

## **REFINE project. England and Wales - Quality Assurance**

1. What quality assurance arrangements are in place for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in the organisations in your group? How is the **quality of the process** of recognition assured?

The UK tool consists of three sets of general principles for the quality assurance of the process for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Each set is designed to meet the specific roles and responsibilities of the major stakeholders, primarily the deliverers, ie universities, but also those organizations within a country charged with monitoring (and maybe regulating) the process (monitors) and the sponsors of the candidates, be it the employer or the individual, (user)

See the appendix

2. What quality assurance arrangements are in place in relation to the specific tool(s) that you have tested? How is the **quality of the specific procedure** assured?

If this is different in each organisation, please explain briefly

As explained in Q1, the tool is one of quality assurance itself, with each of the stakeholders having a set of general principles by which to abide. Also each stakeholder knows the general principles by which the other stakeholders should be held accountable. For example there is a set of general principles for the quality assurance of the 'monitors', who in turn have a set of principles against which the 'deliverers' can be held accountable.

The three sets of principles have been piloted with a sample of respondents from each stakeholder group and have gained universal approval. As with all processes and procedures, there will need to be

- a) adaptation when being applied in a new situation, eg in a different country
- b) continuous review with updating as and when appropriate.

3. In the light of your work in Refine, what do you think are the **key features of a quality assurance arrangement** for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning?

The key feature is transparency, so that all the participants/stakeholders are clear as to their roles and their responsibilities and how these impinge upon others in the process.

4. What do you think is the **most effective kind of quality assurance arrangement** for recognition of non-formal and informal learning?

Based upon the long practical experience by large numbers of universities in the UK, it is thought that the general principles proposed by the UK are an extremely sound basis for an effective QA arrangement.

5. Any other comments about quality in the recognition of non-formal and informal learning?

As with any learning, wherever and however it takes place, the emphasis should be on supporting the learner to gain access to a quality –assured process leading to an accurate, full and complete recognition of that learning.

## **Appendix**

The Tool:

The proposed, general principles (Code of Practice) for the accreditation of informal and non-formal learning (APEL).

General goals

- Give a Quality Assurance framework for the validation/accreditation/recognition of informal and non-formal learning
- Provide persons and institutions with a common tool for APEL
- This tool can be integrated into a European credit and qualifications framework
- Create a tool responding to the will of the EU to reinforce and valorise voluntary commitment and participation

Aims

- Ensure transparency in the validation/accreditation/recognition process
- Ensure that the learners and/or their sponsors (e.g. employers) are treated equitably, in a fair and impartial manner by the providers of the process.
- To provide the stakeholders with a their own set of guidelines within a general set of overall guidelines

General framework

The tool comes in three parts:

The recognition/validation/accreditation of informal and non-formal learning for

- Learners/candidates and their sponsors
- Delivery institutions e.g. universities
- Monitors and regulators

### **Bespoke principles – Users/Candidates**

The following general principles are designed to ensure that the user/learner (or their sponsoring organisation) has access to recognition (Principle 9), has the definitions clearly defined in line with all other delivering institutions in that country and within Europe (Principle 1) and is provided with transparent documentation and information which clearly sets out the process and procedures including the responsibilities of all those taking part (Principle 4). The educational institution (and the employer) should ensure that the key aspect is the development of the learner (Principle 8). In addition, it is expected that the sponsoring organisations; employers, youth or voluntary bodies embed APEL within their organisation (Principle 3).

REFINE: General principles (Code of Practice) for the recognition of Formal and Informal Learning (APEL) – for USERS/LEARNERS/CANDIDATES/SPONSORING ORGANISATIONS

1. Common definitions are needed to both safeguard and ensure the highest quality arrangements for APEL services.

APEL is defined as the assessment/accreditation of certificated and non-certificated learning (including the assessment of experiential learning). It is recognised that there are other definitions in use.

2. Organisations should seek to embed APEL processes across their learning strategy and policy. Experience to date suggests that APEL arrangements can be introduced into existing provision through, for example, the process of review and validation.

3. APEL procedures and practices should be properly documented and made available to all. Responsibility for all of the stages of the APEL process from initial enquiry to the award of credit should be clearly defined. It is important to make explicit the roles and responsibilities of all staff. Information on the responsibilities of the learners needs to be clear and readily available.

4. Organisations should promote the recognition of APEL as a part of the developmental process for the learner.

Organisations should subscribe to the ideal that the recognition of APEL is not an end in itself, but an integral part of lifelong learning and the continuing development of the learner.

5. Formal recognition of APEL should be available.

It is important that the learner receives a clear record of the learning which has been recognised.

The format of the recognition could be located on a scale from 'valuing' to formal certification.

Although APEL should be made available and easily accessible to all potential learners, the decision to determine the nature of the recognition will rest with the learner. However, formal certification will normally require some form of assessment.

### **Bespoke principles - Deliverers**

The code, consisting of 9 principles, for delivering organisations, recognises their obligations to provide the learner with an assurance of quality, transparency and impartiality. In addition, the deliverers should also include in the code the principles governing its own internal quality requirements. Similarly the deliverers will be subject to external scrutiny either by the government or by an independent agency set up by the government and so must have in place the necessary procedures.

REFINE: General Principles (Code of Practice) for the recognition of Formal and Informal Learning (APEL) – for DELIVERING/PROVIDING ORGANISATIONS, E.G. UNIVERSITIES

1. Common definitions are needed to both safeguard and ensure the highest quality arrangements for APEL services.

APEL is defined as the assessment/accreditation of certificated and non-certificated learning (including the assessment of experiential learning). It is recognised that there are other definitions in use.

2. A clear statement of the organisation's commitment to APEL should be provided and included in all relevant literature.

This statement could be included in organisational documentation at a strategic level including mission statements, strategic plans and programme information relating to access and admissions to membership and/or educational/training/developmental programmes. It also should be prominent in information aimed at learners including career development, and the programme handbook.

3. Organisations should seek to embed APEL processes across their learning strategy and policy. Experience to date suggests that APEL arrangements can be introduced into existing provision through, for example, the process of review and validation.

4. APEL procedures and practices should be properly documented and made available to all. Responsibility for all of the stages of the APEL process from initial enquiry to the award of credit should be clearly defined. It is important to make explicit the roles and responsibilities of all staff. Information on the responsibilities of the learners needs to be clear and readily available.

5. APEL services should be fully integrated within an organisation's quality assurance processes. APEL involves academic judgement and can lead to the award of credit. It should be subject to the organisation's quality assurance systems.

6. APEL policies, procedures, documentation and outcomes should be monitored. Monitoring the impact and performance of all stages of the APEL process should contribute to the improvement of learning strategy, policy and operation.

7. Adequate preparation is required for all persons involved in the APEL process. The widest participation of staff in APEL will be necessary. This will require the training and development of staff to improve services to learners.

8. Organisations should promote the recognition of APEL as a part of the developmental process for the learner.

Organisations should subscribe to the ideal that the recognition of APEL is not an end in itself, but an integral part of lifelong learning and the continuing development of the learner.

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### **Bespoke principles – Monitors/regulators**

The code, consisting of 5 principles, for the monitors/regulators which will often be government bodies or independent agencies set up by the government. However professional bodies, who have delegated the delivery to other institutions, will also act as external monitors for those institutions. The role of the monitors is essentially to ensure that deliverers provide a high quality service. The service provided should conform to the standards set within the country for the recognition, assessment and accreditation of learning.

General principles for the recognition of Formal and Informal Learning (APEL) – for organisations  
MONITORING AND OVERSEEING the delivery of APEL services

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