
Section 5

Building and Reviewing the Portfolio

Key words: RAL portfolio

Your RAL portfolio is an extended statement about your past and current learning, following a specific format.

It is the means by which you argue a case for why you may deserve academic credit for learning you have already acquired: you are making a *claim* for credit in your portfolio. You will complete your RAL portfolio by completing each Section.

Prioritise your list of areas of learning



By this stage you should be able to prioritise your list of areas of learning and write one of them up

- Work on one area of learning deciding on the level and extent of the learning
- Submit a draft of your area of learning to your RAL Academic Adviser for feedback
- Produce appropriate evidence
- Work on your other areas of learning

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND EXERCISES

Dividing your learning into areas

Claimants evolve a range of ways of distributing their learning among specific areas of learning. For example:

- learning may be distributed between, for example, 4 major areas of learning. Each one of these is then sub-divided.
- learning may be distributed more or less equally between, for example, 6 areas of learning.
- most learning may be claimed for under, for example, 3 large areas of learning, but, for example, 2 smaller ones are also included.

There is no single correct way of doing this. The number of areas of learning you submit and the overall size of your claim for credit will depend on how extensive your experiential learning actually is and on how much of it you wish to claim for.



EXERCISE - Constructing an early draft of an area of learning

Purpose

*To help you to distinguish between 'learning' and 'activities'.
(Your areas of learning should be about learning).*

*To generate a vocabulary which articulates the different ways
you learn.*

What you should do

You may now have a number of titles from your CV and job description. You will probably find that some overlap in content or that they complement each other. Now you need to refine your ideas. You will need to think about what will go into each area of learning.

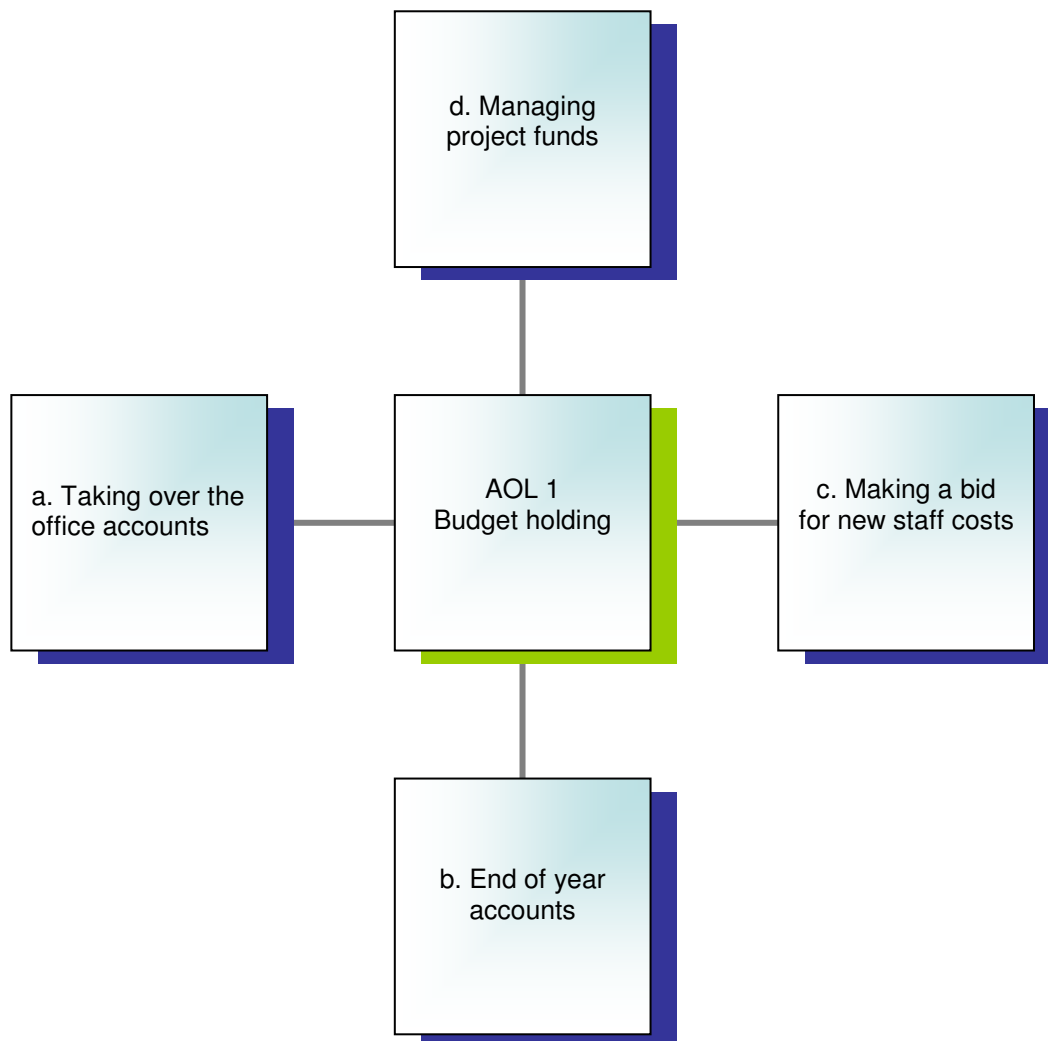
There are a number of ways you can do this:

Make a mind map / spidergram of each title and identify key learning associated with each title as an offshoot. In the example below you can see that several key points have been identified as contributing to the area of learning.

The example below indicates four key activities that helped this claimant develop knowledge and learning in 'Budget holding'. The claimant has usefully identified the starting point (a) and so can start to develop the content of the area of learning building upon each of these stages. You may find it helpful to think of these as 'key learning points' or 'learning outcomes', because they express specific outputs that can be expressed as outcomes which are measurable and which may be supported by specific evidence. There are also indications in (c) and (d) that there may be other areas of learning that might link or overlap with this one.

You may also find the Activity pro forma from the Induction Pack useful to facilitate identification of learning.

Figure 1. Shows an example of a spidergram



For example: 'Making a bid for new staff' might be part of a larger area of learning around managing people, or recruitment costs and selection. You will have to decide whether you put this learning outcome into this AOL and keep all things financial together, or whether to transfer it into a 'people' focused area of learning. Managing project funds suggests that this person has been running or managing projects and that there may be more learning in an area around project management. You will have to decide as you progress with your areas of learning how to allocate your evidence and which specific learning outcomes you can emphasise.

Identify specific achievements – you may have a specific example of something that you have accomplished such as project work, a document you have written or produced, an artefact you have created, or some publicity material you have designed. You will be able to use it as evidence too, to support your claim.

By starting with the finished product, you can begin to reflect on the processes that you went through to create it and the learning that you gained from it. To help you discover the learning you gained from the achievement ask yourself specific questions such as:

- Why did I do this and how did I know how to do it?
- If I did this again how would I do it differently? Why?
- How did I know what to do in this situation? Where had that learning come from?
- Why did I do this in a particular way? What would the consequences be if I did it differently?
- What went well, what went wrong and why?
- Have I done this like this before? Would I do it the same way again? Why?

Identify a newly acquired skill or work activity – this may emerge from reviewing your job description and identifying something that you have had to learn recently from job changes or developments. You may be starting a new project and are learning the basics of it as you prepare your area of learning. This is an ideal opportunity to keep a learning log over the next few weeks where you record the new things you are learning to add to your claim.

Review training documentation - or other evidence such as minutes of meetings to help you trace the development of learning. If your routine work is different to that of other people and has grown in a specific direction you may be sought after as an expert on some issues.

To help you find that learning ask the following questions:

- What would someone else need to know in order to do my job? If I handed it over to someone tomorrow what would they need to know?
- What is the context of my work? How does this influence what I do?
- Are there policies / legislation/ procedures that I must be acquainted with to practice / work safely?
- Do I have to address specific types of problems? How do I go about this? How did I learn how to tackle them?
- What specific responsibilities or professional updating must I ensure are included?

Building on the early draft of an area of learning

Once you have identified the area of learning and some of the key points you want to include, this is where the hard thinking and reflection start as you begin to write your learning journey for that area of learning. Writing up an area of learning is far more time consuming than you think.

These activities may help:

- Carry a notebook and keep a record of some of the things you do at work during the day
- Jot down why you made certain decisions, or how you knew what to do in both routine and unusual circumstances – where did that learning come from? Can you provide evidence for it?
- Ask yourself questions such as; what did I learn from that training day? What have I started to do differently because of it?
- Allow yourself lots of time and some quiet to reflect and write out specific learning incidents that come to mind.

You may find it helpful to write lots of notes to start with, just to tell the story of how your learning grew over time. Remember, we are interested in what you have learnt, how you learnt it and the consequences of your learning, and not just the experience you had. Be careful not to focus only on your achievements as it's the 'learning' that you are receiving credit for, not the 'doing'.

Writing about the key learning points from your mind map, or your specific achievements will help you remember what happened, but you will need to include some analysis of your learning. You will need to write drafts and later edit them, but rather than stare at a blank page it is better to write something, so using key learning points is a good way to get started to describe your learning journey. There are no word limits to areas of learning, but the good ones are often about 2000 words long. Organising your thoughts clearly and in an orderly manner will be to your advantage as you are likely to gain more credits by doing so, but be careful not to 'waffle on' and miss the focus of your learning.

Analysing your learning

Analysing your learning means to explore the different parts that contribute to the whole area of learning and explaining how each part contributes to it. If you are able to interweave into the narrative how you applied your learning and link it to relevant evidence this will also improve your credit rating.

A common difficulty is that claimants describe their learning, but forget to include what the consequence of their learning was:

- did the organisation work better?
- were they more able to do the job?
- what would they have done differently next time and why?

To overcome this, an effective way of showing that you have learned and understood something is to illustrate how you have used the learning. For

example, when you managed a project the first time you did not allow sufficient time for interdependent activities to run alongside it, so when other people's contributions did not come in on time the project deadline was delayed. This means that next time you ran a project, you remembered the difficulties that late contributions made, and so you allowed extra time in your plans. In other words, you have thought through the consequences of your actions. If when you write your area of learning you make sure that you have stated what you have done, why and how and what the outcomes were, it will help you. This will also help you to define or analyse the learning and help you to discover a lot of knowledge that you take for granted. Some reflective thinking models may help you to do this, so that the conclusions that are drawn from the learning are made explicit. (Section 3)

If you get stuck and are not sure what to include, look at the level descriptors for the academic level you are trying to gain credits for and think how to include aspects of your learning that reflect these.

For example:

- do you have to make ethical choices? (further details on ethics in research may be found on the VLE.
- what kind of planning are you involved in?
- how do you make decisions?
- how many people are influenced by your work or impacted by your actions?

Alternatively you may find that reviewing your evidence and deciding what you needed to know to create it may help you identify your learning.



Remember ...

In order for the learning that you detail in your RAL portfolio to be accredited, it must be clearly presented in a standard format. The 'Analysis of Learning' part in each area of learning is the most important part of your whole portfolio.

How many areas of learning do I need?

The number of areas of learning that are needed depends on the amount of experience you have and the amount of credits you may wish to claim for this. The more credits needed, the more detail and information that will be required. You may not need more areas of learning, but if you make them as comprehensive as possible then you may get more credits. However, depending on the extent of your experience, you may find it helpful to divide one area of learning into two or more separate areas. Read 'Making the most of your claim' at the end of this section to ensure you maximise the credit from your learning.

What will the assessor want to know about in your areas of learning?

The assessors on the RAL Accreditation Panel will want to know *exactly* what you are claiming credit for. Consequently, within each of your areas of learning, there must be a detailed breakdown of the learning for which you are claiming credit. This should come in the 'Analysis of Learning' section. Within the requirement that you structure each area of learning in the format described in the next exercise, you are free to present your areas of learning in the way that you think will make most sense to the assessors.

The assessors are likely to find it helpful if you:

- Divide up the analysis of learning section in some way. Two methods claimants commonly use are either bullet points, or sub-headings, followed by a brief analysis, for each skill/type of knowledge claimed.
- Cross-refer to your CV, job description or other areas of learning, where appropriate.
- Substantiate each item of learning with evidence.
- Make it very clear which piece of evidence refers to which item of learning.



EXERCISE - Writing up one area of learning

Purpose

- *To prepare one area of learning as fully as you can, for feedback from your RAL Academic Adviser*
- *Once you have discussed your area of learning with your Adviser and revised it as necessary, it will provide you with a template for writing up your other areas of learning*

Format and content of each area of learning

Each area of learning must include the following headings and information:

a. Name of the Area of Learning

b. Introduction

A short paragraph introducing the area of learning. This should cover how you acquired the learning. Ask the reader to refer, where appropriate, to your CV and job description, rather than repeat information here. You may want to selectively expand parts of your CV or job description(s) in order to give more detailed contextualising information about an area of learning. Make sure you explain why this learning is important.

c. Relevant courses attended

List any relevant training or professional development courses attended in the last five years, (for each give date, duration, outline content and form of assessment, if any). If these include courses you are submitting as 'credit rated learning', refer the reader to where you have listed them.

d. Analysis of Learning

Itemise the learning you are claiming credit for in this area of learning. This should be a fairly extensive breakdown of the knowledge, skills and abilities you are claiming credit for. You may want to explore wider implications and examine how this learning can be used in other settings e.g. managing conflict can be used at work, at home and also in any voluntary organisation you work with.

e. Evidence

You need to supply evidence for each area of learning. The same pieces of evidence can be used in more than one area of learning.

What you should do

1. Use the format described above to make a first draft of one of the areas of learning that you have listed. You are likely to find the following resources useful:
 - RAL level descriptors (Section 4)
 - An example of areas of learning, with comments
 - Bloom's Taxonomy. (Induction Pack)
2. It will help you, if you take note of the following points:
 - The title of your area of learning should be succinct and reflect the learning you are making a claim for.
 - The 'analysis of learning' section is the key to your claim for credit. What is required here is not a bald statement of what you have done but identification of the intellectual activity involved. Ask yourself what decisions you had to take when 'doing something', what factors you had to take into account and, most importantly, if you were 'doing' this again what would you repeat or do differently and why.
 - It is vital that you support the claim for credit that you make in the 'analysis of learning' with appropriate evidence (see below).
3. For the 'analysis of learning', (section d), you may want to express your learning using terms outlined in Bloom's Taxonomy e.g.:
 - Knowledge: "I am able to list/state/outline ... (for example) the key principles of..."
 - Understanding: "I can discuss/explain/clarify/identify ... (for example) the policy of/procedures for..."
 - Application: "I can illustrate/demonstrate/apply ... (for example) the process of..."

The three above are suitable to introduce an area but the ones below will show the greater depth of learning we require.

- Analysis: "I know how to distinguish/contrast/compare/calculate ... (for example) the effectiveness of..."
 - Synthesis: "I am able to organise/set up ... (for example) ...plans for..."
 - Evaluation: "I know how to evaluate/appraise/assess/review ... (for example) the causes of..."
4. When you have drafted one area of learning, make contact with your RAL Academic Adviser to discuss it.
 5. Revise as necessary.
 6. Put it into your portfolio.

Using this area of learning as a template, write up your other areas of learning. If you need further assistance, you can arrange a tutorial with your RAL Academic Adviser. It is not an admission of weakness or uncertainty to contact your adviser. We expect it and it is planned into our work schedule.

What does a good accreditation claim look like?

Claims that are good have the following qualities:

- the context in which learning occurs is explicit, and factors affecting the situation are captured without being too descriptive;
- the task or role that was being undertaken is clearly explained and situated within the context and work activity;
- when problem solving is used there is a clear rationale for the choices and decisions made;
- self-awareness is shown, together with an understanding of the implications of one's own and other people's behaviour and actions;
- where appropriate, reference to academic theories or knowledge is included to support decisions and actions, and is referenced accurately using academic conventions;
- learning is shown to be progressive, is built upon and the outcomes explicit;
- there is evidence of reflection and analysis within the area of learning;
- it is well written, concise, organised and tightly worded;
- evidence is carefully selected, referred to and linked with the narrative, and demonstrates how the learning was used. Where there is limited available evidence, illustrations, such as case studies within the text show how learning was applied and developed;
- each piece of evidence may be used in several ways to demonstrate different aspects of learning, thus reducing the amount of evidence but showing discrimination towards those pieces that support several aspects of learning.

Making the most of learning in your RAL claim.

People use the term 'volume descriptor' to describe the ways in which you can look again at your claim, and draw out more from your areas of learning, which can in turn lead to you gaining more credit. Because you are closely involved in your work, you may not immediately recognise all of the learning that you have gained through your work activities. So volume descriptors are designed to help you get the most credit from your claim, and they explain the qualities the assessors will look for when awarding credit.

An awareness of the volume descriptors below will help to maximise the credit from your RAL claim. Although they should help you to get as many credits as you can, they do not automatically guarantee extra credits. You must be

explicit within each area of learning to optimise the credit awarded. Not all descriptors will be applicable to every area of learning.

Guide to Volume Descriptors

Incremental learning over time, demonstrates broadening or deepening of learning and knowledge with application to practice

Explicit outcomes or product(s) that may correspond to:

- a validated module or
- accredited learning activity or
- WBL project outcomes

Presenting your claim with sections or components that reflect learning outcomes (LO) or specific learning incidents

Demonstrates building levels of learning from first principles through increasing complexity e.g. includes reflection and analysis of learning and / or consequent impact upon others is clearly evident or applied in several contexts

Demonstrates learning from formal training/ education hours, or qualification older than 5 years. (10 learning hours = 1 credit for accredited training). N.B. Same training days can only be counted once per RAL portfolio

Draws on a variety of sources of knowledge and/or demonstrates originality / uniqueness / creativity

High quality evidence presented and annotated appropriately

EXPLANATORY NOTES – Volume descriptors

1. Incremental learning over time, demonstrates broadening or deepening of learning and knowledge with application to practice.

This is an opportunity for you to demonstrate what you have learnt over a period of years. You may find that recent learning, such as in the last two years, is easier to recall, e.g. if you have just begun to access knowledge through searching the internet. More importantly, you may have started a new job within the last two years, and therefore be very aware of what you didn't know when you started in the job as compared to what you know now. Alternatively, you may have started this learning a long time ago, more than five years, and therefore how you learnt it may not be so easy to recall. You may also be very proficient at this area of learning now, and be able to express this in a way that demonstrates you have a lot of expertise and knowledge. This means that your assessors are likely to give you high level credit for this learning, but as an undergraduate you will also need some credits at lower levels, 4 and 5, and therefore it is a good idea to try to recall and record how your learning grew over a period of time. This should show that you started off with a small amount of learning, and that you have built on it to make more knowledge. If you are able to do this, your assessors will see if you can be awarded a range of credits within the claim.

Learning usually grows over time. For example, you may have started in an office and being responsible for the stationery order. To broaden your learning, you may have extended this learning into how to order other types of equipment required in the department, or perhaps taken additional responsibilities related to hiring of equipment. When you are analysing this learning in your claim, you would state the starting point that you began at, and then explain the learning that you developed in order to broaden your skills. Be careful not to describe in too much detail but try to provide a concise summary. An example of deepening your learning might be how you developed the ordering of equipment in your department into understanding the budgetary and financial implications associated with it. This may have developed your learning yet further into understanding cash flow in the department. Make sure your learning progression is explicit within your claim, as assessors cannot award credits for learning that is hinted at, rather than fully presented. Illustrate with examples to show what you can do now as opposed to where you started.

2. Explicit outcomes or a project.

This category is used when you can demonstrate that you have produced an outcome or carried out a project that is similar to a specific module. Your advisor will be able to help you with this, but if you have undertaken a project at work, you should be able to describe what you have learned from the process of undertaking that project. One way of doing this is to think about how you would do it differently next time if you were to do it again, and the reasons why learning took place.

You may not think you have done a project at work before, because it hasn't been called that, but you may have been involved in developing things like: a protocol, a policy or procedure, or an information leaflet, a newsletter for your organisation or perhaps a teaching package for new staff. All of these activities will have given you learning opportunities, so by reflecting on these you can identify what you learnt from the process. By stating the outcome of the learning very clearly, such as in the form of a product, it may be possible to equate this learning with an equivalent taught module and therefore gain credits that reflect a formal module outcome. For example, a qualified nurse from the Czech Republic came to work in the UK. She had to learn technical medical language as well as sufficient English to converse with colleagues and patients. She made a claim for learning English and her learning was recognised as being similar to a taught module that international nurses coming to this country had to study. She therefore gained credit that recognised the similarities between the module and her own learning. This can be seen as matching specific modules available to your study.

You may have undertaken training in the workplace, such as Health and Safety or Risk Assessment training. These training programmes may not have formal accreditation already but TSD may have awarded credits to similar programmes elsewhere, and therefore be able to award your training experience with similar credits. Remember, it is the learning that we are interested in, not just the experience, so make it clear as to what you took away from that training programme and how you were able to apply it at work.

The amount of credits that you are awarded for a particular claim may be related to the fact that a number of other claimants have submitted similar areas of learning in the past, and therefore there may be some precedent, which will guide the award of credits. For example, previous claimants may have submitted a particular area of learning, and it has always been awarded a specific amount of credits. This may be because it reflects a taught module of a similar nature, or the assessor feels that this reflects the usual amount of credit awarded. You may be tempted to compare the results of your claim with other claimants, but this may not be doing yourself justice, as other claimants will present their case differently and will be awarded credits accordingly. The feedback from your adviser after your draft will give you some good pointers as to how you can make the maximum credit from your claim.

3. Presenting your claim in sections or components

When you make your RAL claim, you should try to break each area of learning into component parts. Sometimes these components may relate to specific learning incidents. These learning incidents can sometimes be expressed as outcomes which indicate particular activities, or, as educators express it: 'learning outcomes', which arose from this time of learning. For example, you may be compiling a claim regarding communication within your organisation. This area of learning is likely to consider aspects such as; verbal communication, written communication, electronic communication,

dissemination of information, standards and procedures to communicate key issues and such like. It may be that a critical learning opportunity occurred during the time you that you learnt the skills, and was a key influence in what and how you learnt. A critical learning opportunity may have been an incident or a particular issue that demonstrated how well or how poorly communication systems were working, and therefore provided you with a learning insight that helped you to develop your skill in this area.

Critical learning incidents do not need to be a negative experience but can also be positive experience and may result from feedback from your workplace or colleagues. There may be several separate incidents that contributed to your area of learning but it is not a guarantee that the more learning incidents you include, the higher the number of credits will be, but it will help you to analyse your learning in more depth, and that should contribute to the amount and level of credits you gain.

4. Demonstrates building levels of learning from first principles through increasing complexity.

If you are experienced in a particular area in which you are making a claim, you may be able to articulate your learning in a way that demonstrates you are able to think at a high level of academic ability, as indicated by the level descriptors. This may mean that you are clearly thinking and explaining your learning at graduate or postgraduate level. However, if you are an undergraduate, you will also require credits at level 4 and level 5 which are equivalent to first and second year undergraduate level. You will need to gain credit at these levels as they are not awarded automatically even if you have made a claim that reaches a higher level. This is can be achieved by explaining what knowledge you had at the beginning of this area of learning, and what you have learned over a period of time. You should demonstrate that you have the underpinning knowledge which is reflective of the lower levels of academic ability, and therefore several levels of academic credit may be awarded for the same claim. In order to make the best of this, you will need to be analytical and to explain more fully as to how your initial learning developed. Showing how you are able to use your learning in a variety of contexts is another way of demonstrating higher level learning. Your assessor may be able to see this when they look at a draft of your claim, but you need to think about it as you write to show how your learning has grown.

Very often claims at all levels have not been made explicit within the written text, and although the assessor will be able to see that you could have more knowledge within the claim they would be guessing what you have learnt and therefore it is not possible to award credits. If the learning is implicit, credits cannot be awarded. Therefore you need to review the area of learning critically when you have drafted it, and demonstrate that learning has occurred and is progressive so that all possible learning is captured.

You may be able to demonstrate additional reflection and consequent learning from a situation, or be able to analyse your learning particularly well and this

may result in your assessor awarding more credits. If you are able to demonstrate the extent of the impact of your learning and how it has involved and affected other people, this too may be awarded in additional credits. For example, if only your immediate colleagues have been impacted by your learning then you are likely to have few credits. However, if you can demonstrate that your learning has had an impact upon a group or department, then it is more likely that you will gain additional credits because of the extent of the impact of your learning.

5. Learning from formal training.

Attending training days does not guarantee that you have learned anything. You need to be able to explain what you have done with the learning following the training. Training days can only count if you show what you do with the learning afterwards. This means that any evidence of formal training, such as a certificate, cannot guarantee credits. You need to make it clear what you have learned from that training and how it has impacted your practice. You may want to use the same training days as evidence for several areas of learning, but they cannot be counted more than once, so if you include them in several areas of learning, you must indicate that they are repeats. Remember that it is not "experience" that is being accredited, but your learning. You must show how that learning has affected your work and that will enable recognition of the training time. Awarding credits for training days is not obligatory.

There are occasions when a formal programme of study has been undertaken over 5 years ago. It may carry credits and you may have the transcript to prove that you did the training. Because it was over 5 years ago, you will need to show the assessor that the learning is still in use and that you have maintained its currency, and built on it. A typical example is a Certificate in Education, which can carry different amounts of credit, depending on when and where it was studied. If it is over 5 years old and you have not used it in the last few years, you cannot expect to have the credits from it acknowledged in your claim. If however, you didn't use it for a while, but have returned recently to teaching, and have evidence that you have updated yourself and refreshed your skills, the original credits may still be awarded. It is **your** responsibility to gain a transcript of credits from the awarding institution, and you need to be aware that you may not be able to use all the credits in the transcript, depending on College regulations as to how much credit you can use at every academic level.

6. Variety of sources of knowledge used and/or demonstration of originality, uniqueness or creativity.

If you are able to demonstrate the use of a variety of sources of knowledge in your claim such as reading, work shadowing, searching the Internet, gaining additional training, or the use of a variety of published information, this will

demonstrate that you have drawn on a wide variety of learning resources which will encourage the assessor to consider awarding more credit.

There are occasions when you may be able to present an unusual area of learning, or be particularly creative in how you make a claim for your learning. This is encouraged, and may be recognised as part of the credits. Don't forget that you may have learning from activities outside paid work that you may be able to claim for, such as a position as a club secretary, a school governor, or perhaps you've travelled and worked abroad and learned things about different cultures. You may also have learned from a project that you have just started at work, which may be one of your work-based projects later on in your programme. These activities can contribute significant learning and additional credits to your claim if you are able to demonstrate transferable skills from one context to another. If you're unsure how one of these activities might contribute, contact your adviser to discuss it.

7. High quality evidence presented and annotated appropriately.

You may present your evidence very well and so gain more credits. For example, if you annotate it very clearly and link it into the discussion in the areas of learning so that it is easy to see how the evidence illustrates your learning the assessors will be inclined to award more credit. Similarly, if you use a variety of evidence that illustrates your learning particularly well, then this too may contribute to more credit. However, careful selection of evidence should show that you can discriminate between one piece of evidence that illustrates a number of aspects of your learning, as compared to a lot of evidence that says very little.

Good organization and planning of evidence demonstrates an ability to think through your learning and shows that you have considered how you want to present it to others and maximise its potential. The inclusion of testimonials should be to confirm other evidence and should not be considered as adequate evidence in itself. You **must** also ensure that evidence protects the confidentiality of your workplace, colleagues and anyone else involved. If you specifically want to use something as evidence that involves others, such as photos, a written agreement from the person involved will suffice as consent. You will need to get written parental consent if you are using any material that involves children. Failure to protect others in your evidence may mean that credits cannot be awarded.

Making your planned programme explicit

If you know that you require a specific number of credits from a claim you must make sure you have discussed this with your adviser before you submit a claim. However, your advisor may not remember this much detail about your claim, and it is essential that **you** take responsibility for ensuring that you have made your needs clear. If you are submitting an additional claim it is important you should include a list of areas of learning already achieved so

that the assessor can understand where this new claim fits in. This means that they can become aware of the amounts of credits that you will need to complete your programme and they will consider this as they assess your claim. If you need a lot of credits, then you need to show that your additional claim fulfils all the criteria for both level and volume of credit by following some of these guidelines, so that you can maximise your learning from it. The assessor will try to ensure that the credits that you are awarded reflects the learning that is presented within your claim, but it is your responsibility to make it as clear as you can.

These guidelines only give you some help with preparing your claim. They do not guarantee particular amounts of credits but will depend on how you demonstrate the learning within it, and the evidence that you use to support it.

EVIDENCE

Evidence should substantiate the claim for credit you make in each area of learning. Without evidence the assessors cannot know whether what you are claiming is true.

What is meant by 'evidence'?

Your claim for academic credit must be supported by evidence which demonstrates the knowledge/skills for which you are seeking credit. You must link evidence clearly to each of your areas of learning. In doing this, it is important to think not only about *what* evidence to use, but *how* to use it to illustrate your learning - since the assessors will want to evaluate the extent to which you can analyse your learning.

Types of evidence

Evidence can be in many different media, for example:

- Photographs
- Videos
- Audio tapes
- Written work
- Signed observations of practice

Your evidence might include examples of items you have produced yourself, for example:

- Business plans showing objectives and results
- Financial forecasts/plans
- Monthly/annual reports
- A work product

Your evidence might include information gathered from others about what you can do, for example:

- Certificates
- Evidence of attendance at staff development events certified by the trainer or your line manager
- Correspondence you have received e.g. from colleagues, customers/clients, suppliers
- Witness testimony - a statement by a line manager or other independent source familiar with your work

Your evidence might include case studies. What is required here is that you describe a particular case or critical event in which you have been involved, and discuss in detail how it demonstrates the learning you are claiming for in

a particular area of learning. This is a very useful way of providing evidence for some areas of learning (often related to practical skills), where it can be difficult to provide physical evidence.



Example: a learner responsible for fire fighting on an oil tanker showed how he simulated events for planning and training purposes. This was accompanied by analysis of the event in order to improve performance. The documents used were signed off by a senior officer to indicate that the learner was responsible for and had completed the activity.

Your evidence may include the writing up of an activity your learning diary, or it might include a discussion of how you have applied learning gained on a course to your work or other activities. Certificates from courses may be used as a supplement to such a discussion, or other evidence that that demonstrates you have applied the learning from the courses in your subsequent work.

Using Evidence

Possible areas of learning may develop from the evidence that you have in your work environment. By looking at evidence of your daily work you may be able to gather significant evidence to support your learning just by looking at: letters, emails, minutes of meetings, certificates, products or artefacts, books, reports, articles, policies and procedures.

A few tips about evidence:

- Evidence does not speak for itself so make sure you choose it and use it appropriately, linking it to specific learning outcomes in areas of learning. You can use it more than once if selected well.
- Show the quality of thinking by your choice and use of evidence by selecting carefully and explaining it clearly.
- The quality and annotation of evidence can make a significant difference to your credit; explain why each piece is in there and what learning it shows.

- Seek to protect anyone/any organisation named in the evidence by keeping it confidential and anonymous unless you get written permission to use it – include the permission as part of the evidence. This is particularly important if you use materials that relate to children or vulnerable adults.
- Be sensitive to the implications of your evidence; are you exposing internal problems or placing anyone in a bad light?
- Provide a context for the evidence – how does it fit into your work and learning?
- If you are short of evidence you can always write more; use illustrations to show how you have used your learning. It can bring a claim to life by illustrating a point you are trying to communicate.

An example of using evidence might be as follows: you may have made a point about managing a project, such as forward planning. You might support this with a variety of evidence such as:

- A project plan – *this provides the context*
- The project report – *this explains the process that you learnt from*
- Minutes of meetings – *this demonstrates your communication and planning skills*
- E-mail conversations – *this demonstrates communications that supported the project*
- An illustration/portrait/cameo of the project process, such as: - *'I have learnt that when I manage a project there are other departments involved in it who do not work to my timescales, so therefore I have to factor in extra time to take account of that; e.g. I have had particular problems with the finance department who will not process payments on some days because there is only one person available to do it. I now plan to invoice them on specific days to work around their competing deadlines'.*

Ethical considerations

Work roles and the information generated through work are inevitably important in deciding on evidence to use in your RAL portfolio. It is possible that you may wish to use sensitive information originally gathered for a different purpose as evidence. Where this is the case, it is essential that you comply with the professional, legal or moral standards appropriate to the nature of the information used.

It is your responsibility to find out what these standards are from appropriate sources. However, you will find the following points a useful guide, if you wish to include confidential material as evidence:

- Ensure consent for the use of material is obtained from all people involved, e.g. team members, clients. Details of the consent obtained should be included with the evidence itself, e.g. legible signature on organisational headed paper.

- Consider how to anonymise material adequately. For example, you may wish to re-present names and addresses using pseudonyms. Striking names through with a pen or painting them out is not sufficient, but photocopying and then using a thick black felt pen is more effective. Specific care must be taken with materials referring to children or vulnerable adults.
- You may wish to use simulations to demonstrate situations and get them corroborated by a line manager as representative of your work.
- Always check the legal status of material before using it.
- If in doubt, check with both your RAL AA and your organisation or line manager.