



## Guidance for Accreditation of Prior Learning applications

**These notes provide guidance if you are considering applying for exemption from studying parts of a Buckinghamshire New University course.**

Buckinghamshire New University recognises that you may have knowledge and skills from your previous study or work contexts which would allow you to be given credit against one or more modules on your course, subject to the limits specified in the Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy and Procedure. The University's Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) process enables you to apply for exemption from studying modules for which your previous study or your professional and/or vocational experiences can be recognised as the equivalent learning experience.

You can apply for exemption from modules on undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, delivered full-time, part time or by distance learning. There may be restrictions on whether APL applications can be accepted, especially where Professional Statutory or Regulatory bodies have accredited the course, and you are advised to contact the relevant Faculty before making an application.

In order for the University to award APL credit, your previous studies or work experiences must be compared with the module or modules concerned, and a judgement made about whether your prior learning can exempt you from studying part of the course. To do this, academics will examine your prior learning to make sure that the knowledge and skills you can demonstrate provide a match for those expected from you, had you actually studied the module. Through this process the University can be assured that all students who receive an award, even if they have been given exemption from studying part of the programme, have achieved the course requirements in full.

The University can recognise your prior achievements through:

**Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL):** this recognises learning you can demonstrate through your studies at a Higher Education provider, including Buckinghamshire New University, and which has resulted in the award of academic credit.

The evidence of your prior learning which you submit for Prior Certified Learning will normally consist of details of the modules and your achievement in the form of a transcript for your previous studies. It will only be considered if it closely matches the content of the module(s) from which you are seeking exemption. If successful you will be awarded academic credit for the module. If a close match cannot be established, no credit will be awarded under APL.

**Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL):** this recognises learning which demonstrates your acquisition of knowledge and skills through life and work experience.

The evidence for Prior Experiential Learning takes the form of a portfolio: exactly what is required in this will be explained by your APL Assessor. For example, in addition to a portfolio of your evidence of learning in your working life, you may also be asked to give a presentation, attend an interview, provide an extended CV giving details of prior experience, produce a piece of academic work or sit an examination at the appropriate academic level.

### **Is APL right for me?**

*You are strongly advised to seek advice on the specific implications of APL from your Tutor or Registrar.*

Some advantages of applying for APL and being given exemption from studying part of the course include:

- Spending time reflecting on your knowledge and experience, which can provide a boost to your confidence
- Opportunities to re-develop your academic writing skills
- Not having to attend or submit assessments for the module where you have exemption
- Having more time to focus on your other modules

But you may also need to take into consideration the fact that you may not have as many dedicated learning and teaching opportunities as other students on the course. Joining a course part way through means you may have fewer opportunities to adjust to the demands of your new studies and you would need to be prepared for that challenge.

### **Student Finance matters**

If you are studying on a full time course and are successful in being granted credits through the accreditation of prior learning, you will still be entitled to full tuition fee and maintenance support from Student Finance, as a full time student, providing you meet the statutory eligibility criteria. Whilst you remain enrolled on the programme, you will continue to receive any council tax exemptions or reductions, as well as any other benefits to which you are entitled as a full time student. For part time students, as long as you are studying with at least 25% intensity of the full time equivalent course, then you will continue to be entitled to tuition fee loan support from Student Finance and your student status will be unaffected.

Should you have any queries on the above, please contact the Student Centre on 01494 603020 or e-mail [student.centre@bucks.ac.uk](mailto:student.centre@bucks.ac.uk)

### **International Tier 4 students**

If you are an international student, it is a requirement of the Tier 4 regulations that you must study full-time. Within an academic level, Tier 4 students taking only some and not all the modules of the course are deemed not to be studying full time, and therefore APL may not be given for modules which make up part of a Level. However, exemptions for the whole level of the course are acceptable. For further information please contact [compliance@bucks.ac.uk](mailto:compliance@bucks.ac.uk)

## **Exemption limits**

The maximum amount of APL which can be allowed is set out in the *Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy and Procedure*. Exemption from study is only granted for complete individual modules or whole levels of courses: it cannot be given for part of a module.

## **When to claim**

Applications for APL must be submitted before the start of the module or level for which you are seeking exemption. So, for example, you could make an application before you start the course: you could apply for exemption from one or more first year modules, or for the whole of the first year (Level 4) and begin your studies at Level 5, providing you can demonstrate equivalent learning for the Level 4 modules. Similarly on a postgraduate programme you could apply for exemption from individual modules, or from the postgraduate certificate or postgraduate diploma stages.

You can also apply for exemption from modules once you have started the programme, as long as the application is submitted before the modules start. Once you have started a course, for example, you could realise that you might have already achieved the requirements of some of the modules scheduled for delivery at a later stage. You can then make an application for exemption from study of those modules.

If, for whatever reason, a decision about your claim is delayed beyond the start of the module concerned, you are advised to attend the module until the outcome is confirmed: if your application is not approved you will have to complete the assessments for the module in the usual way.

## **Award Classifications and transcripts**

APL affects the way that your final award is calculated. If you have exemption from study for part of your course, only those modules actually studied and assessed at Buckinghamshire New University as part of the programme for which you are registered will be taken into account in your final grade/classification. For example, if you have been given exemption from Level 4 and Level 5 of an Honours Degree, your award will be calculated solely on the Level 6 modules.

Your transcript will show your results for modules studied on your course, and will also state the number of credits awarded through APL.

## **How to apply:**

If you want to apply for APL you should have an initial discussion with the relevant Faculty academic or Registrar who will provide guidance. Details of application requirements and the forms to use are on the University website.

It is your responsibility to make the application and to supply the supporting evidence and/or the portfolio requirements. The evidence you supply is used in a mapping exercise to match your learning against the learning outcomes for the module/Level from which you are claiming exemption.

Once an APL Assessor has examined your application, they will make a recommendation to the APL Panel: the decision to approve or reject the recommendation rests with the APL Panel.

The APL Panel Secretary will notify you of the outcome of your application, and if it is rejected will give you the reasons. If you want to make an appeal against the decision made by the APL Panel, you should follow the procedure for Appeals against Admissions decisions in the Buckinghamshire New University Admissions Policy.