



Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)

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What is Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)?

Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) is a way of recognising the knowledge and skills that a person has gained through their previous experiences, such as work, volunteering, or informal education. APL can help a candidate gain credit for a course or programme of study, without having to repeat the same learning. APL can be based on certificated learning, which is learning that has been formally assessed and awarded by an institution, or experiential learning, which is evidenced learning that has been acquired through practical activities and reflection.

Purpose of this guidance

This document has been developed to guide those interested in seeking academic credit for learning acquired prior to registering on a programme with Cork Counselling Services Institute (hereafter CCSTI). All Accreditation of Prior Learning or Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis. All applications for APL and AP(E)L must be completed in advance of programme commencement unless otherwise agreed by the Training Team.

APL or AP(E)L can be used to gain:

- Advanced entry to a course
- Exemption/s for a module or several modules

The Accreditation scheme provides the opportunity for applicants to make claims for both certificated and experiential (non-certificate) learning.

The learning claim submitted by the applicant may be against credit or exemption. The claims made will be against the fulfilment of the learning outcomes associated with specific modules of study.

Examples for consideration for APL and AP(E)L accreditation include completion of an IACP-recognised qualification from a programme with a philosophy and rationale consistent with that of the Integrative Humanistic approach, modules or part of modules from a higher-level qualification (QQI Level 5 or above, or equivalent) in an allied profession, equivalent professional, voluntary or community development experience, and equivalent life experience. Candidates who previously would have applied for a place on our Top Up programme are welcome to apply via the APL route.

How to I apply?

1. Candidates interested in applying for an APL should speak with a member of the training team.
2. Prior to submitting an APL or AP(E)L application, all candidates should apply for a place on the programme as normal. This includes:
 - Submitting new entrant application form and CV
 - Submitting two references
 - Payment of non-refundable application fee
 - Attending for interview/s
 - Confirming interest

Candidates should accept a place on the programme if offered. At this stage, if not done so already, candidates interested in submitting an APL application should speak with a member of the training team.

Where a candidate holds a previous qualification which is recognised by the IACP or equivalent deeming them eligible for pre-accreditation status, evidence must be provided as part of their application.

3. Having spoken to a suitably qualified member of the training team, candidates should begin work on their portfolio. An APL or AP(E)L application portfolio is a collection of information and documentation which supports and evidences the candidates prior learning. It should include:
 - a. Introduction
 - b. CCSTI Module Descriptors for which the application is being made
 - c. Prior Learning Achieved
 - d. Supporting Documentation

All APL or AP(E)L assessments carry a non-refundable fee of €150.00 which should be paid upon submission of portfolio.

Structure of the portfolio

When compiling an APL or AP(E)L application portfolio, it is important to remember that what you have learnt is being assessed, not what you have done. This involves reflecting on your experience not just describing what you have done. A portfolio should be logical in structure. All sections are related. Evidence of learning must be linked with learning outcomes.

1. Introduction

Introduction and CV

Include previous education details, past work experience, volunteer experience.

2. **CCSTI Module Descriptors** for which application is being made. You can get these from the training team.

3. Prior Learning Achieved

Section two and three are closely aligned. In section two, applicants are expected to include the module descriptors for which an application is being made. All modules have intended learning outcomes. An intended learning outcome describes the important learning a student achieves having completed that module. Applicants must clearly outline how previous experience fulfils the learning outcomes of the module for which exemption is being sought. Applicants are encouraged to provide as much information as possible and to remember that they are providing evidence to prove that the learning for this module has already been achieved. Applicants must demonstrate the appropriate academic level of learning as determined by the academic unit involved. Applicants may wish to refer to 'Qualifications Can Cross Boundaries: A Guide to Comparing Qualifications in the UK and Ireland' (QQI, 2019) available <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Qualifications%20can%20Cross%20Boundries%202019.pdf>.

4. Supporting documentation

This section should include all documentation and evidence in support of your application and stated learning achieved. This can include records, official transcripts,

references, letters of completion, letters of certification, statements from supervisors, published material, written reports, essays, journal excerpts, audio visual material, proof of volunteer work, attendance records etc. This list is non-exhaustive.

Previous client work

Where applicable, evidence of related client work will be requested where a candidate is applying to recognise prior client work. This may include presenting on prior client work or providing recorded examples of counselling. Trainers will discuss this further with suitable candidates.

Ability to form relationships with trainers and peers etc

Where appropriate, candidates should show evidence of reflective practitioner qualities, their ability to form personal and professional relationships with peers with trainers and supervisors and skills practice experience.

Assessment of portfolio

All APL or AP(E)L application portfolios are assessed on a case-by-case basis. Cork Counselling Services Training Institute is committed to ensuring a fair and transparent process.

- Assessment of the portfolio is undertaken by a member of the Training Team.
- Rigor must be exercised in complying with the Institute's requirements relating to the standards of particular awards.
- Provided that it is clear that individual applicants have fulfilled some of the progression and assessment requirements of the course concerned by means other than enrolment, and that they will be able by completing the remaining requirements to fulfil the intended learning outcomes of the course and attain the standards required for a particular award, such applicants may be admitted as students to any approved appropriate point in the course concerned subject to any over-riding requirements of the Regulations.
- General credit shall be assigned in terms of a number of credit points at one or more levels.
- Any student who has been awarded general credit shall be required to apply to convert that to the specific credit available for the Institute's course concerned.
- Each exempted APL student must undertake a minimum of 100 hours of supervised client work whilst on the course.
- For each applicant accepted on grounds of prior learning to courses validated by an external university the Link Tutors of the validating university shall be consulted.
- Assessor reserves the right to meet with applicant to discuss application in detail to consolidate evidence of prior learning.
- The internal consistency of the BSc course is ensured by:
 - Not exceeding the maximum of 20% of any one cohort who are accepted to apply for APL for more than one module. This will be granted on a first come first serve basis.
 - By encouraging all candidates who are applying for a year under APL to complete Year 1 and for APL to be granted only in relation to Year 2, 3 or 4. In these circumstances, students may apply for their APL following completion of Year 1 and not prior to course enrolment. Exceptions will be made for candidates with pre-accredited or accredited status with the IACP.

- Students applying for APL must undertake 120 hours of client work with CCSTI and prior to undertaking this must show evidence of having completed a minimum of 25 hours personal therapy.
- All candidates must be competent to study using the English Language. Due to the clinical nature of the course the English language requirement for overseas entrants is IELTS grade 6.5 or equivalent.
- Applicant participation in the APL process is voluntary.
- Outcomes will be communicated to students no later than 7 weeks post applicant submission date.

Additional information

For more information, please contact Cork Counselling Services Training Institute on 021 4274951 or email us on info@corkcounsellingservices.ie