**GUIDELINES FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR LEARNING TO CONTRIBUTE TO UNDERGRADUATE AND POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT DEGREE PROGRAMMES – VETERANS AFFAIRS BENEFITS APPLICANTS**

**The Nature of Accredited Prior Learning**

1. The University of Glasgow invites applications to its degree programmes from all prospective students who possess the ability, knowledge and experience required to benefit from them. The University demonstrates its commitment to this aspiration through its widening participation schemes, its arrangements for credit accumulation and transfer, and the accreditation of prior learning.

2. Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) is the recognition by the University, for its academic purposes, of prior learning that has taken place elsewhere. APL may facilitate admission to a degree programme, provide advanced standing on a programme, or lead to the award of credit to count towards a programme’s requirements.

3. APL encompasses both the Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) and the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL). APCL involves the University in recognising learning that has already been assessed and certificated through a formal system of education or training (e.g. public examination system, courses of a Further Education or Higher Education institution). APEL involves a process by which the University judges and recognises learning achieved outside a formal education or training system. The University of Glasgow does not recognise experience by itself for academic purposes; learning must demonstrably have taken place as a result of that experience.

4. In order to be accredited, prior learning must be broadly equivalent to the learning expected of a typical student on the same course or programme who has not been granted APL. In making APL decisions, staff of the University seek to ensure that the overall profile of study and attainment of students whose prior learning is accredited is equivalent to that of students who study at Glasgow for the entire duration of their degree programme.

5. APL normally refers to learning that has been achieved, assessed in the case of APCL and recognised prior to a student first enrolling on a degree programme.

6. Normally, The University of Glasgow does not charge a fee for assessing evidence of prior learning[**(1)**](https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/senateoffice/policies/assessment/accreditationofpriorlearning/aplguidelines/#foot1), but Colleges and Schools that choose to provide further support to help prospective applicants prepare their applications do charge for these services ([Paragraph 19](https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/senateoffice/policies/assessment/accreditationofpriorlearning/aplguidelines/#para19)).

**The Integrity of the University’s Awards**

7. Maintenance of the integrity of the University’s awards is an important principle when considering the contribution of credit gained externally to awards of the University of Glasgow. The following minimum criteria apply when awarding degrees and other qualifications of the University of Glasgow to students with APL, and these criteria must be taken into account when admitting such students to programmes of study.

* At least 50% of the total credit value of any award of the University of Glasgow must be derived from courses studied at the University of Glasgow.
* Notwithstanding the above, a student who has been admitted direct to the later years of an honours programme, but who is subsequently unable (for good cause) to complete the final year of the honours programme, may be awarded a general or designated degree provided that he/she has satisfied the requirements for such an award.
* This guideline does not apply to awards which are made jointly with other institutions and operate under joint Memoranda of Agreement.
* Credit associated with a postgraduate Dissertation or other substantial independent work cannot normally be transferred from a previous award.

8. When admitting students with external credit to their programmes, Colleges may choose to apply more stringent criteria than those set out in [Paragraph 7](https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/senateoffice/policies/assessment/accreditationofpriorlearning/aplguidelines/#para7), and these criteria may vary from programme to programme. [Paragraph 7](https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/senateoffice/policies/assessment/accreditationofpriorlearning/aplguidelines/#para7) provides a governing principle, and minimum criteria that course designers and scrutiny groups can consider for adoption on a programme-by-programme basis.

9. Although appropriate prior learning may be recognised by the award of credit, all such credit is ungraded for the academic purposes of the University of Glasgow.  This restriction applies to APCL as well as to APEL. It recognises that grades derived from the assessment schemes of other bodies are unlikely to be directly comparable to those of the University of Glasgow, whose Code of Assessment should be decisive for this purpose.

10. The policy of not awarding grades in relation to APL has potential implications for a student’s chances of progression to the later years of a degree programme and of gaining particular classes of award (e.g. Merit or Distinction) (see [Paragraph 21](https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/senateoffice/policies/assessment/accreditationofpriorlearning/aplguidelines/#para21)). Colleges are responsible for making incoming students aware of all the possible implications of the regulations on credit transfer.

11. All prior learning recognised by the University is shown on transcripts, but is clearly differentiated from attainment in the University’s own courses.

**Making Decisions about APL Applications**

12. Each College and/or each School must appoint an APL Officer, who will be responsible for APL decisions in connection with that College or School’s undergraduate and taught postgraduate degree programmes. The APL Officer’s decisions should be made after consultation with appropriate colleagues in the College or School.

13. Decisions about APL require the exercise of academic judgement. The primary consideration is whether the claimed prior learning is broadly equivalent to the learning that would otherwise have been assessed during the degree programme or evidenced by the certificated learning normally required by the stated entry requirements for that programme. In making this judgement, it is necessary to refer to the aims and learning outcomes of the degree programme or its component courses.

14. Prior learning may be awarded specific credit if it demonstrably fulfils all the intended learning outcomes of a particular course in the University of Glasgow.  Otherwise, relevant prior learning is awarded general credit.

15. For each award, the College specifies any limits it wishes to place on the currency of prior learning, e.g. whether prior certificated learning must have been completed within a certain number of years of the prospective student’s first enrolment for a degree programme.

16. For each award, the College decides what evidence it requires to receive from an applicant for APL. This might include: a portfolio of work; a focused interview; completion of a set task; completion of the usual assessment for the course to which the prior learning is claimed to be equivalent; a reflective account or diary of the learning achieved.

17. APL Officers are expected to communicate their decisions clearly and promptly to applicants. Whenever they refuse an application, they must provide the applicant with a clear statement of their reasons. At the application stage, an applicant is not a student of the University of Glasgow; as the University’s Appeals process covers only registered students, there is no right of appeal against the refusal of an application for APL[**(2)**](https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/senateoffice/policies/assessment/accreditationofpriorlearning/aplguidelines/#foot2).

18. University of Glasgow Admissions are required to keep records of all APL assessments for Veterans Affairs Benefits students, regardless of the outcome of the assessment itself.

**Guidance for APEL Applications**

19. For each undergraduate and postgraduate taught degree programme where APEL might be sought, the College must nominate a member of staff to act as the first point of contact for prospective applicants. This will usually be a member of staff in the Recruitment & International Office (RIO) but might alternatively be a member of staff in the College. The designated member of staff is responsible for giving prospective applicants information about when and where to submit their applications, for making them aware of the nature of the evidence they are expected to produce, and for informing them about the availability and cost of any further support that the College or School might offer.

20. A College or School might, but is not required to, offer applicants further support such as: formal or informal training appropriate to the evidence required (e.g. training in how to reflect on learning experiences); formative assessment and feedback (e.g. reading and commenting on initial drafts of reflective accounts). A fee, set by the Clerk of Senate, is charged for such services.

**Regulations**

21. The regulations for every undergraduate and taught postgraduate award should specify whether or not applications for APL may be accepted. If they are, then the regulations should further specify (or point an applicant to other documentation that specifies):

* the limits on the total credit value of prior learning (see Paragraphs [7](https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/senateoffice/policies/assessment/accreditationofpriorlearning/aplguidelines/#para7), [8](https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/senateoffice/policies/assessment/accreditationofpriorlearning/aplguidelines/#para8));
* that no grade (or grade points) will be awarded in respect of prior learning (see [Paragraph 9](https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/senateoffice/policies/assessment/accreditationofpriorlearning/aplguidelines/#para9));
* the designation of the APL Officer.

22. In applying regulations for degrees and other awards, ungraded APL credit should be treated as credit at grade D or better for the purposes of:

(a) the award of a degree:  
(b) annual progress, or   
(c) entry to honours.

For the award of Merit and Distinction, ungraded APL credit should not be counted and therefore APL students’ grade point average should be calculated only on the basis of credits studied and assessed at the University of Glasgow.

**Public Information**

23. Prospectuses and similar sources of information for prospective students, both paper-based and electronic, are expected to specify whether or not applications for APL will be accepted in respect of each undergraduate and taught postgraduate programme covered by them. They should state clearly the nature of the evidence required for an application for APL and give full details of a first point of contact ([Paragraph 1](https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/senateoffice/policies/assessment/accreditationofpriorlearning/aplguidelines/#para18)9). Where the College or School offers further support to applicants ([Paragraph](https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/senateoffice/policies/assessment/accreditationofpriorlearning/aplguidelines/#para19) 20), these documents must also explain how to access this, describe the type of support available and state the level of fee that is charged.

**Quality Assurance for APEL**

24. At the end of every academic session, each APL Officer must make a formal statement to the relevant College (or Colleges) of: the number of APEL applications received; the numbers granted and refused; in each case where an application was granted, the amount of credit awarded as a result. This information is recorded separately for every award. These data are discussed by relevant College committees. The College must satisfy itself that its criteria for APEL remain objective, are being fairly and consistently applied, and are not unintentionally growing more or less stringent as time goes by.

1 A charge is made in some cases, particularly in relation to entry to professional degrees where there is long-standing, national practice, for example the MEd Professional Development and Enquiry.

2 Any complaints regarding the admissions process should be directed to the Recruitment & International Office in the first instance.

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) provides an independent public services complaints system which covers Universities. Anyone may submit complaints about the University to SPSO if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of an investigation or review of a complaint by the University. The SPSO cannot however consider complaints about i) academic judgement, or ii) discretionary decisions which are made without any maladministration.