Portfolio of Evidence for Experience - Guidelines

IN REGOGNITION OF NON-FORMAL & INFORMAL PRIOR LEARNING

Contents

Forms of prior learning recognised

Southern Cross University recognizes that some people bring substantial knowledge, skills and experience to their university study. The [Advanced Standing and Recognition of Prior Learning Policy](#) and [Advanced Standing and Recognition of Prior Learning Procedures](#) allow Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to occur for:

- **Formal learning –** learning gained through study in a structured, accredited program that leads to full or partial achievement of a qualification; and/or
- **Non-formal learning –** learning gained through study in a structured, non-accredited program (such as a short course, seminar, on-the-job training or professional development) that does NOT lead to a qualification; and/or
- **Informal learning –** learning gained through years of paid or voluntary experience, professional standing or performance.

What do I need to know?

This **Guide** will assist you to use the **RPL Portfolio of Evidence Form** to:

a. list units (subjects) in your Southern Cross course that have content (topics) and learning outcomes for which credit may be sought;

b. describe the knowledge, understanding and skills you currently hold for each learning outcome; and

c. gather a range of supporting documents to verify your claims and support your application for Advanced Standing.

Before making an application for Advanced Standing:

1. Read your course **RPL Guide** to identify if there are limits on the type of prior learning or amount of credit that may apply for the course.

2. Download and save the [Portfolio of Evidence for Experience - Form](#); **PLUS**

3. Be familiar with your [Southern Cross course](#) requirements, described on the **Course structure** page
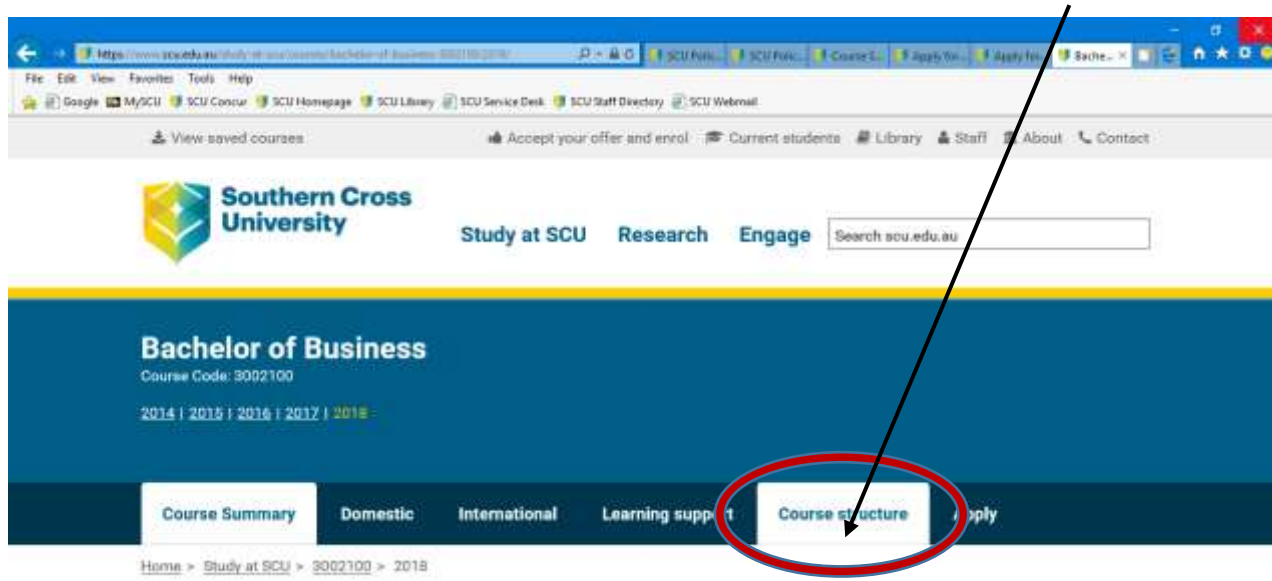
Figure 1. Locating the Course structure tab. Reprinted from Bachelor of Business, In *Southern Cross University Website*, n.d., Retrieved from https://www.scu.edu.au/study-at-scu/courses/bachelor-of-business-3002100. Copyright n.d. by Southern Cross University.

1. Scroll to the list of units, known as the **Schedule of Units**. The Schedule contains core (compulsory) units of study. Some courses also have major, specialisation or elective unit options.

2. Click on any unit link (or perform a Southern Cross Unit Search) to view the unit's content (topics); and learning outcomes.

About unit content and learning outcomes

Learning outcomes are clear statements of learning achievement that are expressed in terms of what learners are expected to know, understand and be able to demonstrate on completion of a unit (Australian Qualifications Framework Council, 2013; Macquarie University, n.d.).

According to John Biggs and Catherine Tang (2007) learning outcomes link teaching intentions and the assessment of student learning.

Learning outcomes align with **graduate attributes** that embody the generic characteristics, qualities and skills a graduate will potentially contribute to society (Barnett, 1990), beyond the disciplinary requirements reflected in the learning outcomes. So by attaining particular learning outcomes, learners also master the necessary graduate attributes.

The **unit content** and **learning outcomes** are the important criteria for you to address, through the statements you will write about the depth and breadth of your knowledge, skills and experience.

When describing what you know understand and can do in relation to a unit learning outcome, it is critical to provide contextual examples from your experience instead of simply making general statements about the criterion.

You can also use what you know from history, literature, industry standards and current media as examples to demonstrate your understanding, as long as you cite in-text and reference appropriately.

Unit content

Topic 1: Introduction to the accounting environment

Topic 2: Recording business transactions

Topic 3: Overview of the financial statements

Topic 4: Financial statement analysis I

Topic 5: Financial statement analysis II

Topic 6: Budgeting

Topic 7: Cost volume profit

Topic 8: Capital investments

Topic 9: Working capital management

Topic 10: Financing the business

Topic 11: Performance management

Learning outcomes and graduate attributes —

On completion of this unit, students should be able to:	GA1	GA2	GA3	GA4	GA5	GA6	GA7
1 Describe the regulatory, social and ethical context of the business environment				✔			
2 Record basic business transactions and produce the four key financial statements				✔			
3 Use financial statement analysis techniques to aid internal and external decision making	✔			✔		✔	
4 Apply basic costing, budgeting, working capital and capital investment techniques to organisational decision-making	✔			✔			
5 Distinguish and compare alternative sources of business financing				✔			
6 Discuss the measurement of organisational performance				✔		✔	
7 Identify and apply basic accounting and finance tools and techniques in a routine setting	✔						

GA1: Intellectual rigour, GA2: Creativity, GA3: Ethical practice, GA4: Knowledge of a discipline, GA5: Lifelong learning, GA6: Communication and social skills, GA7: Cultural competence

Figure 2. Unit content, learning outcome and graduate attributes. Reprinted from ACC10707 - Accounting for Business, In *Southern Cross University Website*, n.d., Retrieved from http://courses.scu.edu.au/units/acc10707-accounting-for-business/2017. Copyright n.d. by Southern Cross University.

Should I apply for Advanced Standing?

Answering positively to these questions will indicate whether you should continue with your application and evidence gathering.

Consider:

1. What paid or voluntary work, projects, on-the-job training, professional development, or seminars have I completed that might be relevant to the unit/s for which credit is sought?

2. What other community based or domestic tasks have I contributed to that may also be relevant?

3. How recently did I learn or utilise my skills and knowledge? - Are they current in terms of staying safe and legal? - Can I show that I have continued to use and further develop them?

4. What documents and other evidence do I possess to show:

    a. the knowledge and skills I have attained;

    b. that I can consistently perform these skills and transfer knowledge and skills to new tasks and settings;

    c. my ability to research and critically analyse issues to solve problems or create new information; and

    d. readiness for self-directed learning, (where I become a self-motivated, autonomous learner that takes responsibility for planning, initiating, and evaluating my own learning efforts).

What types of supporting documents should I provide?

A range of supporting documents (evidence) must be submitted with your application, such as:

1. a current **resume** or **curriculum vitae** detailing past and current experiences (including dates and hours of service) relevant to the range of positions or roles you have held;

2. a range of other **primary and secondary evidence** from those listed under the heading "What supporting documents verify current professional experience and expertise?".

Figure 3. Resume and supporting documents. Reprinted from Business Resume Template Collection, In *SampleBusinessResume.com*, 2016, Retrieved from http://samplebusinessresume.com/10-resume-examples-2014/business-resume-examples-recommended-resume-templates-for-freshers-resume-examples-2014-pdf-by-derrick-crabtree/. Copyright 2017 by SampleBusinessResume.com.

If your statements and evidence are sufficient and your experience is proficient and current, credit is likely to be awarded.

Do supporting documents need to be certified or translated?

In some circumstances you may need to provide certified copies of original documents. All non-English document must be accompanied by an authorised English translation.

Format of the RPL Portfolio of Evidence for Experience Form

The Form provides:

- fields to record your name, contact details, student ID and the Southern Cross course relevant to the unit/s for which RPL is sought;
- a checklist and textbox to list your supporting documents as Appendices;
- an applicant declaration;
- space for unit content (topics) and learning outcomes to be included; and
- textboxes that accommodate statements evidencing how, when and where the learning outcomes have been achieved and remain current.

Unless otherwise stated in your course RPL Guide, each statement must be 400 words (+ or – 10%) per learning outcome and should:

1. incorporate performance verbs to describe the levels of cognition you have attained in thinking, learning and understanding;

2. include specific examples of non-formal and/or informal experiences demonstrating the understanding and capabilities you have achieved, including the ways currency of knowledge and skills has been maintained;

3. contain reflections on what you have learnt, how you might approach these tasks differently next time and what your priorities for future learning will be; and

4. acknowledge the works of others using in-text citations and a reference list.

How do I write statements demonstrating my capabilities?

Watch Bloom's Taxonomy of the Cognitive Domain Explained to unpack what learning outcomes are; and understand how action or performance verbs are used to describe the levels of cognition you have attained in thinking, learning, understanding and performing for a particular learning outcome.

View Appendix A – Bloom's Digital Taxonomy Verbs for further guidance.

Lee Crockett's (2011) infographic reveals that at the lower level of cognition, known as lower order thinking skills (LOTS), is remembering, understanding and applying. Higher order thinking skills (HOTS) involve deeper levels of cognition like analysis, evaluation and creation.

You'll notice that learning outcomes start with and may include multiple performance verbs to indicate the levels of knowledge, skills and reasoning you will need to be able to meet unit requirements.

For instance, on completion of the unit **ACC10707 - Accounting for Business** you should be able to:

LOTS LEARNING OUTCOME	HOTS LEARNING OUTCOME
1. **Describe** the regulatory, social and ethical context of the business environment	2. **Record** basic business transactions and **produce** the four key financial statements
4. **Apply** basic costing, budgeting, working capital and capital investment	5. **Distinguish** and **compare** alternative sources of business financing

techniques to organisational decision-making

6. **Discuss** the measurement of organisational performance

Lower order thinking skills

Learning outcomes 1, 4 and 6 require lower order thinking skills. When referring to Appendix A, the word '**describing**' is situated in the left hand, red column at the remember level of cognition. Being able to define a term requires us to recall what has been learnt, demonstrating the lowest level of cognition.

Before being able to explain an idea or situation we must initially understand it. Hence, the words '**discussing** and **distinguishing**' are found in the second, purple column at the understanding level. They are an example of the second lowest level of cognition.

Applying what we know and understand is slightly more difficult, but still classified in the upper levels of lower order thinking. Therefore '**applying**' is listed in the third, orange column at the apply level. As we move from left to right utilising words from the red, orange and purple columns to describe what we know, understand and can do, we are effectively communicating the ways our level of cognition is rising.

Higher order thinking skills

Learning outcomes 2 and 5 require higher order thinking skills. If tasked with writing a statement about how your current capabilities already fulfil learning outcomes 2 and 5 requirements, you would:

1. identify and classify the performance verbs in the learning outcome (such as **produce** and **compare**); and

2. select performance verbs from the Appendix A columns that represent the same level of cognition (which for this scenario are the **analysing** and **creating** levels) to describe what you know, understand and can perform in relation to the learning outcome.

The assessor evaluating your application will compare the level of cognition described in your statement to the supporting evidence to verify your claim and determine if there is correlation regarding the level of cognition.

Within your statements remember to address the unit content or topics and discipline related information contained in the learning outcome. If you refer to ideas or information created by another person, cite and reference the work using an appropriate referencing style. For further assistance view the Southern Cross Referencing Guides.

A sample statement describing my capabilities

Below is a three-part structure outlining how you might address the unit topics associated with learning outcomes. Let's say the learning outcome criterion involves demonstrating the development of analytical and research skills in HR management.

Part 1: General statement about the criterion.

Start with a broad sentence or two about meeting the criterion. Make sure you use the language of the criterion so that the reader knows you are talking about the right discipline knowledge and skill set.

Example:

My well-developed analytical and research skills have been demonstrated during five years work as an academic research assistant and in implementing a government grants program. In both roles I benchmarked industry standards, researched and analysed a range of quality sources to compile current information about complex social issues including, homelessness, Indigenous disadvantage, and literacy problems.

Part 2: Contextualised examples to support the criterion.

The examples are specific instances of applying research and analytical skills. They can be structured using the SAR model:

- *Situation:* Briefly outline the context of the example and what your role was.

- *Action:* Give details of what you did, how and why.

- *Result:* Briefly outline what the result was. This could be a tangible item, such as a report. If this result is measurable, then include this information. Measures can be quantitative (e.g. numbers, cost) and qualitative (e.g. standards).

Example:

While Project Officer for the Community Grants Program, I researched and analysed options for a consultative process with community groups. My role was to prepare an executive briefing paper which identified options and recommended a course of action with scheduled implementation review.

I reviewed eight consultative processes used by various government agencies, three recommended by private consultants, and completed a literature review covering the last ten years. Using a set of criteria I established based on this material, I summarised the processes, selected four that best met the Community Grants Program needs, evaluated them based on the criteria and recommended one. My recommendation was accepted by the executive, with commendations on the quality of the briefing paper. I am now developing a strategy for introducing this option into the program.

Part 3: Link to study and job in hand.

If there is a gap between the examples provided and the learning discipline, you may wish to close with a short statement that signals the transferability of your knowledge and skills to the proposed field of study and employment opportunities as well as discussing any learning reflections and future learning directions.

Example:

I anticipate that these research and analysis skills will readily transfer to researching and analysing strategic HR issues such as staff engagement, talent management, training needs analysis and workplace planning. The most notable learning experience during this process was the important of evaluating quality sources to obtain reliable data. As I continue into postgraduate studies I am keen to expand my knowledge of different research methodologies to include an appreciation for Indigenous knowledges and research methods.

Don't forget to keep your statement within 10% (+ or -) of the required word count.

How will experiential knowledge and skills be assessed?

The University compares the full time equivalent hours of service in a professional or voluntary capacity or life's passions to National occupational standards, using the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO). The indicative skill level and years of full time equivalent service in an Australian occupation has a direct and consistent relationship to the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) Qualification Levels and the amount of credit awarded under Schedule 1 of the Procedures.

Appendix A – Bloom's Digital Taxonomy Verbs

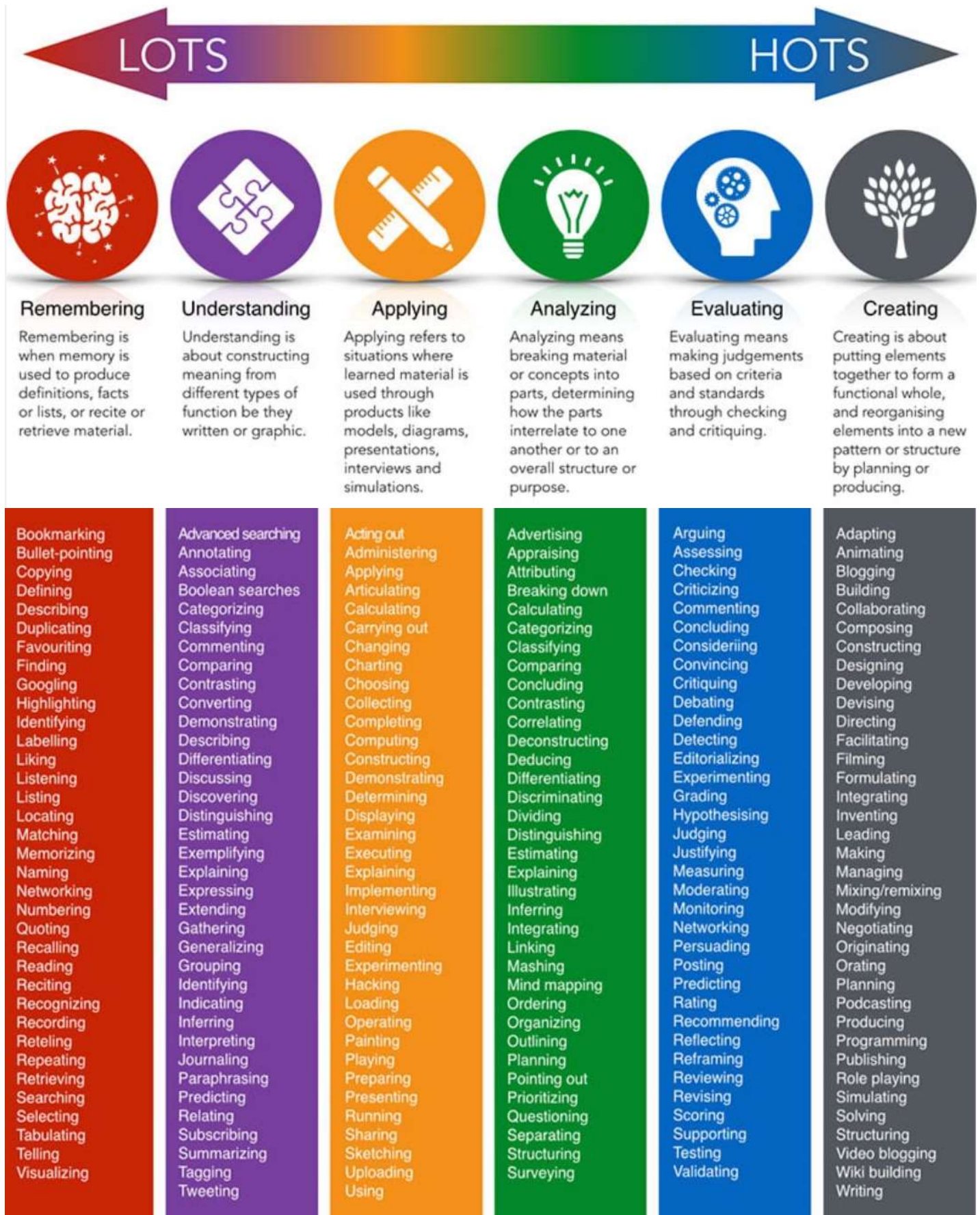*Figure 5.* Bloom's Digital Taxonomy Verbs. Adapted from *Global Digital Citizen Foundation*, globaldigitalcitizen.org, 2017, Retrieved from https://globaldigitalcitizen.org/blooms-digital-taxonomy-verbs. Copyright 2017 by Global Digital Citizen Foundation. Reprinted with permission.

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