

A brief explanation of an APEL Process

Important note: each HE college or University will have its own guidance material, procedures and regulations, but they are likely to be looking for similar to what follows.

Claims for accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) are usually the result of a number of years of learning carried out in a work context. An experiential learning claim does not relate directly to the number of years worked, but rather to the amount and analysis of **learning** that has taken place during your time at work. It is important that your claim relates to the amount (volume) of learning that you are claiming credit for, as well as the level.

To qualify for accreditation, your experiential learning must adhere to the following guidelines:

- Your learning must have been equivalent in level to that which would have been achieved in higher education
- Your learning must have been kept up to date
- Your learning must be relevant to the intended course of study
- You must be able to provide evidence of this learning

To justify your claim for APEL you will need to produce a matrix that matches your experience to an appropriate set of higher education level indicators. From this matrix, you will need to provide a report that discusses in more detail how you matched each level indicator. You will also need to provide a portfolio of evidence to support your claim. All evidence should be clearly signposted throughout your report, as should your selected Level Indicators.

What will constitute acceptable evidence?

It is important to be aware of the nature of supporting evidence – whether it is direct or indirect. Being able to make a judgement about whether a potential piece of evidence is direct or indirect will help you to decide what you will need to include as part of your claim.

Direct evidence consists of your own work and could include:

- Proposals you have drafted.
- Procedures you have been responsible for drafting.
- Budgets or financial forecast you have put together.
- Artefacts you have designed, made or adapted.
- Project or research reports you have produced.
- Articles you have written.
- Training plans you have designed.
- Questionnaires or surveys you have designed or administered.
- Textbooks or manuals you have contributed to.

Indirect evidence is information about your learning gathered from or generated by others such as:

- Statements from your line managers, and others that you work with or for.
- Certificates of completion from non-credit rated courses.
- Supporting letters from managers or experts.

Quite often evidence will be more relevant if you provide some commentary which sets the evidence in context.

It is possible that some of the evidence you may wish to use may not be able to be included because of its confidential or sensitive nature. There are a number of ways that you could get around this problem:

- If you are offering evidence relating to areas such as teaching, assessment or counselling you could ask those involved, or your line manager, to verify your learning.
- You could delete from your evidence information that identifies individuals or institutions.
- In all cases where you are uncertain it is important that you check with your line manager or tutor before including the evidence. If you do include confidential material ensure that you have written consent for use of the material from all involved and that this is included with the materials.

When selecting items of evidence it may be helpful to ask yourself the following questions:

- How does this item help to prove my learning?
- Is this the best evidence for this area of learning?
- Is it sufficient or do I need more?
- Do I really need it, or have I already provided sufficient evidence?

Supporting evidence can take many forms, including a portfolio of work, powerpoint presentations, audio-visuals, creative projects, reports, testimonials and interviews.

The claim for accreditation of prior learning needs to be supported by evidence to demonstrate your achievement of the level indicators, linked within the learning experiences. It is important to consider what evidence you should use as well as how you use it, as this will help to demonstrate your ability to analyse your learning.

It may include information gathered from others about what you can do:

- Certificates
- Feedback from clients
- Statement from line manager

Take care when including work related evidence that you do not breach any professional or legal standards when compiling your evidence. It is your responsibility to ensure that you know what the standards are and that you comply with them.

It may be possible to use a single piece of evidence that demonstrates several capabilities or that can be used for more than one level indicator- quantity of evidence does not necessarily equate to quality of learning.

Finally when deciding on the evidence remember:

- **Relevance** - The evidence must be relevant to your overall programme of study, the level indicator chosen and at the appropriate level.
- **Sufficiency** - You must ensure that you adequately and appropriately evidence each level indicator for which you wish to claim credit.
- **Currency** - The evidence must be still meaningful in the area in which the learning has taken place. It must be up to date and reflect current thinking in the field. Ideally the evidence will be dated to demonstrate the currency. Evidence more than 5 years old can only be used if you can demonstrate that it is still in current usage and has been subject to recent scrutiny and update.
- **Reliability** - You should be able to show that the evidence you provide to support your learning experience could be repeated in another experience.
- **Authenticity** - it must be clear that the evidence provided originates from you or is specifically referring to you. Obtaining a signature for evidence is a useful way to prove this.

All evidence should be clearly referred to in the explanation and analysis of the learning experiences section of your portfolio, with clear signposting to the appropriate appendix.

Presenting Your Evidence

Compile your supporting evidence into a suitable format, such as a portfolio and divide it into sections that relate directly to your report, signposting the evidence clearly and making sure that it is related to the level indicators.

Gather any other material together that you want to submit as evidence. Consider if there are any confidentiality issues which need to be addressed and negotiate these with your tutor and/or workplace.

Your evidence should be compiled into a folder and organised and presented in such a way that the work can be referenced back to both your report and your level indicator matrix.

The amount of evidence presented should reflect the number of credits that you are claiming. Clearly the larger the claim the more evidence is required.

Text above adapted from the Learner Handbook of Ufl/ learndirect. Learning through Work scheme.