



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:

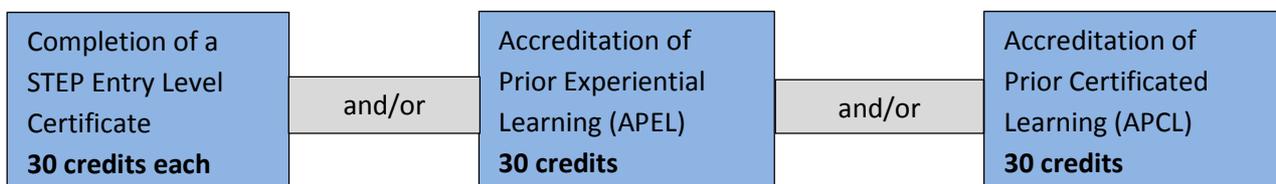
1. Entry Level
2. Diploma Level
3. Practice Level



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

In order to progress to Diploma Level you must be in possession of **60 Entry Level credits**.

These can be accumulated from any combination of:



The Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning and Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning forms will be explained further in this document.

STEP Membership Categories

Once you have gained 60 Entry Level credits, you are eligible to become a **STEP Affiliate** and to progress to Diploma or Advanced Certificate courses.

Upon completion of two Advanced Certificates worth 30 Diploma Level credits each, you are eligible to become a **STEP Associate**.

Once you have completed four Advanced Certificates that form part of a specific Diploma programme (e.g. the four Advanced Certificates that make up the STEP Diploma in Trust and Estates), you will have obtained 120 Diploma Level credits and you can apply for **Full STEP Membership**. In order to achieve Full Membership, you would first need to apply to STEP for 60 Practice Level credits for which candidates must have two years of experience in a mid-level or senior position.

Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)

Accreditation of Prior Learning is the process used to award credits based on learning you have gained previously, either through qualifications or work.

Categories

There are two categories within Accreditation of Prior Learning:

1. APCL – Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning – this form considers learning which has been formally assessed and certified by an educational institution, e.g. a University, recognised training provider or professional body
2. APEL – Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning – this assesses prior learning gained through work

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

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 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 APL application was approved more than 12 months earlier. In this instance a fresh APL application may need to be made. However, 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 UK VAT (if applicable). If both APCL and APEL applications are made then a total fee of £100 plus UK VAT is payable. The fees are non-refundable, however, payment will not be taken until the APL forms have been approved by the Admissions Team, so there is no harm in submitting an application even if you are not sure whether it will meet the criteria.

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.

Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) at Entry Level

The APCL process considers learning which has 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 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 are known to 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)
Certificate in Offshore Administration
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 International Finance and Administration qualifications (Chartered, Diploma, Advanced Certificate, Certificate)
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 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 about the academic content of the course and the volume and level of study.

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

Please note that an APCL application must be accompanied by a copy of the relevant certificate or other evidence that this qualification has been obtained, such as a membership certificate. It is not necessary to provide an original certificate; a scanned copy or attached image file will be sufficient.

How your APCL application will be assessed

Decisions regarding Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning are made by the Admissions Team and are a matter of academic judgement. The main considerations are:

- 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 has been challenging and rigorous enough to allow students to undertake study at Diploma Level with a reasonable expectation of success

Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) at Entry Level

The purpose of APEL is to accredit learning from prior work experience. The learning must have been achieved over a period of at least 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 working under supervision is admissible.

(N.B. Entry Level experience will not be appropriate for an application to TEP and is therefore distinguished from Practice Level experience. This experience needs to be in a client-facing role or a role independent of direct supervision and mid to senior in level).

Application procedure

Applicants are required to detail on their APEL form the nature and level of their work and what they have learnt from their work experience. For each job held within the last 12 months, applicants should 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. 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.

In completing the form remember that the emphasis is a practical one. This is not about writing an essay on legal/technical principles.

How your APEL application 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 from 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 learning, i.e. there must be enough detail to demonstrate that these skills/knowledge have been acquired;
- The extent to which the application shows achievement of knowledge and skill to STEP's Entry Level standard;
- The extent to which the application is authentic, i.e. clearly related to your own efforts and achievements.

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 please see the web page for that Diploma programme.

Queries

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

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