PADDLE SCOTLAND

Accredited Prior Learning (APL) & Recognised Prior Learning (RPL) Policy & Guidance

2 October 2025

Purpose of policy:

- To set out Paddle Scotland's position on recognising Accredited Prior Learning (APL) and Recognised Prior Learning (RPL) as part of working towards a Paddle UK Awarding Body qualification.
- To provide guidance to candidates who wish to apply for Accredited Prior Learning (APL) or Recognised Prior Learning (RPL).

*Where referring to Paddle UK Awarding Body this document will use the terminology of "Awarding Body".

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Definitions

APL - Accredited Prior Learning:

APL refers to prior learning that has already been formally assessed and certified by an awarding body (e.g. qualifications, diplomas, or certificates.)

RPL - Recognised Prior Learning:

RPL refers to informal or non-certificated learning gained through work experience, self-study, or volunteering, which is then assessed to determine if it meets the required standard.

Feature	APL (Accredited Prior Learning)	RPL (Recognised Prior Learning)
Type of Learning	Formal, certified learning	Informal, experiential learning
Evidence Required	Certificates, transcripts	Verified log books, work experience, portfolios, self reflection, testimonials, referees
Example*	SCQF Level 7 (or above) in Sports Coaching instead of Coach Award eLearning.	Demonstrating and evidencing Coaching experience to gain exemption from Core Coach training.

* The examples provided are for illustrative purposes only and do not guarantee exemption or recognition. Each application will be evaluated individually, taking into account how current, and the quality and relevance of the evidence provided in relation to the specific training or award.

Introduction

Paddle Scotland recognises many learners may have relevant experiences and qualifications from other sports, work and qualifications from other training providers.

We aim to recognise your learning through the Accredited Prior Learning (APL) Service.

Important note: Paddle Scotland considers both APL and RPL under the scope of the Accredited Prior Learning (APL) Service.

The Accredited Prior Learning Service will consider other nationally recognised, professional awards and will recognise training and assessment schemes other than its own where they are identifiable as being of equal or higher standard.

Examples which may form pathways into current Awards include:

- Awards from previous schemes
- Awards from other sports
- Awards from other countries
- HE / FE Qualifications in a relevant subject area

Some of these have already been mapped by the Awarding Body and can be found here.

If you have a recent (within the last 3 years) Awarding Body approved equivalent Safety or Navigation award (as detailed above) this can be submitted via the "Alternative Safety Training" or "Alternative Navigation Training" credentials in Just Go.

In some cases, the service will also consider:

- Experience gained through work or volunteering in the sector/ area.

The Accredited Prior Learning Service is free to National Association members.

The following guidance is for Paddle Scotland Members. If you are a member of Paddle England, Paddle Cymru or Paddle Northern Ireland, please contact your National Association.

Important note: The APL Service does not grant Awards. Where an applicant wishes to achieve an Award, they may be granted APL / RPL for the training or prerequisites but will need to complete the assessment in order to obtain certification.

Who is the Accredited Prior Learning (APL) Service for?

APL can benefit:

- Individuals looking for recognised credit for entry to a programme at higher education level; for example direct entry to a Performance Coach Award.
- Individuals looking for recognised credit for entry to a programme at the same education level; for example, a Slalom Kayak Coach who wants to pursue Advanced White Water Kayak Coach Assessment.
- Learners who may have withdrawn from a programme prior to completion and who wish to count that learning towards another award. For example, attending Sea Kayak Coach Training but wanting to pursue a SUP Open Water Coach Assessment.

The Paddle Scotland staff member will support you through the APL process by:

- Introducing you to the APL Guidelines specific to the relevant subject area;
- Building your confidence as a learner through identifying your strengths and skills;
- Advising you on how to prepare your Evidence of Learning and select suitable referees.

What does the APL Application involve?

An APL application is about getting evidence and explaining how it allows you to meet the knowledge and skill requirements for a course of study. This means you must reflect on your experience and on the learning you have already achieved as a result. Before you go through the APL process, there is an important guiding principle you should remember.

It is what you have learned that is being recognised, not what you have done.

Individuals can have very different learning experiences, even from identical courses. Effective learning is demonstrated by the ability to apply knowledge to new situations. Therefore, it's crucial to provide evidence of learning from your experiences, not just a description of them. This involves:

- Reflecting on your experiences,
- Identifying key takeaways, and
- Documenting them.

Discussing these insights with your mentor or referee can further solidify your understanding and provide additional evidence of your learning.

In essence, applications should evidence the following:

- **Relevance** - the learning or qualification gained provides the applicant with the knowledge and skills required which is relevant to the training or award they are aiming to achieve / apply for APL.
- **Sufficient** - the learning or qualification gained is of an equivalent standard or level to the standard of the training or award they are aiming to achieve / apply for APL.
- **Recent** - the learning or qualification must reflect recent engagement in paddlesport activities relevant to the training or qualification being applied for. (Normally, within the past 3 years). Historical qualifications and / or experience can still be valid evidence but may require additional evidence of how it has been applied in a paddlesport setting.

- **Depth of Learning** - the level of knowledge, skills, and competencies demonstrated through prior learning aligns with the requirements of the training or award the applicant is aiming to achieve.
- **Verifiable** - the evidence provided must be verifiable (authenticated) as the learner's own work.

Preparing for Application

- **Step 1:** Consider your learning to date and how it meets the requirements of the training and award you want to achieve.
- **Step 2:** Discuss your application with your mentor, referee or a coaching advisor.
- **Step 3:** Pull together your evidence (see Supporting Evidence).
- **Step 4:** Complete the application.
- **Step 5:** APL outcome given within 14 working days or a request for more information.
- **Step 6:** Book on relevant training or assessment.

If your application is not successful you are eligible to submit a new application with more evidence or you have the right to appeal. Please see the Appeals Policy on our website for further information.

Submitting an Application

The Main Application

A fully completed Electronic Application Form is required (completed as a "Credential" in JustGo). Incomplete but submitted forms will be returned to the draft state and applicants asked to fully complete prior to resubmission.

The application form must provide clear evidence of attainment and professional assessment of the skills contained within the award against which Accredited Prior Learning is sought.

The appropriate Award Syllabus, prerequisites and structure should be used to assist in the writing of the application. Where possible, the award held and the Award sought should be matched up. Copies of the syllabi can be downloaded from the Awarding Body website.

Applicants should expect to provide written information about their experience / learning relating to what they are applying for and how their experience / learning meets the criteria of the awards they intend to gain. In many cases we find applications of less than 200 words per element of the application lead to delays while we seek further information.

Referees

Upon receipt of your APL application, we may request details of a referee to support it. Referees can provide valuable evidence of your experience and offer context for qualifications gained outside the UK, especially those in other languages.

Referees should be individuals who know the applicant reasonably well, in a capacity which enables them to give a meaningful reference. They should provide an honest and positive reference, in the context of the application. If using a referee to provide evidence of your experience, they should hold Awarding Body qualifications in the same discipline and environment to enable them to verify your learning and experience in context. Referees who are a current provider of the award you wish to attain are a useful endorsement of your skills and will help strengthen your application.

Alternatively, the referees should have a verifiable understanding of both the qualification / award you aim to achieve and the prerequisites that APL is sought against.

Once an applicant has selected their referees, they should speak to them before submitting the application to ensure that they are happy to be a referee and that they feel they are able to verify the experience as detailed in the application.

Note: Referees must not be close friends or family.

Supporting Evidence

The purpose of supporting evidence is to demonstrate an applicant's level of competency and experience. Where relevant, applicants are also required to submit:

- **Copies of certificates for existing qualifications and awards.**
  Where the application includes details of awards held with other organisations, copies/scans of certificates should be included. An applicant wishing to use an award from another country, National Federation or National Governing Body (NGB) must also provide a copy of the syllabus in English.

Tip: For certifications that list units on separate pages, please ensure you include all pages on submission. Please ensure all photos and scans are legible before uploading.

- **Current Logbook.**

Where a Logbook provides evidence of current activity and working to the level required, preferably under conditions relevant to paddlesport coaching in the United Kingdom, a copy must be submitted with the application form. Logbooks should be verified and signed off by an appropriate person, such as a coach, mentor, employer, or assessor who has knowledge of or is qualified in the relevant Award the applicant is aiming to obtain.

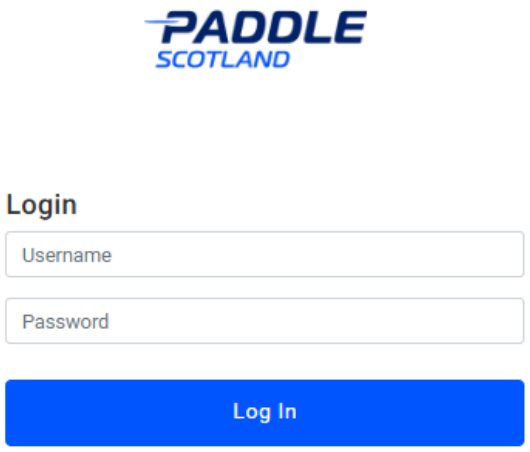
Online Application System

Step 1

Log into the JustGo system. This can be reached by visiting paddlescotland.org.uk and clicking 'Login' on the top right hand corner.

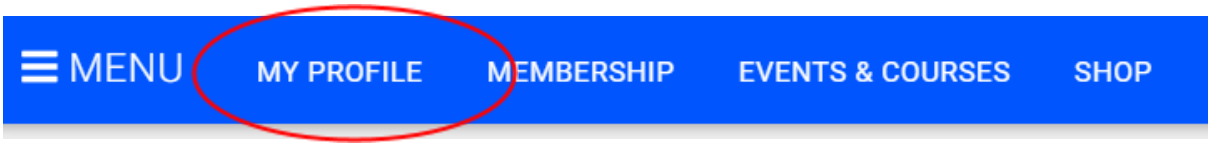
Your username for the system will most likely be your membership number or email address.

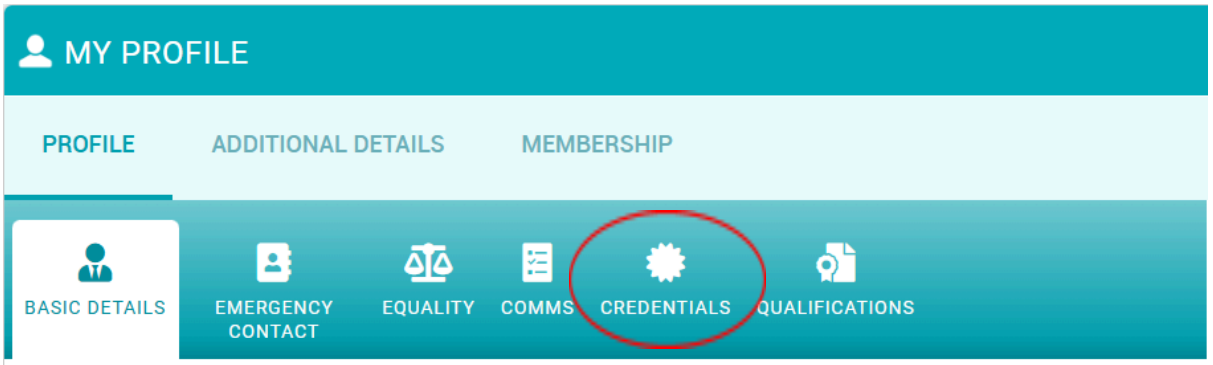


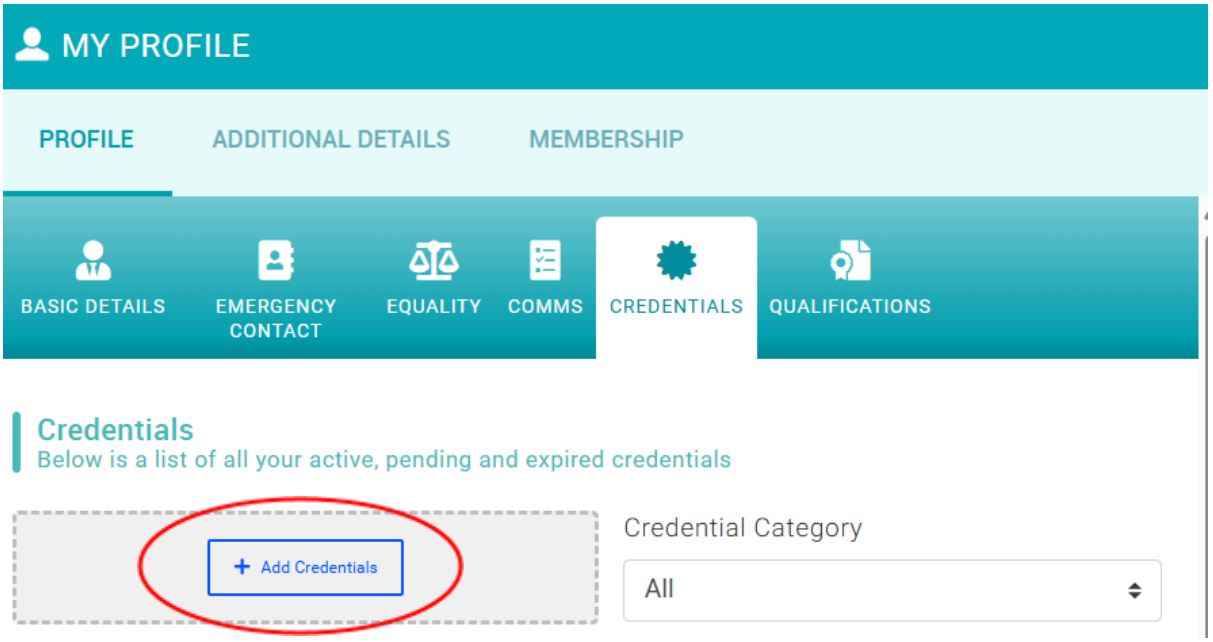


Step 2

Once logged in, please click on “My Profile” on the top menu bar, then click on “Credentials”, followed by “Add Credentials.

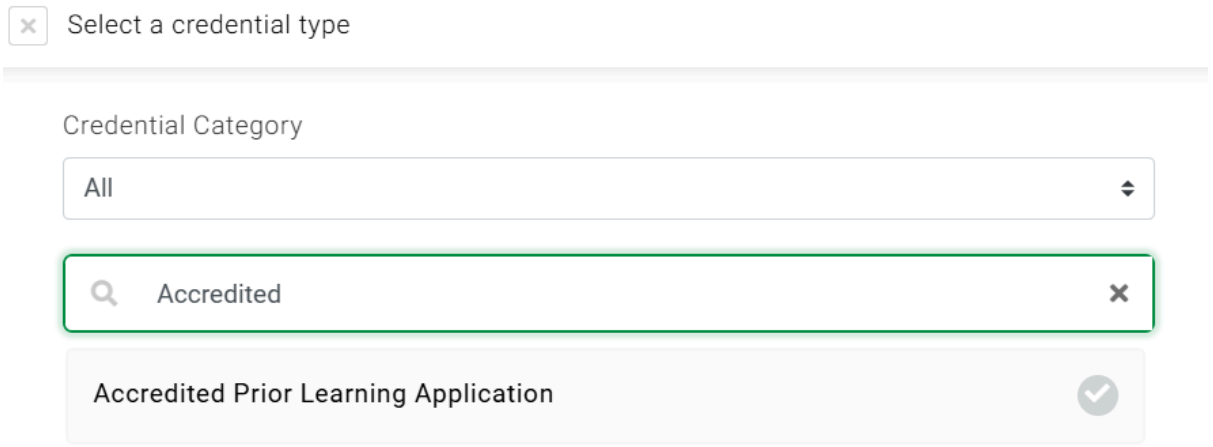






Step 3

Search for “Accredited Prior Learning Application” and click the tick.



Step 4

Complete the application, including uploading any relevant evidence.

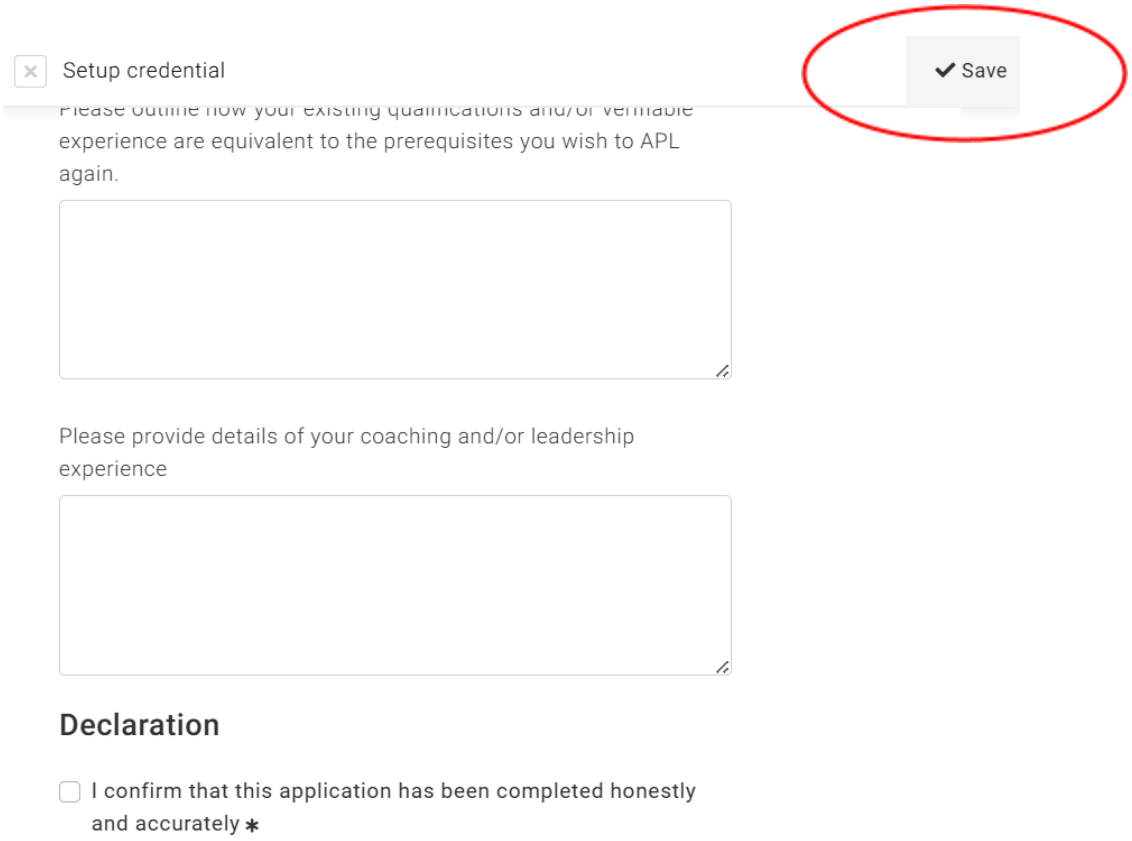
Please answer all questions as fully as possible. Please do not assume the

reader knows you or is familiar with your work. Incomplete but submitted forms will be returned to the draft state and applicants asked to fully complete prior to resubmission.

The application will ask you the following:

- Which prerequisites/requirements of the award you wish to apply APL / RPL against.
- Details of any training or qualifications (not already recorded on your Membership Record).
- To upload any supporting documentation, this could be certificates, logbooks, etc.
- To outline how your existing qualifications and / or verifiable experience are equivalent to the prerequisites you wish to APL / RPL against.
- To provide details of your coaching and / or leadership experience.
- Referee details.
- To confirm your application has been completed honestly and accurately.

Once completed ensure you hit the “Save” button (top right corner of the application).



Step 5

Your application will then be reviewed by a Paddle Scotland staff member who will check everything is correct. You may be contacted for further information, clarification and / or for details of referees if needed. Outcomes should be confirmed within 14 working days.

Withdrawal of Application and Mistakes

Once an application has been submitted, any changes need to be carried out by Paddle Scotland. These should be emailed to hello@paddlescotland.org.uk detailing the "Credential ID", your membership number and the issue to be resolved.

Policy Review Arrangements

Paddle Scotland will review this policy on an ongoing basis as part of our continuous improvement activity and revise it as and when necessary in response to our customer and learner feedback, changes in our policies and processes and actions from allegations.

In addition, we may update this policy in light of operational feedback to make sure our arrangements for dealing with suspected cases of malpractice and maladministration remain effective.

Contact

If you would like support or further guidance in submitting an application, please contact the Delivery Centre Manager:

noush.duffy@paddlescotland.org.uk

Telephone no: 07702 669080