

Tools for Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning



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Exemplar documents

Resources by Anne Murphy

1. ***RPL Matters in the DIT: policy and practice guide for staff***
(electronic version) (2010)
2. ***APEL Matters in Higher Education*** (book only) (2008)
3. RPL Information booklet for the public (electronic)
4. Journal article on developing and implementing RPL policy in the DIT (electronic)
5. Staff training programme document: (electronic)
'CPD course in RPL in HE: pedagogies, policies and procedures'

RPL terms and concepts

recognition of prior learning

- **APEL** – accreditation/assessment of prior experiential learning
- **APCL** – accreditation of prior certificated learning
- **Formal learning** – structured and assessed
- **Non-formal learning** – achieved through structured learning that may not have been assessed
- **Informal learning** – achieved through learning from work, voluntary activities, reading etc

Where RPL fits into NQFs

- For **entry** to a programme of study or training
- For **exemption** from elements of a programme
- To establish the **level** of prior learning in relation to framework levels and programme standards
- To achieve a **full award**
- To establish if **learning outcomes** have been met
- To diagnose **gaps** in prior learning in relation to awards/qualifications
- To describe the value of learning in terms of framework **credits**
- For **mutual recognition** of qualifications
- For membership of **professional bodies**

Framework tools essential for RPL

- **Levels** of learning with descriptors of each level – to describe degree of difficulty etc
- Programmes/awards/qualifications/standards – as **benchmarks** against which to measure achievement
- **Learning outcomes** – what should be achieved
- **Credits** system/s (VET, HE, work-related) – to quantify volumes of learning

Guiding Principles?

- RPL is a process that needs to be underpinned by **principles**.
- RPL tools should reflect the agreed **underpinning principles**

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Types of APEL assessment page 54

- Using **existing examinations** for 'taught' award
 - **Challenge tests** in observed conditions
 - Suitable **projects** over a short time
 - Presentation of **artefacts**, with an **interview**
 - Extended **CV** with interview
 - **Observation** in real-work situation
 - **Simulation** or role play
 - **Portfolio** of evidence in relation to LOs
 - Formal **Qualifier** programme or project
- ... should be appropriate and fit for purpose*

Assessment criteria for APEL

- **Authenticity**
- **Relevance**
- **Currency**
- **Level**
- **Sufficiency**
- **Capacity to succeed**

Assessment criteria for APCL

- **Volume/years**
- **Volume/credits**
- **Depth/level**
- **Learning outcomes**
- **Curriculum content**
- **Reading list**
- **Research component**
- **Work practice/internship**
- **Examination papers**
- **Currency/recency**
- **Status of the awarding authority**

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Self-assessment for APEL

- APEL applicants need **clear guidance** about precisely what is required of them
- A set of **performance standards** or **learning outcomes** are essential
- Applicant need to know the **types of evidence** of learning that are acceptable
- If applicants struggle to find evidence of learning or are reluctant to undertake a performance test or interview, perhaps they should not try!

Including APEL in Assessment Regulations

If an award is involved in an APEL process, it is essential that the process is quality assured, otherwise there may not be trust and confidence in it.

An APEL Portfolio Template

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RPL flowchart

- Page 71

2 main paradigms of APEL

- **Formative APEL** – to identify how much learning an applicant has already achieved and what new learning is required
- **Summative APEL** – assessing prior learning against a set of standards or LOs to achieve credits or an award/qualification

Both types can be used in pedagogical design

Integrating APEL into Pedagogies

In professional development programmes, it is not unusual for learners to have achieved much of the learning outcomes already.

Integrating APEL into modules encourages participants to reflect on their prior learning, to show evidence of that learning in relation to the LOs of the module.

Critical Reflection in RPL

- **Describing** prior learning is a relatively easy process.
- **Identifying** learning from experience in relation to LOs is a little more difficult. But it is how APEL works.
- Producing **critically reflective** APEL portfolios works well in groups where there is **shared professional learning experiences**.

GROUP APEL WORKS WELL for added value and peer learning

Combining APEL with WBL

Learning in communities of practice for professional development makes group APEL relatively easy:

- a. Trainers and lecturers***
- b. Social workers***
- c. Leaders of voluntary organisations***
- d. Journalists***
- e. Architectural technologists***
- f. Chefs***

Thank you!
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Questions?

