



Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)

GUIDELINES FOR THE FACULTY READER EVALUATION OF AN APEL ESSAY PACKET

Introduction

People are learning at all stages of their lives. At EOU, we recognize the following:

- There is diversity in how individuals learn.
- Learning occurs outside the traditional college classroom.
- Some of this learning can be assessed and ultimately used for credit toward completion of a degree plan at the university level.

Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning is acknowledged as a technique that can be used to validate and reliably evaluate **learning** from life experiences...competencies that came from jobs, volunteering in a community, participating in hobbies, or maybe even traveling.

Within the administration of EOU and APEL, we also recognize the demographics of our institution's student population and the priorities as outlined in our strategic planning goals. There is documentation from the Council on Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) that prior learning assessment within a collegiate curriculum is highly recommended for both recruitment and retention of adult students.

APEL 390 - Portfolio Development

APEL 390 is the EOU course in which students are taught the prior learning assessment process. Within the outcomes of this course, students will identify what they have learned during their adult life experiences; the course helps learners articulate what they know and can do and ultimately back up their claims to creditable achievements. Significant learning from life experience is mandatory for a learner to use this credit option at EOU. Therefore, advisor recommendation for student enrollment is a prerequisite. Learning Essay packets are developed as a means for students to provide evidence that they already know designated learning outcomes within a specific discipline. APEL Learning Essay Packets are designed to give evidence that the student has a balance between theory, application, and learning. The Faculty Expectations written by academic faculty from the various disciplines at EOU are of critical importance in helping students focus essays using the guidelines pertinent to the essay topic.

Faculty Reader Evaluation of APEL Learning Essay Packets

After completing the APEL 390 course, students may submit Learning Essay packets for evaluation and credit recommendations within a specific discipline. A CAEL standard is that competent, objective experts in the particular subject field in which the topic of the essay packet focuses provide the assessment or judging of the packet. Therefore, you...the Eastern Oregon University academic faculty...are the readers of the learning essay packets and make the credit recommendations. Credit is earned only from the learning that has come from life experience and then...only for learning that is deemed to match college level achievement.

Selection, Orientation, and Updating Faculty Readers

The Dean of the School of Education and Business or the Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences will approve faculty to become readers of APEL Learning Essay Packets. After faculty is approved, the Director of Portfolio will orient the selected faculty to the policies and procedures of the APEL process. Reviews to update faculty readers and to obtain faculty feedback will be conducted on an annual basis. The orientation and reviews may be either with individuals or in group settings.

Communication with Students prior to APEL Essay Packet Submission

- **Faculty Expectations**

The faculty within a specific discipline will be asked to review their respective Faculty Expectations on at least a yearly basis. At any time the faculty may update their documents by contacting the Director of Portfolio. These documents are posted on the APEL website at www.eou.edu/apel and are the primary method for students to know individual discipline requirements and insights.

- **Direct contact between the student and faculty**

In their Faculty Expectations, some faculty request that a student make some brief contact with the reader prior to initiating the essay writing process. We appreciate your willingness to offer this extra assistance as it does greatly help students focus their writing. Sometimes faculty suggests a student NOT write in a chosen topic; of course we appreciate knowing this before a student puts extensive effort into a project! Timeliness in your feedback to the student is appreciated. If this essay is the student's first APEL Essay Learning Packet, he/she will be writing the document in the APEL 390 course and must receive a closing grade for APEL 390 at the end of the term. The student will be selecting the essay topic by the fourth week of the term so there is major work for the student to accomplish in the remaining weeks of the term. (The student will then have one year to submit this APEL Essay Learning Packet or others for the evaluation of the academic faculty readers Students may earn up to 45 credits in this manner).

- **Faculty/student contact when "selected topic" essays are requested**

Essay Learning Packets should target specific disciplines and generally to the learning outcomes identified in the syllabi of specific courses that EOU includes within our curriculum. It is also recognized that many disciplines include selected topics courses in which the subject is individually identified. Unless otherwise stated in the Faculty Expectations, the APEL recommendations will always include that a student contact and obtain approval from the appropriate faculty prior to initiating an essay that would be a selected topic.

APEL Evaluation Procedures

- **Routing Essays:** Essay packets for evaluation will be routed to the faculty by a specified classified staff person located in Regional Operations. The Essay Packet will usually come to the designated reader by campus mail. If there is some uncertainty as to who should be the designated reader, the Essay Packet may be sent from Regional Operations to the school office to be distributed to the appropriate reader. *Reviews are usually expected to be completed within two weeks.*
- **Evaluation Form and Credit Recommendation:** An evaluation form that is to be completed by the faculty reader will accompany the essay packet. The form includes a checklist for the reader to indicate satisfactory or unsatisfactory status for organization, style, documentation, and bibliography. There is a section to give an explanation of why academic credit was recommended or denied. Topics to be addressed include:
 - Evidence of College-level equivalency
 - Statement of Strengths
 - Statement of Weaknesses

The faculty will then document their credit recommendation on this form as to the following:

- number of credits to be awarded (up or down from the student credit request)
- whether the credit should be at upper or lower division
- the title of how the credit should be identified on the transcript (if the student's self-assessment of the title is inaccurate, reword to more accurately represent the learning)
- if requested by the student, whether the credit meets general education requirements within a specific gen ed category

In the APEL Essay Packet, the student will include a credit request. However, the faculty has total authority in the recommendation of credit and should modify the credit recommendation accordingly. For example, faculty may recommend the **same as** the student request, recommend **more** credits than the request, recommend **less** credits than the request, recommend lower division when the request was for upper division (or vice versa), etc. Even if an essay may not be recommended for meeting general education requirements, credit may still be useful as an elective in the student's degree program.

In reading an Essay Learning Packet, Faculty may evaluate that the documented learning is less than satisfactory to recommend credit at this time. There are several options. Faculty may suggest that the student submit revisions: expand the discussion of topics not adequately addressed, provide increased dialogue regarding the theoretical framework or specific concepts, include more illustrations from application, ask if other documentation is available to back up claims, etc. Please give your suggestions on the section of the evaluation form titled "Recommendation for Improvement/Further Evaluation." Some disciplines discuss this revision process on their Faculty Expectation Sheets and allow students at least one re-read by the faculty reader. We would hope that APEL submissions would be satisfactory or have potential for revisions. However, if this were not the case, the APEL instructors would appreciate knowing appropriate changes so that we can guide students in developing better APEL Essay Packets.

- **Returning the Evaluation To Regional Operations:** Upon completion of the evaluation, please return the APEL Essay Packet and Credit Recommendation Form by campus mail to Dee Toland in Regional Operations.
- **Process Completion:** The process now includes the formation of a Credit Award Letter that will be sent from Regional Operations along with your credit recommendation to the Dean of your academic school and to the Provost for their signatures. When the student has paid the fee for the

credits, the Registrar will add the credits to his/her transcript. Lower division credit is transcribed as APEL 299 and upper division credit is transcribed as APEL 499. The discipline and topic will also be included.

- **Faculty Payment:** Faculty will be paid by their respective college at a rate of \$100 per essay read. Payments will be made once a term; the date you evaluate the essay will determine in which term payment is made.
- **Appeal by Student:** The student has 30 days to make an appeal to your evaluation of the credit recommendation. The appeal is to be sent to the Director of Portfolio. You will be contacted to discuss the nature of the appeal and discuss the response that should be officially sent to the student by the Director of Portfolio. If further appeal by the student is requested, it will be directed to the appropriate academic dean just as grade appeals are routed for regular courses.

General Guidelines When Reading an APEL Essay Packet

- “Equivalent to college-level” is not synonymous with “identical” when considering the content you would include in a course of this subject in the traditional classroom. Essay Learning Packets are focused to specific disciplines that EOU includes within our curriculum. It is recommended by the APEL instructors that students review the General Academic Catalog and course syllabi to identify specific courses that are similar to the student’s self-assessment of learning. From the syllabi, the student can ascertain the learning outcomes to be addressed within an essay.
- APEL credit is transcribed on the EOU records as “S” credit. Therefore, even if we desire that all essays are “A” equivalent, faculty should recognize that “C” work does qualify for passing and credit should be awarded.
- Credit through the APEL process is more than writing a report on what was accomplished when having a specific experience. Students must include at least three components as outlined by the EOU Faculty in a previous document titled “Summary of Essay Expectations”:

The essay should include three components – theory, application, and learning.

- In the discussion of “theory,” the student should reference current readings, demonstrate knowledge of the area, and cite references that show what they know of the content of the topic being addressed.
- In the discussion of “experience,” the student should explain in detail the experiences that have developed or refined the base of knowledge the student is claiming. This is not to be a chronological listing of experience in the general area of the topic of the essay. It is to be very specific and tied directly to the topic. Other extraneous material should be omitted.
- Students preparing essays should strive to demonstrate a balance between personal experience and an acquired knowledge of general principles of the discipline. The essay should demonstrate what the student knows, how they came to know it, how they applied it.

APEL Administrative Staff and APEL Committee

APEL is administered by the Office of Academic Affairs:

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APEL Review Committee – This oversight committee has been implemented to review policy and procedures of the APEL credit option at EOU and to facilitate communication with the administration and teaching faculty.

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