

Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) Process

Guidance for Applicants

For applications to Higher
Education courses commencing
September 2023



Contents

1. Who is this Guidance for?	2
2. What is APL?	2
3. What do we mean by prior informal and non-formal learning and APL?	2
4. Who is Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) for?	3
5. What does the APL process involve?	4
6. APL for Foundation Degrees and/or other Higher Level Courses.....	6
7. Timelines for your APL Process.....	7
8. Portfolio of Evidence of Learning.....	10
Appendices:.....	12
Expression of Interest Form	13
APL Application Form	15

1. Who is this Guidance for?

This Guidance is for applicants who wish to have prior experience and/or learning recognised in order to be eligible for either entry to, or module exemption from, Foundation Degree programmes and other Higher Education Programmes at Belfast Met. This is the **Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)** process.

2. What is APL?

APL is the process used to acknowledge and establish the learning and/or experience you may already have which may support your application to the College.

Within the APL process you may wish to claim for:

- Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL); and/or
- Accreditation of Prior Certified Learning (APCL).

3. What do we mean by prior informal and non-formal learning and APL?

Prior informal/non-formal learning is learning based on experience. It includes all learning which you have done up to this point which has not already been formally assessed. This includes prior learning gained through life and work experiences (paid and voluntary), as well as prior learning gained through community-based learning, workplace learning and training, continuing professional development and independent learning.

The APL process will allow the **learning** you have gained from experience to be recognised and counted.

This can help you to:

- Think about the learning you have already achieved and to plan how to build on this learning to meet your personal and career goals.
- Apply for an appropriate Foundation Degree, or other higher level course at a college if you don't have the normal entry qualifications but can show that you have the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Gain credit towards modules of a Foundation Degree, or other higher level course, so as to shorten the normal period of learning by showing that you already have the knowledge, skills and understanding needed for particular parts of the programme or qualification (e.g. units or modules), subject to the Awarding Body regulations.

4. Who is Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) for?

APL can benefit:

- individuals in the workplace looking for recognised credit for entry to an academic programme at higher education level; and
- learners who may have exited a higher education programme prior to completion or the receipt of credit and who wish to count that learning towards another award.

The Belfast Met APL Adviser will support you through the APL process by:

- introducing you to the APL Guidelines specific to the relevant subject area;
- building your confidence as a learner through identifying your strengths and skills; and
- advising you on how to prepare your **Portfolio of Evidence of Learning** (see Section 8).

5. What does the APL process involve?

APL is about getting evidence and explaining how it allows you to meet the knowledge and skills requirements for a course of study. This means that you must reflect on that experience and on the learning that you have already achieved as a result. Before you go through the APL process there is an important guiding principle you should remember.

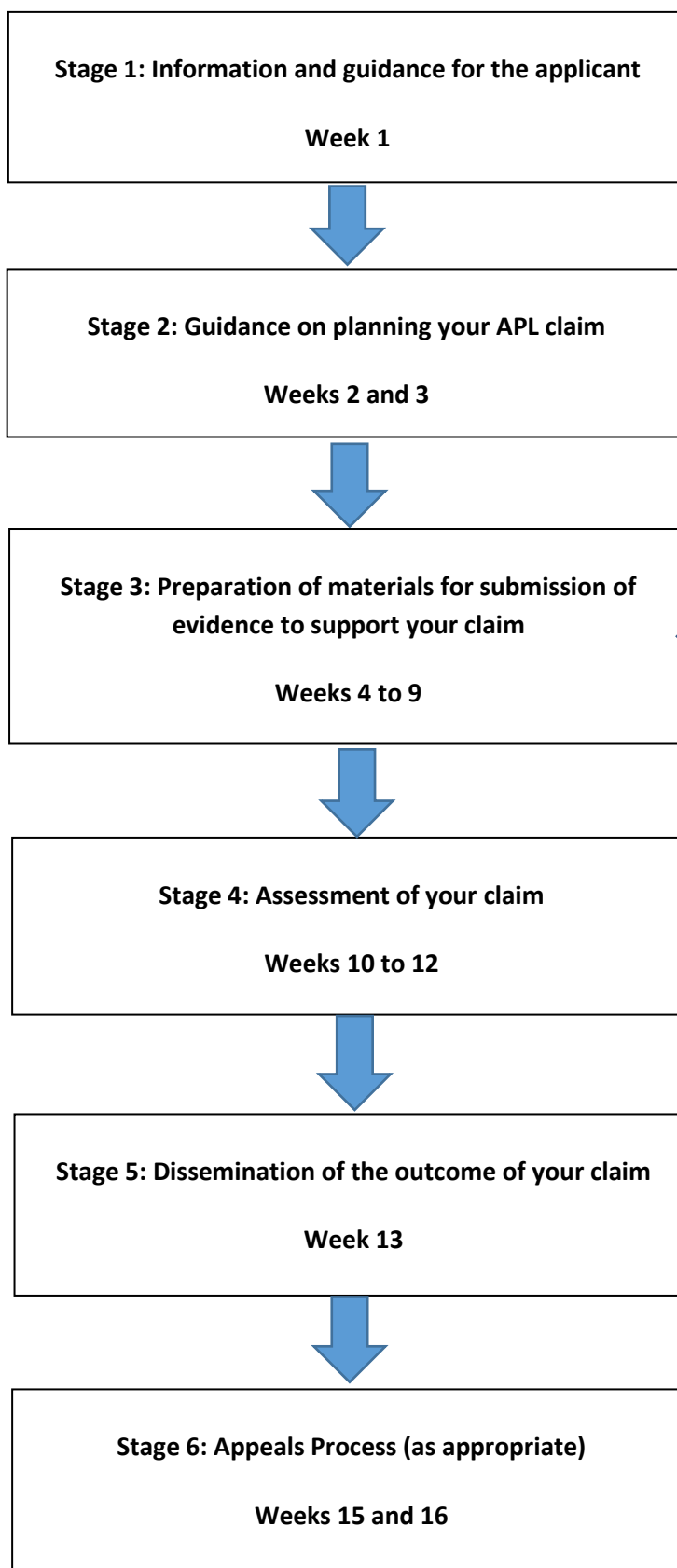
It is what you have learned that is being recognised, not what you have done.

For example, two people might have the same experience through doing identical jobs but one might have learned much more from the task(s) involved than the other. People who have learned something are able to use that learning to help them in other related situations.

Therefore, you need to provide evidence of what you **have learned** from your experiences, not just describe what you've done. This involves reflecting on your experiences and drawing out from them what you have learned, then writing this down and talking about it with your facilitator. The writing and the talk will help to provide the evidence you need.

The **Overview** overleaf shows the six stages in the APL process.

Overview of the APL Process



Evidence for APL should be submitted by 23rd June 2023 (unless otherwise agreed by the APL Adviser and applicant, deadlines will be line with relevant Awarding Body timelines for example Ulster University (UU) deadline is 1st September 2023, please note 1st September 2023 includes final sign off by the UU Faculty Partnership Manager (FPM). Deadlines are also subject to Colleges' HE programme commence date.

6. APL for Foundation Degree and/or Higher Level Courses

The requirements for the Higher Education programmes are outlined in the Belfast Met website and Prospectus.

During the APL process, the APL Adviser or a member of the course team will have discussed your professional qualifications and experience. For applicants who do not meet the entry requirements consideration for entry to the programme may alternatively be based on APL. All APL claims must be made in line with the process outlined here. The APL Adviser will guide you through the APL process and a subject specialist will review your experience against the skills/knowledge criteria for the course.

QUB and Stranmillis University College - Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme (CATS)

For QUB and Stranmillis University College Foundation Degree programmes, APEL credit may be given to a maximum of 80 CATS points. Credit transfer will not be permitted for study undertaken earlier than three years prior to entry.

Ulster University – Credit Points

For APL on course exemption for Ulster University Foundation Degree programmes, a maximum of 50% APL for exemption is permitted.

7. Timelines for your APL Process

The table below outlines the APL process and timeline for each stage.

Stage	Task	Timeline
<p>Stage 1</p>	<p>Information and guidance</p> <p>After applying for a course using the Belfast Met online application process, applicants should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contact the College and arrange to meet the APL Advisor; • be given an outline of APL process including maximum APL thresholds, advice on APL provided (is the proposed evidence appropriate/likely to meet the entry criteria?); and • submit an Expression of Intent Form (see page 14) within one working week from initial contact. 	<p>Week 1</p> <p>(Week 1 commences when the applicant receives an OFFER letter and makes initial contact with the College .)</p>
<p>Stage 2</p>	<p>Guidance on Planning your APL Claim</p> <p>Applicants should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be provided with an APL Application Form; • be advised on the content and purpose of the Portfolio of Evidence of Learning (see Section 8); and • be advised on the learning outcomes against which the evidence will be assessed. 	<p>Weeks 2 and 3</p>

Stage	Task	Timeline
<p>Stage 3</p>	<p>Prepare materials and evidence for submission to support your APL Claim</p> <p>Refer to the contents of the Portfolio of Evidence of Learning (see Section 8).</p> <p>Applicants should maintain regular contact with the APL Adviser or subject specialist during this period.</p> <p>Applicants should submit an APL Application Form (see pages 16 & 17) and a Portfolio of Evidence of Learning to the School Administrator by the end of Week 9.</p>	<p>Weeks 4 – 9</p>
<p>Stage 4</p>	<p>Assessment of your Claim</p> <p>The assessment of the Portfolio of Evidence of Learning will be carried out by the College.</p> <p>It will be supplemented by an interview with the subject specialist to establish authenticity and reliability of your evidence, understanding of your expectations of studying at Level 4 and your motivation to progress to Foundation Degree or other HE level study.</p>	<p>Weeks 10 - 12</p>

Stage	Task	Timeline
Stage 5	<p>Outcome of your APL Claim</p> <p>You will be provided with the outcome of your application by the end of Week 13.</p> <p>Outcomes of claims will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved • Not Approved • Insufficient Evidence 	<p>Week</p> <p>13</p>

Any changes to these timelines will be subject to agreement between you and the APL Adviser in line with relevant Awarding Body timelines.

Appeals Process

If you wish to appeal the outcome of your APL claim an appeal must be submitted **within 10 working days** of the date you were informed of the decision. This can be done via the College Compliments and Complaints Policy available at:

<https://www.belfastmet.ac.uk/about-us/corporate-information/public-documents/>

There is no external Appeals Process.

8. Portfolio of Evidence of Learning

Your claim for APL for entry is to be supported by a **Portfolio of Evidence of Learning** including a Personal Reflection and examples of evidence to authenticate your claim.

Your Portfolio should contain:

1. Title page
2. Table of contents
3. Curriculum Vitae
4. Employment History (including a detailed workplace reference)
5. Education and Training History (including a description of training)
6. Training and Professional Qualifications (certification)
7. Personal Reflection
8. Other evidence – this may include informal Learning Activities, e.g. conferences/workshops etc.

Additional information to support your submission can include:

- Practice-based documents
- Reports on observation of practice
- Video/audio files, with commentary and analysis related to the achievement of learning outcomes
- Analytic and evaluative description of practice
- Statements from supervisors in relation to aspects of practice
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD) records and appraisals
- Reports of professional discussions
- Reflective statements

Applicants who wish to apply for APL for on course exemption should also provide:

1. Title and description of the module.
2. Certified Results Sheets.

Applicants should confirm the **certification dates** accepted by the Awarding Body with the APL Adviser – this is the currency of a qualification.

Once the evidence has been assessed you will be notified of the outcome of your APL application.

9. Appendices:

Expression of Interest Form

APL Application Form

Expression of Interest Form

Please make sure you have read and fully understood the **Guidance for Applicants** before completing this form. College staff are available to help you.

Surname:	
Forename(s):	
Title:	
APL Reference:	
<p>Contact Details</p> <p>Home Address:</p> <p>Postcode:</p> <p>Email Address:</p>	
<p>Telephone Number(s)</p> <p>Home: Work:</p> <p>Mobile:</p>	

I have met with the APL Coordinator and wish to give notice of my intent to submit an APL application for:

Entry to the following Foundation Degree/HE programme:

Exemption from the following Module(s):

Personal Statement

Please provide details of your interest in and motivation to study on your chosen Foundation Degree or other Higher Level programme.

Student Signature:

Date:

OFFICIAL USE ONLY

APL College Adviser Signature:

Forwarded to College APL Coordinator/HE Adviser

Please return this form by email to your Belfast Met APL Adviser.

APL Application Form

Part 1 – Personal Information	
Surname:	
Forename(s):	
Title:	
Student ID (if applicable)	
<p>If you have already submitted an Application for full-time study via UCAS, please insert your UCAS number here:</p>	
<p>Contact Details</p> <p>Home Address:</p> <p>Postcode:</p> <p>Email Address:</p>	
<p>Telephone Number(s)</p> <p>Home: Work:</p> <p>Mobile:</p>	

Employer Name and Address (if applicable):

Part 2 – Proposed Course of Study

Foundation Degree/Higher Level course title:

Mode of attendance:

Month or year of entry:

Please tick the level of APL for which you are applying:

**Tick as
appropriate**

(i) Entry

(ii) On-Course Exemption – please list the modules(s) for which you are seeking exemption

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

(iii)	Both Entry and On-Course exemption	
Part 3 – Outline of APL Claim		
I enclose the following documentation:		Tick as appropriate
(i)	APL Application Form – signed and dated	
(ii)	Portfolio of Evidence of Learning (please indicate if the portfolio is to follow)	
(iii)	Certified evidence	

Signature:	Date:
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Please return this form to the School Administrator along with your Portfolio of Evidence of Learning.

If you are reading the PDF version of this document and required the editable Word version of this document, you can find a Word version on the college website, visit <https://www.belfastmet.ac.uk/about-us/corporate-information/public-documents/> to locate the document titled 'APLGuidanceNotesfor HE Applicants_2023 Word version'