

Accredited Prior Learning (APL) Policy 2024/25

For Publication on the SSHO Website

Scope

1. This policy outlines St Stephen's House procedure in considering Accredited Prior Learning (APL) applications for students on the Common Awards.
The maximum number of APL credits that can be granted for a specific program of study can be found at:
<https://www.durham.ac.uk/departments/academic/common-awards/policies-processes/admissions/apl-credit-limits/>

Definitions

2. The Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) is the process by which a student applies for and, if successful, is granted an exemption from some of the modules on their pathway, because an academic judgment is made that they have already met most or all of the Learning Outcomes for that portion of their programme.
3. Accreditation of Prior Learning is an umbrella term for two processes:
 - a) Accreditation of Prior Credited Learning (APCL) recognises learning gained through previous academic study which has been formally recognised and recorded in a Higher Education context
 - b) Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) recognises other kinds of learning, including learning gained outside of the classroom and through practical experience.

For the purposes of this document, 'APL' subsumes both APCL and APEL, unless otherwise specified.

Key Principles

4. This policy derives from Durham University's guidance on Accredited Prior Learning. Where APL applications fall outside of the parameters of the University's documented guidance, St Stephen's House will refer such applications to the University for consideration.
5. All APL applications should be processed prior to the University deadline detailed in the [Common Awards Calendar](#)
6. A student may apply for APL once they have received an offer of a place to study on a Common Awards Programme at St Stephen's House.
7. A student may not apply for APL after the start of the academic year in which they would normally have taken the module(s) from which they seek exemption.
8. An application for admission to a course is separate from an APL application and each application will be assessed individually on its own merits.
9. In order to be granted exemption from study through APL all applicants must be able to demonstrate sufficient evidence that their previous learning satisfactorily fulfils the learning outcomes of the relevant module(s) (for example, through formal transcript with supporting module information, or portfolio of experiential learning).
10. Students who have left a programme of study at another institution as a result of academic failure and are not considered as being in good academic standing will not be considered eligible for APL from the programme in which they failed.

11. In circumstances where an applicant or student may have achieved some, but not all, of the learning outcomes for a particular Level or module, St Stephen's House may consider it appropriate to approve the APL claim on the condition that, once registered on the Common Awards programme, the student must study and complete specific modules that will enable them to achieve the outstanding learning outcomes (and therefore, ultimately, meet all of the programme learning outcomes relating to the award for which they will be registered). As such cases would fall outside of the parameters of Durham University's guidance St Stephen's House will forward any applications of this nature, with the Senior Tutor's recommendations, for consideration by the Common Awards Management Board.
12. Prior training or other experiential learning for which accreditation is sought must have taken place not more than five years before the date of the candidate's proposed start date on the Common Awards programme. St Stephen's House will calculate this period from the date when the previous qualification was awarded, or experiential learning undertaken.
13. While St Stephen's House will provide support and guidance so far as is reasonably practicable to an APL applicant, responsibility for completing the application and providing relevant supporting evidence rests with the APL applicant.
14. 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.
15. St Stephen's House reserves the right to take additional steps to verify the currency and authenticity of prior learning cited in an APL claim.
16. APL credit is a discretionary gesture on the part of St Stephen's House and cannot be considered to be a right. St Stephen's House reserves the right to refuse an APL Claim application, for example, if it is felt that it is in the applicant's best interest to pursue the full Common Award Programme.
17. Credit awarded through the APL process does not contribute to the calculation of the final award. The number and level of credits for which APL has been credited will be shown on any transcript which the student may receive. The modules awarded by APL will be shown as having been passed but a percentage mark will not be recorded.
18. Successful APL applicants wishing to undertake further modules of academic interest in the place of modules credited as APL will need to make a request in writing to the Senior Tutor. The Senior Tutor will consider the implications of the request including college resources and the student's academic progress and perceived capacity when making a decision. Any modules agreed as additional provision following such a request will not be formally assessed and credit will not be awarded.
19. St Stephen's House reports to the Common Awards Management Board on its use of APL. The Management Board will periodically review reports of APL applications made, alongside relevant St Stephen's House policies and statistics to ensure consistency and fairness. The Common Awards Management board remains responsible for the approval of non-standard cases to ensure consistency across Common Award programmes.

Roles & Responsibilities

20. The Senior Tutor oversees the administration of the APL process and is the first point-of-contact for queries, support and advice regarding APL applications.
21. The Senior Tutor is responsible for supporting applicants with further advice on adequate and appropriate submission content and for informing applicants of the outcome of their application.

Procedure for APL Applications

APL guidance for Applicants can be found at:

<https://www.durham.ac.uk/departments/academic/common-awards/policies-processes/admissions/apl-applicant-guide/>

22. Applications for APL should be submitted by 1 September. Students will be advised of application outcomes by the end of October. Late applications may be considered where admission to a program of study falls after 1 September.
23. Potential APL applicants should obtain details of the learning outcomes, content and assessment of the module(s) their application relates to from St Stephen's House.
24. The APL application form and example application can be found under Policies and Processes at <https://www.durham.ac.uk/departments/academic/common-awards/resources/templates-forms/>
25. Providing evidence for APL applications:

For any APCL element of the application, the student will need to provide at a minimum the following information about their prior certificated learning:

- The titles of the modules taken;
- The institution in which they were taken;
- The Higher Education Institution that validated them (if different);
- The level of each module;
- The number of credits each module was worth; and
- When the credit for the modules was awarded (i.e., the date the relevant certificate was awarded, or the original transcript issued).

For any APEL element of the application needs to contain information about the applicant's prior learning:

- What it was;
- Where it happened; and
- When it happened.

All APL applications need to include a *mapping exercise*, in which the relevant Programme Learning Outcomes or Module Learning Outcomes are listed, and a note is made of which ones the applicant is claiming to have met in their prior learning, and of what evidence is being submitted to back up that claim.

The evidence supplied needs to be sufficient to allow the assessors to exercise their academic judgment, and *confirm that the student's learning is in the right area, at the right level, and broadly equivalent in scope and depth* to the learning of a student who has met the relevant Learning Outcome by means of Common Awards study. As long as this is kept in view, there can be a great deal of flexibility about the kind of evidence that is needed.

26. Where evidence of prior learning falls under APCEL and APEL two separate applications will need to be made.
27. There is no fee for APL applications.
28. All applications should be submitted to the Senior Tutor. St Stephen's House will not accept

- responsibility for the loss or delay of applications sent by post.
29. The Senior Tutor will verify photocopies of documentary evidence submitted against original documentation. Applicants may opt to collect their documents from the Senior Tutor or to receive the returned documents by post. St Stephen's House will not accept responsibility for the loss of original documents returned by post.
 30. St Stephen's House may telephone or write to an employer, education institution or similar mentioned in an APL application to gain assurance of the authenticity of the application.
 31. St Stephen's House reserves the right to reject an APL claim application if it is received after the deadline, it is incomplete and/or the supporting evidence is not clear or genuine.
 32. Following initial checks for authenticity and currency, APL claim applications will be assessed by a subcommittee of at least two members of the St Stephen's House Board of Examiners for Common Award Programmes. The Sub Committee may:
 - i. Consider that the APL request may be of potential merit, yet falls outside the parameters of a standard APL request as defined by the APL Checklist and is to be referred to Durham University for further consideration;
 - ii. Consider that the APL applicant has demonstrated that they have already met the learning outcome for the module(s) for which they want credit and approve the APL application;
 - iii. Consider that the applicant has not demonstrated that they have already met the learning outcomes for the module(s) for which they want credit and reject their application;
 - iv. Consider that the applicant may have a case for APL but that more evidence is required to make a decision. It may be that the Board of Examiners requests further information or may ask the applicant to take a written test or viva before making a decision.
 33. Discussion and outcomes of the sub-committee will be clearly recorded with the reasons for accepting or rejecting the application. Decisions of the sub-committee will then be ratified by the Full Board. St Stephen's House will keep clear records of applications and outcomes, and a copy of all evidence submitted until the candidate has completed their studies.

Contact Details

34. Contact Details for members of St Stephen's House Staff are available on this website via <https://www.ssho.ac.uk/about/people/>

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