

Introduction

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) enables people of all ages and backgrounds to receive recognition and formal credit for learning acquired in the past, through either successful study of a qualification (or part of) or through learning gained via work and business experience. There are four ways in which to claim RPL, namely through APL, APEL, APCL and Advanced standing. These approaches to gaining RPL are outlined in the following document. This policy is to be used in conjunction with our partner's policies from Staffordshire University (the Admission Policy, Equal Opportunity plus the Appeal Procedure from Shrewsbury Colleges Group should also be taken in account).

What is APL?

The accreditation of prior learning (APL) is the account taken of traditional study or course-based learning that has been formally assessed by an educational institution and has resulted in the award of a qualification or part-credit for an uncompleted course of study. Through the RPL process it may be possible for you to gain entry to a course of study at Shrewsbury Colleges Group.

Typical qualifications for entry onto undergraduate courses include: GCSE, A Levels, Certificates, or Diplomas. If you do not possess any of these qualifications or didn't complete a course of study but were awarded part-credits, you may still be able to gain access to the Higher Education course of your choice through RPL. For example you may have completed or gained partial credits from one of more of the following: City and Guilds, NVQ's professional qualifications, a partly completed BTEC or Pearson qualification.

What is APEL?

The accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) is the account taken of learning experiences gained through life, work and business that by their very nature cannot be evidenced through formally assessed certification or transcripts. The APEL can enable us to assess the skills and knowledge base you have gained through your relevant work experiences.

What is APCL?

APCL or Accreditation of prior certificated learning, is a process through which previously assessed and certificated learning is considered and, if appropriate, recognised for academic purposes e.g. ILM and CMI.

What is advanced standing?

This is the term used for the procedure of granting credit to a student for educational experiences or courses undertaken at another institution which are non-certificated e.g. continuous professional development (CPD).

1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

- a. Shrewsbury Colleges Group is passionate about raising aspirations and supporting achievement for people with diverse requirements, entitlements, and backgrounds. It actively promotes personal development, widening access and participation, employability, building business partnerships with the community, and equality of access through the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). This enables the identification and accreditation of the knowledge and skills applicants have acquired inside and outside of Higher Education (H.E.)
- b. The APL policy and procedures are informed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) Academic Infrastructure. Recognition and accreditation relates to the achievement of learning, and the outcomes of that learning, whilst the experience serves to provide the underpinning evidence of that learning. The process of extracting learning from experience is critical for recognition purposes.
- c. Shrewsbury Colleges Group promotes reflective practice that enables applicants to demonstrate their full potential in specialist areas. Applicants are encouraged to use reflection to deconstruct and then reconstruct personal and professional experience with a focus on the learning achieved for credit purpose.
- d. We recognise learning wherever it takes place plus the knowledge and skills that can be acquired from a whole range of learning experiences, both formal and informal. The purpose of the RPL policy is to ensure that process and procedures are implemented consistently across the college, the requirements of awards and professional bodies are met, and that academic quality and standards are maintained and that Shrewsbury Colleges Group is exercising properly its responsibilities for all awards we are approved to deliver.
- e. We encourage RPL as a means of entry to, or credit within, all our programmes. The outcomes of RPL support recruitment and retention through:
 - Recognising and awarding academic value to a diversity of learning experiences
 - Avoiding repetition of learning previously acquired
 - Contribution to curricula flexibility for the student
 - Enabling acceleration of students' rate of progress where applicable

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- f. Entry on the basis of experience rather than formal qualifications is accepted practice within Shrewsbury Colleges Group and is normally achieved through an interview and/or evaluation process where the applicant can demonstrate relevant skills, knowledge and competencies. Beyond satisfying the criteria for admission to an award, an applicant may be in a position to make a submission for RPL which can be counted towards their award and enable them to gain admission with credit e.g. directly onto a higher stage of the award, or to receive credit towards one or more modules on that award.

2. Principles

- a. Applicants who require credit for prior learning will be offered the opportunity to prove learning through the RPL process. Learning can count against awards offered by Shrewsbury Colleges Group subject to the limitations identified by awarding bodies.
- b. Credit awarded through an RPL process must be identified on the student record as RPL level/stage for programme planning and award purposes.
- c. Where credit is awarded against core or named modules the learning must meet the learning outcomes of such modules so as to satisfy the overall module aims and outcomes. Where credit is matched against specific modules, it is recorded as RPL credit for the named module.
- d. Judgement on the level and amount of credit to be awarded will be subject to the normal academic quality and standard processes for the assessment of students.
- e. Decisions regarding RPL are a matter of academic judgement. The decision-making process and outcomes will be transparent and demonstrate rigor and fairness. Any appeal against decisions relating to the award of credit will be conducted in accordance with Shrewsbury Colleges Group appeals procedure.
- f. Information and guidance will clearly outline the process for making an RPL application including the range and nature of the evidence required to support the application and outline learner support available.
- g. Normally it is assumed that if the student completed the certificated learning more than five years ago the learning will be out of date and no credit can be given. However, Shrewsbury Colleges Group will consider the circumstances of each application for the accreditation or prior learning on its own merits e.g. if a student has worked professionally and has built on that learning in the interim period.

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All staff associated with the support, guidance and assessment of applications will be given appropriate training and development.

4. Equality and Diversity

This policy will be implemented in accordance with Shrewsbury Colleges Group Equal Opportunities Policy.

5. Regulatory requirements of awarding and professional bodies.

Shrewsbury Colleges Group requires that all staff are aware of, and operate under the specific requirements of its awarding bodies and where appropriate, professional bodies.

6. Accreditation of Prior Learning Procedure.

The processes for APCL and APEL are different. Both processes are designed to ensure consistency and comparability and parity of treatment of applicants.

7. APCL Process

- a. Course Leaders will be responsible for the APCL applications to their programmes of study. Applicants will normally make one only APCL application prior to initial registration on a programme of study. The monitoring of the procedure is undertaken by the Quality Team.
- b. The applicant must provide information about their certificated learning on the RPL application form either from Shrewsbury Colleges Group's website or from Admissions office. In all cases documentary proof that the qualification or part thereof, has been obtained and a full transcript of results must be provided. It is the applicant's responsibility to provide either original documentation or certified copies of original documentation.
- c. Applications for APCL must be submitted to Admissions and the Course Leader at the point of application for an academic place. Decisions on APCL applications will be made by the Course Leader before a student initially enrolls. Retrospective applications for APCL will not normally be allowed. Where appropriate, reference to the equivalence of the prior learning to the learning outcomes of the modules for which credit is being sought must be clearly identified.
- d. If an offer of a place to study at Shrewsbury Colleges Group is made to an RPL applicant, that offer should be a conditional offer, subject to, but not restricted to, successful completion of the RPL process.

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- a. The applicant will be responsible for:-
 - The decision as to whether any application will be made for prior learning.
 - Submitting an application with supporting evidence to the relevant Course Leader
- b. The Course Leader will evaluate the applicant's prior certificated learning and decide whether the applicants learning may be considered for accreditation in terms of equivalence to the modules for which credit is being sought.
- c. The Course Leader will not offer the applicant any guarantees as to the outcome of his/her submission.
- d. Refer to the Head of HE for final approval prior to advising Admissions of outcome.
- e. Admissions to confirm outcome to student.

9. APEL Process and Advanced Standing

- a. Credit for prior experiential learning and CPD may be gained from a variety of sources.e.g. workplace, community activities, voluntary work and other informal learning experiences. The award for experiential learning is of general credit rather than awarding specific credit value. Evidence of the experience itself is not considered sufficient for the award of credit. The evidence must be presented in a way that demonstrates that equivalent and relevant learning has taken place. This will include a portfolio of evidence and a statement evaluating the learning that has been achieved.

10. Responsibilities for APEL applications

- a. The applicant will be responsible for:-
 - The decision as to whether any application will be made for prior learning.
 - Submitting an application with supporting evidence to the relevant Course Leader.
- b. The Course Leader will evaluate the applicant's prior experiential learning and decide whether the applicant's experience may be considered for accreditation to the modules for which credit is being sought.
- c. The Course Leader will not offer the applicant any guarantees as to the outcome of his/her submission.
- d. Refer to the Head of HE for final approval prior to advising Admissions of outcome.
- e. Admissions to confirm outcome to student.

11. Learning Outcomes

a. Learning outcomes reflect the knowledge, understanding, practical and transferrable skills which the applicant has acquired resulting from experiential learning. Applicants will need to provide evidence that each learning outcome has been achieved. The nature of evidence will vary considerably and may include:

- Reflective statements
- Portfolio
- Written assignments
- Performance practice-based documents
- Reports on observations of practice
- Video/audio tapes with commentary and analysis related to the achievement of learning outcome
- Analytic and evaluative description of practice
- Statements from workplace supervisors in relation to aspects of their practice.

12. Assessing Applications for APEL and Advanced Standing

a. In order to make an application for credit based on experiential learning, the applicant must provide information on the RPL application form available from the Admissions Office or website. Applicants must provide verifiable evidence to support their application. An applicant will include:

- A statement of claim for credit
- A summary of the learning claimed
- A reflective essay on the learning claimed in relation to the targeted programme and the outcomes achieved.
- A summary of evidence against each element of learning, cross-referenced against the full evidence.
- Full evidence as appropriate.

b. The criteria for evaluation of the learning in an application will be based on:-

- Acceptability – is the evidence valid and reliable?
- Sufficiency and breadth – is the achievement of the claimed learning fully demonstrated?
- Authenticity – is the evidence clearly the achievement of the applicant?

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- Currency – is the learning current, or if not is there evidence of updating? Normally it is assumed that if the applicant completed the experiential learning more than five years ago the learning will be out of date and no credit can be given.
- Statements of professional competency, where appropriate.

13. Appeals

An appeal may only be submitted if the applicant believes there has been material irregularity in the processing of the application. An applicant wishing to appeal against the decision of the Course Leader must follow Shrewsbury Colleges Group appeals procedure.

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Application Form

Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL)

Or

**Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) including
Advanced Standing**

Please refer to the RPL Policy dated September 2020 when completing this application form.

This form should be completed with the support of the relevant Course Leader for the award at Shrewsbury Colleges Group you wish to study.

It is the applicants' responsibility to provide certified copies of original documentation, such as official transcripts of results, and evidence to demonstrate equivalent experiential learning outcomes.

All Applicants

Please indicate the application you are making by ticking ONE option below.

Claiming APCL for entry to year 1 of an undergraduate course.

Claiming APEL/Advanced Standing for entry to year 1 of an undergraduate course.

Please indicate the course you are applying to at Shrewsbury Colleges Group:

Full Award Title:

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Personal Details:

Forename(s)

Surname:

Mobile:

Landline:

Email:

Address:

FOR APEL AND ADVANCED STANDING APPLICANTS ONLY

Evidence of Experiential Learning or Advanced Standing

You will need to attach a written statement on a separate sheet(s), providing verifiable evidence to support your application and attach it to this form.

This will include:

1. A statement of claim for credit
2. A summary of the learning claimed
3. A reflective essay on the learning claimed in relation to the target programme and the outcomes achieved.
4. A summary of evidence against each element of learning, cross-referenced against the full evidence.
5. Full evidence as appropriate.

The criteria for evaluation of the experiential learning you have evidences will be based on:

- Acceptability – is the evidence valid and reliable?
- Sufficiency and breadth – is the achievement of the claimed learning fully demonstrated?
- Authenticity – is the evidence clearly the achievement of the applicant?
- Currency – is the learning current, or if not is there evidence of updating? Normally it is assumed that if the applicant completed the experiential learning more than five years ago the learning will be out of date and no credit awarded.

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Please consult the RPL Policy and the relevant Curriculum Leader at Shrewsbury Colleges Group should you require any advice.

APCL APPLICATIONS ONLY

Academic Qualification Already Certificated

In addition to this section, you must also attach official copies of transcripts/certificates to provide proof of prior certificated learning.

Please consult the RPL Policy and the relevant Course Leader at Shrewsbury Colleges Group should you require any advice.

Level and Name of Qualification:

Number of Credits Awarded:

Month and year qualification awarded (eg Jan 2010)

Name and address of awarding School or College:

Descriptive outline of the certificated qualification or credits declared above:

(50 words max)

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ALL APPLICANTS

Additional Evidence

Please list below and/or attach any additional evidence, if applicable, that you wish to submit in relation to the APL/APEL application.

ALL APPLICANTS

By signing below, I declare that the above facts to be correct and I understand that Shrewsbury Colleges Group can approach the awarding bodies or employer, if it chooses, for verification of the summited qualifications or experience.

Signed:

Dated:

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SHREWSBURY COLLEGES GROUP COURSE LEADER AND HEAD OF HE

It is the responsibility of the Course Leader to ensure this form is countersigned by both parties.

By signing below, I verify this application for entry, or advanced standing, through APCL/APEL, is approved and fulfils the criteria according to the Shrewsbury Colleges Group RPL Policy.

Credits to be awarded (if applicable):

Date for study to commence:

Course Leader:

Head of HE:

Signed:

Signed:

Dated:

Dated: