

**Recognising Your Learning: APL Policy
(Accreditation of Prior Learning and
Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning)**

STUDENT HANDBOOK

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## 1. Introduction

Staffordshire University would like to give you credit for your previous experience wherever possible. There are two types of experience that can be accredited. Certificated Learning is where you have taken a course and been assessed and have a documented qualification. The other type of learning is gained by experience (Experiential Learning) and for this you will need evidence from your experience. In both cases staff will have to assess whether you have completed the outcomes of the module that you want to have accreditation for. The process of APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning) which is described in this handbook describes the system you will go through to accredit your previous learning.

### Description of the activity

Members of staff are constantly matching the learning outcomes of modules against the certificated or course-work learning of outside courses at a similar level, or against experience. Staff will be familiar with the learning outcomes of the appropriate modules, and with the descriptions of the level of the experience and the course.

The characteristics of the QAA (Quality Assurance Agency) descriptors will be applied to the level of work or course to see if the level is applicable. These levels are described in Annex 2 of this document if you need to use them. You can leave this untouched if you want to and just listen to the staff description of what is needed.

The learning outcomes of the module will be considered to see if the course you took or your prior experience substantially covers them\*.

The formalities of the process are described in the next sections, but briefly it is important to note that the onus falls on you as the student to start the ball rolling. If you feel that your prior learning whether through qualifications or experience equates with a module of study you wish to undertake you must contact your Faculty APL Administrator ASAP. They will put you in touch with a relevant academic member of staff to discuss your claim. Academic staff will advise you whether your claim is valid and make recommendations with regard to your claim on the grounds of level and learning outcomes.

For claims for both Accreditation of Certificated Learning (APCL) and Accreditation of Experiential Learning (APEL) you must complete the relevant documentation. (See Annexe 3)

You must complete Section 1 of the forms and staff will complete section 2. Staff may require further evidence at any stage.

Two tutors then make recommendations, using the forms, to a Faculty APLS (Accreditation of Prior Learning Scheme) Committee who will normally take decisions based on the recommendations and ensure consistency of approach.

- \* **NB** You will need a copy of the learning outcomes of the relevant module and possibly a level descriptor (Annex 2) in order to provide evidence of learning achievements and level of work.

### **APCL and APEL: A Step by Step Guide.**

1. Reflect on your experience and certificated learning. Is there a match between your prior experience or certified learning and the course you wish to study at Staffordshire University? It is important to bear in mind the level that you will be studying at. If you think you may have a case for either APCL or APEL contact your Faculty APL administrator. They will forward you the relevant documentation. It is important that you get things moving as soon as possible as there are time limits to applications: three weeks after enrolment for Level One students and two weeks for Level Two and Three.
2. The APL administrator will discuss the procedure, forward the relevant documentation to you and put you in touch with the relevant member of academic staff. You must discuss your claim with an academic member of staff as soon as possible.
3. If the academic staff member decides that you have good grounds for a claim they will advise you to complete the relevant documentation.

For APCL this requires copies of your certificates, course documentation and an APLS claim form stating how your previous course meets the learning outcomes of the module or modules you wish to claim for. These are available through module descriptors and course handbooks and will be forwarded to you by your faculty APL administrator. This will enable the staff member to make an informed decision regarding the acceptance of your claim against a module or modules.

For APEL this requires an APLS claim form in the first instance. You must be careful to match your experience to the stated learning outcome of a module or modules. These are available through module descriptors and course handbooks and will be forwarded to you by your faculty APL administrator. This will enable the staff member to make an informed decision regarding the acceptance of your claim against a module or modules. If the academic member of staff agrees that your experience matches the stipulated learning outcomes you will be asked to discuss a negotiated assessment with staff. This could be in the form of a presentation, interview, portfolio or short written assignment. Your tutor will discuss the marking criteria and you will be asked to prepare and deliver/submit your assessment to an agreed deadline.

For the Negotiated APL module you will need to complete the APLS claim form in the first instance outlining your previous qualifications and/or your experience. With an academic member of staff you will discuss the option of a Negotiated APL module as general credit. This will enable the staff member to make an informed decision regarding the suitability of your claim against the generic learning outcomes of these modules. If the academic member of staff agrees that your experience matches the stipulated learning outcomes you will be asked to discuss a negotiated assessment. This could be in the form of a presentation, interview, portfolio or short written assignment. Your tutor will

discuss the marking criteria and you will be asked to register on the relevant Negotiated APL module and prepare and deliver/submit your assessment to an agreed deadline. Remember you can only gain general credits through a Negotiated APL module.

4. Once you have met with the academic member of staff and completed and submitted the relevant paperwork your claim will go to the relevant faculty committee for approval. You will receive the a decision within 10 working days of submitting the completed paperwork. On approval of APCL you need take no further action except to check your APCL exemption has been entered on your student profile correctly. For APEL you must complete your negotiated assessment as agreed with the academic member of staff. In some cases this will be graded and in some it will not, this will have been discussed at your previous meeting.

5. If the relevant faculty committee rejects your claim you do have the right to appeal. The procedure is outlined in the systems and process section of the APL policy document. However, if your application is declined it is important that you continue to study the module or modules in the normal way until the outcome of your appeal is known.

6. If all this seems complicated do not worry. If you think you can make your experience or previous qualifications count toward a university award contact your Faculty Administrator who will talk you through the process.

## Annexe 1. Some Useful Definitions

**Accreditation:** is a term frequently used as a synonym for the recognition of learning. However, it is perhaps more properly used to signify the most formalised and widely practised forms of recognition.

**Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL):** a process for assessing and, as appropriate, recognising prior learning or prior certificated learning for academic purposes. This recognition may give the learning a credit-value in a credit-based structure and allow it to be counted towards the completion of a programme of study and the award(s) or qualifications associated with it.

**Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL):** a process, through which previously assessed and certificated learning is considered and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes.

**Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL):** a process through which learning achieved outside education or training systems is assessed and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes.

**Acknowledgement:** is another term sometimes used to describe the recognition of learning, but is usually used in a more broad and non-specific sense and does not necessarily involve the use of standardised mechanisms.

**Advanced standing:** is an agreement with another institution whereby an individual student who has undertaken part of a course of study at the institution may apply to transfer to an appropriate programme of study at the University. Applications are dealt with on an individual basis and follow normal admissions procedures.

**Articulation:** Articulation is a formal process leading to the recognition of the credit rating of a named qualification of a partner institution of the University and the creation of opportunities to transfer with advanced standing and specific credit to a named qualification of the University.

**Credit Transfer:** A mechanism whereby students who have successfully completed a level or stage of a higher education award at another institution may apply to transfer to an appropriate programme of study at the University. Applications are dealt with on an individual basis.

**Dual awards:** A dual award describes collaborative arrangements under which two or more awarding institutions together provide programmes leading to separate awards being granted by both, or all of them.

**Franchise:** Franchising is a formal process by which the University, as an awarding institution, agrees to authorise the provision of the whole or part of one or more of its own approved programmes by a partner organisation. The University retains overall responsibility for the programme's content, delivery, assessment and quality assurance arrangements.

**Joint awards:** A joint award describes collaborative arrangements under which two or more awarding institutions together provide programmes leading to a single award made jointly by both, or all participants.

**Recognition (of learning):** any process that acknowledges and establishes publicly that some reasonably substantial and significant element of learning has taken place and can be assessed to have done so.

## **Annexe 2. Summary of QAA Descriptors**

- **Certificate Level** (*Currently Level 1 of the University Modular Framework (UMF)*)

The holder of a Certificate in Higher Education will have a sound knowledge of the basic concepts of a subject, and will have learned how to take different approaches to solving problems. He or she will be able to communicate accurately, and will have the qualities needed for employment requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility.

- **Intermediate Level** (*Currently Level 2 of the UMF*)

Holders of qualifications at this level will have developed a sound understanding of the principles in their field of study, and will have learned to apply those principles more widely. Through this, they will have learned to evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems. Their studies may well have had a vocational orientation, enabling them to perform effectively in their chosen field.

They will have the qualities necessary for employment in situations requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making.

- **Honours Level** (*Currently Level 3 of the UMF*)

An Honours graduate will have developed an understanding of a complex body of knowledge, some of it at the current boundaries of an academic discipline. Through this the graduate will have developed analytical techniques and problem-solving that can be applied in many types of employment. The graduate will be able to evaluate evidence, arguments and assumptions, to reach sound judgements, and to communicate effectively.

An Honours graduate should have the qualities needed for employment in situations requiring the exercise of personal responsibility, and decision-making in complex and unpredictable circumstances.

- **Masters Level**

Much of the study undertaken at Masters level will have been at, or informed by, the forefront of an academic or professional discipline. Students will have shown originality in the application of knowledge, and they will understand how the boundaries of knowledge are advanced through research. They will be able to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, and they will show originality in tackling and solving problems.

They will have the qualities needed for employment in circumstances requiring sound judgement, personal responsibility and initiative, in complex and unpredictable professional environments.

- **Doctoral Level** (for Professional Doctorate applicants only)

Doctorates are awarded for the creation and interpretation of knowledge, which extends the forefront of a discipline, usually through original research. Holders of doctorates will be able to conceptualise, design and implement projects for the generation of significant new knowledge and/or understanding.

Holders of doctorates will have the qualities needed for employment requiring the ability to make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, and innovation in tackling and solving problems.

## **The Documents**

**AP(E)L 1  
ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR LEARNING SCHEME (TO ACCESS THIS FORM IN  
ALTERNATIVE FORMATS PLEASE CONTACT YOUR FACULTY APL ADMINISTRATOR)**

**APPLICATION AND APPROVAL FORM**

**\* ALL SECTIONS TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE APLS COMMITTEE \***

**Applicant MUST complete RELEVANT SECTIONS IN FULL:**

**SECTION 1**

|                                              |                        |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>1.1</b>                                   |                        |
| <b>Name (in full):</b>                       |                        |
| <b>Student Registration Number:</b>          |                        |
| <b>Address (for correspondence):</b>         |                        |
| <b>Post Code:</b>                            | <b>E-mail Address:</b> |
| <b>Tel. No (home):</b>                       | <b>Tel. No (work):</b> |
| <b>Place of Work (where applicable):</b>     |                        |
| <b>Professional Qualifications:</b>          |                        |
| <b>1.2</b>                                   |                        |
| <b>Current Award/Course Title (in full):</b> |                        |
| <b>Name of Award/Course Leader:</b>          |                        |
| <b>Number of credits applied for:</b>        |                        |
| <b>Level of credits applied for:</b>         |                        |
| <b>Module Title:</b>                         |                        |
| <b>Name of Module Leader:</b>                |                        |
| -----                                        |                        |
| <b>Office Use Only</b> Award Code:           | <input type="text"/>   |
| Module Code:                                 | <input type="text"/>   |

**Please indicate the number of modules for which you have submitted AP(E)L applications**

**Applicants MUST complete a separate form for each module seeking accreditation**

*Photocopies of Section 1.1 can be submitted with multiple module applications, and candidates are advised to take photocopies before completing other sections if they know other modules will be submitted*

***FAILURE TO COMPLETE ALL RELEVANT SECTIONS OF THIS FORM WILL RESULT IN A DELAY IN YOUR CLAIM BEING PROCESSED***

**APLS CLAIM**

**For APCL**

Evidence should be provided in the form of learning outcomes. Module descriptors, which include the aims, content and outcomes are available from the Faculty Office, APL Advisor, Course Leader or Module Tutor.

Hours of theoretical study, course content, assignments and assessments with results must also be included as appropriate.

**For APEL**

In the case of prior experiential learning evidence must be submitted to support the case for eligibility for Negotiated Assessment. This should be in the form of learning outcomes. Module descriptors, which include the aims, content and outcomes are available from the Faculty Office, APL Administrator, Course Leader or Module Tutor.

See section on 'evidence' on page 16 of the AP(E)L policy.

**APPLICANT MUST ENTER RELEVANT INFORMATION BELOW:**

**EXPERIENCE**

(Certificated course or evidenced life experience)

**WHAT I HAVE LEARNT**

(Learning Outcomes)

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  |  |
|--|--|

Signature:

Date:

**Example**  
**APLS CLAIM**

**For APCL**

Evidence should be provided in the form of learning outcomes. Module descriptors, which include the aims, content and outcomes are available from the Faculty Office, APL Advisor, Course Leader or Module Tutor.

Hours of theoretical study, course content, assignments and assessments with results must also be included as appropriate.

**For APEL**

In the case of prior experiential learning evidence must be submitted to support the case for eligibility for Negotiated Assessment. This should be in the form of learning outcomes. Module descriptors, which include the aims, content and outcomes are available from the Faculty Office, APL Administrator, Course Leader or Module Tutor.

See section on 'evidence' on page 16 of the AP(E)L policy.

**APPLICANT MUST ENTER RELEVANT INFORMATION BELOW:**

**EXPERIENCE**

(Certificated course or evidenced life experience)

**WHAT I HAVE LEARNT**

(Learning Outcomes)

**Example 1 - APL for certificated course**

2 years ago I completed an Institute of Management Certificate in Management. My certificate and a copy of the syllabus is attached.

I have covered the learning outcomes for the modules People Management 1 and Budgeting & Cost Management on my current course.

**Example 2 – Prior Experiential Learning**

As an experienced Personnel Officer of fifteen years standing (see CV) I believe I have fulfilled the learning outcomes of the module in Conflict Management. I have detailed experience and evidence below which corresponds to the Learning outcomes.

- a) I have trained senior managers in the company to understand the employment relationship and I attach a programme of a training course showing that I am the presenter.
- b) I enclose (confidential material) a strategic plan I put forward to avert a strike a year ago and some minutes from regular meetings with the Union that I facilitate. I also attach some minutes from Personnel meetings specifically related to conflict situations.
- c) I believe that document 'iii' submitted as above and the minutes of 4<sup>th</sup> November 1999 show that I can employ negotiation techniques.

- a) Ability to provide good advice regarding rights, duties and obligations of the employment relationship.
- b) Understand the nature of conflict in employing organisations and the strategies available to manage the manifestations.
- c) How to employ negotiation techniques as a method of conflict resolution.

Signature:

Date:

**Section 2 Course/Module Leader MUST complete this section:**

**NOTE: DO NOT SUBMIT ANY ASSIGNMENTS/COURSE WORK WITH THIS FORM**

**Name of Student:**

**Student Registration Number:**

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>2.1 List documents checked:</b> <i>(Use an attached sheet if necessary)</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>2.2 Number of Credits:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>2.3 Level of Credits:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>2.4 Award/Course Title:</b><br><br><b>Module Title:</b><br><br><b>Module Code:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>2.5 * SUPPORTED/NOT SUPPORTED</b> ( <i>* Delete as applicable</i> )<br><i>(Provide rationale for decision below)</i><br><br><b>This application fits the pathway described.</b><br><br><b>Award/Course Leader's signature:</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Date:</b></span>                                               |
| <b>2.6 For APEL only: Are there any negotiated forms of assessment that need to be completed:</b><br><b>* YES/NO</b> ( <i>* Delete as applicable</i> )<br><br><b>IF YES, complete the following:</b><br><b>NATURE OF ASSESSMENT(s):</b><br><br><br><b>SUBMISSION DATE:</b><br><b>Overall grade/mark awarded (For APEL only)</b> |

**2.7 Signatures of two Tutors with subject expertise or one tutor with subject expertise and a Faculty APL Advisor:-**

**Name:**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Name:**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Section 3 The APLS Committee Chair MUST complete this section:**

| Course/Award/Module (Code and Title) | Number of | Level of Credits |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|------------------|
|                                      |           |                  |

**\*ACCEPTED/REJECTED/DEFERRED ( \* Delete as applicable)**

**CONDITIONS:**

**Chair:**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

## **GUIDELINES FOR COMPLETION OF THE APPLICATION AND APPROVAL FORM**

This **MUST** be read in conjunction with Section 6 entitled “Systems and Processes” of the AP(E)L Policy document.

### **Section 1 - Applicant Completes**

- 1.1 It is important that applicants complete this personal details section in as much detail as possible.
- 1.2 Completion of this section requires the applicant to state such details as Award/Course Title, Award/Course Leader, number of credits applied for, level of credits applied for, Module Title and Module Leader.

### **FOR APCL**

- 1.3 Completion of this box will identify applicant’s previous study and provide written evidence to support his/her claim

### **Previous Study**

Please enter here the actual study that you are presenting for your claim.

Clearly identify the actual course and if any credits were awarded when you did the course. Please note you will be required to produce the original course certificate and formal written evidence from the educational institution where you studied detailing the number and level of credits.

### **Evidence**

You will need to have discussed in your initial contact with academic staff the types of evidence required. This will ensure that you are able to collect the necessary evidence prior to the interview for the claim. As well as documentary evidence, as above, you will probably need to produce evidence of course content, assignments and assessments with results. Space is provided for you to enter your evidence (taught courses). When you meet the person who will deal with the actual claim they may wish to see previous work e.g. assignments and possibly the content of a portfolio.

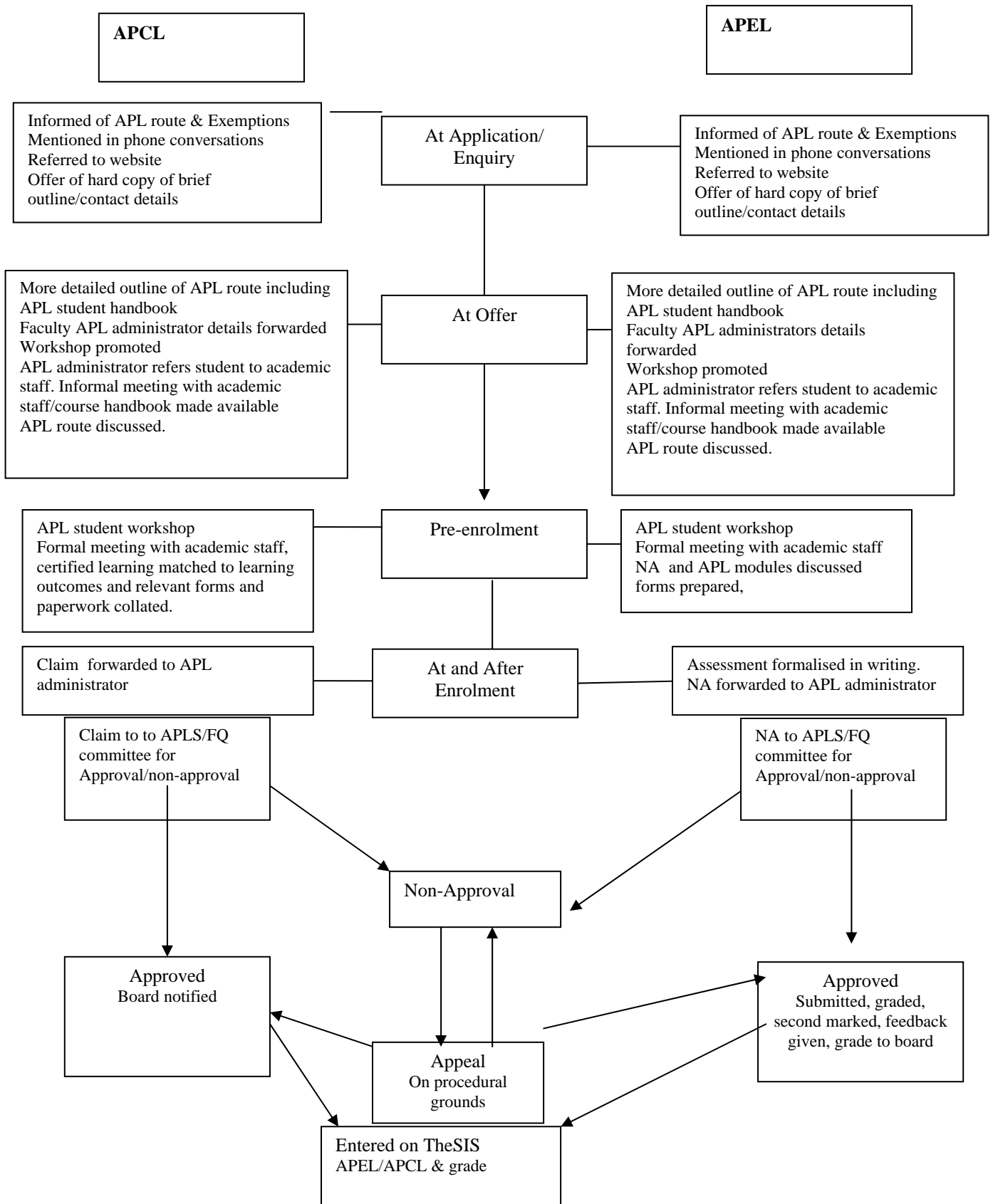
The relevant tutors and possibly a Faculty APL Advisor will help you establish the level of your claim by reference to national standards.

### **FOR APEL**

You will need to have discussed in your initial contact with staff the types of experience you have acquired, how this relates to the learning outcomes of the modules/course you are claiming for and of the evidence they will require. This will ensure that you are able to collect the necessary evidence prior to the interview. Space is provided for you to enter your evidence.

During your meetings with the Module leader you will discuss an appropriate form of negotiated assessment which will enable you to demonstrate that you have met the required learning outcomes at the appropriate level.

## Annexe 4 – APL Procedure



## **Contacts**

Accreditation of Prior Learning Administrators.

### **Faculty of Computing, Engineering and Technology**

Chris Hanks  
Faculty of Computing, Engineering and Technology  
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### **Faculty of Art, Media and Design**

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AMD also have a nominated Academic APL Advisor for staff: Helen Chapman  
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### **Faculty of Business**

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The APL Co-ordinator for Health will be  
Mark Savage on [m.savage@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:m.savage@staffs.ac.uk)

## Faculty of Sciences

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The APL Co-ordinator for Sciences will be  
Dr Rob Boast on [r.boast@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:r.boast@staffs.ac.uk)

## Centre for Professional Development

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CPD also have a nominated Academic APL Advisor for staff: Chris Wakeman:  
[c.e.wakeman@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:c.e.wakeman@staffs.ac.uk)

**General queries about the policy**

Pete Jones

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