

Policy and procedures for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) - 2023/24

1. Introduction and Definitions

1.1 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

The Recognition of Prior Learning enables applicants and/or current students on taught courses to gain recognition for qualifications they have already achieved at other institutions, or for the learning they have gained from their experiences, for example in the workplace. It does this by providing exemption from some part(s) of the chosen course of study.

1.2 The University (UEA) recognises prior learning in four ways:

a. Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)

This is the process through which learning achieved outside education or training systems is assessed and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes.

b. Accreditation to Prior Certificated Learning (APCL)

Learning at higher education level, which has been formally achieved, but which has not been awarded credits or a qualification by a UK Higher Education Institution (HEI). For example, qualifications awarded by a non-UK higher education degree awarding body.

c. Credit Transfer

Relates to learning formally achieved at the same qualification level and awarded with credits or a qualification by a recognised UK HEI.

d. Articulation Arrangements

In articulation arrangements UEA makes an assessment of and recognises the equivalence of a course at another institution and offers students the opportunity to join UEA at an appropriate point in the UEA course without the requirement for them to complete the standard RPL process. The Academic Partnerships Office handles requests for Articulation Arrangements.

2. General Principles

2.1 UEA's RPL prerequisites are that the prior learning is:

a. Current – achieved within the last five years, unless the applicant can provide supporting evidence which shows how the learning achieved through the course/qualification remains contemporary;

- b. Relevant – the subject area is appropriate for the course and the learning outcomes map onto module(s) that they are to be claimed against;
- c. Evidenced – transcripts or certificates for credit transfer/APCL and the production of a portfolio for APEL;
- d. At the required level – for credit transfer it needs to be comparable in level and academic standard with the content and learning outcomes equivalent to an award at UEA;
- e. At same credit volume or higher than the modules being claimed against.

2.2 For Apprenticeships UEA must account for prior learning and experience of the individual when negotiating a price with the employer, reducing the content, duration, and price of the programme accordingly. Where prior learning has been assessed and accredited the apprentice must still meet the minimum length of the apprenticeship (372 days) which must include 20% of off the job learning. RPL exemptions may not be granted for more than 50% of the apprenticeship programme.

2.3 In addition:

- a. Exemptions may not normally be granted where a student has previously registered for and failed part of an award and wishes to seek readmission to the same or similar award.
- b. Schools may not award exemptions for core or compulsory modules. Any exceptions to this may be made only with the approval of the Learning and Teaching Committee of Senate.
- c. Schools may not award exemptions for pre-requisites in certain disciplines at UEA, e.g., where the modules are required for Law Society recognition or are needed for professional practice, unless the applicant can show that the identical modules have been completed elsewhere.
- d. UEA decides how much credit to award an individual student via RPL, based on the level, extent, and perceived relevance of the material (both knowledge and skills based) contained within the course/qualification offered by the applicant when compared with their intended course of study at UEA.

3. Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) principles

3.1 Applicants must submit their APEL evidence at the same time as an application made via the recognised application route for the course. Typically, for undergraduate courses, this would be via UCAS or for postgraduate courses via the UEA direct application form.

3.2 APEL exemptions are not permitted for certain professional disciplines. Prospective students should contact the UEA's Admissions Service (admissions@uea.ac.uk) to confirm whether the course will accept APEL exemptions.

3.3 Level of APEL permitted

(i) Amount of APEL permitted

- Bachelors and Integrated Masters courses: APEL exemptions may not be granted for more than 60 credits of the total number of credit points required for an award.
- Postgraduate taught courses: APEL exemptions may not be granted for more than 25% of the total number of credit points required for an award.

(ii) When combined with APCL and credit transfer

- Bachelors and Integrated Masters courses: The maximum RPL (i.e., a combination of credit transfer, APCL and APEL) that may be granted is 33% of the total number of credit points required for an award.
- Postgraduate taught courses: The maximum RPL (i.e., a combination of credit transfer, APCL and APEL) that may be granted is 50% of the total number of credit points required for an award.

(iii) Consideration of applications

- Director of Learning and Teaching for the School (or delegated other).

(iv) Timing

- APEL applications may take up to 10 weeks to complete. All applicants should be advised of this and should be aware of semester restrictions concerning exemption for half year arrangements, especially if the intended course of study involves year-long modules.

4. APEL application process

4.1 APEL evidence will be assessed individually. Applicants must demonstrate that relevant, practical experience has been gained, and compile a portfolio of evidence using:

- a. where applicable, confirmation by line-manager of job responsibilities and job description;
- b. a record of achievements;
- c. where applicable, details of specialist training/skills;

d. contact details of two referees, who can comment on the candidate's achievements;

e. documentation to demonstrate the learning outcomes achieved and the candidate's personal reflection of how the experience has furthered his/her understanding of the relevant subject area;

f. a completed UEA application form via UCAS or a UEA direct application form.

4.2 Applicants should be directed to the relevant School contact by the Admissions Service. The School contact will provide the applicant with the Course Profile for their intended course of study. Applicants should indicate the relationship between the course profile and their portfolio of evidence with the appropriate School contact, e.g., Course Director, School/Faculty Admissions Officer for advice.

4.3 The responsibility for assessing APEL cases shall be delegated to appropriate members of academic staff within the relevant School(s). Following the consideration of their portfolio candidates may also be asked to interview.

4.4 The APEL interview may be recorded to enable interviewers to check the validity of their eventual assessments. The interview should focus on key, relevant learning experiences and candidates will be invited to give a detailed narrative account of the relationship between their prior learning and their intended course of study. The recommendations of the academic reviewers following the interview will be forwarded to the Director of Learning and Teaching for the School, or their delegated deputy.

4.5 The Director of Learning and Teaching for the School or their delegated deputy will consider the evidence put forward by the applicant and the recommendations of the academic reviewers. They may approve and endorse the APEL exemption on behalf of the School Board, and will inform the candidate in writing and send a copy of the letter to:

a. **Relevant SAS - ACR (Student and Academic Services - Academic Registry) Manager** for Undergraduate, Integrated Master's and Postgraduate Taught Candidates

b. **Admissions Service** for UEA staff or their immediate Family

4.6 If no exemption is granted, based on the evidence presented, the School/Faculty shall inform the applicant in writing and copy the letter to the Admissions Service.

4.7 Records relating to the APEL assessment must be retained in accordance with the relevant School's protocol. The candidate should also keep the portfolio of evidence for future reference.

4.8 For Apprenticeships due to the nature of apprenticeship contracting arrangements the application process will be arranged and managed by the School

of Study and supported by UEA Apprenticeship Team in conjunction with employers, and in line with Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) requirements.

5. Accreditation to Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) and Credit Transfer principles

5.1 Prospective students must note that credit is not guaranteed via **APCL** towards their intended course of study at UEA, and where it is approved it may not directly reflect the value/level of the credit assigned to their current/previous qualification by the validating body, i.e., it may be less.

5.2 Schools of study may not award exemptions for pre-requisites in certain disciplines at UEA, e.g., where the modules are required for Law Society recognition or are needed for professional practice, unless the applicant can show that the identical modules have been completed elsewhere.

5.3 In cases of **credit transfer**, only marks awarded by UEA for the course/award being studied will be included in the progression decisions, calculation and classification of the final award. Credit transferred from another HEI will be treated as though obtained on a pass/fail basis and is not used to calculate the final award.

5.4 Level of APCL/credit transfer permitted

(i) Amount of APCL/ Credit Transfer permitted

- Bachelors and Integrated Masters courses:

For APCL and credit transfer for undergraduate Honours degree courses and Integrated Masters degrees, a candidate must normally attain the final 240 credits at UEA (or the final 360 credits in the case of degree courses comprising 480 credits).

Under exceptional circumstances, a concession may be granted for a candidate to be admitted to Year 3/the final year of a degree course.

Candidates may alternatively be admitted to Year 3/the final year of a degree course where this is part of a 3+1 programme under a partnership formally approved through the UEA International Partnerships Review Group.

- Postgraduate taught courses:

Candidates may be granted APCL or credit transfer of up to 50% of the total number of credit points for an award.

It will not be granted for the dissertation part of a course.

(ii) When combined with APEL

- Bachelors and Integrated Masters courses: The maximum RPL (i.e., a combination of credit transfer, APCL and APEL) that may be granted is 33% of the total number of credit points required for an award.
- Postgraduate taught courses: The maximum RPL (i.e., a combination of credit transfer, APCL and APEL) that may be granted is 50% of the total number of credit points required for an award.

(iii) Consideration of applications

- Bachelors and Integrated Masters courses:

Direct entry to Year 1 (Spring Semester) or Year 2 Autumn Semester)

Delegated to Schools.

Direct entry to Year 2 (Spring Semester)

Learning and Teaching Committee via a concession approved by the Academic Director of Taught Programmes.

- Postgraduate taught courses:

Exemption for 50% or less towards the total number of credits for an award

Delegated to Schools.

(iv) Timing

- APCL applications may take up to 6 weeks to complete. All applicants should be advised of this and should be aware of semester restrictions concerning exemption for half year arrangements, especially if the intended course of study involves year-long modules.

6. Previous study at the UEA

Where a student is permitted to top-up a qualification from UEA, the lower award is subsumed into the higher award when the higher award is conferred, in accordance with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree Awarding bodies. There is no requirement for a student to 'hand-in' the certificate for the lower award in these circumstances.

7. APCL and Credit Transfer application process

7.1 The applicant's request must be made in writing, enclosing:

- a. A certified copy of certificate(s) or parchment(s);
- b. A syllabus;

- c. A full record of academic results achieved;
- d. A completed application form via UCAS or UEA direct application form, the request must include an academic reference from the institution which awarded the qualification.

All evidence should be sent to the Admissions Service (admissions@uea.ac.uk) to accompany the submitted application.

7.2 Alternative RPL application procedures are in place in the following three Schools: Education and Lifelong Learning (EDU), Health Sciences (HSC) and Social Work (SWK) these Schools have delegated authority to approve applications on behalf of the UEA's Learning and Teaching Committee.

7.3 The Admissions Service will notify the candidate of the outcome in writing, and a copy will be sent to the appropriate Student and Academic Services - Academic Registry (SAS - ACR) Manager. If the application is considered by the Learning and Teaching Committee, SAS - ACR will write to the student and copy the letter to the Admissions Service and the School as appropriate.

7.4 For Apprenticeships due to the nature of apprenticeship contracting arrangements the application process will be arranged and managed by the School of Study and supported UEA Apprenticeship Team in conjunction with employers, and in line with Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) requirements.

8. Complaints

A complaint against a judgement on an application for RPL will be treated in the same way as a complaint with the admissions process, please see UEA's [Admissions Appeals and Complaints Procedure](#). Should the applicant wish to appeal the decision they are advised to consult the [Admissions Policy](#), and if they were hoping to transfer from one degree to another the [Student Transfer Policy](#).

9. Recording Recognition of Prior Learning

RPL is recorded in the Student's Record and on their Transcript.