

ASSESSMENT OF PRIOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING (APEL) EASTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY PROCESS AND GUIDELINES

I. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT

Eastern Oregon University follows the standards and principles of good practice as outlined in the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning's publication titled Assessing Learning – Standards, Principles and Practices by Urban Whitaker (1989). Two categories are listed as follows:

Academic Standards – related to the assessment process itself

1. Credit should be awarded only for learning, and not for experience.
2. College credit should be awarded only for college-level learning.
3. Credit should be awarded only for learning that has a balance, appropriate to the subject, between theory and practical application.
4. Appropriate subject matter and academic experts must make the determination of competence levels and of credit awards.
5. Credit should be appropriate to the academic context in which it is accepted.

Administrative Standards - related to the context in which the assessment and award of credit take place

6. Credit awards and their transcript entries should be monitored to avoid giving credit twice for the same learning.
7. Policies and procedures applied to assessment, including provision for appeal, should be fully disclosed and prominently available.
8. Fees charged for assessment should be based on the services performed in the process and not determined by the amount of credit awarded.
9. All personnel involved in the assessment of learning should receive adequate training for the functions they perform, and there should be provision for their continued professional development.
10. Assessment programs should be regularly monitored, reviewed, evaluated, and revised as needed to reflect changes in the needs being served and in the state of the assessment arts.

II. RATIONALE

The primary impetus for this document was the creation of the External Degree (BA/BS) in General Studies at Eastern Oregon College in May 1978. This degree was approved by the State Board of Higher Education in recognition of the special needs of adults in the rural areas of the state. It was the major focus of efforts aimed at offering programs, which were packaged so that non-traditional students could participate in them, and obtain their baccalaureate degree. Since 1978, there have been many changes. The institution is now Eastern Oregon University and the Office of Academic Affairs now administers the program directed toward adult students both in Oregon and throughout the United States and Canada. Multiple degrees are now offered online and the External Degree in General Studies is now called Integrative Studies.

Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning continues to be a necessary and relevant option for adult students receiving degrees at Eastern Oregon University. Such assessment provides recognition for non-traditional college-level learning. It may shorten the time needed to complete a degree, and involves the adult learner in a developmental process, which in itself has much value.

III. ELIGIBILITY

Regularly admitted EOU degree seeking students may enroll in APEL 390, Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning, the course in which the prior learning assessment process is taught. Students successfully completing this course may continue in the APEL process by developing Learning Essay Packets to be evaluated by the EOU academic faculty. (Students in approved collaborative programs with EOU may also be considered for APEL.) Students should have their advisor's approval to enroll in APEL. Students who participate in this credit option should have had experiences from their adult life that appear to provide potential for college-level learning.

IV. ADMINISTRATION AND STAFFING

- **Administration:** The APEL program will be administered in cooperation with the Office of Academic Affairs. A Director of Portfolio Assessment, under the supervision of the Provost, will oversee the standards and operations. Assurance of fair and consistent treatment of students will be part of the Director's role.
- **APEL 390 Instructors:** Instructors for the APEL 390 course will meet EOU instructional teaching criteria and be approved through the academic colleges of EOU.
- **Faculty Readers:** Eastern Oregon University academic faculty from the disciplines represented at EOU will be selected as APEL faculty readers to evaluate Learning Essay Packets in topics of their respective disciplines. The faculty reader will make a credit recommendation. These faculty will be approved by their respective College Dean and participate in training provided by the Director of Portfolio Assessment. The faculty reader will be paid a flat fee per each essay evaluated.
- **Credit Award Signers:** Signers on the Credit Award will verify that adopted standards, standards, and procedures have been met. Two signatures will be required on the credit award:
 - 1) the College Dean of the faculty reader (verifying the credentials of the faculty reader) and
 - 2) the Provost (verifying the administrative standards and procedures).
- **APEL Reviewers:** A committee of selected EOU faculty readers, academic administrators, and the APEL Director will be activated on a bi-annual basis to review the standards and procedures of the APEL program. Their recommendations and adoptions will be made available in appropriate institutional publications.

V. EOU GUIDELINES

- **Fees** - APEL 390 is a four credit upper-division course. The cost per credit will be the same as for other credits offered through the EOU online/onsite program. Cost per credit awarded from evaluation of APEL Learning Essay Packets will be identified in online EOU publications. Regional Offices can also confirm current fees. The current cost per credit will be entered on the APEL Agreement that the student signs.
- **Credit Limitations** - Credit awarded for Learning Essay Packets is limited to 45 credits at an under graduate level. (In accordance with the Northwest Commission on Colleges & Universities (NWCCU), regional accreditor, the 45 credits reflect a 25% maximum of the minimum credits required for an EOU Baccalaureate degree.)
Students are advised that APEL credit may not be transferable to other institutions.
- **Degree Requirements met by APEL Credit** - Credit from essay assessment has the potential to meet elective, general education, or major requirements within a student's EOU degree plan. The advisor attempts to guide a student to work on essays that would be focused on degree-completion gaps. Prior to the faculty reader's evaluation, there are no assurances as to the number of credits to be awarded, upper division determination as compared to lower division credit, or how credit will "fit" a degree plan. The credit awarded will ultimately be recorded by the Registrar on the student transcript as APEL 299 for lower division credit and APEL 499 for upper division credit except for Business credits which are awarded as BA 210 for lower division credit and BA 410 as upper division credit.

VI. PROCEDURES

1. The student obtains information from the APEL Director. Discussion with the academic advisor is strongly recommended.
2. The student enrolls in APEL 390, Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning, and completes the course with a grade of S/U. Among the objectives of this course are providing the following:
 - a. Guidelines as to definition of college-level learning.
 - b. An essay development process that ties learning from the prior experience to the theory of the relevant academic field. (Credit is awarded only for demonstrated college-level learning and not for the experience per se.)
 - c. The standards that are appropriate for performance in the various EOU disciplines as outlined in the individual Faculty Expectations submitted by faculty readers in the various subject fields
3. The student submits the first Learning Essay Packet to the APEL Instructor and all future essays to his/her advisor. The packet is then forwarded to the APEL Director or the office specialist located in Regional Operations for routing to the appropriate college and approved faculty reader with expertise in the essay topic.

4. An EOU academic faculty reader from the discipline of the essay topic evaluates the Learning Essay Packet and makes a credit recommendation. The reader verifies the following:
 - a. The documented learning would be expected to fall within the regular curricular offerings of Eastern Oregon University either as outcomes from regular courses or as special topics.
 - b. The learning is at college-level, comparable to credit earned by traditional means.
 - c. The documented learning ties the student's experience to the theories of the respective academic field.
 - d. Credit from APEL essays does not duplicate other credit that is on the student's transcript.
5. If the credit recommendation is identical to the credit request, the APEL Director will initiate a process wherein the "recommendation" is converted to a "credit award." The credit award letter will document the number of credits awarded, the upper/lower division level determination, and (if applicable) meeting of any general education requirement. The credit award requires approval from the faculty reader's College Dean (verifying the expertise/qualifications of the faculty reader) and the Provost (verifying the processes of administrative standards and procedure.)
6. The student receives a credit award and billing statement that is generated by the specified office specialist located in ACA.
7. If the credit recommendation varies from the request, the advisor and/or APEL instructor communicates with the student to determine if the credit recommendation will be accepted. In some situations the student may choose to amend the essay with the intent of resubmitting the essay for a second evaluation.
8. Upon receiving the billing statement, the student sends payment to the EOU Student Accounts Office. If payment is not made punctually, the EOU Student Accounts Office will add the amount due to the student's account. If payment is sent directly to the Student Accounts Office, it is requested that the student also notify the APEL Director that payment has been made.
9. Upon verification of payment, APEL Director or the Regional Operations office specialist will notify the Registrar who will post credit on the student's transcript. The transcript notation will designate that credit was awarded through Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning.

Appeals to the faculty reader's credit recommendation should be made within 30 days to the APEL Director. A final appeal may be made to the College Dean associated with the discipline of the essay. This process is comparable to that used when a student files a grade grievance.

VII. ADVISING FOLLOW-UP

After receiving credit for prior learning, the student shall work with his/her advisor to update the degree completion plan. APEL credits can be used toward any degree program at Eastern Oregon University.