



**WEST OF SCOTLAND  
CONSORTIUM  
DipSW PROGRAMME**

**ADVANCED  
ENTRY  
ARRANGEMENTS**

**Information for Agencies and  
Applicants**

**AUGUST 2000**



# An AP(E)L scheme for advanced entry with credit to the DipSW

## Introduction

Commitment to widening access and providing a variety of routes to the DipSW is part of both CCETSW and West of Scotland Consortium policy. The latter had its framework for advanced entry through AP(E)L approved in May 2000. The AP(E)L scheme for the West of Scotland DipSW is presently available in the routes at Glasgow University, Glasgow Caledonian University and Strathclyde University.

The scheme would allow students to claim credit within the DipSW on the basis of their prior certificated or experiential learning. Students would therefore be able to enter the programme at an advanced stage and continue to accumulate credit, in the usual way, until they had gained the whole award. **Institutions have agreed to operate just one advanced entry point. This will be the Intermediate Assessment point for the DipSW. Therefore successful Advanced Entry candidates would start their course at the beginning of Part II of the DipSW Programme.**

CCETSW define APL as the accreditation of prior certificated learning, i.e. learning which has taken place on a previous course of study which may exempt the learner from part of the DipSW programme. The accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) is the process of assessing and then credit rating learning which has its source in some experience prior to the point of entry onto a course. It recognises that adults can gain valuable learning as a result of work, voluntary or life experiences. This is particularly the case in social work where many skilled and knowledgeable staff work in a range of social work settings but do not hold formal qualifications. The APEL mechanism can also be applied to any learning resulting from education or training experiences that have not been formally assessed and certificated.

The abbreviation which is used by CCETSW to refer collectively to both these processes, i.e. the accreditation of prior certificated learning and/or the accreditation of prior experiential learning, is AP(E)L. Our proposed Admission with Credit Scheme focuses primarily on people claiming credit in this combined way.

The general principle underlying AP(E)L is that appropriate learning, wherever it occurs, is worthy of credit towards a qualification, provided that:

- it can be clearly identified and described;
- it can be assessed;
- it is at an appropriate level and relevant to the award sought.

It is important to remember that *it is the learning that attracts credit, not simply the experience*. This principle reflects the way in which different individuals can share similar experiences but learn different things as a result. It follows from this that the responsibility for identifying their learning and making an AP(E)L claim rests with the student and will require significant effort on the part of that individual.

## The award of credit within the West of Scotland DipSW

Students can make claims against the whole of Part One of the DipSW. Modules cannot be claimed separately, as claims are against all the learning and competence outcomes for Part One of the Programme. Four Options have been identified which specify the required contents of the Portfolio according to the circumstances of the candidate - these are explained below

## Applications to the scheme

- Information regarding the AP(E)L scheme will be included in the publicity materials which are circulated to prospective DipSW students prior to their application to join the programme (e.g. CCETSW, Consortium or institutional publicity materials). This will include information that small

numbers of applicants in participating institutions who meet the selection criteria for the AP(E)L scheme may be invited by the institution to consider making a claim.

- Students need first to be accepted on to the programme by an institution through the existing selection and admissions procedures (which include provision for entry without formal qualifications) and to have completed all relevant checks.
- There will be a named contact point within each institution to provide information and advice to applicants within the selection process.
- The AP(E)L contact person may advise the student that an invitation to make an AP(E)L claim is unlikely, where, in their judgement, it is clearly inappropriate.
- The institution will apply the selection criteria :
  - a) the student has the potential to claim credit for the whole of Part I of DipSW in terms of sufficiency of certificated learning and/or duration, range and depth of reflection on experience, and will be
    - b) 1) self-financing,
    - or 2) financed by an employer,
    - or 3) attract an additional bursary
- The institution will make a judgement and if space is available the student is invited to participate in the scheme and is required to pay the relevant fees. The full AP(E)L handbook is issued by the route /institution when the invitation is extended.

### **The Process**

The student makes the claim to have acquired knowledge and skills through successful completion of a previous course of study and/or workplace experience. The responsibility of supporting this claim with evidence rests with the student who will/must supply the institution with all relevant documentation required in the form of certificates, course outlines, assessment criteria etc. The required contents of the portfolio of evidence are determined by the relevant recognised pathway. These have been arrived at through detailed matching projects which have been commissioned by the Consortium and are accepted by the participating institutions. They enable the Scheme to provide detailed advice to candidates on how to prepare their claim according to 4 possible sets of circumstances.

- 1. Where there is some certificated evidence of learning and substantial experience in a social work/social care role the portfolio would contain:**
  - a) a legal study set by the University (route)
  - b) an Integrative Practice Study
  - c) a commentary written by the candidate which identifies and explains how they met the learning outcomes and DPI Competences - this would draw on a range of sources of evidence of practice, including at least one from a qualified worker who has directly observed the candidate's practice.  
  
*(The findings of one of our recent pathways projects indicates this would be the option for holders of a range of Community Education and Youth & Community qualifications, who also have substantial experience in social work/social care settings.)*
- 2. The SVQ Pathway - the candidate would submit:**
  - a) SVQ 4 in Care, or HNC in Social Care and SVQ 3 in Care,
  - b) a legal study set by the route
  - c) a commentary which shows their capacity to reflect upon and critically analyse their practice, and which draws on evidence from the SVQ Portfolio.
- 3. Where there is no certificated evidence which has been academically credited the candidate may choose**

**3.1 to submit a portfolio of four elements:**

- a) legal study set by the route
  
  - b) written work which shows equivalence to all the learning outcomes and competences required at Intermediate Assessment,
  
  - c) a reference/report equivalent to that of a practice teacher which addresses DPI competences and must include an element of direct observation of the candidate's practice
  
  - d) an Integrative Practice Study.
- or

**3.2 The Assessment Only Option :** candidates choose to submit all Part One Assessments of their registered route to demonstrate equivalence to the learning outcomes. This would include a commentary on their own practice and the equivalent of a practice teacher's report

**Preparation of the portfolio and student support**

The student prepares the elements of the portfolio, following the guidance in the Candidate Handbook and the discussions with the AP(E)L advisor which will include suggested time scales.

The assessment of the claim will mirror the normal quality assurance procedures associated with Part I of the DipSW Programme, with two markers for each element drawn from lecturers, practitioners and practice teachers, and will be subject to the standard assessment procedures and processes including confirmation of results by the Programme Assessment Boards, including external assessors. The institution will scrutinise the relevant documentation with regard to the following criteria:

- Authenticity - It should be the student's own work
  
- Quality - Learning claimed should be at the academic level appropriate to the route
  
- Directness - Learning should match the content of Part One within the DipSW Programme as taught within the institution
  
- Currency - All learning claimed must be up to date, mainly relate to the last five years, or show evidence of up-dating.

Students may require support from the work place, where applicable, to access relevant materials and evidence. Participants should have access to adequate material, physical resources to allow assessment criteria to be met. Where workplace mentors/advisors are used they must be conversant with the APEL process in operation and have an in-depth knowledge of the skills being assessed. It should be recognised that learners may require access to relevant training or learning experiences in order to complete claims for the whole of Part One.

The institution should provide information on the procedure for claiming APEL. The student will require details of the learning outcomes/aims and objectives of Part One. The method of assessment must be made clear to the student and be appropriate to the learning claimed. Support may be provided through written guidance materials and/or through group work / workshops. Examples of appropriate evidence may be made available to the student.

**Further Information**

If you require further information or advice concerning the AP(E)L Scheme then this can be obtained from the following people:

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