

Accredited Prior Learning (APL) Policy

For Publication on the SSHO Website

Scope

1. This policy outlines St Stephen's House procedure in considering Accredited Prior Learning (APL) claims for students entering the Common Awards BA Programme. APL Claims are not accepted for any other programme of study offered by St Stephen's House. APL claims may be made by new students or students of St Stephen's House who wish to transfer to the Common Awards BA programme.

Definitions

2. Accreditation of Prior Learning can take either of two forms:
 - a) APEL – Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning, learning which may have been acquired through uncertificated training, life experience. This learning will not have resulted in any formal qualifications
 - b) APCL – Accreditation of Prior Credited Learning – learning for which an award has been achieved.

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

Key Principles

3. This policy derives from Durham University's 'Principles for the Award of APL at Durham' and other guidance issued by the University. Where APL claims fall outside of the parameters of the University's documented guidance, St Stephen's House will refer such claims to the University for consideration.
4. APL claims should be processed prior to the start date of the relevant module(s).
5. A student may not apply for APL after the start of the academic year in which he or she would normally have taken the module(s) from which he or she seeks exemption.
6. A student may apply for APL once he or she has received an offer of a place to study on a Common Awards Programme at St Stephen's House.
7. An application for admission to a course is separate from an APL claim application and each application will be assessed individually on its own merits.
8. APL will only be credited to students who have clearly evidenced their own genuine prior achievement of Common Awards learning outcomes. 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 requirements of the relevant module(s) (for example, through formal transcript with supporting module information, or portfolio of experiential learning).
9. 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.
10. 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). There are some instances therefore, when St Stephen's House may support the approval of an APL Claim from an applicant who has not already achieved all the relevant outcomes but with the proviso that, as a condition of approval, the student will complete the outstanding learning outcomes as part of the Common Awards programme. As such cases would fall outside of the parameters of Durham University's 'Principles for the Award of APL at Durham' St Stephen's House will forward any claims of this nature, with the Senior Tutor's recommendations, for consideration by the Common Awards Management Board.
11. Maximum credit limit for successful APL claims is one third of the standard programme. In the BA Theology, Ministry & Mission there are 360 programme credits, so the maximum APL claim of a third is 120 credits.
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. When calculating the currency of previous certificated learning, St Stephen's House will calculate this period from the date when the previous qualification was awarded.
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.

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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 is treated in the same way as credit awarded through the normal taught route, except that it 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 claims 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 process and is the first point-of-contact for queries, support and advice regarding APL Claim 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 Claim Applications

22. Applications for APL should be submitted by 1 August. If a student applies by 1 August, the result will be processed so that the student hears the outcome by the end of September.
23. Potential APL Claim applicants should, in the first instance, obtain details of the learning outcomes, content and assessment of the module(s) from the St Stephen's House.
24. In order for an APL application to be considered, applicants must submit the specified documentation by the deadline of 1st August. There are two types of applicant:

a) *APCL applicants with existing academic credit*

These applicants must submit:

- i. A completed Scenario 1 or 2 APL Checklist & Mapping Document (available from <https://www.dur.ac.uk/common.awards/policies/apl/>);
- ii. Originals of Supporting Documentation demonstrating that the relevant Common Awards Learning Outcomes have been met (This might take the form of: a list of Module Learning Outcomes from the earlier programme of study, combined with evidence that these modules were passed; a list of relevant Programme Learning Outcomes from the earlier programme of study, combined with evidence that the relevant level of the programme was passed; or a list of relevant assessment tasks undertaken by the student, combined with evidence that these assessments received a pass mark. If you need guidance on this, please contact the Senior Tutor.)
- iii. Two photocopies of the full set of evidence

b) *APEL applicants with uncertificated learning or work experience*

These applicants must submit:

- i. A completed Scenario 3 APEL Mapping Document[SS5] (available from <https://www.dur.ac.uk/common.awards/policies/apl/>);
- ii. Originals of Supporting Documentation demonstrating that the relevant Common Awards Learning Outcomes have been met (This should include a description of the experience through which the learning was gained and the quality of the learning gained, and might take the form of a portfolio of existing pieces of work. In appropriate cases, St Stephen's House may be able to specify new pieces of work or to interview a candidate to provide

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- suitable evidence of fulfillment of the relevant learning outcomes. Please contact the Senior Tutor to discuss this.)
- iii. Two photocopies of the full set of evidence
 25. Should an applicant's prior learning include academic credit and uncertificated experiential situations, both types of application are required.
 26. All applications should be addressed for the attention of the Senior Tutor and may be submitted either in person; or by post. St Stephen's House will not accept responsibility for the loss or delay of applications sent by post.
 27. The Senior Tutor will verify photocopies of documentary evidence submitted against the originals before returning the original documents.
 28. The applicant 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.
 29. 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.
 30. 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.
 31. St Stephen's House will use standard forms to record the process of APL Application review in line with requirements from the University of Durham. Sample documentation is available from <https://www.dur.ac.uk/common.awards/policies/apl/>
 32. Following initial checks for authenticity and currency, APL claim applications will be assessed by a sub-committee of at least two members of the St Stephen's House Board of Examiners for Common Award Programmes according to the APL Checklist supplied by Durham University. The members of this sub-committee will normally include the Chair of the Board. 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 he or she has already met the learning outcome for the module(s) for which he or she wants credit and permit a concession;
 - iii. Consider that the applicant has not demonstrated that he or she has already met the learning outcomes for the module(s) for which he or she wants credit and reject his or her 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 must be minuted with the reasons for accepting or rejecting the application clearly recorded. Decisions of the sub-committee will then be ratified by the Full Board.
 34. The Chair of the Board of Examiners communicates in writing the APL decisions made to the Senior Tutor, who will write to the applicant confirming the outcome of the APL request. Regardless of the application's outcome, all documentation associated with the application will be held on record by St Stephen's House after the student has completed his or her studies.

Contact Details

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