Example Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) Portfolio
Example Portfolio

The following example Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) portfolio is designed to guide both those claiming APEL and academic staff supporting the development of APEL portfolios.

It is recognised that all claims for APEL are different and based on an individual’s own experience and, therefore, this example portfolio does not need to be used as a template, but it should be used as a guideline for content and structure of an APEL claim.

Reflective Statements

Those claiming APEL should include in their portfolio a reflective statement(s), identifying what they have learnt from their prior experience, and how this relates to the learning outcomes and requirements of the module(s) for which they are claiming credit. Therefore it is recommended that both APEL applicants and academic staff supporting the development of APEL portfolios consider carefully the content and structure of the reflective statement used in Section 4 when making a claim.

Structure

This example portfolio is presented in sections, which can be used as a guideline for structuring an APEL claim.

- Section 1 – Applicant and APEL details
- Section 2 – Index
- Section 3 – Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- Section 4 – Reflective Statements
- Section 5 – Evidence Appendices

Further guidance on claiming credit for prior learning, using either APEL or Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL), can be found at: http://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/guidance/index.html
## Section 1: Applicant and APEL details

It is recommended that the following information is provided within an APEL portfolio to ensure clarity for those making and considering a claim.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicant Details</th>
<th>Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of Applicant</td>
<td>John Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date(s) of Experiential Learning</td>
<td>2007-2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student I.D. No. (if known)</td>
<td>12345678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volume and Level of Credit from APEL to be accredited to Kent Programme</td>
<td>30 credits level 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected Start Date</td>
<td>September 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volume and Level of any APCL also being claimed</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of External Awarding Body</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>School/Centre</td>
<td>ABC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title of External Award</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme</td>
<td>BA/BSc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of Award</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full/ Part-Time</td>
<td>Part-Time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Modules Claiming APEL for:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module Title and Code</th>
<th>Modules Claiming APCL for:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving &amp; Communication (WL123)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Background to Claim

I have completed this portfolio with the support of my portfolio supervisor. It has enabled me to reflect on the work that I have carried out over the last 4 years which has involved problem solving and communication through project work.

The evidence I have chosen best illustrates the areas where I have met learning outcomes, and gives clear examples of where my professional practice has allowed me to learn and develop.

My aims in making this claim for credit are to assess my prior experience, and what I have been able to learn from it, so that it can be used to gain credit for this module. I believe that this will allow me to gain accreditation for work that I have already carried out. The APEL process itself has enabled me to reflect on where I am in my career, what skills I have developed, and how these are applicable to my everyday working life.
Section 2: Index – Evidence Index

To ensure clarity for those making and considering the APEL portfolio it is recommended that an index, such as the one below, is used to identify how the evidence included in the portfolio relates to the learning outcomes being claimed against.

Module Title – Problem Solving & Communication (WL123)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Appendices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Please provide the learning outcomes you are mapping your experiential learning to here.</td>
<td>Please provide the name of the evidence being used to support your claim and its reference.</td>
<td>Please provide where in the portfolio this evidence can be found.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.e. Demonstrate effective skills in communication</td>
<td>i.e. Written report</td>
<td>i.e. Appendix 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Develop the knowledge of how to conduct research into a problem in any aspect of professional practice.</td>
<td>Evidence Item 1 - Best Practice Research Report</td>
<td>Appendix 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Undertake research effectively using library resources and information technology.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Demonstrate the critical and evaluative skills developed in written communication not necessarily confined to a substantial project.</td>
<td>Evidence Item 2 - Options Paper Evidence Item 3 - Paper to Approval Committee Evidence Item 4 - Minutes from Approval Committee</td>
<td>Appendix 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Communicate in a professional setting and across a range of audiences.</td>
<td>Evidence Item 5 - Guidance on New Process</td>
<td>Appendix 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section 3: Curriculum Vitae (CV)

To support a claim for credit it is sometimes useful to supply a CV. This gives those considering the claim a better understanding of an applicant’s work experience and education.
Section 4: Reflective Statement(s)

A key part of the APEL portfolio is the reflective statement which describes an individual’s relevant experience and reflects on how their learning from that experience allows them to meet the requirements of the module(s) for which they are claiming credit.

The statement should be written in line with the learning outcomes being claimed against (i.e. module/programme learning outcomes) and if a claim is for a number of modules it may be necessary to provide more than one reflective statement.

Reflective statements should be as concise as possible, should identify the key areas learnt and relate them to the requirements of the module(s) being claimed for. The style and content of the below example can be used as a guideline when making a claim for credit.

Example Reflective Statement (Please note the below content and references are for illustrative purposes only)

At my two most recent employers I was given responsibility for projects to re-develop new business approval systems. These projects required me to assess working practice and identify solutions to improve work based processes.

To complete both projects I evaluated existing processes to identify where re-development was needed and developed strategies for implementing improvements; I was also able to evaluate and decide upon who needed to be involved in the project. To ensure an organised approach to the work I analysed each aspect of the project and developed a project plan – giving a structure and time line to work from. As part of the plan I identified the key aims of the project that needed to be met – such as ensuring that improved systems met external and internal requirements – something the existing systems were not doing.

In completing each project successfully I have developed a number of new skills which I am now able to apply to my working practice. In order to make my claim for credit against this module using the learning from these two projects I have developed a portfolio of evidence to support my reflective statement below.

Research and Evaluation

Both projects have allowed me to gain a greater understanding of the importance of evaluation in approaching any area of my professional practice, and the benefits it can provide in identifying the best approach and methods for completing a project (Smith and Jones, 1978, p.42).

For each project I evaluated the existing systems of new business approval before devising a strategy for making improvements to them. Initially I carried out best practice research in order to become informed about practice at other similar organisations. This research allowed me to develop new skills in searching for and assessing key pieces of information, using web resources, policy documents, publications, books and face-to-face interviews. I learnt how to assess the evidence looked at, to determine if it was relevant to my project aims and whether it was from a reliable source – i.e. using information from the sector to determine what ‘good’ alternative systems were.

Once the research had been completed I evaluated it to allow me to identify the best solutions to the problems with the existing systems. I was able to present solutions for feedback to stakeholders before assessing their feedback to develop a final system to put forward for approval.

This best practice research also provided me with an opportunity to develop my citation and referencing skills. Including citation and referencing gave my work authority and credibility and provided an opportunity for others to locate the source documents on which the best practice report was based (Simons, 2009, p.72).

In taking this approach to my project work and applying it to my current practice I believe I have met the learning outcomes:

1. Develop the knowledge of how to conduct research into a problem in any aspect of professional practice.
2. Undertake research effectively using library resources and information technology.
Problem Solving

Applying a process of research and evaluation over a period of time to complete both projects, has given me a system for identifying solutions to work based problems which I can apply to my current working practice. This was of use in ensuring that the problems faced on both projects were resolved.

The problems which arose during the lifetime of the projects were often caused by the wide variety of stakeholders involved and their differing requirements. This required negotiation with stakeholders to identify solutions and evaluate the differing requirements against the project aims. Where two stakeholders had specific issues I was able to work with them to identify suitable solutions. Often in evaluating a problem it became evident that in order to solve an issue a new system or policy would be required, in these cases I was able to communicate this to internal policy development officers and identify with them how to develop and implement the relevant solution.

In reflecting on my approach to the project and my process for problem solving I believe that I have developed the skills needed to meet the learning outcome:

1. Demonstrate problem solving skills and the ability to provide strategies to workplace problems.

Written Communication Skills

My work on these two projects has helped me in the development of a range of skills including my written communication skills.

The projects have given me experience of writing concise evidence based reports which analyse problems and offer solutions in-line with organisational requirements. I have also produced interim project reports in support of the projects, marking project progress and evaluating feedback from stakeholders. I have since been able to use these skills in my day-to-day work to produce best practice research reports and options papers that critically analyse the various possible options and which are written with the appropriate audience in mind.

These skills have also been applied to other written work I have completed such as guidance material for different audiences, with different levels of understanding and minute taking where I have had to use analytical skills to identify the key and relevant pieces of information and record them accurately.

Writing this reflective piece has added to these skills allowing me not only to critically reflect on my approach to work and the skills I have developed, but also on how I can apply these skills to my working practice. I have also learnt how to write reflectively for the first time. I believe that these skills will be of benefit to me when carrying out the written academic work required on the rest of this programme.

Therefore I believe that through these projects I have met the following learning outcomes:

1. Demonstrate the critical and evaluative skills developed in written communication not necessarily confined to a substantial project.
2. Communicate in a professional setting and across a range of audiences.

Verbal Communication

I have developed communication skills in verbally discussing and communicating my project plans at various levels. This has meant ensuring communications were fit for the relevant audience (internal/external) and supported by evidence. In addition I developed skills in verbal negotiation when resolving issues related to each project I have also been able to gain experience in working one-to-one with staff at all levels to explain changes to existing systems and the roles those members of staff would play within them.

Each project had a variety of stakeholders providing verbal feedback at development meetings. This meant I was able to develop skills in comparing and contrasting the arguments and opinions of others. I was able to understand what individual needs or wants might underpin stakeholder arguments and influence their point of view. In understanding this I was able to make judgements on people’s points of view and counter them where necessary to ensure that feedback and arguments were made in relation to the wider context of the project aims.

I have also developed an understanding of ensuring that arguments and opinions of others are heard, regardless of the individual’s level within the organisation. This allows me to compare and contrast the arguments of someone looking at changes to a system from a strategic role at a higher level, to the needs of someone using the system in an operational role, to find the right balance in the new system.
Through my APEL claim I have been able to understand how my work to date has considered the importance of the perspective of others in both verbal and written communication (Farrell, 2002, p.8) and how comparing strengths and weaknesses in arguments can be applied to future academic or professional work.

I believe therefore that I have been able to meet the learning outcome:
1. Compare and contrast the strengths and weaknesses in the arguments and opinions of others.

**Conclusion**

This APEL claim has enabled me to reflect on the management of two large projects with different employers, and track the development of my skills over a period of time. I have learnt to understand that different skills are required to be used within different types of organisation and that I must be a reflective practitioner in order to be a successful worker and to continually develop my skills through the rest of my career. I have also used this claim as an opportunity to consider different theoretical approaches to the types of work carried out on both projects.

Therefore I believe that I have been able to meet the learning outcome:
1. Critically evaluate the relevant concepts and theories to analyse issues in the workplace.
Section 5: Evidence Appendices

Evidence should be included within the APEL portfolio which supports directly the experience and learning from that experience which is highlighted in the reflective statement(s).

Please note - the example evidence provided here is for illustrative purposes only. Evidence will be relative to the individual claim and the module(s) which are being claimed for.
Best Practice Research into New Business Approval Systems

Following a period of research into the new business approval practice at other organisations the following are some of the existing successful systems that we could adopt.

The examples below have been taken from web research, as well as face-to-face interviews with people in similar organisations locally.

Organisation 1

This organisation runs a similar system to ours but has identified that all new business approval decisions should be made and administered locally, due to the reduction it provides in cost.

Of particular interest is that decisions are made via an online system that allows an audit trail to be built up electronically, and provides a list of precedents therefore speeding up the new business approval process. This system provides:

- Access to a bespoke online approval system.
- Video-based demonstrations of how to make approval decisions consistently.
- Online records that can be accessed for audit purposes.

While this would be an ideal system for us, the implementation for our organisation would have to be considered against the cost of setting up the systems and the expertise required in maintaining them.

Sources of information – web research, face to face interview.

Organisation 2

Organisation 2 has a unique system in that it has … … .

Organisation 3

There is a system of … … .
Options for Approval of Revised New Business Approval Systems

The following are options for the revised new business approval systems. These options have been developed following research into practice at other organisations. Individual organisations approach new business approval in different ways, so there is no single sector approach that can be adopted.

It is important to ensure that the new process is fair and reflects the level of approval required.

Option 1 - Standard Process

That the existing standard local new business process is retained, but with an online function added to improve service, reliability and record keeping.

It is recommended a standard fast track re-submission process is also included where a new business proposal is rejected……

Option 2 - Central Approval Process

It is suggested that a new…….
APPENDIX 2  PAPER TO COMMITTEE  EVIDENCE ITEM 3

Paper to Internal Approval Committee - Proposed Changes to New Business Approval

Introduction
A more effective process for the oversight of new business approval is required to ensure we are meeting internal and external requirements.

Current Situation
Currently new business approval is carried out without clearly defined oversight. New processes would provide this, along with a revised internal policy to ensure staff operate and record the new processes effectively……..

Proposal
It is proposed that new approval activity is given more structure through a new process. There would continue to be decisions made at a local level, which would be supported by better recording of the new business approval decision. This record would be kept as……..

Monitoring
Monitoring would be carried out centrally; a quarterly new business report would be made at board level, which would track clearly the type and volume of decisions being made…….