

GUIDE

FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING (APEL)

JURY MEMBERS IN FRANCE

A – General principles

(Extracts from the circular « Organisation de la validation des acquis de l'expérience », Ministry of National Education - CIRCULAR N°2003-127 dated 1-8-2003)

[...]

The accreditation of prior experiential learning expressed in article L. 335-5 of the Education Code is a substitute for, and constitutes a manner to obtain diplomas and certificates in the same way as the formal education route, apprenticeship or continuing education for adults.

[...]

The accreditation of prior experiential learning is carried out by taking into consideration the totality of a candidate's knowledge, aptitudes and competences acquired during the exercise of salaried, non-salaried or volunteer activities that are in relationship with the field of the diploma for which the application is made.

All of the skills, competences and knowledge arising out of a candidate's experience must be taken into account when determining accreditation, whether they are part of the professional domain or general domain of the diploma.

[...]

The conditions governing admissibility of the request

The candidate must prove at least three years of salaried, non-salaried or volunteer activities that are in relationship with the field of the diploma postulated for. [...]

The admissibility of the request is decided based on the information and documents supplied by the applicant in their file (see infra § 4.2.1), by considering the actual length of all the activities and the relationship that exists between the activities and jobs of the applicant and the field of the diploma applied for. [...]

The jury : *composition*

The jury is constituted and presided over in accordance with the regulations governing the specific diploma. It is therefore essential to review the general regulations of each diploma. Concerning the representatives of the profession on the jury, within the APEL framework, there must be 50% employers and 50% employees in order to comply with article 4 of decree n° 2002-615 dated 26 April, 2002. In addition, it is appropriate to try to ensure a balanced representation between men and women.

It is important to ensure that jury members are qualified to analyze the work done, to evaluate skills and knowledge acquired by experience and to conduct interviews with adults. This can be accomplished by putting in place training modules for jury members.

Jury members involved with the company or organization where the candidate exercised or exercises his or her activity may not sit on a jury when considering this candidate and must excuse themselves from the jury during these deliberations.

The jury deliberates in a plenary session.

In an effort to be efficient, the organization of each jury must be flexible enough to permit the regular consideration of requests for accreditation of prior experiential learning. However, if it

seems that the number of candidates, the complexity of the files or any other constraint will weigh too heavily on the organization and functioning of the jury, the jury may be split up and organized in groups of examiners. This decision may only be made by the president.

The jury : *interview*

The interview allows the candidate to provide additional information and, to explain in greater detail, the information supplied in his file. It is organized at such time as the jury considers that it cannot grant the diploma based only on the candidate's file or on the initiative of the candidate. Whether it is put in place by the candidate or the jury, it allows the jury to complete its file, to understand more thoroughly the actual activities of the candidate and to focus on the most significant elements of information with respect to the requirements of the diploma. In this sense, the interview is not to be in the form of an oral examination testing a candidate's knowledge and skills. The interview is prepared and conducted by the jury based on an analysis of the candidate's file.

A convocation to the interview is prepared and sent to the candidate.

As a guide, the length of the interview is usually between 20 and 45 minutes.

The jury : *deliberations and decisions of the jury*

The jury assesses the extent of the accreditation based on:

- an in-depth analysis of the totality of the elements provided by the candidate in his or her file which present, on one hand, his or her career path, especially professional, and on the other hand, describe and detail his or her jobs and activities ;
- an interview, if this is requested by the candidate or if the jury considers it to be necessary.

It takes into account any possible benefits, exemptions or decisions to accredit prior experiential learning that the candidate has asserted in his or her request.

The extent of the accreditation is established by the jury on the basis of its analysis of the activities carried out by the candidate that he or she has decided to present in conformity with his or her application. From this presentation the jury deduces the knowledge, skills and competences mastered by the candidate.

Its analysis is supported by the Referential of Professional Activities when this is set forth in the decree creating the diploma. It evaluates the equivalence between all of the candidate's experience and all or part of the requirements of the diploma which is being applied for.

The jury's decision is in line with the specific rules governing the diploma applied for. That being the case, either it proposes the granting of the diploma, it grants a part of the diploma and indicates what subsequent evaluation is necessary in order to obtain the diploma in full, or it decides that there is no accreditation.

The validation function

Two activities correspond to this function:

- an administrative activity of verification of the admissibility of the application and the recording of the individual's candidature in order to obtain a diploma by APEL;
- an assessment and evaluation activity of the candidate's experience carried out by the jury (cf. § 3).

The applicant's file

The content of the file requesting accreditation of prior experiential learning is defined at the national level and is made up of different elements that do not have the same objective and which are grouped in two booklets which constitute the applicant's file :

- **First series of elements (booklet 1)** : documents which prove the period of time of the activity (work certificates, certificates of activity, salary payslips, any fiscal or social document justifying the length of time and the type of activity), as well as a general presentation of the activities and jobs that permit the verification of the admissibility of the request.

In addition, documents such as training certificates and diplomas obtained previously must be supplied by the candidate. Combined with other information which the candidate wishes to make available to the jury, they clarify the information provided concerning the type of activities of the candidate and their level.

Booklet 1 also permits the candidate to request an interview with the jury.

- **Second series of elements (booklet 2)** : one or more documents describing the typical jobs and activities chosen by the candidate which, when completed, will supplement the first series of elements in order to allow the jury to evaluate the extent of the accreditation.

The file to be completed by an individual candidate is standardized at a national level, at the moment it is in the form of two booklets.

B – Methodologies and tools

(Extracts from the APEL jury's guide– Academy of Strasbourg)

Booklet 1

Presentation of elements concerning:

- the request with the exact title of the diploma,
- the identity of the candidate,
- the benefits of the tests,
- a short description of the organizations, jobs and activities,
- the diplomas obtained.

Information concerning the professional career path and training of the candidate.

Presentation of complementary information destined for the jury about the professional activities carried out or the extra-professional experience not developed in the second document.

Booklet 2

It constitutes the document in which a detailed description of (at least) four activities, salaried or non-salaried, performed by the candidate is provided.

The structure of the file encourages the candidate to identify an **organization** (a company, an association ...) in which he or she holds (or has held), one or more **jobs**, and in which he or she describes one or more **activities**.

It examines:

1. the work context (organization),
2. the functions or missions held, the activities and tasks completed,
3. the tools used (equipment, materials, resources...),

4. the flow of information
5. the extent of the responsibilities and autonomy of the candidate.

Situations encountered: various combinations are possible :

- an organization (company), one job and four activities in connection with this job,
- several organizations, one job for each of them, one activity picked for each,
- one or several organizations, one or several jobs and activities in connection with them.

Utilization of the file

This step **is at the heart of the jury's mission** because it is a question of accurately determining the career path of the candidate, his or her professional project and identifying evidence of the skills and competences that he or she has applied when carrying out the described activities.

Thus, it is a question of :

- ◆ identifying the request and the candidate's project,
- ◆ identifying the different aspects of his or her career path,
- ◆ proceeding to examine the file :
 - read completely the two booklets,

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- understand the competences and knowledge acquired as compared to the activities presented in the Diploma Referential (first the Professional Activities Referential), |
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- construct the different elements of his or her career path, prepare the line of questioning that will guide the interview.

The Diploma Referential

The referentials are tools to be utilized by the different actors involved in training and accreditation : teachers, trainees, candidates applying for diplomas, those responsible for training in different organizations, tutors in professional internships, jury members...

The diploma referentials, developed with professionals, are constructed **on the basis of a Professional Activities Referential** which is combined with an Accreditation Referential.

The Professional Activities Referential (PAR) defines the functions, the tasks and conditions of the professional activity ; it identifies a set of functions and activities.

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| <p>The PAR serves as a foundation for the Accreditation Referential. The mastery of a professional activity is evidence of the acquisition of practical skills appearing in the Accreditation Referential.</p> |
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The interview

The interview is everything but, an oral exam based on academic knowledge, the referential or questions found on tests, ...

Mid-term tests or the type of questioning found in traditional exams is excluded during this stage.

The interview, arising from the initiative of the candidate or the jury, should be an opportunity for the jury members (National Education teachers and professionals) to focus their questions on professional activities.

Thanks to questions which are raised after examination of the file, the interview provides jury members with an opportunity to obtain additional information which will help understand more thoroughly the activities described.

In addition, this permits the jury to judge the individual nature of the file.

The interview should allow the jury to analyse the candidate's knowledge of professional practices and the tools and methods. In addition, it allows the candidate to describe, in detail, the conditions, the environment of his or her activity or experience and to provide evidence of his or her autonomy.