

STEP Qualifications and Membership Framework

Guidance on STEP Entry Level and
completing the APL forms



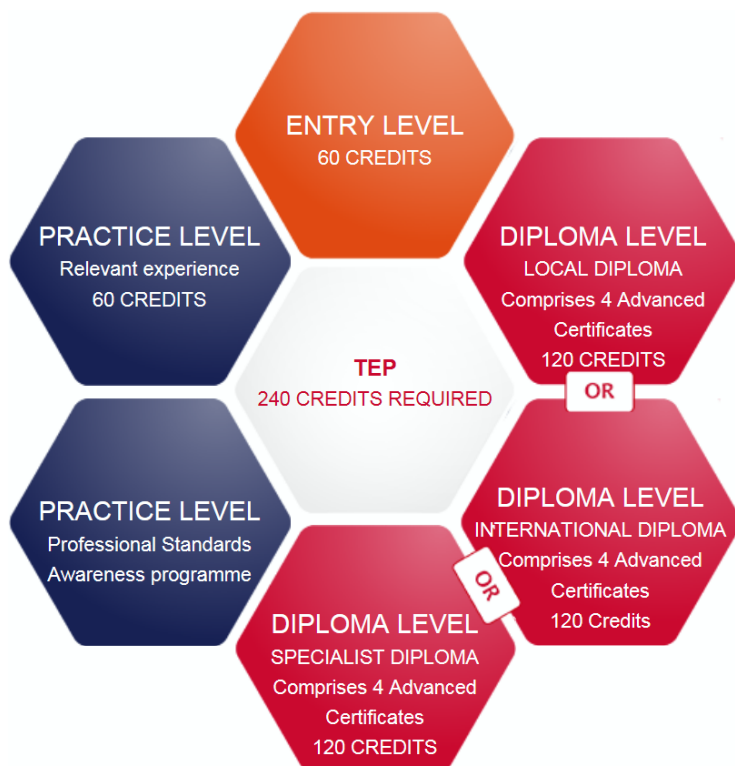
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STEP's Qualifications & Membership Framework (QMF)

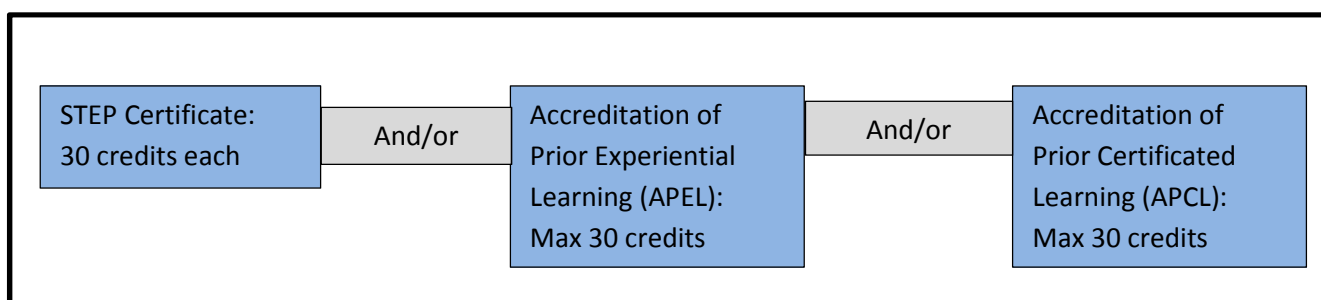
Under the STEP Qualifications & Membership Framework, full STEP membership and TEP status is awarded upon completion of three distinct stages:

1. Entry Level;
2. Diploma Level;
3. Practice Level.



The first stage is to pass “Entry Level”. Entry Level can be completed by applicants in a variety of ways, but the academic threshold must be reached by all applicants according to the same standard. Successful completion of Entry level leads to Diploma level.

60 Entry Level credits may be accumulated from any combination of:



You can gain your first level of STEP membership by gaining 60 Entry Level credits and call yourself a STEP Affiliate.

Transitional measures

Students enrolled on an Entry Level Certificate prior to April 2015 will automatically be given the extra 30 credits needed to pass Entry Level at the point of enrolling on a Diploma Level course (provided the assessment for the Certificate on which they enrolled has been passed).

Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)

Accreditation of Prior Learning is the generic, overarching term used for the award of credits on the basis of demonstrated learning which has taken place in the past.

Categories

There are two main sub-categories within the Accreditation of Prior Learning:

1. APCL – the Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning - learning which has been formally assessed and certified by an educational institution, e.g. University/University College, recognised education/training provider or professional body; and
2. APEL – the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning - the formal recognition of prior learning gained through other experience, in particular learning gained within and through work

Credits may be given for prior learning where the level, standard, and relevance of that learning are appropriate as preparation for study at Diploma level within the QMF.

Decisions regarding the accreditation of prior learning are a matter of academic judgement, with the main considerations being:

- Whether the prior learning is broadly equivalent to the learning that would otherwise have been assessed during the study of a STEP Entry Level Certificate; and
- Whether any prior qualification being presented for APCL credit is adequate preparation in terms of general cognitive demand to enable the individual to undertake the Diploma level study with the reasonable expectation of a positive outcome

The requirement of currency

The learning on which the claim for APCL or APEL is based must generally have taken place no more than five years prior to the date of submission of the application. It may be possible to rely on prior *certificated* learning which took place more than five years previously provided the applicant is able to demonstrate that their learning has since remained current by way of regular CPD.

For both APEL and APCL applications there may be exceptions to the currency rules where there are exceptional circumstances (decisions will be made with due regard to the Equality Act 2010).

CLTI are not required to accept a Diploma level application where the relevant Entry Level APL application was approved more than 12 months earlier. In this instance a fresh APL application may need to be made. A successful APL application will remain current for the duration of the applicant's Entry Level Certificate studies (even if this exceeds 12 months).

Fees

The fee to have an APCL or APEL application considered is £50 plus VAT. If both APCL and APEL applications are made then a total fee of £100 plus VAT is payable. The fees are non-refundable.

Timescale for consideration of applications

Receipt of APL applications will be confirmed by email. A decision will be made by the CLTI Admissions Team within two weeks. If further information or supporting evidence is requested the two weeks will begin from the date this further information is received.

Level Descriptors

The following describe the level of knowledge and skill (and performance, in the case of APEL applications) applicants will need to have demonstrably reached in order for their prior learning to be accredited at Entry Level.

Knowledge	Applicants must understand the general principles involved in a topic area and have a broad understanding of the received knowledge in the area. They must also have an awareness of where the points of debate lie in the area, without necessarily having to provide a reasoned preference for one view over another.
Intellectual skill, e.g. problem solving, critical thinking, evaluation	Applicants are able to understand and articulate the nature of the problem that needs solving and take well-trodden paths to solve it, collecting the material needed to solve the problem from a variety of sources, and communicate an articulated response to the problem both orally and in writing. For example, where a client's/fictional legal issue has been identified by the applicant they can proceed to give a comprehensive account of the legislation/case law principles that are required to predict the legal outcome (e.g. breach of trust/no breach of trust) and present this in an account that flows logically from one stage of the problem to another to the ultimate liability conclusion.
Performance (APEL only)	<p>Applicants assume some, but limited, responsibility – under direction or supervision and within defined guidelines. For example, an applicant may have several ongoing projects but will prioritise them depending on time-sensitivity related to their clients' business objectives.</p> <p>The applicant is able to take responsibility for the quality of their work.</p> <p>The applicant is able to undertake complex or non-routine tasks, showing the ability to adapt their existing knowledge and skill to the new task, and learn new skills.</p> <p>With appropriate help and support the applicant is able to develop further skills, through structured and unstructured training, e.g. formal one-day course or simply scheduling time to read and note the STEP updates.</p>

Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) at Entry Level

Under the APCL scheme, the learning must have been formally assessed and certified by an educational institution, education/training provider or professional body. The prior academic or professional qualification must be at a difficulty level similar to or higher than a STEP Entry Level Certificate (see Level Descriptors above) and the subject matter should be relevant to that of the STEP qualifications (the focus may be domestic or international). This includes the following key areas of professional practice.

- Law
- Tax
- Accounting
- Wealth Management
- Estates Practice
- Financial Planning
- Investment

By way of guidance, some of the qualifications that meet the APCL requirements are listed below.

AAT Accounting Qualification
ACA
ACCA (Foundation and Diploma)
ACIB
Advocate (in recognition of the professional qualifications required to achieve this status)
ATT
Bahamas Institute of Financial Services Trustee Diploma
Barrister (in recognition of the professional qualifications required to achieve this status)
CII Financial Services Qualification (Certificate, Diploma, Advanced Certificate and Advanced Diploma)
CFA
CMA
CISI Wealth/Retail (Qualifying/Advanced/professional)
CISI Compliance/Risk (Qualifying/Advanced/professional)
CISI Capital Markets (Qualifying/Advanced/professional)
CISI Operations (Qualifying/Advanced/professional)
CFP
CLT Specialist Paralegal Qualification in Wills, Probate and Administration
CTA
Degree in law, accounting, finance, economics, business studies (PhD, Master's degree, University degree, College degree)
FINRA Series 7
ICA Diploma in Compliance
ICA Diploma in Governance, Risk and Compliance
ICSA (Chartered, Diploma, Advanced Certificate, Certificate (offshore paper only))
ILEX Probate and Succession papers, Level 6
Institute of Professional Will Writers Entry Examination

International Diploma in Financial Administration
Lawyer (in recognition of the professional qualifications required to achieve this status)
MBA
Notary (in recognition of the professional qualifications required to achieve this status)
RICS – Property, Finance and Investment pathway
SOLAS qualification for Accountants in Scotland
Solicitor (in recognition of the professional qualifications required to achieve this status)
SOLLA accreditation

Application procedure

A formal application must be made whether or not the prior qualification on which the application is based is listed in the table above. If listed, only the title of the qualification, date of the award and evidence that the qualification has been obtained are needed. If the qualification is not listed, the form asks for more detail as to subject matter coverage, volume and level of study.

Applicants can rely on more than one prior qualification to meet the APCL requirements.

Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) at Entry Level

The purpose of an APEL scheme is to accredit *learning* from prior experience and not experience per se. The learning must have been achieved over a minimum period of one year working in a role related to the subject matter of the STEP qualifications. The role need not be senior in nature – learning that takes place while in a junior role and generally working under supervision is admissible (N.B. Entry Level experience will not be appropriate for application to TEP and is therefore distinguished from Practice Level experience which is required for the application for TEP). This experience needs to be experience in a client-facing role or a role independent of direct supervision, and most usually mid to senior level.

Application procedure

Applicants are required to evidence their prior learning by detailing on the APEL claim form the nature and level of their prior experiential learning. In order to do this applicants will need, for each job role held within the relevant period, to briefly list the key activities undertaken and what they learned from doing them. Each activity described should be relevant to work in the field of trusts and/or estates. For each activity indicate applicants are asked to how they demonstrated their competence to do the activity. The aim of this is to demonstrate that you have acquired, through your experience, the knowledge and skills that are broadly equivalent to having studied and passed an Entry Level Certificate. The form will include the STEP Entry Level descriptors (as above) as you must demonstrate that your knowledge and skills reach or exceed this level.

In completing the form remember that the emphasis is a practical one. This is not about writing an essay on legal/technical principles. Detailed guidance, with example completed forms is provided.

How your claim will be assessed

The assessment of a claim for accreditation of prior experiential learning is solely a matter of academic judgement. It will be based on the following criteria:

- The extent to which the application demonstrates that learning has been acquired by your experience;
- The extent to which the application demonstrates a *match* with the activities and knowledge expected of a professional at your level in your field;
- The extent to which the application is *sufficient* to demonstrate the learning, i.e. there must be enough detail to demonstrate the learning of these skills/knowledge through your experience;
- The extent to which the application shows achievement of knowledge and skill to the standard of STEP's "entry level";
- The extent to which the application is authentic, i.e. clearly related to your own efforts and achievements.

Sample completed APEL forms follow

TEPs

TEPs who wish to complete a STEP Diploma will gain direct entry to the Diploma and may claim exemption from two of the Advanced Certificates comprising that Diploma.

Exemption from Advanced Certificates

Exemption from up to a maximum of two Advanced Certificates of certain Diplomas is possible. For detailed information including criteria and application process see the web page for that Diploma.

Queries

Please contact the CLTI Admissions Team if you have any queries:

Email: cltinternational@centlaw.com Tel: +44 121 362 7733