



Agensi Kelayakan Malaysia
Malaysian Qualifications Agency

**Guidelines to Good Practices:
Accreditation of Prior Experiential
Learning (APEL) for Access
[APEL.A & APEL.M]**

Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning GGP APEL.A and APEL.M
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FOREWORD

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GLOSSARY

a. Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning

A systematic process that involves the identification, documentation and assessment of prior experiential learning, i.e. knowledge, skills and attitudes, to determine the extent to which an individual has achieved the desired learning outcomes, for access to a programme of study and/or award of credits.

b. APEL Assessments

A combination of various assessments (ie. aptitude test, portfolio, interview, presentation etc) that an applicant must pass to be awarded the APEL certificate.

c. APEL Certification Process

An indication of the competencies and readiness of an applicant to pursue a particular programme in higher education.

d. Aptitude Test

A formal examination comprising oral, written, performance based or product based assessments which the applicant must pass.

e. Course

A component of a programme. The term course is used interchangeably with the term module or unit.

f. Formal Learning

Intentional learning/programme of study delivered within an organised and structured context (pre-school, primary school, secondary school, technical college and university) that may lead to formal recognition/a recognised qualification.

g. Good Practices

Good practices are a set of internationally accepted norms which are expected to be fulfilled to maintain high quality.

h. Higher Education Provider (HEP)

A body of a corporate, or an organisation, or other body of person(s) which conducts higher education or training programmes leading to the award of a higher education qualifications.

i. Informal Learning

Learning which takes place continuously through life and work experiences. It is often unintentional learning.

j. Malaysian Micro-credential Statement (MMS)

A document outlining personal information of the learner and details of the Micro-credential such as course origin, credit award, name of the awarding institution, language of instruction, delivery, mode of study, level of course, credit hours, student learning time, duration, enrolment requirements, course learning outcomes, assessment, grading system etc.

k. Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF)

An instrument that classifies qualifications based on a set of criteria that is approved nationally and benchmarked against international best practices.

l. Non-formal Learning

Learning that takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training. It may be assessed but does not normally lead to a formal certification.

m. Programme

A set of courses that are structured for a specified duration and learning volume to achieve the stated learning outcomes, which usually leads to an award of a qualification.

n. Portfolio

A compilation of documentary evidence that documents the prior learning experiences of an applicant which include formal, informal and non-formal learning.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Malaysian Government has realised the importance of lifelong learning to be adopted as the main agenda in achieving the nation's human capital development. The transformation of higher education from now and beyond aspires to nurture holistic human capital development and to produce Malaysians who are intellectually active, creative, innovative, ethical, adaptable and capable of creative thinking.

Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) through the MQA Act 2007 (Act 679) have an on-going commitment in assisting individuals in utilising their prior learning as much as possible. MQA assists in identifying learning that has taken place through various types of lifelong experiences that are not formally certified.

This process is referred to as Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) and was set under the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF). APEL allows individuals to progress in the context of lifelong learning and widens the mobility of student participation and adult learners.

Following the successful implementation of APEL for Access [APEL.A] into the Certificate, Diploma, Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes of study beginning from 2011, MQA has undertaken the subsequent step to embark on APEL for Credit Award, known as APEL.C in 2016. The notion behind APEL.C is to provide an avenue to assess relevant experiential learning of the individual against the course learning outcomes, which ultimately leads to the award of credits for courses within a programme of study. APEL.C aims to avoid duplication of learning; hence it offers time and cost savings for individuals to complete a study programme and more importantly, provides recognition to deserving individuals.

APEL has further expanded from providing access and awarding credits for individual courses to the award of academic qualifications with the introduction of APEL.Q in 2021. APEL.Q recognises prior experiential learning that takes place in the workplace, as well as other forms of learning, i.e. formal, non-formal and informal continuing professional development education and training..

APEL in Malaysia is upheld by the following core principles:

- a) Prior experiential learning should be recognised regardless of how and where it was obtained, provided it is related to learning or a form of competency acquisition;
- b) Assessment will be based on authentic, flexible, current and reliable evidence;
- c) Assessment will be conducted by practitioners/experts in the subject, in the related field;
- d) The method of assessment will be tailored to the level and experience of the learners, thus providing an opportunity for learners to demonstrate their acquired competencies;
- e) Decisions of APEL assessments should be transparent and subject to appeal and review;
- f) Information and support services will be actively publicised, taking into account the diversity of the students; and
- g) Quality assurance mechanisms should be clear and transparent.

1.1 Definition of APEL

Generally, different terms have been used in various countries to describe the activities related to accreditation/recognition of prior learning. For instance accreditation of prior learning (United Kingdom), recognition of prior learning (Australia, South Africa, Scotland and Ireland), recognition of current competency (New Zealand), prior learning assessment and recognition (Canada) and prior learning assessment (United States). All the terms include the key notion that prior learning should be recognised regardless of how and where it was acquired, provided that learning is relevant to the learning or competency outcomes in a course or programme of study.

In the MQA Act 2007 (Act 679), prior learning means knowledge, skills or attitudes previously acquired and includes prior learning experience. APEL is defined in the MQF as a verification process of an individual's achievement of a set of learning outcomes acquired through formal, non-formal or informal learning irrespective of time and place.

In this Guideline, APEL is defined as a systematic process that involves the identification, documentation and assessment of prior experiential learning i.e. knowledge, skills and attitudes to determine the extent to which an individual has achieved the desired learning outcomes for access to a programme of study and/or award of credits. APEL process generally involves the assessment of experiential learning, including those which have previously been assessed or credit rated. This learning may be acquired through formal, non-formal and informal means including formal schooling, work and life experiences, training, independent study, voluntary work,

hobbies and family experience. In a nutshell, APEL encapsulates the range of activities and approaches used formally to acknowledge and establish publicly that some reasonable substantial and significant element of learning has taken place.

1.2 Purpose of the Guidelines to Good Practices (GGP)

In acknowledging the vital roles of APEL in the enculturation of lifelong learning, MQA has taken the initiative to develop the Guidelines to Good Practices: Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL.A and APEL.M) which is an updated version of GGP APEL that was first published in 2012 . This initiative signifies MQA's commitment to support the implementation of APEL as an important element in our higher education and training sectors.

The purpose of the GGP is to:

- a) support the practices of APEL.A and APEL.M as part of lifelong learning agenda in Malaysia, besides promoting public awareness and understanding of APEL;
- b) support the implementation of provisions under Sections 74-77, Malaysian Qualifications Agency Act 2007 and the proposed Malaysian Qualifications Agency (Prior Learning and Credit Transfer) Regulations 2009;
- c) provide a set of core principles to ensure consistency in approaches to accrediting prior experiential learning for access into higher education studies and
- d) provide higher education providers (HEPs) and relevant stakeholders with essential information pertaining to the principles, processes and procedures in the implementation of APEL.A and APEL.M.

In general, the GGP intends to provide a guide or source of information for:

- a) coordinators, advisors, assessors, moderators and external examiners involved in the APEL.A and APEL.M process;
- b) professional bodies and employers; and
- c) learners as a useful aid to seek information about institutional APEL.A and APEL.M policies and practices.

Derived from intensive consultations with all stakeholders and interested parties, the Guideline seeks to encourage national consistency through sharing and facilitating good practices across

various sectors in education.

This GGP acknowledges the different needs or requirements of the various programmes. Hence, it is not intended to be prescriptive; rather it provides a range of measures and good practices which HEPs can adopt in assessing prior experiential learning for access.

1.3 Scope of this GGP

APEL.A was initially offered to Malaysians seeking recognition of their prior learning for purposes of gaining admission into tertiary studies. After the implementation of the APEL.A for the purpose of admissions to the Bachelor's programme (Level 6, MQF) on 1st September 2011, MQA continued to implement the APEL assessment for admissions to the Certificate (Level 3, MQF) and Diploma (Level 4, MQF) programmes beginning 1st February 2013. The implementation of APEL was then extended for student admissions to the Master's programme by coursework and mixed mode (Level 7, MQF) beginning 18th February 2014.

In 2020, APEL.A is further extended to expatriates working in Malaysia and their family members. The APEL.A certification is an indication of the competencies and readiness of the applicant to pursue a particular programme. However, the certification does not guarantee admission into a HEP. Applicants are still subjected to the procedures and additional requirements (if any) as determined by the HEP.

Effective 2022, access to tertiary studies via APEL.A is extended to **research-based programmes** (Level 7 and Level 8, MQF). APEL.A is accessible for both local and international applicants. However, international applicants are responsible to ensure that recognition of prior experiential learning is acceptable by the regulatory bodies in their home countries.

On another development related to APEL.A, students who have accumulated credits through **the micro-credentials** which are unbundled from an accredited programme can now apply to exit with a formal degree award via APEL.M route.

APEL.A certification can only be used for the purpose of furthering studies in the chosen field, which should be relevant to their prior experiential learning. It is not equivalent to the knowledge

and competencies of a particular academic degree programme at the MQF level. The certification cannot be used for the purpose of seeking employment.

This Guideline should be read in conjunction with the following publications and any other related future publications of MQA:

- a) The Malaysian Qualifications Framework
- b) Code of Practice for Programme Accreditation;
- c) Code of Practice for Institutional Audit;
- d) Guidelines to Good Practices: Micro-Credentials
- e) Guidelines to Good Practices: Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning for Credit Award (APEL.C)
- f) Guidelines to Good Practices: Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning for the Award of Academic Qualifications (APEL.Q)

For programmes that are bound by professional bodies standards, HEP must seek approval from the professional bodies on the acceptance of students through the APEL.A route.

2.0 BENEFITS OF APEL

APEL has been identified as a powerful tool for bringing adult learners into the mainstream of higher education. It reassures them that they do not have to learn the skills and competencies that they have previously acquired. The growing body of research on the subject has revealed evidence that APEL has benefitted various stakeholders, i.e., learners, institutions, employers and the nation.

2.1 Learners

Learners seek APEL because it can help them:

- a) increase self confidence and enhance the motivation to continue learning;
- b) get access and recognition to higher qualifications;
- c) document knowledge, skills and experience better through the preparation of portfolio of evidence; plan for further learning and personal career development;
- d) map prior learning onto the MQF to identify a notional level;
- e) develop analytical and learning skills through the process of undertaking APEL itself;
- f) increase mobility and employability; and
- g) reduce time and cost.

2.2 Institutions

APEL can help education institutions to:

- a) increase access and widen participation for non-conventional learners;
- b) support the development of curriculum; and
- c) enrich the teaching-learning experience with the presence of non-conventional
- d) learners.

2.3 Employers

APEL acknowledges workplace learning for the benefit of both the employers and employees. It supports training and staff development strategies. Employers encourage APEL because it helps the organisation to:

- a) increase motivation and interest in workplace practice on the part of the employees;
- b) reduce the amount of time needed to complete a qualification and therefore, requiring less

- time away from the workplace;
- c) generate new ideas and development in the workplace as a result of process of reflection on practice by employees; and
 - d) improve employee retention, and reduce recruitment and training cost.

2.4 Nation

APEL may bring various benefits to our nation by:

- a) promoting lifelong learning culture as a means of upgrading its workforce in response to global k-economy (knowledge economy) trend;
- b) enhancing productivity through the acquisition of skills and knowledge among its workforce; and
- c) boosting the nation's competitiveness at the regional and global levels.

3.0 APEL.A AND APEL.M POLICIES

3.1 APEL.A policy

The policies related to APEL.A are as follows:

- a) APEL.A is applicable to local and international applicants who do not meet the regular entry requirements imposed by the academic programme at any MQF level
- b) Applicants applying for entry via APEL.A must meet the minimum age requirements stipulated for the various level of qualifications
- c) For Master and Doctorate level, applicants must have the minimum formal qualifications stipulated
- d) Applicants applying for entry via APEL.A must have prior experiential learning

3.2 APEL.M policy

APEL.M is applicable to learners who have completed micro-credentials that are unbundled from accredited programmes. Only learners who have completed the following percentage of micro-credentials may apply for admission via APEL.M:

- a) Learners who have completed at least 50% of the total graduating credits of the intended programme via micro-credentials which are unbundled from the accredited programme from one HEP or multiple HEPs,
AND
- b) Meet the minimum age requirements as stipulated in the APEL.A for the various level of qualifications under the MQF
- c) Applicants who are admitted via APEL.M, must fulfil the minimum age of graduation stipulated in the GGP MC

4.0 ADMISSION CRITERIA VIA APEL.A AND APEL.M

All applicants are required to successfully complete the APEL.A or APEL.M assessments conducted by the APEL Assessment Centres (*Pusat Penilaian APEL, PPA*). Applicants can apply for admission into a programme of study offered by any HEP in Malaysia based on the relevant MQF level of the APEL.A certification. Eligibility to apply for admission into a programme of study using APEL.A or APEL.M does not guarantee admission. In addition, for professional programmes, the entry requirements must abide by the requirements set by the respective professional bodies.

Applicants must comply with the admission criteria stipulated below for entry via APEL.A or APEL.M.

4.1 Admission criteria for the various level of qualifications under the MQF through APEL.A

a) Programme at MQF Level 8

(**Doctorate** by Coursework, Mixed Mode and Fully Research-based)

- i. At least 35 years of age in the year of application;
- ii. Possess at least a Bachelor degree or equivalent qualifications (or those with higher qualifications e.g. Postgraduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma);
- iii. Possess at least 5 years of related work experience and
- iv. Pass APEL.A assessment for Doctorate level

b) Programme at MQF Level 7

[**Master** (by Coursework, Mixed Mode and Fully Research-based), **Postgraduate Diploma** and **Postgraduate Certificate**]

- i. At least 30 years of age in the year of application;
- ii. Possess at least STPM/Diploma/equivalent qualification (or those with higher qualifications e.g. Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma);
- iii. Possess relevant work experience; and
- iv. Pass APEL.A assessment for Master's level.

c) Programme at MQF Level 6

(Bachelor, Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate)

- i. At least 21 years of age in the year of application;
- ii. Possess relevant work experience; and
- iii. Pass APEL.A assessment for Bachelors degree level.

d) Programme at MQF Level 5 and Level 4

(Advanced Diploma and Diploma)

- i. At least 20 years of age in the year of application;
- ii. Possess relevant work experience; and
- iii. Pass the APEL.A assessment for Diploma level.

e) Programme at MQF Level 3

(Certificate)

- i. At least 19 years of age in the year of application;
- ii. Possess relevant work experience; and
- iii. Pass the APEL.A assessment for certificate level.

4.2 Admission criteria for the various level of qualifications under the MQF through APEL.M

Applicants can only apply for admission via APEL.M if he/she has completed the following quantum of micro-credentials which are unbundled from accredited programmes and meet the minimum age requirements of APEL.A at the various MQF levels:

- a) Completed at least 50% of the total graduating credits of the intended programme via micro-credentials which are components from the accredited programme offered by a single or multiple HEPs

AND

- b) Meet the minimum age requirements as stipulated in the APEL.A for the various level of qualifications under the MQF

The remaining percentage of courses in a programme from the above categories can be assessed by the receiving institution through the prescribed courses in the programme whose award is sought by the applicant.

5.0 ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS

The assessment instruments that will be utilised to assess the prior experiential learning of the learners for admission into a programme of study comprises a combination of the following components depending on the MQF level:

- a) Aptitude Test
- b) Portfolio
- c) Interview
- d) Research intent and presentation (based on research proposal or area of expertise)

Learners have to pass each stage of the assessment depending on the instruments adopted for the respective MQF level.

5.1 Assessment weightages

The assessment instruments carry different weightages that contribute to the overall assessment. The weightage of each assessment instrument based on the different MQF level qualifications is stated in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Assessment weightages based on MQF level of qualifications.

MQF Level Instruments	T3 (Certificate)	T4 (Diploma) + T5 (Advanced Diploma)	T6 (Bachelor, Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate)	T7 (Master, Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate)		T8 (Doctorate)	
				Coursework/ Mixed-mode	Fully research based	Coursework/ Mixed-mode	Fully research based
Aptitude Test	100%	100%	30%	40%			
Portfolio			70%	40%	50%	50%	50%
Research Intent + Presentation					30%	30%	30%
Interview				20%	20%	20%	20%

5.2 Learner's competencies

The required competencies for the APEL.A or APEL.M assessment are guided by the MQF five clusters of learning outcomes. Therefore, the assessments conducted aims to ensure that applicants will have the following minimum competencies to pursue higher education:

- a) Knowledge and understanding
- b) Cognitive skills
- c) Functional work skills with focus on:
 - i. Practical skills
 - ii. Interpersonal and communication skills
 - iii. Digital and numeracy skills
 - iv. Leadership, autonomy and responsibility
- d) Personal and entrepreneurial skills
- e) Ethics and professionalism.

Each of the competencies are described below:

a) Knowledge and understanding

Knowledge and understanding refers to a systematic understanding of facts, ideas, information, principles, concepts, theories, technical knowledge, regulations, numeracy, practical skills, tools to use, processes and systems.

It may relate to a subject, a field of study or discipline, as well as to technical and occupational or workplace aspects of knowledge and understanding. It starts with basic general knowledge and progress to varied, broader, specialised and advanced knowledge including those relating to sustainable practices, rules and regulations, health and safety, especially relevant to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) type of and even professional programmes.

The scope of knowledge should include the common everyday knowledge within the environment of learners. This may also be acquired through formal, informal and non-formal learning circumstances-experiences. Developing personal values and ethics may derive from

knowledge and experiences.

Knowledge and understanding enables the learners to relate their prior knowledge in the course of learning and/or work, as well as to expand to related fields. Knowledge provides the basis for applications of all other competencies.

b) Cognitive skills

Cognitive skills relate to thinking or intellectual capabilities and the ability to apply knowledge and skills. The capacity to develop levels of intellectual skills progressively begins from understanding, critical/creative thinking, assessment, and applying, analysing, problem solving as well as synthesising to create new ideas, solutions, strategies or new practices. Such intellectual skills enable the learner to search and comprehend new information from different fields of knowledge and practices.

c) Functional work skills

i. Practical skills

These are generally work skills and operational skills applicable in common employment environment such as planning; organisational skills; selection of tools, material, technology methods and procedures, whilst in study context, it may include study skills and preparations, undertaking procedures, scientific skills, designs, research and so forth. It also includes specialised skills which are set by specific subject, discipline, technical or occupation-related work skills and professional practice which enhance professional competence. It should include safe and sustainable practices as well.

ii. Interpersonal and Communication skills

Interpersonal skills refer to a range of skills which, amongst others, include interactive communications; relationships and collaborative skills in managing relationships in teams and within the organisations; networking with people of different cultures; as well as social skills/etiquette.

Communication skills refer generally to the ability to communicate/convey information/ideas/reports cogently and professionally in an appropriate language. The

communication must be effective and in appropriate forms, in various medium, to a range of audience and different situations. The ability to communicate in more than one language is encouraged.

iii. Digital and Numeracy skills

Digital skills generally refer to the ability to use information/digital technologies to support work and studies. The skills include sourcing and storing information, processing data, using applications for problem solving and communication, as well as ethics in applying digital skills.

These are the quantitative skills that require learners to acquire increasingly higher levels of numerical abilities. It is acknowledged as an important living skill relevant in study, work and daily life. It may include understanding of basic mathematics, symbols relating to statistical techniques and so forth.

iv. Leadership, autonomy and responsibility

This cluster of skills refers to the ability of an individual to build relationships and work with teams made up of peers or in managerial capacities with varying degrees of autonomy to make decisions or setting goals at organisational/unit/team levels; to take responsibilities and provide accountability; to be confident, knowledgeable, articulate, honest, professional, concerned, resilient, a risk taker and possess other intrapersonal skills including working in, and leading teams.

d) Personal and Entrepreneurial skills

Personal skills are life skills that learners are expected to use daily. They are normally portrayed through enthusiasm for independent learning, intellectual and self-development; by demonstrating confidence, self-control, social skills and proper etiquette; and commitment to professionalism in the work place. It also includes capability to plan for career development or further education. Aspects of character such as honesty, punctuality, time management, keeping to and maintaining deadlines that are important in a work environment are also important personal skills.

Entrepreneurial skills require relevant knowledge, skills and expertise in key areas of an enterprise. Important personal qualities will include creativity, grit and drive. The drive to be an entrepreneur is set as personal skills but also requires the requisite of relevant knowledge, cognitive and functional skills.

e) Ethics and Professionalism

Ethics and values are important at personal, organisational, societal/community and global settings as they guide personal actions and interactions at work and within the community at large. Awareness/understanding and respect of ethical, social and cultural differences and issues are important in the exercise of professional skills and responsibilities: integrity, professional conduct (professionalism), and standards of conduct such as upholding regulations, laws and codes of good practices or code of professional conduct. A sensitive approach in dealings with other cultures adds value to this learning domain.

5.3 APEL.A assessment instruments

APTITUDE TEST: The Aptitude Test assessment components comprise Bahasa Malaysia Language, English Language, Numerical Literacy, and General Knowledge + Critical Thinking of the applicant.

Applicants are required to sit for the Aptitude Test on the time, date and place scheduled by the selected APEL Assessment Centre (*Pusat Penilaian APEL, PPA*)

For international applicants, expatriates and their family members

- the Bahasa Malaysia Language component will not be tested. The number of questions omitted under the Bahasa Malaysia Language component is replaced with questions in the English Language components.
- under General Knowledge, the current issues section will focus on issues at the global context

PORTFOLIO: A portfolio is a formal document that contains a compilation of evidence documenting prior experiential learning of a learner acquired over a period of time. This type

of learning may be in the form of formal, informal or non-formal learning. The portfolio is prepared by the learner to demonstrate that the learning acquired is relevant and specific to the five clusters of learning outcomes outlined in the MQF.

Any forms of learning claimed and acquired by the applicant must be substantiated with documentary evidence be it direct or indirect evidence (**Appendix A**) such as appointment letters, statements/testimonies from employers/clients/colleagues etc. However, applicants should be selective in choosing clear and concise evidence which have direct relevance to the learning acquired.

All evidence must be organised and presented based on the identified formal, informal and non-formal learning in a portfolio form as indicated in **Appendix B and Appendix C**. In the portfolio form, applicants must carefully match their prior learning to the stated MQF competencies (refer to Section 5.2: Learner’s Competencies). The applicants are required to submit the Portfolio (APEL.M) either in Bahasa Malaysia or English. The completed Portfolio form and its associated evidence must be submitted in softcopy format.

All Portfolios submitted will be assessed using the rubric in **Appendix D**.

5.3.1 Assessment for Advanced Diploma, Diploma and Certificate Levels

Aptitude Test is the only assessment for the Advanced Diploma, Diploma and Certificate levels of programme of studies. This is the only form of assessment which is to evaluate applicant’s prior learning and this assessment contributes 100% of the total APEL.A assessment. The Aptitude Test will take two hours and the structure of the test is presented in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Structure of the Aptitude Test for Advanced Diploma, Diploma and Certificate Levels

Components	Test Content	Structure of the assessment
Bahasa Malaysia Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reading & comprehension ● Vocabulary ● Grammar & tenses 	10 MCQ questions

Components	Test Content	Structure of the assessment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Error correction • Spelling 	
English Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading & comprehension • Vocabulary • Grammar & tenses • Error correction • Spelling 	10 MCQ questions
Numerical Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • Basic descriptive statistics • Basic numeracy • Basic algebra • Problem-solving 	10 MCQ questions
General Knowledge and Critical Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General knowledge: current issues, digital literacy and information sourcing • Critical thinking: logic reasoning, classification skills and pattern recognition 	10 MCQ questions

Applicants at the Advanced Diploma, Diploma and Certificate level are required to submit the portfolio. However, the portfolio will not be assessed as it only serves as documentary evidence to support that the applicants have acquired some form of prior experiential learning in the past.

5.3.2 Assessment for Bachelor, Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate levels

a) Aptitude Test

Aptitude Test which is a form of assessment to evaluate the prior learning of the applicant carries 30% of the total APEL.A assessment for the Bachelor, Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate levels programme of studies. The Aptitude Test will take two hours and the structure of the test is presented in **Table 3**.

Table 3. Structure of the Aptitude Test for Bachelor, Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate Levels

Components	Test Content	Structure of the assessment
Bahasa Malaysia Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reading & comprehension ● Vocabulary ● Grammar & tenses ● Error correction ● Spelling 	10 MCQ questions
English Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reading & comprehension ● Vocabulary ● Grammar & tenses ● Error correction ● Spelling 	10 MCQ questions
Numerical Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Basic descriptive statistics ● Basic numeracy ● Basic algebra ● Problem-solving 	10 MCQ questions
General Knowledge and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● General knowledge: current 	10 MCQ questions

Components	Test Content	Structure of the assessment
Critical Thinking	issues, digital literacy and information sourcing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical thinking: logic reasoning, classification skills and pattern recognition 	

Upon successful completion of the Aptitude Test, applicant will then proceed to the next stage of assessment which is the submission of Portfolio

b) Portfolio Assessment

In addition to the Aptitude Test, the applicant will be required to submit a portfolio (either in Bahasa Malaysia or English) which will be assessed by the appointed assessors in the APEL Assessment Centre (*Pusat Penilaian APEL, PPA*). If the assessors are uncertain with the authenticity, sufficiency or relevancy of the evidence presented in the portfolio, they may request to meet the applicant for verification or validation purposes in the form of interview, presentation, demonstration, etc. The Portfolio assessment contributes 70% of the total APEL.A assessment for the Bachelor, Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate levels.

5.3.3 Assessment for Master, Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate levels

a) Aptitude Test

(Only for coursework and mixed mode programmes. Not applicable for fully research-based programmes)

Aptitude Test carries 40% of the total APEL.A assessment for the Master, Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate levels programme of studies. The duration of the Aptitude Test is 2.5 hours and structure of the test presented in **Table 4**.

Table 4. Structure of the Aptitude Test for Master, Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate Levels

Components	Test Content	Structure of the assessment
Bahasa Malaysia Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading & comprehension • Grammar & prose • Spelling • Vocabulary • Correction of errors 	Part A : 13 Objective questions Part B : 1 Structured question
English Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading & comprehension • Grammar & prose • Spelling • Vocabulary • Correction of errors 	Part A : 12 Objective questions Part B : 1 Structured question
Numerical Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic mathematics / descriptive statistics • Basic algebra • Problem-solving 	Part A : 25 Objective questions Part B : 1 Structured question
General Knowledge / Critical Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General knowledge: current issues, digital literacy and information sourcing • Critical thinking: logic reasoning, classification skills and pattern recognition 	Part A : 25 Objective questions Part B : 2 Structured questions

b) Portfolio Assessment

(for coursework, mixed mode and fully research based programmes)

In addition to the Aptitude Test, the applicant will be required to submit a Portfolio (either in Bahasa Malaysia or English) which will be assessed by the appointed assessors in the APEL Assessment Centre (Pusat Penilaian APEL, PPA). If the assessors are uncertain with the

authenticity, sufficiency or relevancy of the evidence presented in the portfolio, they may request to meet the applicant for verification or validation purposes. The Portfolio assessment contributes 40% of the total APEL.A assessment for the coursework and mixed mode programmes while the fully research-based programmes it constitutes 50% of the entire APEL.A assessment.

c) Interview Assessment

(for coursework, mixed mode and fully research based programmes)

Upon successful completion of the Portfolio assessment, applicants will undertake an interview assessment. This is an oral structured interview-based assessment used to assess an applicant's skills, knowledge/competencies to undertake tertiary studies.

The interview assessment contributes 20% of the total APEL.A assessments for all three modes (i.e. coursework, mixed mode and fully research based) of postgraduate studies at MQF level 7.

d) Research Intent and Presentation

(only for fully research based programmes at the Master level)

This assessment mode contributes 30% of the total APEL.A assessment for fully research based programmes where applicants will be evaluated on their readiness and preparedness to undertake such programme by providing details and information related to the areas/disciplines of the research. Applicants are required to submit a brief research intent outlining the information as indicated in **Table 5** prior to the presentation/demonstration. For research related to applied sciences or where it requires laboratory skills, a demonstration of such skills during the presentation will be required at a venue determined by the APEL Assessment Centre (Pusat Penilaian APEL, PPA).

Table 5. Framework of the Research Intent

No.	Items	Descriptions
1.	Institution identified to undertake the research	
2.	Potential supervisor consulted for the research studies (name and related information of the supervisor)	
3.	Title of research	
4.	Introduction / Research Background Provide an introduction encompassing the context, establish the relevance of the proposal and provide a discussion of the important studies and theories or frameworks related to the research problem	
5.	Research Problem The research problem you will be focusing and its significance contribution to addressing an existing gap in the knowledge in the field / making an original contribution the said discipline.	
6.	Literature review Provide a critical summary of published research literature relevant to your topic under consideration for research. Its purpose is to create	

No.	Items	Descriptions
	familiarity with current thinking and research on a particular topic, and may justify your future research into a previously overlooked or understudied area	
7.	<p>Research plan/methodology</p> <p>Outline the following in brief:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The methods that you will use to gather your information b) The theories and techniques you will use to analyse the information c) Overall research plan from conceptualisation to writing of thesis/dissertation 	

Sample of the **Research Intent and Presentation assessment rubric** form is presented in **Appendix E**.

5.3.4 Assessment for Doctorate Level

(For coursework, mixed mode and fully research-based programmes)

a) Portfolio Assessment

The applicants will be required to submit a Portfolio (either in Bahasa Malaysia or English) which will be assessed by the appointed assessors in the APEL Assessment Centre (*Pusat Penilaian APEL, PPA*). If the assessors are uncertain with the authenticity, sufficiency or relevancy of the evidence presented in the portfolio, they may request to meet the applicant for verification or validation purposes. The Portfolio assessment contributes 50% of the total APEL.A assessment.

b) Research Intent and Presentation

This assessment mode contributes 30% of the total APEL.A assessment where applicants will be required to provide information related to the areas/disciplines of the doctorate studies. In this connection, the applicant will have to submit a brief research intent outlining the information as indicated in **Table 5** prior to the presentation/demonstration. For research related to applied sciences or where it requires laboratory skills, a demonstration of such skills during the presentation will be required at a specific venue. Sample of the **Research Intent and Presentation assessment rubric** form is presented in **Appendix E**.

c) Interview Assessment

Upon successful completion of the Research Intent and Presentation, applicants will undertake an Interview assessment. This will contribute 20% of the total APEL.A assessments for all the three modes (i.e. coursework, mixed mode and fully research based) of the doctorate studies at MQF level 8.

This is an oral structured interview-based assessment used to assess an applicant's skills, knowledge/competencies to undertake tertiary studies. The interview score sheet is provided in **Appendix F**.

5.4 APEL.M assessment instruments

5.4.1 Portfolio Assessment

For applicants who have completed micro-credentials from accredited programme with at least 30% from a single HEP or at least 70% from multiple HEPs but do not meet the regular entry requirements of the programme, may apply for APEL.M for admission purposes.

APEL for admission purposes through the micro-credential track known as APEL.M only requires the applicants to submit a complete Portfolio for assessment of his/her readiness to undertake a tertiary study.

The applicants are required to submit a Portfolio (APEL.M) either in Bahasa Malaysia or English. The Portfolio form is as outlined in **Appendix C** and must be submitted in softcopy format.

In the said Portfolio form, the applicants must clearly state the number of micro-credentials taken, percentage of credits accumulated and the related evidence such as the result slips or/and the digital badge/Malaysian Micro-credential Statements (MMS) gathered.

If the assessors would like to confirm the authenticity and ensure sufficiency or relevancy of the evidence presented in the Portfolio, they may request to meet the applicant for verification or validation purposes. Hence other forms of verification instruments such as interview, presentation, demonstration, etc may be adopted.

This Portfolio assessment contributes **100%** to the entire APEL.M for all MQF levels of qualifications.

6.0 APEL.A AND APEL.M CERTIFICATION PROCESS

APEL.A certification determines the eligibility of an applicant to apply for admission into any level of MQF qualifications at any HEPs. Given the fact that APEL.A assessment may take as long as two (2) to four (4) months, applicants are advised to apply for APEL.A certification six (6) months prior to the date of admission into the desired HEP. An APEL certification qualifies the applicant to apply for admission to any HEP in Malaysia but is not a guarantee for admission into the said intended programme of study.

APEL.A and APEL.M certification process for the various level of MQF qualifications are as illustrated in **Appendix G** and **Appendix H** respectively.

6.1 Pre-application phase (Self-Assessment)

In deciding whether or not to undertake APEL assessment, applicants will need to consider the fact that it is a highly individualised process which will require the use of their skills such as self-motivation, reflection and time management.

Applicants must first ensure that the basic admission criteria stipulated in Section 4 of this GGP are met i.e. age and academic qualifications requirements (only for master and doctorate level studies). Applicants must also assess the relevancy of their prior learning experience.

This is to determine whether their prior learning experience correlates with the competencies stipulated in Section 5.2: Learner's Competencies.

It is important for the applicant to understand the requirements of the intended programme of study and its expected learning outcomes. If upon the personal self-assessment conducted, the applicant feels he/she has the capability and is prepared to undertake the tertiary studies at the specific MQF level qualification, then the applicant may proceed to apply for APEL.A or APEL.M at the MQA APEL portal.

6.2 Application phase

Applicants must first apply for APEL.A/APEL.M in the MQA APEL.A portal. Upon receipt of the application, MQA will then inform the applicant on the status of their application based on the admission criteria [ie. fulfilment of the minimum age requirements and the academic qualifications (for Master and Doctorate level of studies)]. MQA will also notify the APEL Assessment Centre chosen by the applicant on the applications that met the admission criteria. The APEL Assessment Centre (*Pusat Penilaian APEL*, PPA) will then contact the applicant to proceed with the APEL.A or APEL.M application in the PPA APEL portal. Upon registration at the PPA portal, applicant will need to pay the relevant APEL application fees as stipulated by MQA.

6.3 Application fees

The following fees (*wherever applicable*) imposed by the APEL Assessment Centre (*Pusat Penilaian APEL*, PPA) are regulated by MQA. Please refer to MQA website for the related fees structure.

Types of fees:

- a) APEL.A or APEL.M application fees
- b) Resit fees
- c) Appeal fees

6.4 Assessment

The assessment of prior experiential learning for the purpose of APEL.A will encompass the comparability of the experiential learning acquired by learners to the learning domains stipulated in the MQF. The expected competency level in the Aptitude Test is also pegged at the appropriate level as indicated in **Table 6**.

Table 6: Competency level of the Aptitude Test for various MQF qualifications

MQF qualifications	Competency level of the Aptitude Test
Certificate	Between UPSR and PMR (Grade/Year 9) or equivalent qualifications
Diploma	PMR (Grade/Year 9) or equivalent
Advanced Diploma	PMR (Grade/Year 9) or equivalent
Bachelor	SPM (Grade/Year 11) or equivalent
Master	Equivalent to the 1 st year of the Bachelor degree

Assessment principles: The APEL.A assessment processes and procedures will uphold the following principles to ensure integrity and credibility of the assessment to evaluate the readiness and preparedness of the learner to undertake tertiary studies:

- a) there must be a transparent assessment system adopted to evaluate the prior experiential learning against the learning domain as stipulated in the MQF Edition 2
- b) recognition of the prior experiential learning is based on demonstrable learning achievement and not on the assumption of learning due to the undertaking of a particular job/position secured for a set duration of time or merely following any non-formal learning
- c) all forms of assessment adopted to evaluate the prior experiential learning must be of equal rigour as in any assessment in the conventional education track.

Assessment instruments: The various assessment instruments that will be utilised comprises the following and it may be a combination of two or three instruments depending on the entry MQF level of qualifications:

- d) Aptitude Test
- e) Portfolio
- f) Interview
- g) Research Intent and Presentation

However, for APEL.A (MQF level 3 and level 4) and APEL.M only a single instrument is used to evaluate the prior experiential learning.

The assessment instruments for entry into the various MQF level qualifications have been described in Section 5 Assessment Instruments of this document.

6.5 Post-assessment

6.5.1 Results

Upon completion of the APEL.A or APEL.M instruments, the APEL Assessment Centre (Pusat Penilaian APEL, PPA) will notify the applicant on the outcome of the assessment. If the applicant successfully completes the related assessments for entry into specific MQF level qualifications, they will be provided the APEL Certificate from MQA. The sample of the APEL.A certificate is indicated in **Appendix I**. This APEL.A certificate will enable the applicants to apply for admission into the related MQF level of studies in any higher education institutions in Malaysia.

APEL.M certificate issued by MQA will state the name of the institution, the programme of study and the related discipline as opposed to APEL.A certificate which will only indicate the MQF level of the programme.

At any stage of the assessment process, HEPs must ensure that the outcomes and results are announced in a timely manner to the applicants.

6.5.2 Appeal or Re-sit

Applicants who failed any of the assessment instruments may appeal for a review of the results or apply for a re-sit. The applicant will be charged the appeal or re-sit fees published by MQA for each attempt.

Appeal:

The applicant who is not satisfied with the decision of the APEL assessment results can submit a written appeal to the PPA by providing the grounds for the appeal. The appeal must be submitted within one (1) week from the date of the official announcement of the result. A different Assessor will be appointed to evaluate the merit of the appeal.

Re-sit:

The applicant who failed the aptitude test can only re-sit the aptitude test for a maximum of 2 attempts. If the applicant still fails at the second attempt, the applicant must wait for a minimum of three (3) months before re-sitting for the test.

Applicants who have failed the portfolio assessment may resubmit the portfolio for assessment again. However, this re-submission can only be made at least 6 months after the notification date of APEL.A or APEL.M results.

6.5.3 Conferment of APEL.A Certificates

MQA will issue the APEL.A certificates for each successful applicants to the APEL Assessment Centre (Pusat Penilaian APEL, PPA) where they have registered to undertake the APEL.A or APEL.M assessments. This APEL.A certificate will have no expiry date.

If the applicant prefers to have the APEL.A Certificate couriered to them, they will need to inform the PPA and pay the relevant fees for the courier service.

7.0 ROLES OF MQA AND HEPs

This section outlines the roles of MQA and HEPs in the administering the APEL.A and APEL.M process.

7.1 Roles of MQA

MQA has established and developed a comprehensive GGP: APEL.A and APEL.M to provide the HEPs and relevant stakeholders with information on its application and implementation. As custodian of APEL in Malaysia, MQA reserves the right to the following actions:

- a) to approve or reject any application from HEPs to establish the APEL Assessment Centre (Pusat Penilaian APEL, PPA) and to implement APEL.A or APEL.M;
- b) to retract the approval given to the HEP in the event of any malpractices found;
- c) to monitor and audit the APEL.A processes and procedures of the HEPs; and
- d) to make amendments to this GGP as and when deemed necessary. It is the responsibility of the HEP to keep abreast of any changes made in the GGP to improve the APEL.A and APEL.M processes.

7.2 Roles of HEPs

HEPs that intend to implement APEL.A and/or APEL.M must submit their applications and obtain a written approval by MQA prior to its implementation as an establishment of APEL Assessment Centre (Pusat Penilaian APEL, PPA). This approval granted is institutional-based and not specific to a programme or faculty/school. The approved HEPs must adhere to this GGP, including the quality assurance aspects in managing APEL.A and APEL.M. It is the responsibility of the HEP to familiarise itself with this GGP and all the related quality assurance documents and policies set by the MQA and other related agencies. HEPs must consult MQA for any provision that may not be covered in this GGP.

8.0 QUALITY ASSURANCE

Quality assurance is an integral part of the APEL.A and APEL.M implementation processes. HEPs or approved APEL Assessment Centres (Pusat Penilaian APEL, PPA) are to employ the same standards and rigor through the assessment and process of evaluating the prior experiential learning for the purposes of admission. This will safeguard and uphold the credibility and integrity of the entire APEL.A and APEL.M processes.

HEPs must regularly monitor and review the operations of APEL. All processes and procedures must be transparent, clearly defined and integrated within the existing quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms of the HEP.

Mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing the APEL processes and procedures may take into account the following:

- a) the number of applicants who apply for APEL.A/APEL.M under the approved APEL Assessment Centre (Pusat Penilaian APEL, PPA) based on the various MQF qualifications level;
- b) the success rate of applications managed by the PPA;
- c) an evaluation of the applicants' experience, including the time taken by them to undertake and successfully complete the APEL process;
- d) an evaluation of the staff's experience, including the time spent by staff to support and manage the APEL process;
- e) tracking and monitoring of the progression of applicants who are admitted into the HEPs to pursue their tertiary studies

APEL.A and/or APEL.M processes need to be fully integrated within the quality assurance systems of the approved APEL Assessment Centres or HEPs to ensure transparency, consistency, reliability and accountability. APEL processes and procedures of the HEP should be made available for scrutiny by appropriate external quality assurance body or agencies.

LIST OF PANEL MEMBERS

NO	NAME	INSTITUTION
1.	Prof Dr Andy Liew Teik Kooi Chairperson	HELP University
2.	Prof Dr Titik Khawa Abdul Rahman Member	Asia e University
3.	Dr Amirul Faiz Osman Member	Universiti Utara Malaysia
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