



## STEP Entry Level Guidance



## STEP's Qualifications and Membership Framework

Gaining credits from STEP qualifications, other prior qualifications and from industry experience enables you to progress through STEP's membership categories to become a STEP Student, Affiliate, Associate and finally, a Full member (a TEP).

<p><b>Entry Level</b></p>	<p>You need 60 Entry Level (EL) credits to become a STEP Affiliate member, which can be demonstrated or achieved through a combination of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• completion of (a) STEP Certificate(s) (worth 30 EL credits each);</li> <li>• accreditation of a relevant prior qualification (APCL, worth a maximum of 30 EL credits);</li> <li>• accreditation of relevant prior experiential learning through work experience (APEL, worth a maximum of 30 EL credits).</li> </ul> <p>Whilst studying a STEP Certificate, you will need to be a STEP Student member. STEP Student members can state this on their CV, business cards and within their email signature, but there are no post-nominals for this category of membership.</p> <p>Once you have 60 EL credits, you can become a STEP Affiliate member. STEP Affiliate members can state this on their CV, business cards and within their email signature, but there are no post-nominals for this category of membership.</p>
<p><b>Diploma Level</b></p>	<p>Along with being eligible to become a STEP Affiliate member, once you have 60 EL credits you will also be eligible to study at Diploma Level and enrol onto STEP Advanced Certificates (which can be combined to lead to a STEP Diploma).</p> <p>Once you have completed two STEP Advanced Certificates, you may upgrade to become a STEP Associate member. STEP Associate members can state this on their CV, business cards and within their email signature, but there are no post-nominals for this category of membership.</p>
<p><b>Practice Level</b></p>	<p>Once you have completed four STEP Advanced Certificates (which comprise a recognised STEP Diploma route), you will be eligible to upgrade to STEP Full membership and become a TEP. To do this, you will need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demonstrate that you have a minimum of two years of experience in a mid-level or senior position; and</li> <li>• complete STEP's Professional Standards Awareness (PSA) case study and confirm that you have read and understood STEP's Code of Professional Conduct.</li> </ul> <p>You can complete the PSA case study at any time during your studies with STEP, or as a CPD activity at any level of membership.</p> <p>Once upgraded, a TEP can state that they are a STEP Full member on their CV, business cards and within their email signature, and can use the post-nominal TEP. They can also use the STEP logo and should refer to the logo guidelines.</p>

Please note: those who are already STEP Affiliates, Associates or TEPs can enrol directly onto a STEP Advanced Certificate/Diploma and do not need to obtain further Entry Level credits.

# Accreditation of Prior Learning

Accreditation of Prior Learning is the process used to award Entry Level credits based on learning you have obtained previously, either through relevant qualifications (APCL) or work experience (APEL).

## Categories

There are two different categories of Accreditation of Prior Learning which, when combined, can lead to the 60 Entry Level credits required to become a STEP Affiliate member and enrol onto STEP Advanced Certificates:

### 1) Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL)

This application is for those with a prior qualification set at Level 4 or above which has been formally assessed and certified by an educational institution (e.g. a University), a recognised training provider or a professional body. The qualification must cover financial, legal or wealth related content and should equip the individual to:

- i) undertake further, higher level, professional study;
- ii) work within the profession of wealth management and administration.

### 2) Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)

This application is for those with at least 12 months' work experience in a practical position within a relevant industry, undertaking work relevant to STEP (i.e. trusts, estates, taxation, accounting, private client or wealth management).

If you only have the relevant qualifications/experience to apply for **either APCL or APEL**, you will need to complete a STEP Certificate to supplement the 30 EL credits obtained through your application (STEP Certificates are also worth 30 EL credits).

### *The requirement of currency*

The qualification on which an APCL application is based must have been completed no more than five years from the date of the APCL application, unless the applicant is able to demonstrate that their learning has remained current by way of regular CPD.

The work experience on which an APEL application is based should have taken place no longer than 12 months prior to the date of the APEL application. Exceptions will only be made in exceptional circumstances, with due regard to the Equality Act 2010.

CLT International are not required to accept an enrolment onto an Advanced Certificate where the relevant APL application(s) were made more than 12 months earlier. In this instance, a new APL application(s) may need to be submitted. However, a successful APL application will remain current for the duration of the candidate's Entry Level studies should they be enrolled onto a STEP Certificate (even if this exceeds 12 months).

### *Fees*

It costs £50 (+ UK VAT, if applicable) for each APCL or APEL application to be considered by the Admissions Team. The combined fee for applying for both APCL and APEL is therefore £100 (+ UK VAT, if applicable). The fees are non-refundable; however, payment will only be taken for successful applications.

### *Timescale for consideration of applications*

Receipt of applications will be confirmed by email. A decision as to whether an application has been successful will be communicated to the applicant within 3-5 working days of the confirmation of receipt. If further information or supporting evidence is requested, the 3-5 working day timeframe will restart from the date the further information or supporting evidence is received.

## Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL)

APCL applications consider learning which has been formally assessed and certified by an educational institution (e.g. a University), a recognised training provider or a professional body. The qualification must cover subject matter similar to that of the STEP qualifications. This includes the following key areas of professional practice:

- Estates
- Trusts
- Wills
- Taxation
- Accounting
- Wealth management
- Wealth structuring
- Family business advising
- Financial planning
- Investment

By way of guidance, the following qualifications meet the APCL requirements:

AAT Professional Diploma in Accounting
ACA
ACCA qualifications (set at Level 4 or above)
ACIB
Advocate (in recognition of the professional qualification required to achieve this status)
ATT
Bahamas Institute of Financial Services Trustee Diploma
Barrister (in recognition of the professional qualification required to achieve this status)
Certificate in Offshore Administration
CII Diploma in Regulated Financial Planning (and the modules within same)
CII Diploma in Financial Planning (and the modules within same)
CII Advanced Diploma in Financial Planning (and the modules within same)
CFA
CMA
CISI Investment Advice Diploma (Securities/Derivatives/Financial Planning and Advice) – Wealth/Retail
CISI Investment Advice Diploma (Financial Planning and Advice) – Financial Planning
CISI International Certificate in Advanced Wealth Management – Wealth/Retail
CISI Certificate in Paraplanning – Financial Planning
CISI Managing Operational Risk in Financial Institutions – Operations
CISI Investment Management – Capital Markets/Corporate Finance
CISI Advanced Certificate in Global Securities Operations
CISI Certificate in Private Client Investment Advice and Management – Wealth/Retail
CISI Certificate Financial Planner (CFP)
CISI Diploma in Financial Planning
CISI Diploma in Investment Compliance – Compliance/Risk
CISI Diploma in Investment Operations
CISI Diploma in Capital Markets
CISI Diploma in Corporate Finance
CISI Chartered Wealth Manager Qualification
CISI Diploma in Wealth Management

CLT Scotland Specialist Paralegal Qualifications in Wills, Trusts and Executries
CLT Specialist Paralegal Qualification in Wills, Probate and Administration
CTA
Degree in law, accounting, finance, economics or business studies
FINRA Series 7
ICA International Advanced Certificate in Regulatory Compliance
ICA International Advanced Certificate in Anti Money Laundering
ICA Advanced Certificate in Legal Compliance
ICA International Diploma in Governance, Risk and Compliance
ICA International Diploma in Anti Money Laundering
ICA Professional Postgraduate Diploma in Governance, Risk & Compliance
ICSA International Finance and Administration
ILEX Law of Wills and Succession paper
ILEX Probate Practice paper
Institute of Professional Will Writers Entry Examination
Lawyer (in recognition of the professional qualifications required to achieve this standard)
MBA
Notary (in recognition of the professional qualifications required to achieve this standard)
RICS – Property, Finance and Investment Pathway
SOLAS Executry Procedure paper
Solicitor (in recognition of the professional qualifications required to achieve this standard)
SOLLA Later Life Adviser Accreditation

### *Application procedure*

A formal application must be made regardless of whether the qualification held is listed above.

If listed, only the title of the qualification and the date of award needs to be stated on the APCL form. If the qualification is not listed, applicants will need to provide details of the qualification's academic content (syllabus) and the level and volume of study.

All applications should be supported by a scanned copy of the qualification completion certificate or other supporting evidence, plus a copy of the course syllabus if the qualification is not listed above.

Applicants may rely on more than one prior qualification to meet the APCL requirements, but please note that a maximum of 30 EL credits can be obtained from APCL. All qualifications relied upon must be set at Level 4 or above (multiple Level 1, 2 or 3 qualifications will not equate to a Level 4 for the purposes of an APCL application).

### *How your APCL application will be assessed*

Decisions regarding APCL are made by the Admissions Team and are a matter of academic judgement. The main considerations are:

- whether your prior qualification has been challenging and rigorous enough to allow you to undertake study at STEP Diploma Level with a reasonable expectation of success; and
- whether your qualification equips you to perform as a professional within the wealth management and administration industry.

# Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)

APEL accredits learning from work experience. Applicants must have at least 12 months' experience working in a role related to the subject matter of the STEP qualifications. The role need not be senior in nature – learning which takes place while in a junior role under supervision is admissible. However, the work experience on which an APEL application is based should have taken place no longer than 12 months prior to the date of the APEL application. Exceptions will only be made in exceptional circumstances, with due regard to the Equality Act 2010.

Please note that Entry Level experience will not be appropriate for an application to upgrade to Full STEP membership (TEP) and is therefore distinguished from Practice Level experience. Practice Level experience is where those who have completed a STEP Diploma and wish to become a Full STEP member should apply to STEP to prove that they have at least two years' mid-senior experience in a client-facing role or role independent of direct supervision.

## *Application procedure*

Applicants are required to detail the nature and level of their work on their APEL form.

Applicants should begin with their current role; if an applicant has been in their current role for at least 12 months, any prior experience does not need to be noted. However, if an applicant has less than 12 months' experience in their current role, they should also provide details of any other relevant roles which they have worked in within the last 12 months.

For each role, applicants should list the key activities undertaken. Each activity should be relevant to work in the field of trusts, estates and/or wealth management. The aim of collecting the information asked for within the APEL application is to ascertain that the applicant has acquired, through their experience, the knowledge, skills and professional understanding and behaviours relevant to working as a competent professional within the industry.

When completing the form, remember that there is a practical, technical emphasis; this is not about writing an essay on legal/technical principles.

## *How your APEL application will be assessed*

Decisions regarding APEL are made by the Admissions Team and are a matter of academic judgement. When deciding whether to approve an application, the Admissions Team will consider:

- the extent to which the application demonstrates that learning has been acquired from the experience given;
- the extent to which the application demonstrates a match with the activities and knowledge expected of a professional at the applicant's level within the applicant's field of work; and
- the extent to which the application shows achievement of skills/knowledge to STEP's Entry Level standard.

## Queries

If you have any queries about completing your APL application(s), please contact CLTI at:

[cltinternational@centlaw.com](mailto:cltinternational@centlaw.com)

+44 121 362 7733