

IB02 - Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy & Guidance Notes

1. Introduction and Principles

This document sets out policy and procedure for the Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) at the Sherwood Psychotherapy Institute (SPTI) and covers all undergraduate and postgraduate programmes leading to awards currently validated by Staffordshire University. University Award Boards apply fair and consistent regulations for progression within, and transfer between, programmes and for the award of credits and qualifications. Those who might be eligible for the recognition of prior learning are made aware of the opportunities available, and are supported throughout the process of application and assessment for recognition. Selection processes for entry are underpinned by transparent entry requirements, both academic and non-academic, and present no unnecessary barriers to prospective students.

APL enables eligible students to incorporate previous relevant theoretical and/or practical learning into a programme of study and be accredited for this learning. Assessment and feedback practices, including those for the recognition of prior learning, are explicit, transparent and accessible to all intended audiences. The previous learning must be relevant to the programme for which they are applying, and if their application is successful, the credit will count towards their chosen programme of study. Where professional and regulatory bodies impose any particular restrictions on the use of APL, these will be reflected in the handling of APL applications.

These guidelines have been developed to comply with Staffordshire University guidelines on Accreditation of Prior Learning.

2. What is APL?

Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) is offered by Higher Education Institutions to candidates who have studied elsewhere in order that they do not have to repeat topics when they join a new programme. You can achieve exemption from topics on the new programme if you can demonstrate you have studied them elsewhere at a similar standard.

Accreditation of Prior Learning covers a range of prior learning experience; such learning may be recognised by an education provider (referred to as *Accredited Prior Certificated Learning; APCL*) or it may have been achieved by reflecting upon experiences outside the formal education and training systems (known as *Accredited Prior Experiential Learning; APEL*). Prior learning, both certificated and experiential, may be formally recognised on the Programmes. SPTI operate effective policies, regulations and processes which ensure that the academic standard for each award of credit or a qualification is rigorously set and maintained at the appropriate level, and that student performance is equitably judged against this standard.

3. What APL can people apply for?

Typically, SPTI provides curricula in which theory, personal and professional development, and competency acquisition complement and enrich each other and the overall experience of the student. There is a maximum amount of APL that can be agreed - every student who applies for APL, regardless of how much they have studied elsewhere, must complete at least a third of the SPTI programme.

Course	Entry Point	*Academic Requirements	*Clinical Requirements – evidence must be provided
BSc Counselling & Psychotherapy	Year 2 / Level 5	120 credits at level 4	30 hours personal therapy
MSc Integrative Psychotherapy	Year 2 / Level 7	As per entry criteria on the web site	40 hours personal therapy
MSc Person-Centred & Experiential Psychotherapy	Year 2 / Level 7	As per entry criteria on the web site	40 hours personal therapy
MSc Integrative	Year 3 /	As per entry criteria	40 hours personal therapy

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Psychotherapy	Level 7	on the web site	
MSc Person-Centred & Experiential Psychotherapy	Year 3 / Level 7	As per entry criteria on the web site	40 hours personal therapy

- Postgraduate Programmes

The number of credits required for completion of the Masters course is 180. For entry into the course after year 1, students must provide evidence of completing academic and clinical components as detailed in the table above. Applicants will also be assessed in relation to the modality of the training already completed which will be mapped against the modality of the SPTI course*.

- Undergraduate Programme

The number of credits required for completion of the BSc (Hons) course is 360. For entry into year two, students must provide evidence of completing academic and clinical components as detailed in the table above*.

Applications to join the BSc programme are welcome for year two only.

*this information is provided for guidance only and does not constitute an entitlement.

4. How does SPTI and the University decide whether I can be awarded APL?

Each Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) decision is arrived at on a course by course basis by mapping either the level or module learning outcomes. Applications should be made as early as possible and must be before a module/year commences. You need to demonstrate that you can meet 100% of the Learning Outcomes for each module that you are applying for exemption from. Charges are applied for applications of APCL and APEL. Learning/experience must have taken place within 5 years of the start date of the programme being applied for and refers to the actual date learning took place, not the date of conferment/award.

Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL)

Applicants should provide copies (sight of the originals may be requested for verification) of the certificated learning to the Admissions team. The Programme Leader will check that the learning outcomes from the certified prior learning align with the learning outcomes of the module/level/year of the SPTI course. All mapping and decisions will be approved by a Director and recorded on the applicants file. Further guidance may be sought by SPTI from the professional body.

Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)

Applicants applying for APEL should discuss with the Admissions team the specific evidence of the claim and submit a portfolio demonstrating how the learning outcomes of the module for which APEL is being requested, have been met. A clear indication should be made indicating the mapping of the learning outcomes of the claimed modules/level to the evidence of experiential learning submitted. These will be assessed by the Programme Leader as pass/fail and if passed, will be recorded as the pass mark of either 40%E (undergraduate) or 50%E (postgraduate). These will not be taken into account when calculating the average mark for classification purposes. The submitted assessments will be subject to the usual moderation and External Examining processes. All mapping, assessments and decisions will be approved by a Director and recorded on the applicants file. Further guidance may be sought by SPTI from the professional or validating bodies.

Credit can only be gained for the learning which has been achieved as a consequence of taking part in a particular activity, and not simply for participation in it. It will not be enough to list the learning

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activities in which you have taken part. It will be necessary for you to provide very specific evidence of the learning which has taken place.

5. How do I demonstrate that I have met the learning outcomes & clinical requirements?

Assessment and feedback practices are informed by reflection, consideration of professional practice and subject-specific and educational scholarship. For each learning outcome you need to detail the module(s), formal assessment(s), etc., which you believe have helped you meet that learning outcome. Examples are as follows:

Example 1:

Learning outcome: On completion of the module the student will be able to highlight significant concepts of the humanistic approach to counselling and psychotherapy.

Evidence: I studied humanistic psychology during (name of module) on this course. I successfully completed a 2000 word written assignment relating to this. This enables me to fulfil this learning outcome at level.

Example 2:

Learning outcome: On completion of the module the student will be able to reflect on working in organisations and with fellow health professionals.

Evidence: During my initial training I completed a work place observation, which enabled me to gain insight into working in statutory organisations and with multi-disciplinary teams. Part of my training was with (name) – this is within the voluntary sector. I had to reflect on what I observed as part of my assessed personal learning log. As this study was at Level this clearly demonstrates that I am able to fulfil this learning outcome at undergraduate level.

Example 2 is where a learning outcome is focused on the mode of learning (experiential) rather than the topic studied. The first example focuses on the topic.

The best way of demonstrating the level at which you studied the particular learning outcome is through stating the training organisation attended and the qualification towards which you were studying. Further evidence can be supplied in order to support your statements; for example, transcripts of credits; assessors' comment sheets; copies of module outlines from the training you have already completed.

You will also need to demonstrate that you meet the clinical obligations of the Programme for which you are submitting an APL application. For example, SPTI students studying on the BSc course are expected to complete 30 hours of personal therapy with a suitably qualified therapist during the first year of training. This could be evidenced by a letter from your personal therapist outlining the number of hours attended and in what time period together with details of the therapist professional background (e.g. a CV summary).

Please note; we would not consider evidence which is more than five years old. If you are making a request which includes qualifications and experience, which are more than five years old, please give reasons why you consider them to be appropriate.

6. What costs are involved?

The APL fees for students currently registered and in-training at SPTI who are undertaking the Accreditation of Prior Learning application process is £150.00.

The APL fees for external applicants is £250.00 to cover the Accreditation of Prior Learning application process.

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Fees are payable upon submission of your completed APL application.

Please note; the fee is non-refundable should your APL application be unsuccessful.

7. How do I apply?

SPTI makes clear to prospective students how the recruitment, selection and admission process will be conducted and what prospective students have to do. Through inclusive design wherever possible, and through individual reasonable adjustments wherever required, assessment tasks provide every applicant with an equal opportunity to demonstrate their achievement. The APL application process aims to:

- identify an applicant's skills and knowledge
- equate these with specific standards and requirements
- credit the applicant in an appropriate manner

This process can be divided into six steps as indicated in Figure 1:

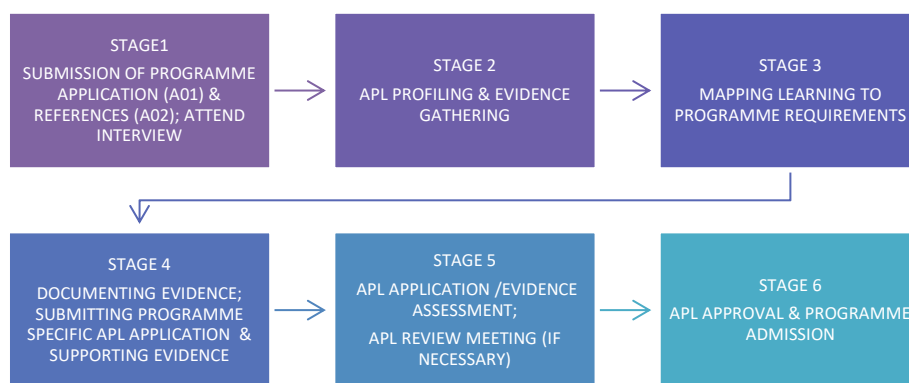


Figure 1 – Overview of the APL Process

Stage 1 - Programme Application & Interview

Assessment and feedback practices, including those for the recognition of prior learning, are explicit, transparent and accessible to all intended audiences. Those who might be eligible for the recognition of prior learning are made aware of the opportunities available, and are supported throughout the process of application and assessment for recognition.

Before embarking on the APL application process, you should complete and submit a Programme Application Form (form code A01) together with two references (form code A02).

You will then be invited to an interview with the appropriate Programme Leader. This interview will determine your suitability for your selected programme of study and will include an introductory discussion regarding the APL application process. The latter will focus on your background experience and qualifications.

In order to prepare yourself for this discussion, we recommend that you also update and submit your curriculum vitae (CV).

Your CV should list in chronological order the various phases of your education, working life and family life. For each of the phases you identify, you should provide the following information:

- The dates when the activities took place
- The role you fulfilled
- The activities and responsibilities you carried out

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- Any training you received
- What you learned in doing these activities

Do not forget to include a resume of your personal development (e.g. relevant hobbies, voluntary work and personal therapy) particularly where you can demonstrate that they have resulted in additional 'competencies'.

The CV you produce, together with the application form and references will assist the Programme Leader in assessing your potential eligibility for undertaking the APL application process and recommend the first steps that should be taken as you embark on the APL process.

Stage 2 – APL Profiling & Evidence Gathering

Should the preliminary discussions reveal that you may benefit from the APL process your next step is to gather evidence about your previous qualifications and experience to support your claim for credit towards the new qualification you are seeking. Examples of relevant evidence includes (but is not limited to):

- Details of previous courses you have studied, supported by certificates showing that you successfully completed them
- A personal report of your accomplishments and skills relevant to the criteria or learning outcomes for which you wish to receive recognition. This should be supported by a statement from an independent referee.
- Copies of reports, and documents you may have written, supported by witness statements that the documents are your own work
- Copies of presentations you have made (again, supported by witness statements)
- Copies of work instructions you carry out (plus witness statements confirming your capability to undertake them successfully)
- A supervisory report outlining details of clinical experience to date, the number of supervision hours attended and the ratio of hours to client contact together with details of the therapist professional background (e.g. a CV summary).
- A therapist letter confirming hours attended to date and in what time period together with details of the therapist professional background (e.g. a CV summary).

Stage 3 - Mapping Learning to Programme Requirements

You must demonstrate that your evidence identified in Stage 2 reflects the stated learning outcomes and clinical requirements being sought by the programme for which you are applying. We suggest you assemble your learning achievements and the description of the evidence before transferring the relevant information to your APL Application Form.

The following points will be considered by the Programme Leader / representative when matching and compiling evidence:

- The evidence produced clearly and self-evidently meets the learning outcomes for which credit is being sought. *Evidence is valued both for its relevance and for its sufficiency.*
- Although the learning activity may have taken place sometime in the past, does this demonstrate that you can still apply the learning that you acquired i.e. *it should be current.*
- Evidence will normally be *direct* i.e. it will have been produced by you. Sometimes *indirect* evidence may be acceptable. This could take the form of a testimonial or a record of activities undertaken. This sort of secondary evidence is usually provided to supplement other direct evidence.

The evidence should be compiled and presented in a portfolio (such as a ring binder). The portfolio

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should be suitably organised and indexed to show the link between your prior education, training, work and life experiences and the skills, expertise, knowledge and understanding required. It must demonstrate that your prior education, training, work and life experiences have provided you with the skills, expertise, knowledge and understanding required by SPTI.

Stage 4 - Documenting Evidence & Submitting Application

Documenting Evidence

The portfolio should ensure it easy to see what evidence you are providing for each of the learning outcomes/clinical requirements that you are addressing. The better your portfolio is organised, the easier it is for us to assess and the more likely it is that you will be successful.

Suggested Layout

Have a front cover which includes;

- your name and address
- the programme title / module / level / year of training for which you are seeking exemption
- the date on which the portfolio is being submitted

Make your first page a Contents Page. List the module title and cross-reference to the evidence, so that it is immediately clear where the relevant evidence is to be found. A piece of evidence may address more than one learning outcome.

Figure 3 – Overview of Section

Section A	
Module Title	
Learning Outcomes	Evidence
1	A1; A2
2	A2

In the evidence sections for each module you are addressing, preface the evidence with a grid, as illustrated in *Figure 3* above. This will serve to summarise your evidence against the relevant learning outcomes and so provide your assessor with a helpful overview.

Submitting Your Programme & APL Applications – Deadlines

In order to be considered for your selected Programme of study you will need to complete the following;

- Programme Application Form (form code A01)
- Two references (form code A02)

The usual deadline for submission of your Programme Application & references is 15th June for entry into the programme beginning the same calendar year.

In order to be considered as an APL applicant you will need to complete the following:

- APL Application Form (A03i – MSc Integrative Psychotherapy; A03p – MSc Person-Centred & Experiential Psychotherapy; A04 BSc (Hons) Counselling & Psychotherapy)

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- Portfolio of evidence demonstrating how you meet the learning outcomes and clinical requirements of the module / level / year of training of the Programme for which you are seeking exemption.

The usual deadline for this component of the process is 31st July.

The decisions of assessment panels are recorded accurately, and communicated promptly and in accordance with stated timescales. We cannot guarantee that APL applications received after the above dates will be processed prior to the commencement of the forthcoming academic year. However, as Programme Leaders have some discretion in this regard we suggest making contact with the Programme Leader of your proposed programme of study in order to ascertain potential flexibility in relation to timeframe.

Please note; completion and submission of an APL application does not guarantee Accreditation of Prior Learning. Also it is important to realise that an application for admission to the programme is completely separate from an application for APL and each application will be assessed individually on its merits.

Please send your application forms, references, supporting evidence and payment (cheques made payable to SC&P) to *Admissions, SPTI, 2 Castle Quay, Castle Boulevard, Nottingham NG7 1FW*

Stage 5 – APL Application/Evidence Assessment & APL Review Meeting

Your application for APL will be assessed by two or more members of academic staff, usually including the relevant Programme Leader and a Director. Recruitment, selection and admission processes are conducted in a professional manner by authorised and competent representatives of SPTI. The assessment includes the following components:

- reviewing your application form for completeness
- ensuring there are no gaps in the provided evidence; i.e. checking that your evidence portfolio contains all stated documentation
- checking that the evidence provided relates to the standards and learning outcomes being claimed

The evidence you provide about your prior learning and experience is assessed against the following criteria:

- **Validity:** Does the evidence provided match the competences required by SPTI? Are the skills, knowledge and expertise being demonstrated by the applicant at the level required by SPTI in both level and content?
- **Sufficiency:** Is the amount of evidence sufficient to demonstrate they have achieved the credit currently being claimed? Does it cover all the aspects being looked for?
- **Authenticity:** This refers to the ownership of the evidence. Assessors need to be able to verify that the work submitted really is the result of your own effort and expertise.
- **Reliability:** Will different assessors place a similar value on the evidence you have provided and make similar judgements when confronted with the same evidence?
- **Currency:** This refers to the date of the evidence. Assessors must be sure that the evidence submitted by the applicant is recent enough:
 - to be considered a measure of current levels of competence. The recognition of prior learning will recognise formal certificated or experiential learning which has occurred up to five years prior to the start date of the course.

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- to be appropriate to the assessment given the changes that have taken place in the psychotherapy professional over the years since learning was undertaken.

Assessing and verifying the evidence;

Successful applications; on completion of the Accreditation of Prior Learning assessment we will write to confirm the successful outcome of your application. This will usually take place within 28 days of APL application receipt.

Assessors record the outcome and recommendation of credit or recognition of prior learning is made in writing to the University.

Unsuccessful applications; in instances where assessors do not deem evidence to be relevant or sufficient (for example, in regard to clinical requirements or academic level/s) you will be informed in writing and invited to attend an APL review meeting with the appropriate Programme Leader who will explain to you the reasons for the decision and assist you to consider alternatives; for instance, joining a different academic year or programme. In some instances you may qualify for the right to appeal the decision.

Stage 6 - APL Approval & Programme Admission

This stage involves the final verification by SPTI and Staffordshire University.

If your APL claim has been successful, the credits awarded to you will be entered onto the University's record system.

SPTI gives successful applicants sufficient information to enable them to make the transition from applicant to current student. SPTI will send you a Student Welcome Pack with information regarding entry into the programme for which you have been approved.

8. Appeals

In accordance with the SPTI and University appeals regulations, an appeal can only be made against a decision on the basis that there was a material error or irregularity in the process.

SPTI/Staffordshire University shall not be obliged to consider an appeal simply on the grounds that the applicant is unwilling to accept the original decision not to grant credit, and seeks to overturn that decision.

A request for appeal should be made in writing and addressed to the Programme Leader with responsibility for APL.

In every case, all applicant evidence must be retained in order to facilitate either internal or external moderation of the assessment decision. This includes copies of the original certification against which APL is being claimed, the subject mapping undertaken and any portfolio and/or additional assessment required.