

Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) on Foundation Degree Programmes

How to gain
higher education credits quickly
using what you learn at work



Introduction for learners

What are Foundation Degrees?

Foundation Degrees are university-level qualifications, designed to equip you for a particular area of work – as well as giving you the general skills that are useful in any type of job.

Foundation Degrees integrate academic and work-based learning and are intended to equip you with the skills and knowledge relevant to your employment. Learning and work are closely interlinked within foundation Degree programmes.

One of the important strengths of Foundation Degrees is that they will normally link to at least one programme leading to a bachelors degree with honours. It is often quicker to complete a Foundation Degree than to start a bachelors degree with honours on a part time basis.

Typically, on foundation degrees, you will get the chance to learn in the workplace as well as the classroom and it is often possible to study flexibly. So whether you are looking to change job, return to work or boost your current career prospects, Foundation Degrees offer a route into higher education for people of all ages and backgrounds

What is Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)

The accreditation of prior experiential learning or APEL, is based on the idea that many adults acquire knowledge and skills through experience at work. An APEL process looks at the learning that takes place at work and relates it to credits, courses and modules in higher education. This can enable learners to move more quickly through a Foundation Degree.

Adults can use APEL on most foundation degrees to show the learning they have achieved through work.

Why claim credit through APEL?

1. You can save time by completing your foundation degree more quickly. The APEL credits count toward the first level of the foundation degree
2. You can even start the APEL process before you enrol as a student to get a good start on the programme
3. You can avoid having to repeat learning already undertaken at work
4. You can save money

For what 'type' of learning can APEL credit be awarded?

A wide range of work experiences could provide the opportunities to move more quickly through a foundation degree, although it is the ability to demonstrate your learning, rather than simply stating your experience which is the basis for being awarded higher education credits.

Since this learning will not have been previously assessed, a claim for APEL credit involves the submission of documents which form evidence for that learning. This will be explained in more detail later.

There are some fundamental principles to the process of APEL:

1. Learning must be measurable and credit cannot be awarded for experience alone - it is the learning that really counts;
2. The learning to be credited must be related to the course;
3. The learning must serve as a basis for further learning;
4. The learning should bear some relationship to the individual's educational goals;
5. The assessment of APEL credit must be made by appropriate assessors.

How much APL credit can I claim?

The minimum amount of credit which can awarded is equivalent to one module which equals 20 credits. The maximum amount is 40 credits. These credits are at level 4.

Is there an 'expiry date' for my learning?

There is no standard expiry date after which learning cannot be used to gain credit. However, a judgement will be made by the APEL Board as to how appropriate it would be to award credit that is not current. It may be necessary to provide evidence that the learning has been kept up to date.

How much does APEL cost?

Each APEL credit currently costs about £7 but this is only a guide price.

How can I apply for APEL credit?

This booklet will take you through the process.

Case Studies

We have included these case studies to illustrate how APEL has worked for other students in the past.

Rajinder Minhas



My name is **Rajinder Minhas** and I work as a Higher Level Teaching Assistant in a secondary school. I am responsible for raising student attainment and monitoring student progress. I hold line management responsibilities for the team of teaching assistants and I maintain the SEN register. I have seven years experience - originally as a TA and the last four years as a HLTA. It was very useful to me to have the experience to gain APEL – this was extremely helpful in achieving the foundation degree.

I used the APEL guidelines which were very helpful and straightforward to follow. I gave examples of situations where I had learnt at work with positive results backed by evidence from the inclusion manager, SENCo and head teacher. I also reflected on my learning at work and demonstrated how I have taken positive actions with positive results.

Case Study

Michelle Bate



My name is **Michelle Bate** and I am currently working as a Home School Community Liaison Officer. I am also the designated Child protection Officer and also hold Higher Level Teaching assistant status.

I achieved APEL by reflecting on my everyday experiences at work and I gathered evidence from my workplace to support this. I gathered information about my role in health and safety within the setting, as well as planning, observing and assessing. I asked my line manager to take part in the process and to support my reflections how and what I have learned from my roles and responsibilities and also how I have developed as a practitioner.

Case Study

Melanie Burke



My name is **Melanie Burke** and I am studying on the Early Years Services foundation degree. I am currently working as a Senior Nursery Nurse at a private day nursery, I have been there nearly 3 years.

Applying for APEL has ensured my past learning is recognised and will hopefully enable me to finish the foundation degree a semester sooner.

I read the APEL guidelines to see what I could claim; I then completed the APEL process which was basically reflecting on my workplace learning. I asked my manager to take part and she outlined my roles and responsibilities in the workplace and helped me to see what I had learned over the past 2 years. I have also claimed APL for British Sign Language levels 1 and 2. These options have helped me to move more quickly through my foundation degree.

Case Study

Nighat Mehmood



My name is **Nighat Mehmood** and I study on the foundation degree in Early Years Services. I am currently working as a Family Support worker at a Children's Centre. I have been working with children and families since 2003. APEL has helped me to achieve credits on my degree to complete my Foundation degree in a shorter amount of time. I wrote about my current experiences within my workplace using the APEL guidelines for help. I gathered information about what I learn at work which included what I have learned from my roles and responsibilities. I then reflected on my learning experiences and development and involved my line manager in this process. I will finish my foundation degree earlier and the process was useful too. I learnt more about reflection and improving the work that I do.

Case Study

Rachel McCormick



My name is **Rachel McCormick**. I am a Higher Level Teaching Assistant. I now have a Foundation Degree in Learning Support. Being able to obtain APEL credits was really useful in recognising my previous learning at work as it enabled me to complete my foundation degree more quickly. It gave me the opportunity to gain credit for everyday learning at work and put it to good use in developing my career. I had to write about my current practice, showing my learning while working with whole classes, on my own and my experience of managing other professionals. This was supported by a conversations with my head teacher. The APEL guidelines were really useful to ensure I did not forget anything. The only thing I wished I had done differently is to have applied for my APEL credits at the first opportunity. I consulted my head teacher about APEL and she confirmed this during the process of my application.

The APEL Process

Introduction

This process involves the cooperation of your line manager at work. This is usually someone like a:

- Nursery manager;
- Head teacher;
- Deputy head teacher;
- Centre Manager.

It is absolutely vital that you seek the cooperation and agreement of your line manager before starting the APEL process. You cannot succeed in the process without this agreement and cooperation.

If you are finding it difficult to identify a line manager, please speak to your personal tutor in the first instance.

The Process

This APEL process is about identifying your learning at work through reflection on what you have learned and a dialogue with your line manager.

The process will take some time and needs to be carried out in well before the APEL submission date. You will be introduced to the process in the module: The Reflective Practitioner (4SN002).

There are two opportunities to gain 20 credits - there are 40 APEL credits in total. The first 20 will be assessed in semester 1 and the second 20 in semester 2 of your first year on the foundation degree.

Semester 1 credits will be about the learning you have experienced in your work place.

Semester 2 credits will be about the learning you have experienced with partners (people and organisations) outside your actual workplace but essential to the work that you do. This could be for example:

Parents/families;

Local authorities;

SEN agencies;

Members of multidisciplinary agencies;

Other schools or early years settings;

local community organisations;

PCTs;

Ofsted;

The Assessment

The following outcomes will be used to assess your APEL claim. These statements come from the foundation degree learning outcomes and you will need to keep these firmly in mind as you go through the APEL process. (See appendix 2).

- 1. Show the importance and challenges of leading practice and supporting others**
- 2. Reflect on your own strengths, weaknesses and values**
- 3. Develop specialist knowledge, especially related to: inclusion, diversity, equity, safeguarding**
- 4. Seek advice and guidance toward problem solving**
- 5. Develop the qualities and transferable skills necessary for lifelong learning, including digital literacy**

In order to verify APEL claims and gather further information, we may contact line managers to discuss the claim.

The APL process step by step – tick off the tasks as you do them

Task	Done?
1. Read through the guidance above and ensure that you are clear about the APEL process. This will be supported by the Reflective Practitioner (4SN002) module.	
1. Complete the Application Form below carefully.	
2. Make sure you have attached your line manger’s Professional Witness statement to your application.	
<p>3. Complete the Dialogue form carefully and ensure it is signed by your line manger. These are the most important forms in the process. You will be successful if you take your time, refer to the assessment criteria (see appendix 1) and start this process early in the semester. This is not something that can be done overnight. Start talking to your line manager at the start of each semester about this process.</p> <p>The form is included in this booklet but should be completed as a WORD document and printed out. You can find the form on the WOLF SED SJA Student Support Site in the APL section. Your line manger’s comments can be hand written or typed.</p>	
4. Print out a copy of your current university transcript from evision and attach to the other documents. The transcript must be within a month of the date of the APEL Board meeting.	
5. Attach the CV you have already created in the Reflective Practitioner module	
6. Your application can be submitted as sheets of A4 paper stapled together with the Application form clearly on the front. Please don’t put the application in plastic wallets or any other kind of folder.	
7. Ensure all documentation is handed in or posted to ‘the APEL secretary’ in the school office in WN block at Walsall Campus who will log its arrival. She will email you a receipt.	
8. After the APEL Board has met, you can check evision for your results. It may take up to 20 working days after the Board for the credits to appear on your transcript. If you are unsuccessful and we do not award credits then we will email you at the address supplied on the Application form.	

APEL Application Form.

Part One – applicant to complete.

Your name:	Your student Number:
Your email address:	Date of application:
First submission? <input type="checkbox"/> Resit? <input type="checkbox"/>	SEM 1 <input type="checkbox"/> SEM 2 <input type="checkbox"/>
Please tick which award you are studying:	
Foundation Degree Supporting Inclusive Practice	<input type="checkbox"/>
Foundation Degree Early Years Services	<input type="checkbox"/>
BA award title:	
Name of line manager:	
Position:	
Address and telephone number:	
Total Amount Payable £200	
Signed by student:	

Part Two – assessors to complete.

Summary of credits recommended	Number of credits
SEM 1 Level 4 credits recommended	
SEM 2 level 4 credits recommended	
Assessor signature:	Date:
Verifier signature:	Date:

This form supersedes all other SJA claim forms for APL (Andy Cramp July 2010)

APL Costs: payment will be due once assessment of your claim has taken place; this is a non-refundable payment; there is one 'resit' option for which you must meet the deadline and submit the whole application again, showing clearly where you have made changes and/or additions to the claim; you will be invoiced by the School of Education for the APL fee; non payment may lead to University sanctions.

Dialogue Form.

Semester 1: Learning at Work (20 credits at L4)

Action	Your response	Your line manager's reflective comments
In 200 words or less, please describe your current role at work		
How long have you been in this post?		
Is it part time or full time? If part time please give details.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reflecting on the past two years, outline 3 important and positive learning experiences at work that resulted from an action you took; • what skills and knowledge did you learn from these experiences? • how did your action change the workplace? • how did you change? • discuss these 3 learning experiences with your line manger ; • please do not write more than 200 words for each experience. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • again, reflecting on the past two years, outline 3 important ways in which you think you could have improved your practice at work; • discuss these 3 learning experiences with your line manger; • what learning do you need to take part in to support these improvements? • Please do not write more than 200 words for each experience 		

Dialogue Form

Semester 2: Learning with Other Agencies (20 credits at L4)

Action	Your response	Your line manager's reflective comments
<p>In 200 words or less, please describe your current role at work. You can carry these details over from semester 1.</p>		
<p>How long have you been in this post?</p>		
<p>Is it part time or full time?</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reflecting on the past two years, outline 3 important and positive learning experiences at work that resulted from an action you took; • The focus here should be on working with people and/or agencies outside the setting; • who were the people and/or agencies? • what skills and knowledge did you learn from these experiences? • how did your action improve an aspect of your workplace? • how did you change? • discuss these 3 learning experiences with your line manger ; • please do not write more than 200 words for each experience. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • again, reflecting on the past two years, outline 3 important ways in which you think you could have improved your practice working with people and/or agencies outside the setting; • who were the people and/or agencies? • discuss these 3 ideas with your line manger; • what learning do you need to take part in to support these improvements? • please do not write more than 200 words for each experience. 		

Professional Witness Statement

Thank you for taking part in this APEL process. We rely on your professional judgements to verify and endorse (if possible) the student’s learning at work. We also hope this APEL process is useful to you in your professional dialogues with those you line manage. As well as making contributions to the Dialogue forms, we also need your comments against the headings below. Students do not need to cover all these learning areas but please make a comment where you can. The headings are meant to help you think about the learning the student has undertaken during the past 2 years at work.

Thanks again for your support.

Learning Area	Line manager comments
1. Show the importance and challenges of leading practice and supporting others	
2. Reflect on your own strengths, weaknesses and values	
3. Develop specialist knowledge, especially related to: inclusion, diversity, equity, safeguarding	
4. Seek advice and guidance toward problem solving	
5. Develop the qualities and transferable skills necessary for lifelong learning, including digital literacy	

I confirm that the information given above is a true account

Signed by line manager:..... Date:.....

Signed by student: Date.....

Appendix 1

Assessment Criteria

This is the assessment criteria that will be used to assess the outcome of the APEL process. This is for information only.

Learning (1= strong response)	1	2	3	Comments
1. Show the importance and challenges of leading practice and supporting others				
2. Reflect on your own strengths, weaknesses and values				
3. Develop specialist knowledge, especially related to: inclusion, diversity, equity, safeguarding				
4. Seek advice and guidance toward problem solving				
5. Develop the qualities and transferable skills necessary for lifelong learning, including digital literacy				

Award credits?

Yes

No

Signed by assessor:

Date:

Signed by moderator:

Date:

Appendix 2

Foundation Degree: Early Years Services Learning Outcomes

1. To demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the importance and challenges of leading practice and supporting others, to meet the needs of children and families, including health and well-being.
2. To demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the expected pattern of children's development from birth, including pedagogical approaches, creative planning of learning opportunities, the curriculum, the learning environment, assessment and methods of researching these.
3. To demonstrate knowledge and understanding of issues in relation to rights, diversity, equity and inclusion in relation to working with children and families in a global context.
4. To make critical judgements about key theories, principles and issues of policy in a systematic way through their development as a reflective practitioner.
5. To be able to reflect on your own value system and evaluate your personal strengths and weaknesses for future learning and apply this to your academic study and professional practice.
6. To undertake enterprising work-based investigation and problem-solving and be able to communicate clearly a wide range of theoretical positions to a range of audiences using appropriate media and digital literacy skills.

Foundation Degree: Supporting Inclusive Practice Learning Outcomes

1. Demonstrate the underlying values and principles relevant to the ideologies of inclusion, including the diversity of learners and the complexities of the inclusion process.
2. Evaluate the societal and organisational structures and purposes of social systems, and their possible implications in the workplace.
3. Analyse inclusion concepts, theories and issues in a systematic way and identify and apply subject knowledge in professional practice.
4. Process a range of relevant empirical and theoretical data to propose solutions to problems in different contexts.
5. Reflect on your own value system, relating this to social diversity and global citizenship.
6. Develop the qualities and transferable skills necessary for lifelong learning, including digital literacy.

Appendix 3

The document:

**Higher Education Credit Framework for England (QAA, 2008)
defines completion of this level as the ability to:**

1. develop a rigorous approach to the acquisition of a broad knowledge base;
2. employ a range of specialised skills;
3. evaluate information, using it to plan and develop investigative strategies and to determine solutions to a variety of unpredictable problems;
4. operate in a range of varied and specific contexts, taking responsibility for the nature and quality of outputs.

Notes

