



AP(E)L Policy and Procedure

Introduction

The Institute of Clinical Science and Technology (ICST) is committed to recognising the learning of students wherever it takes place. The Institute welcomes applications from students who wish to use the accreditation of prior (experiential) learning (AP(E)L) as a means of entry to courses (where regulations permit), as well as entry with credit against some of the requirements of the ICST higher education programmes with validating partners.

The Institute recognises the importance of developing clear and accessible information on the AP(E)L procedures for potential students, students, employers, external examiners, and ICST academic and support staff. To ensure that professional and academic competencies and outcomes are not compromised, the AP(E)L procedures are both transparent and rigorous in meeting the Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes and the Quality Assurance requirements of ICST.

In this document use of the short form 'ICST award' refers to an award of a validating partner, such as a university or other higher education institute. The use of the term 'ICST award' is not intended to imply that ICST is the awarding body. Details of the awarding body can be found in the particular course description or specification.

Glossary

Academic credit

Courses of study are made up of modules of learning. Each module is 'worth' a specified amount of academic credit at a specified academic level.

Academic level

The outcomes of each module of learning are measured at a specific academic level of learning.

Accreditation of Prior Learning – usually shortened to 'APL'

This is the general term to describe the process by which the Institute recognises the prior learning of students. This term is frequently used in text that relates to both APL and APEL

Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning – usually shortened to 'APEL'

Academic credit is awarded for learning from appropriate experience or non-credit rated education activities.

Challenge Assignment

The student is permitted to undertake the module assessment as a way of providing evidence of their learning from experience.

Claim

Students 'claim' they have learnt through experience and produce evidence to prove that their learning matches the academic level and the learning outcomes of a specific module(s) or a course of study.

Evidence

This is the range of materials used to prove that a student has learnt from experience. This evidence is divided into two categories:

Direct evidence: evidence produced by the student such as; a work project, care plans, reflective writing, audio or videotapes.

Indirect evidence: information gathered from others about the student such as; testimonials, certificates of attendance at in-house study days, minutes of meetings.

General credit

Students can claim for general credits against course outcomes and gain exemption from option or open modules.

Modules of learning

Each course is made up of modules of learning. Each module has an identified number of academic credits at an academic level with specific learning outcomes, content and assessment.



Portfolio of evidence

This term is often used generically to mean any evidence that is produced to claim credit. It also has a specific meaning; if students are unable or do not wish to undertake a 'challenge assignment', they may be able to demonstrate their knowledge through production of a 'portfolio of evidence'. This portfolio is a collection of direct and indirect evidence that is used to prove learning from experience and must explicitly address the content and learning outcomes of the course or the module(s) they are claiming credit against.

Course of study

This is a collection of modules which comprise an approved curriculum taken by the student and leading to a named award, delivered by ICST with a validating partner.

Specific credit

Students are awarded specific credit if they are successful in claiming exemption from a specified module. Their transfer credit or APEL claim must match the specified module content, learning outcomes, and academic credit.

Transfer credit

Students can use previous successfully assessed learning awarded by another Higher Education Institution and accepted by ICST and its validating partner, as part of the credit requirement for an ICST validated award.

Transcript

If a student wishes to claim for transfer credit, they are required to provide a transcript from the education institution where they studied. This transcript of credit is a summary of the level and tariff of credit awarded by that education institution.

Background

There are a variety of approaches to AP(E)L. Whilst there were commonalities, the differences presented difficulties in ensuring a consistent Institute approach to quality monitoring and a uniform student experience. The Institute has rationalised the variety of approaches and adopted a centralised AP(E)L system underpinned by a common Policy and Procedure. This Policy and Procedure encompasses the totality of the higher education courses delivered by the Institute. One of the aims in developing the AP(E)L Policy and Procedure was to ensure that the process is rigorous yet not overly bureaucratic, and as transparent and user friendly as possible. An alignment with the existing assessment procedures was considered the best way to achieve this aim. Professional regulation requirements inform the operation of AP(E)L.

When a course leads to a professional qualification it is essential that the process does not compromise a student's ability to meet professional competencies and academic outcomes required by the course. For these courses the award of credit via AP(E)L is based on the notional learning time to meet the theoretical/practice outcomes and theory/practice hours.

What is AP(E)L?

The Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning is the process by which the Institute recognises the prior learning of students. This learning can be used either as entry to a course (where regulations permit) or entry with credit against module(s) of learning in a course. The minimum AP(E)L claim is normally one module (20 credits) but there is the facility for students to 'top up' credit if required. This may occur when a student has studied a module at a higher education establishment where the credit awarded to modules is lower than that awarded by ICST or its validating partner. The maximum claim will normally not exceed 50% of the total credit of the award registered for (professional regulations may preclude this).

To be awarded credit for module exemption, the student provides evidence that her/his learning matches course outcomes so general credit and exemption against option or open modules may be awarded; or specific module(s) content and learning outcomes. If successful, credit is awarded against a module(s). A claim for entry must be completed prior to commencing the course.

AP(E)L is the term used to describe two distinct types of learning:

Transfer credit

Often called APL and describes learning which has taken place normally as a result of a teacher-led activity, often classroom based, where the student's learning has been subject to formal assessment and academic credits awarded. Credits that were awarded through Transfer of Credit (APL) will not count towards a classification of an award.



Accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL)

Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning is the process by which academic credit can be awarded by the Institute for the learning of knowledge and skills achieved by virtue of life experience and informal learning. APEL acknowledges that valuable learning occurs outside a formal educational setting and therefore is not formally assessed. Such learning can be achieved through workplace experience or outside work in a variety of settings. It is not experience itself that will earn academic credits, but the learning derived from reflecting on the experience.

APEL can be awarded for entry to a course and for exemption from modules.

To be awarded credit for module exemption, the student provides evidence that her/his learning matches course outcomes where exemption against optional or open modules may be awarded; or specific module(s) content and learning outcomes. This evidence is then formally assessed and graded, and if successful, credit is awarded against a module(s). Students (where regulations permit) may use APEL for entry by producing a portfolio of evidence that matches a set criterion. The portfolio is assessed and if successful, entry to the programme is awarded.

Information on the AP(E)L process

Students

Students or potential students are able to gain information in a variety of ways, including the ICST marketing materials such as prospectuses, and those of the validating partner. Students seeking information on AP(E)L may contact the APL coordinator, course directors or designated departmental academics for initial advice.

Employers

Employers can obtain information on AP(E)L via the same routes as students.

ICST Academic Staff

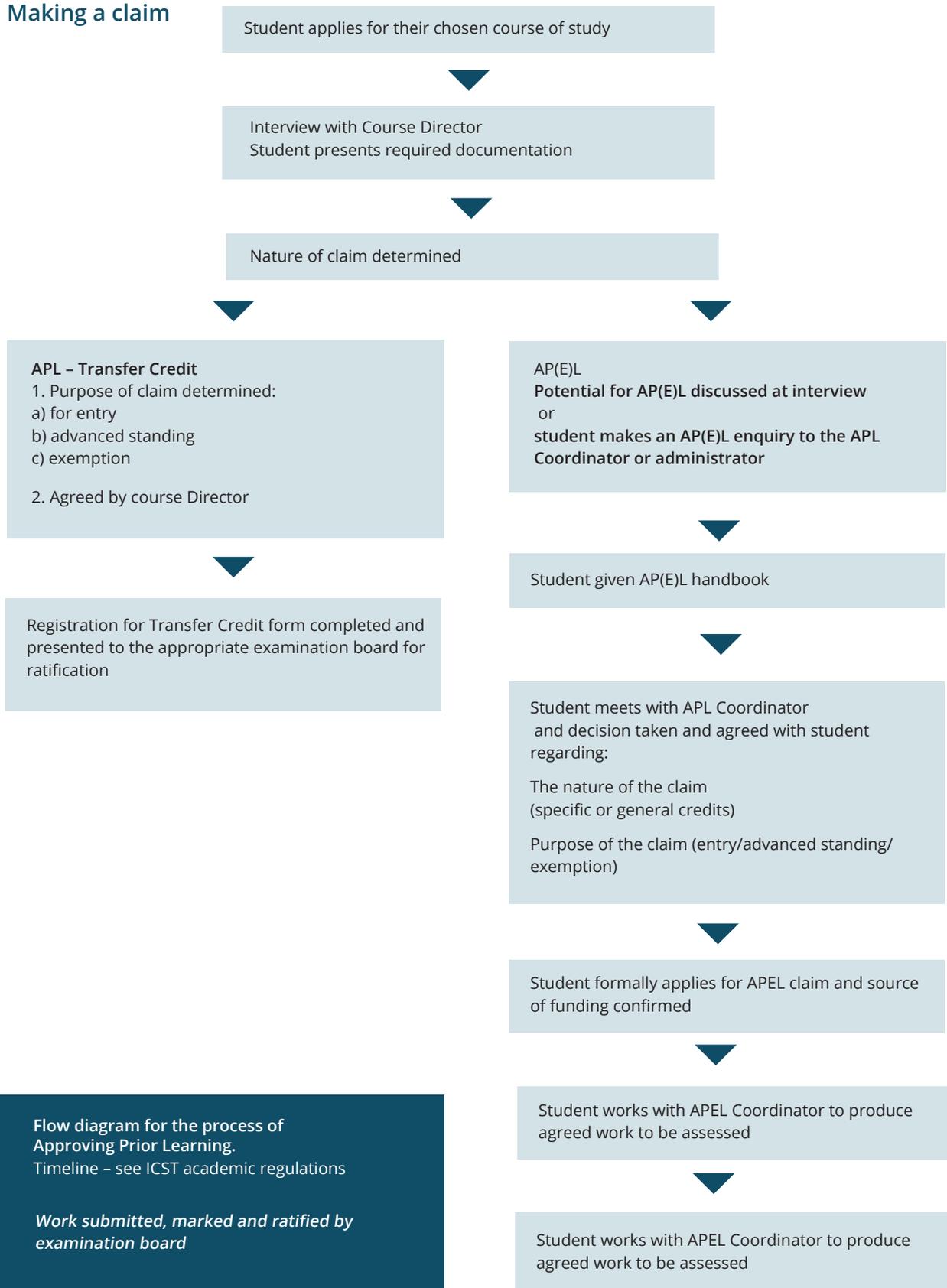
Academics within the Institute have access to all the AP(E)L documents via the Director of Student Services. The APL coordinator acts as a resource for all ICST staff in relation to AP(E)L.

External Examiners

When appropriate external examiners involved in the APEL process will receive a copy of the Institute AP(E)L Policy and Procedure booklet.



Making a claim



Flow diagram for the process of
Approving Prior Learning.
Timeline – see ICST academic regulations

*Work submitted, marked and ratified by
examination board*



Making a claim for transfer of credit

- a) If students have undertaken relevant certificated learning and wish to claim for transfer credit, they will discuss this with, and provide evidence to the appropriate course director. They are required to provide a transcript from the education institution where they studied. This transcript should provide evidence of registration; the name of the course/module(s) studied; the date of successful completion; the number of academic credits; and the academic level. In addition to the transcript, students need to provide a copy of the module documentation that shows the module aim; objectives or learning outcomes; content; academic level and assessment. This detail is required to determine the match against the module claimed. If the course director agrees the transfer credit, the decision is reported to the relevant Subject Area Examination Board and/or Examination Board using the approved Registration of Transfer Credit Form (Appendix A).
- b) Normally students transferring credit for entry or core modules need agreement from the course director and ratification from the examination board prior to registration on the course.
- c) Normally students will complete the transfer process for all other modules within their first semester of study.
- d) Currently there is no charge to students for transfer of credit.

Making a claim for APEL

- a) If students wish to claim APEL for entry, they should commence the process with sufficient time to complete and results agreed by examination board prior to commencement of the chosen course.
- b) These students are enrolled with ICST to allow them access to learning resources.
- c) Although not essential, it is preferred that students declare a wish to undertake APEL for module exemption prior to, or on commencement of their course so the suitability of their claim may be determined and agreed in principle.
- d) Students who wish to claim for module exemption may undertake the APEL process concurrent with their course.
- e) Depending on the course, there may be a charge for APEL and where this applies, details are given to the student prior to commencing the process.
- f) Invoicing and payment is made prior to ratification of results by the examination board.
- g) There are a variety of ways in which a student can be supported through the APEL process. Currently the Institute uses an individual tutorial support system. Consideration will be given to student support through an accredited unit of learning as well as the development of support through the use of paper based and web based materials.

Tutorial support

- a) Students attend an initial meeting via skype or telephone. The course director / module lead / academic advisor will facilitate the meeting.
- b) Students are asked to send ahead of the meeting:
 - Their curriculum vitae, which explicitly highlights areas relevant to the module(s) or course outcomes being claimed.
 - A statement of learning related to the module(s) being claimed
 - A testimonial which supports their statement of learning.
- c) Students discuss the basis of the claim with the APL advisors. This discussion enables the advisors and student to decide if the student has appropriate and sufficient learning from experience or informal learning, to make a successful claim against a specific module(s). Students make the choice whether to continue with a claim.
- d) If a student decides to proceed with the claim, a decision is made about the approach to be taken, the documentation required, and the time scale required for completion.
- e) The students are required to offer evidence of past learning through experience to substantiate their claim and this evidence must meet certain criteria to allow an assessor to make a valid judgement.

This evidence can be presented in two ways:

A 'Challenge Assignment'

A 'challenge assignment' means that the student has evidence that she/he has the knowledge and skills that form the content and outcomes of a specific module(s) and wishes to undertake the module(s) assessment.

- a) Students who undertake the module assessment will normally be expected to adhere to the usual module assessment cycle and submit at the same time as other module assignments. This assignment is graded, moderated and externally examined in the same way as any module assignment. If students are unsuccessful, they are allowed a second attempt but will receive the maximum grade allowed for resubmissions by course regulations.



- b) There is a cost to students wishing to undertake a challenge assignment and students are made aware of the charge.
- c) Invoicing and payment is made prior to ratification of results by the examination board.

A Portfolio of Evidence

This term is often used generically to mean any evidence that is produced to claim credit. It also has a specific meaning; if students are unable or do not wish to undertake a 'challenge assignment', they may be able to demonstrate their knowledge through the production of a 'portfolio of evidence'. This portfolio must explicitly address the overall content and learning outcomes of the module(s) they are claiming specific credit against, or the overall course outcomes if claiming general credit. Students are given information on the types of evidence available, how the portfolio should be compiled, and the criteria used for assessment. The range of evidence can be extremely varied; for example: reflective writing, care plans, projects, audiotapes, and reports. Students receive guidance on the most appropriate choice of evidence to include in their portfolio. Course directors / Module lead and Advisors to work in consultation with APEL co-ordinator in providing student advice.

- a) Normally students are expected to complete a 20 Credit portfolio in a semester.

Student Support

- a) Students compiling a portfolio are entitled to a further two hours tutorial time with their allocated advisor.
- b) The format of this tutorial time is negotiated between the student and advisor. The advisor records student contact and the discussion content.
- c) Students undertaking a challenge assignment are entitled to the same assignment tutorial entitlement as students studying the module.

Withdrawal and unsuccessful claims

- a) Students have the opportunity to withdraw from the APEL process at any time by informing the APL coordinator in writing.
- b) If students are unsuccessful, they are allowed a second attempt to submit their portfolio but will receive the maximum grade allowed for re-submission by pathway regulations.

Professional Body Requirements

Where APEL is used as part of a professionally regulated award, such as pre-registration courses, the APEL claim must be mapped against the specific standards set by the professional body and demonstrate the full achievement of such standards to ensure that the student has achieved the level required by the course outcomes.

APEL advisor

- a) Each student is allocated an APL advisor. The role of the advisor is to support the student in the preparation of their claim and she/he is available for the specified tutorial time.
- b) Normally the advisor will NOT be a subject specialist.

APEL assessment

Appeals Procedure

The APEL process is subject to the Institute Appeals Procedure.

Assessment of a 'Challenge Assignment'

The appropriate module team marks the 'challenge assignment'.

The process for marking, moderation, external examination and ratification of results is the same for any module assessment.

Students have the opportunity for one re-submission.

Assessment of a Portfolio of Evidence

- a) The student's APL advisor does not assess the portfolio of evidence.
- b) The usual assessment process guides the assessment of a portfolio.
- c) An assessor marks the portfolio by studying the evidence presented and determines whether it corresponds to the content and learning outcomes of the course or module(s) claimed. This judgement is guided by certain criteria:



Validity: How well the evidence presented matches the course or module(s) requirements.

Sufficiency: How well the amount of evidence presented meets the requirements and is sufficient to allow a judgement to be made.

Authenticity: Whether the ownership of the evidence is clearly that of the student. Additional testimonies may be required.

Currency: How well the evidence provides proof that the student has knowledge and skills that relate to current professional practice.

Level: The evidence presented is at the same or a higher academic level required by the course or module specification.

- a) The process for marking, moderation, external examination and ratification of results is the same for any module assessment.
- b) Students have the opportunity for one re-submission.

Management of AP(E)L

- a) The Policy and Procedure is implemented in accordance with the ICST Regulatory Framework Admissions Standards.
- b) Overall management of the AP(E)L Policy and Procedure is the responsibility of the APL coordinator reporting to the Principal (or his nominee).
- c) The appointed administrator has the responsibility for maintaining a central database and invoicing students.
- d) APEL tutorials and ongoing student support is organised by the APL advisors.
- e) The assessment process for challenge assignments and portfolios of evidence is the responsibility of the Department of Student Services
- f) The management and ratification of transfer credit remains with the course director.

Quality Assurance

Quality Reporting

- a) APEL assessment is a component of module monitoring. Module monitoring reports form part of the Annual Course Monitoring Reports.
- b) The APL coordinator tracks the performance of students who undertake a challenge assignment or produce a portfolio of evidence.

Evaluation of the AP(E)L Policy and Procedures

The APL coordinator collects qualitative data from APL advisors, assessors and students who have completed the process. Students are asked to comment particularly on the usefulness of the information given and the adequacy of the support arrangements. This information is presented at the Academic Board meetings.

The qualitative and quantitative data serves to inform developments of the process and enhance the student's experience



Appendix A

This form should be used to register credit for accredited learning gained elsewhere which is accepted by the Institute as equivalent to certain modules on a course or learning course.

Students should be aware that where transfer credit is given, that module will not appear on the transcript of modules studied, but the source of credit may be recorded.

Section 1: STUDENT DETAILS

Student Name:	ICST Student Number:
Course/Course to which the student is registered:	

Section 2: DETAILS OF CREDIT

Source of credit	
Awarding body/institution:	
Title of module(s) and/or award:	Date awarded:
Evidence considered	
Certificate/transcript seen	YES / NO
Syllabus/course content examined	YES / NO
Comments:	
Credit awarded (specify module titles and codes or whole level)	

Section 3: SIGNATURE OF COURSE DIRECTOR

Signed:	Date:
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Appendix B

This form should be used to register credit for accredited learning gained elsewhere which is accepted by the Institute as equivalent to certain modules on a course or learning course.

Students should be aware that where transfer credit is given, that module will not appear on the transcript of modules studied, but the source of credit may be recorded.

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Certificate/transcript seen	YES / NO
Syllabus/course content examined	YES / NO
Comments:	
Credit awarded (specify module titles and codes or whole level)	

Section 3: SIGNATURE OF COURSE DIRECTOR

Signed:	Date:
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Section 4: EXAM BOARD TO WHICH THIS RECORD OR CREDIT IS PRESENTED

Course:
Level:
Month/Year:
Signature of Examination Board Chair:

Copies to: Student file; Course Director; APL Co-ordinator



Guidance notes for the completion of this form

This form should be used to record all transfer credits (exemptions and advanced standing) awarded to students registered at ICST for certified learning gained elsewhere. Please note this is a fast track procedure for transfer credits only. This form should not be used to record credit granted wholly for uncertificated or experiential learning which should be recorded in accordance with the APEL procedures for the Institute.

Section 1:

Normally it will be sufficient to enter the course title.

Section 2:

Enter the name of the awarding body and/or institution, the full title and the year of the award

e.g. BTEC/NottinghamCollege,BiomedicalScience,2002

In cases of familiar or established qualifications you need only certify that you have seen the appropriate certificate or record. In cases where the match is less evident or obvious you may need to check the course content in more detail to check that there is sufficient match or equivalence. Any significant issues should be summarised in the section reserved for comments.

Credit awarded may be the whole of a level (e.g. all of level four). At M level it is more likely to consist of individual units. If credit is given for a whole level or full-time year of an undergraduate course, you should enter level and number of Institute credits e.g.:-

8 level 5 credits

4 level 5 and 4 level 6 credits

If credit for individual modules is given, you should specify their titles and codes.

Section 3:

Authority to admit with transfer credit including credit for advanced standing lies with the Course Director. This form should be signed by the Course Director or nominated academic.

Section 4:

Details of credit awarded should be submitted to the exam board for the relevant course. Normally this will be the Award and Progression Exam Board to which the student has been admitted. However, if transfer credit is given for parts of the course which contribute to classification, External Examiners should be consulted before the credit is confirmed. The record of credit is intended in part to enable monitoring of credit awarded alongside student performance.

A record of credit granted should be kept in individual student files. A summary sheet of all credit granted on a course (or a set of copies of completed Registration of Transfer Credit Proforma) should also be retained for future Registry use.