fail the minimum number of credits for the programme and have to be considered to receive an exit award. The College will check that students have completed sufficient credits to leave the College with the relevant exit award; this means that at least half the taught credits of the exit award have been completed at the College (in line with the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Degree Regulations). If the student has not completed enough credits, they may only be eligible to receive a transcript of their results.
13. Applications for APL/APEL are considered on academic grounds and, as such, no formal rights of appeal exist against the final decision of the College, as appeals cannot be made against decisions of academic judgment. Appeals may, however, be made in line with the procedure outlined in Appendix 1, on the grounds of procedural irregularity, the emergence of new material information or evidence of bias or prejudice.

## The Application Process

14. Applications for APL/APEL must normally be made prior to entry and applications after enrolment will only be considered on an exceptional basis. Deadlines for applications are

31st July for APEL and 31st August for APL, although all applicants are encouraged to apply as early as possible to allow sufficient time for the consideration of their request.

15. Applications for APL/APEL should consist of a written request to the Registrar, along with documentary evidence of the prior learning. This can be in the form of transcripts, certificates, or other suitable evidence. Module/unit descriptors or equivalent documents indicating the Intended Learning Outcomes of the modules/units previously studied should be supplied.
16. Applicants will be charged £50 to cover administration costs.

### **Consideration of Applications**

17. Applications will be considered by an APL/APEL subject assessor, normally the Director of Postgraduate Studies or another faculty member.
18. The subject assessor should complete the APL/APEL Mapping Form. Consideration of the applications should include a detailed and documented discussion of how the Intended Learning Outcomes of each module/unit, where APL/APEL is to be applied, have been met through prior learning or equivalent experience.
19. If the assessor decides that further evidence is required in addition to the applicant's initial submission, they should inform the student as soon as possible regarding the particular evidence required.
20. If the assessor decides that they wish to see the applicant to ascertain additional information in support of the application, arrangements for an interview should be made as soon as possible.
21. When assessing the evidence against the requirements of the Intended Learning Outcomes of the programme and particular course module/unit, the assessor should consider the following:
  - Subject content and knowledge
  - Volume of learning
  - Level of learning
  - Evidence of achievement
  - Any particular restrictions imposed by Professional or Statutory Bodies, if applicable
22. The assessor should refer to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications to assess whether the level of the prior learning is acceptable.
23. The Director of Training or the Director of Postgraduate Studies is expected to provide advice and guidance to current students considering applying to another institution for APL/APEL, in relation to the programme's Intended Learning Outcomes and evidence required for an application for APL/APEL.

## Approval of Applications

24. In all cases authorisation of award of credit via APL/APEL is a matter to be determined solely by the Director of Training. The Director of Training will do so upon consideration of the recommendation from the appropriate subject assessor/panel.
25. A decision regarding whether an application for APL/APEL can be approved will depend on the requirements and specific learning outcomes of the particular programme as well as the details of the individual application.
26. Applications should meet the following criteria:
  - Evidence must be current (not more than 7 years from the date of award)
  - Evidence must be authenticated
  - Evidence must be acceptable (according to the Framework of Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ))
  - Evidence must be sufficient (additional evidence can be requested)
27. The outcome of the assessment will be one of the following:
  - Recommended for exemption
  - Rejected on academic grounds
28. If an application is rejected, then reasons should be clearly recorded and communicated to the applicant.
29. If an application covers several modules, APL/APEL may be granted for only some of them. In this instance, the outcome will be partially approved/rejected on either academic or non-academic grounds. The modules which are approved or rejected should be clearly indicated, along with the reasons, so that the student can be informed as such.
30. Applications for APL/APEL will normally be assessed within 20 working days of receipt.
31. The College reserves the right to terminate an application for study, or withdraw an offer of a place, if the applicant is found to have omitted relevant facts or information in connection with their application or who has falsified or plagiarised any part of their application, both for initial applications for a place at the College or for APL/APEL <sup>1</sup>. If this is discovered after the applicant has been granted APL/APEL, the College will require the student to sit the units for the which APL/APEL have been granted.

## Reporting and Record Keeping

32. Decisions about APL/APEL applications will be relayed to the Registrar. Applicants should be informed and the normal processes for an application to study should be followed.
33. Unsuccessful applicants will be advised of the reason(s) for the decision and, where appropriate, given an indication of any further evidence which might be required to come to

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<sup>1</sup> As stated in the College's Admissions Policy available on the website

a final decision.

34. Successful applicants who wish to defer their place should be advised that APL/APEL may not be available if they do so.
35. The Academic Administrator will record successful applications for APL/APEL as a credit on the student's record on the student information system.
36. Records of all decisions relating to APL/APEL applications will be maintained by Registry for information and reporting purposes (details of numbers of applications received, granted and refused, etc. for information).
37. Monitoring will take place by the College's Academic Quality Assurance Committee (AQAC), to ensure that the criteria for APL/APEL remain objective and are being fairly and consistently applied, they will also monitor the progress of students admitted with APL/APEL. This is important so that information is built up on the suitability of particular qualifications for the granting of credit exemption.
38. APL/APEL monitoring reports will be sent to the AQAC and to any validating body as required.

### **Awarded Credit**

39. Any credit awarded through APL/APEL is treated in the same way as credit awarded through the normal taught route, except that it does not contribute to the calculation of the final award. It will also be represented as 'Prior Learning' on the student's academic transcript.
40. Particular consideration will be given to the case of students who have been granted the full amount of APL/APEL on their entry programme but fail the minimum number of credits for an award and are consequently considered for an exit award.

### **Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning**

41. The College recognises that students, particularly mature students, enter higher education with an extensive range of expertise, skills and knowledge derived from a variety of professional, vocational, community, leisure and personal contexts. APEL provides students with the opportunity to have their prior experiential learning assessed and included within their validated programme. APEL will normally only be granted in the case of programmes with a practical or vocational element.
42. APEL does not exempt a student from study but allows the use of different routes to the award of credit. All students must meet the learning outcomes as set out in the programme specification in order to qualify for the award.
43. For cases of APEL, assessment will be rigorous in ensuring that the learning that has taken place through experience is equivalent to the learning that would occur from following

those elements of the study which the student is seeking exemption from. Credit will only be given for demonstrated learning, where equivalence of learning outcomes can be demonstrated.

44. Examples of experiential learning may include:
  - Work experience (paid or unpaid/ voluntary),
  - A task or project undertaken, a report written, or a course run
  - Non-accredited courses taken, e.g., in-house training
  - Life experience
  - Reading and research
45. Enquiries about APEL will be referred to the relevant Programme Director in the first instance. Applicants are advised to discuss their application with the Programme Director prior to submitting the application form or portfolio, so that guidance can be given to the likely nature of the evidence required.
46. Applicants must submit a personal statement and portfolio of evidence demonstrating the learning achieved. They must also complete the APEL application form to indicate what is being submitted against which Intended Learning Outcomes. The portfolio might include:
  - Practice-based documents
  - Published articles and manuscripts
  - Video/audio recordings or other electronic files, with commentary and analysis related to achievement of learning outcomes
  - Analytical and evaluative description of practice
  - Awards and honours
  - Viva
  - Statements from supervisors or managers in relation to aspects of practice
  - References from colleagues, employees, voluntary organisations, professional bodies
  - CV
  - Book lists
47. The Programme Director will review the portfolio and discuss with the applicant any revisions or supplementary material that might be required.
48. Applicants will also be interviewed to discuss their experiential learning so that assessors can map their learning against the Intended Learning Outcomes of the relevant module/unit or level.
49. Applicants should note that it is the level and depth of the experiential learning measured against the learning outcomes for the module/unit that attracts the credit, not simply the experience.
50. All decisions to grant APEL will be considered, assessed, recorded and communicated according to the principles and processes laid down within this document.

## **Appendix 1 – Appeals Procedure**

1. If applicants or prospective students are dissatisfied with the outcome or treatment of their application for APL/APEL, the following procedure applies:
  - a) The appeal must be sent to the Director of Training in writing within 20 working days of the outcome.
  - b) The appeal must clearly outline the reasons why the applicant believes the decision is incorrect.

**NOTE** that appeals will only be considered on the grounds of procedural irregularity, the emergence of new material information or evidence of bias or prejudice.

2. When received, the College will acknowledge receipt of the appeal and undertake the following review of the original decision:
  - a) The Admissions Committee will discuss the appeal and make a response to the applicant within 20 working days of the appeal request being received.
  - b) If members of the Admissions Committee have been involved in the original decision, those members will not be involved in appeal process and alternative members of staff with appropriate qualification will be used to assess the appeal.
  - c) If the applicant wishes to appeal further against the decision of the Admissions Committee, this must be lodged with the Director of Training within a further 10 working days of receiving the outcome of the Admissions Committee decision.
  - d) At this stage the appeal will be passed to the Principal, whose decision is final.