**The Animal Behaviour and Training Council Guidelines for the Accreditation of Prior Experience and Learning (Trialled by the Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors from February 2021)**

**Introduction**

The Animal Behaviour and Training Council has set standards for the roles of Animal Trainer; Animal Training Instructor, Animal Behaviour Technician, Clinical Animal Behaviourist. For every ABTC role an individual must demonstrate that they meet the standard for the role. Each standard has two parts; “Knowledge & Understanding” and “Practitioner Skills”. This document is concerned with The Knowledge and Understanding (K&U) part, which is the underlying basis of being a professional practitioner. One needs to know and understand before one can apply that knowledge effectively and appropriately in practice.

**Accreditation of Prior Learning terms:**

The Accreditation of Prior Experience and/or Learning is known as **APL** and includes:

* APEL (Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning): is APEL gained outside of a formal course: through work roles, or other activities such as volunteer work, unassessed CPD e.g. webinars, reading, conference attendance etc.
* APCL (Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning): knowledge (learning) acquired on courses that have been formally assessed and certificated

An individual may have completed a course recognised by the ABTC as meeting the K&U requirements. However, not everyone will have had the opportunity to undertake formal study in a college / university or may have studied subjects different to those areas covered by the standards or completed a course that is not yet recognised by the ABTC as meeting the requirements. This is where Accreditation of Prior Experience and Learning (APEL) comes into the equation.

The Accreditation of Prior Experience and/or Learning is known as APEL. It is a recognised way to progress vocational learners into and through higher education or to meet a professional standard. It does this by the individual showing what they have learnt through provision of documentation and, importantly reflection.

It is clear to the ABTC that APEL is very applicable to the progression of vocational learners into an ABTC role and from one ABTC role to another.

The ABTC aims to provide a common and consistent approach to APEL that is supportive, objective, fair, transparent and timely.

This guidance document is intended for applicants. It is designed to provide a clear explanation of the structure and process of APEL within the ABTC and its Practitioner organisations including the APBC.

**Quality assurance of APEL process and decisions**

The ABTC is very aware of the need for clarity and transparency in the APEL process. It adheres to the overall ethical stance that assessments should be Supportive, Specified, Objective, Fair, Transparent, Timely and Confidential.

The assessments are only undertaken by persons that have appropriate training and expertise to assess K&U and have undertaken ABTC specific training in the application of that expertise to the ABTC requirements. This includes training and agreement of all assessors to work to the ABTC in the agreed set of standards, levels and to maintain clear and sufficient record of their assessment, including using agreed recording processes

All assessments of an application are carried out by two assessors who are impartial to the applicant.

Applicants are informed of who these assessors are and given the opportunity to indicate if they are concerned about any potential bias. Such concerns should be respected and new assessor(s) allocated if that is the applicant’s wish. Should there have to be a later change to the assessment panel, e.g. due to assessor illness, then the applicant must be informed of the new proposed assessor and have the same right to request and alternative or delay until their application can be assessed by the originally agreed parties.

**What is assessed and how?**

The assessors are looking to see that you have met the knowledge and understanding for the role, that is at the right level (see following sections). These are given as Learning Outcomes and are grouped into ‘knowledge sections’.

You will need to include a record of your evidence mapped to each knowledge section, enabling the assessors to easily find the relevant documents in your record of evidence. You also need to provide an index. The mapping document is designed to help you to keep an ordered record of all your evidence, to ensure that you have covered all the knowledge sections.

Once your documentation has been submitted it will be reviewed. You may be asked to attend (on-line) interview to further explore aspects of your application.  This is a normal part of accrediting prior learning and experience.

**Your Evidence**

Your evidence may come in several forms. There are three types of evidence and you may submit a combination of these. They are

1. Module descriptors and related certificates showing you have completed relevant formal assessed learning.
2. Descriptors and related certificates showing you have attended non assessed courses or events. For example, these may be workplace-based training, informal courses, webinars.
3. Self-directed learning, which may include reading you have done, leaflets or articles you have written, volunteer activities, life experiences, self-instruction, family responses and hobbies.
4. Evidence of experience of the role, either through observation or participation in aspects of the role
* Where evidence is from the categories A and B please note you will need to provide the name of the course provider, if known.
* Where evidence is from the categories B, C and D it is important to explain why and how you think this relates to the knowledge sections, and what you have gained from your learning. This may be done through the Reflective Accounts document. Use this form to document your evidence of your experience in relation to the knowledge and understanding for each knowledge area of the standards for the role that you are applying for (i.e. what was the experience) and identify the learning that has taken place (i.e. what did you learn in these experiences). For some knowledge areas you may only require certificates, or the Reflective Accounts Form. In others you may want to add further evidence such as feedback.
* It is worth keeping a reflective log of your learning and experience related to your role anyway, as this is part and parcel of professional practice in relation to meeting Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

**Presentation of Evidence: Index**

Clear labelling and an index are essential parts of your application. All documents should have a clear identification name. For all electronically submitted documents this should be the File name. It should simply be

Your name and document number e.g.

 A McBride 1

A McBride 2

A document named [Your Name] Index must also be submitted. This will provide a clear index of every document you have submitted. These will relate to the mapping documents and will ensure that the assessors can easily find the relevant information.

The index should contain

The Document name (in numerical order)

Descriptor

And the folder name in which it is located (if you have sorted documents into folders)

Example:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Document name | descriptor | Folder name  |
| A McBride 1 | Certificate from Rabbits Ahoy  | Formal learning |
| A McBride 2 | Certificate of attendance CPD Conference Behaviour Counselling from Principles to Practice | Webinars and conferences |
| A McBride 3 | Reflection on Book Egan The Skilled Helper | Reflective Logs |

Where clarity of labelling and location of evidence is not provided, the applicant may be asked to do this and resubmit the evidence before any review is undertaken by the assessors.

**ABTC Standards for K&U**

The standard for K&U for each role covers various topics such as ethology, welfare, law and communication. They also refer to the Level at which the topics should be studied. The term “Level” refers to the level at which the knowledge is taught and assessed. Levels are defined in the National Qualifications Framework and relate to increasing levels of depth of knowledge, ability to synthesise and critically assess information. At the end of this sub-section is a diagram and links for further information about education levels. For the ABTC roles the levels are as follows:

Animal Behaviour Technician – Level 5

Clinical Animal Behaviourist – Level 6

**Where to go if you need further information**

Please contact the APBC office (info@apbc.org.uk) if you require any further assistance.