



Institute for **Outdoor Learning**



**Accredited
Practitioner
APIOL**

*Facilitator of outdoor learning with a breadth of
experience in challenging situations*

Information Pack



Warwick Mill Business Centre, Warwick Bridge, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA4 8RR
www.outdoor-learning.org institute@outdoor-learning.org
T 01228 564580 F 01228 564581

Registered charity number 1149420



APIOL Accreditation with IOL

Recognising good practice in Outdoor Learning

The APIOL Award recognises the holistic skills and knowledge of professionals who deliver outdoor learning programmes. The award is a valuable source of continuing professional development (CPD) for instructors, teachers or leaders.

- ✓ APIOL shows a commitment to standards and good practice in Outdoor Learning
- ✓ APIOL accredits your values, thinking, understanding and leadership approach
- ✓ APIOL celebrates your experience, skills, knowledge, qualifications and awards
- ✓ APIOL recognises and values your reflective practice and ethics
- ✓ APIOL entitles you to an automatic upgrade to Accredited Member of the Institute for Outdoor Learning.

Accredited practitioners of the Institute for Outdoor Learning are experienced facilitators of outdoor learning with a consolidated breadth of experience.

The APIOL Award

APIOL is an award that recognises how people use their skills, knowledge and experience to design outdoor learning solutions for individuals and groups.

APIOL award holders will have worked in challenging or unique environments and have experience planning, leading and evaluating programmes with a range of activities.

Typically, an Accredited Practitioner has been involved in Outdoor Learning programmes for 3-5 years or more as an employee, freelancer or volunteer. For example, instructor, tutor, teacher, lecturer, youth worker, senior trainer, etc.



Benefits of APIOL accreditation for employers

APIOL accredited staff can give you confidence in their professional approach, values and ethics that shape how they use their technical or subject specific skills.

- APIOL aligns your staff team with national standards
- APIOL supports the development and career progression of your staff
- APIOL is a way to promote the experience and expertise within your organisation

Get in touch if you have a large number of staff you wish to complete APIOL – we can arrange bespoke training and support packages for your team.

Accredited Practitioner of the Institute for Outdoor Learning

For IOL Members who are a	<p>Facilitator of outdoor learning with a breadth of experience in challenging situations</p> <p>Accredited Practitioners of Outdoor Learning display a personal passion and enthusiasm for outdoor learning and recognise the value of outdoor learning to individuals and society.</p>
Delivering Learning	<p>Uses a range of styles to facilitate impactful and lasting learning</p> <p>Involves others in the planning, delivery and evaluation of learning</p>
Activity Expertise	<p>Designs and delivers programmes with a range of activities</p> <p>Manages complex decisions and risk-benefit choices in the outdoors</p>
Leadership Skills	<p>Models their guiding principles and values, acts ethically</p> <p>Promotes responsible and sustainable use of the outdoors</p>
Professional Approach	<p>Uses critical reflection to continually develop self and others</p> <p>Demonstrates an on-going commitment to and benefit from CPD</p>
Experience	<p>An experienced practitioner of outdoor learning with a consolidated breadth of experience covering challenging or unique environments</p> <p>Has been involved in delivering Outdoor Learning programmes for 3-5 years or more as an employee, freelancer or volunteer. For example, instructor, tutor, teacher, lecturer, youth worker, senior trainer, etc.</p>
Involves	<p>Reflective application form. Getting clarity on your ethics and values.</p> <p>Personal support from an IOL Coach. Quality time to reflect on your work in outdoor learning, and where you are going next.</p>
Participant experience	<p><i>“The APIOL process helped me realise the influence my experiences have had on my career, my values and my practice - a way of pulling all the threads together”</i></p>
Cost	<p>£50 initial application; £400 when accepted as a candidate.</p>

What Is APIOL?

Accredited Practitioner of the Institute for Outdoor Learning (APIOL) is an IOL award that recognises how people use their skills, knowledge and experience to design, deliver and evaluate outdoor learning for individuals and groups.

The APIOL Criteria cover eight areas:

Thinking, understanding and reflective practice

1. Understanding the nature and potential of outdoor learning
2. Promotion of responsible and sensitive use of the outdoor environment
3. Reflective practice and continuous professional development
4. Values and professional integrity

Independence of decision-making

5. Design and management of learning experiences
6. Learning process, facilitation skills and transfer of learning
7. Competent outdoor practice and risk management
8. Professional responsibilities – leadership, teamwork, client relations and involvement

Is APIOL for you?

APIOL requires you to have consolidated experience delivering outdoor learning programmes. It does not “retest” specialist skills, it recognises holistic competence as an outdoor learning practitioner.

APIOL is not for everyone. If you have narrow experience, have only delivered programmes designed by others, or have only operated in familiar locations, you are unlikely to have the necessary experience.

- You must be a student or associate member of the Institute for Outdoor Learning with at least 3-5 years experience in the role of instructor, teacher, coach, leader, teacher, youth worker, trainer, etc.
- You can work in any branch of outdoor learning, e.g. outdoor education, personal development, professional development, sports coaching, adventure tourism, outdoor therapy.
- You can provide outdoor learning in any outdoor environment – e.g. activity centre, school grounds, parkland, wider countryside, lakes, sea, lowland, open moorland, upland or mountains
- You must have a range of experience in outdoor learning programmes – not based around one activity, location or client group
- You have worked with clients through the whole programme cycle - needs analysis, programme design, outdoor learning delivery and programme evaluation

The APIOL Process

The first stage is to look at the APIOL criteria and benchmarks on the IOL website and talk to APIOL award holders about how you can evidence meeting them.



1. Register as an APIOL Candidate

Get in touch with IOL and complete the APIOL Registration form to begin the process.

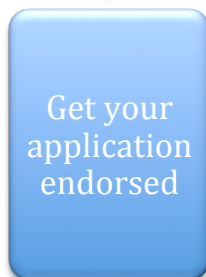
Your application will be reviewed by a member of the IOL Professional Development Team and accepted if there is a fit against the APIOL benchmarks. They will let you know what is required and help you plan dates for completing each element of your APIOL application.



2. Prepare your APIOL Application

There are two pathways for preparing your application:

- a) **IOL Coaching Pathway.** Reflect on your practice, values, approach and career aspirations and complete this stage over several meetings with the assistance of an IOL Coach external to your organisation. [IOL recommended route]
- b) **Reflective Pathway.** If you are critically reflective, self-motivated and have high levels of developmental support you can work through this stage with colleagues, line-managers or a workplace mentor.



3. Get your application endorsed

To confirm the authenticity and validity of your application you will need:

- 1) **A workplace witness statement** to confirm that what you say you do and how you say you act is what they have seen / heard in reality.
- 2) **An IOL Coach statement** to confirm your professional ethics, level of critical reflection and application is ready for APIOL assessment interview.



4. Assessment Interview

Notify IOL Central Office when your application is fully complete and you are ready for your assessment interview. Interviews are arranged on demand and are a professional discussion about your application with two external APIOL Assessors. If you are deferred, gather more evidence and re-apply.

Frequently Asked Questions

Where do I start?

If you want to	You will need
Complete APIOL for yourself	To be a member of IOL. Self-assess your competence against the APIOL benchmarks. Complete the APIOL registration form.
Be an IOL Coach	Be an experienced APIOL holder and complete an application supported by two proposers.
Be an IOL Assessor	Be an experienced APIOL holder, register with IOL, and attend an IOL Assessor moderation event.

Do I have to register before starting APIOL?

Yes. The reflective process of APIOL works best when it is completed in less than 6 months. When you register we will check your experience fits against the benchmarks (or give you specific guidance on what evidence is missing).

Do I need to have completed RPIOL first?

No. You can register for APIOL whether you have an RPIOL award or not.

Do I have to complete APIOL before I can apply for LPIOL?

Yes. LPIOL requires you to have already evidenced meeting the APIOL criteria. If you have the necessary skills, knowledge and experience you can go straight to LPIOL as soon as you complete APIOL.

What is involved in completing APIOL?

To achieve the APIOL Award you will need to demonstrate meeting each of the 47 APIOL criteria. The process involves five parts:

- Part 1 – Outdoor Learning Experience, Achievements, Qualifications, Awards
- Part 2 – Professional Practice, Range of Experience, Development Activities
- Part 3 – Key Experiences and Evidence against the APIOL Criteria
- Part 4 – Endorsements from Witness and IOL Coach
- Part 5 – Assessment Interview

How long does it take to complete APIOL?

That depends on you. Candidates drive the process and most people complete in 2-5 months.

What support will I get to complete APIOL?

Once you have been accepted as a candidate The IOL Professional Development Team will support you. They can offer:

- **An introduction to IOL** – who we are, what we do and how we work
- **A full outline the APIOL process** and what is expected of candidates
- **An exploration the APIOL criteria** and debate on what may, or may not be, valid evidence for meeting each criterion
- **An experience of reflective practice** in the context of IOL accreditation
- **An experience of the coaching approach** as a method of critical reflection
- **Support to select the best application pathway for you**
- **Advice on choosing an IOL coach to work with**

What are the two application pathways?

Choose whichever option works best for you. Whichever pathway you choose, taking time to reflect on your practice, values, approach and aspirations as a practitioner of outdoor learning will assist you in completing your APIOL application.

- **IOL Coaching Pathway.** Reflect on your practice, values, approach and career aspirations and complete this stage over several meetings with the assistance of an IOL Coach external to your organisation. [IOL recommended route]
- **Reflective Pathway.** If you are critically reflective, self-motivated and have high levels of developmental support you can work through this stage with colleagues, line-managers or a workplace mentor.

What are the benefits of working with an IOL Coach?

Being able to talk confidentially with an IOL Coach is often one of the most highly valued parts of the APIOL process.

- Approved IOL Coaches are experienced practitioners who are willing to give their time to support others in their on-going development.
- Your coach can help you reflect on your practice, values and approach as an instructor, teacher or leader of outdoor learning.
- Working with an IOL Coach provides an exceptional opportunity to look at your career so far and plan your aspirations and next steps.

How do I select an IOL Coach?

When you are accepted as an APIOL candidate we will send you a list of IOL Coaches. It is your responsibility to make contact with your chosen coach and arrange the first meeting. You work with your coach as much or as long as you need. Most people meet with their coach 2 or 3 times, either face to face or by phone / video call.

***NOTE:** Approval as an APIOL Coach is a straightforward process for experienced APIOL holders. If you know an APIOL holder who you wish to be your Coach encourage them to complete an application supported by two proposers. APIOL Coach training is optional.*

What might happen if I work with an IOL Coach?

If you work with an IOL Coach they will offer to meet at a convenient time and place (candidates usually travel to the coach). Face-to-face meetings are preferred but Skype and phone are also acceptable. The content and flow of APIOL Coaching meetings should always be guided by your wants and needs. As an example, if you met for 3 sessions that are about 1½ hours long they might look something like:

- **Session 1** - Your experience, skills, interests, goals and view on why Outdoor Learning matters (why do you do what you do?). Exploring and clarifying your key experiences and influences.
- **Session 2** – How your practice has changed over the years and linking your knowledge, skills, attitude and approach with the APIOL criteria. Guidance on getting a witness statement.
- **Session 3** – Helping you ensure your application covers all the APIOL criteria and expresses the real you at your consistent best. Completing your Coach endorsement.

Being away from your place of work with an APIOL Coach who is external to your organisation ensures you have the freedom to explore, clarify and express your personal values, professional practice and career aims without the fear of it adversely impacting your current position.

Do I have to meet all the APIOL criteria?

Yes. It is likely that you will need to have engaged in a variety of roles (paid or voluntary) to gather the experience to meet all the criteria. Different candidates are likely to find different criterion challenging to meet.

- Some criteria may require you to gain experience outside your day-to-day role.
- Some criteria may require you to read or research a new subject or topic.

What do you mean by reflection and reflective practice?

Reflection typically involves questions such as what, where, when, how and why. Reflective practice usually goes beyond reflection to develop critical understanding of the motivations, beliefs, habits and knowledge that underpins your work as an instructor, teacher or leader.

The APIOL application form is designed to support you in the process of reflection and reflective practice. It can help you to extend your self-awareness and improve or develop your professional practice.

What experience is relevant?

Not all your experience will be relevant to completing your application. Use examples that demonstrate *“The knowledge, skills and experience of practitioners who are responsible for providing learning in an outdoors environment and where an inherent challenge (physical, emotional or educational) and the uncertainty of the natural world is present.”*

IOL Individual Accreditation awards are applicable nationally and so our understanding of what constitutes valid evidence for each criterion must fit for instructors, teachers and leaders operating high on mountain ridges as much as in the more remote areas of Scotland, or the shady glades of Oxfordshire woodland, or in the seas off the coast in Devon.

How much writing is there?

The APIOL application form asks challenging questions and tests your ability to be clear, concise and purposeful in what you say. Your application is NOT a piece of academic writing. You can use pictures or illustrations in your application if you wish.

Can I use help to complete my application form?

Please use any support necessary to type your spoken word, transcribe a recording, correct spelling or grammar, etc. It is expected that APIOL candidates will take a professional approach and be able to make the necessary arrangements to suit their specific needs. The IOL Professional Development Team can assist you if required.

How do I get my application endorsed?

Endorsement is critical part of APIOL process to confirm the authenticity, currency, reliability and validity of all you have written in your application. You will need to get two endorsements:

- 1) **A workplace witness statement** to confirm that what you say you do and how you say you act is what they have seen / heard in reality.

Your workplace witness statement must be from someone who has observed you at work and can comment on how your practice matches what you describe in your application. Most people ask their line-manager or senior colleague. You can use one or two witnesses.

- 2) **An IOL Coach statement** to confirm your professional ethics, level of critical reflection and application is ready for APIOL assessment interview.

Your IOL Coach statement must be from someone from outside your organisation and be an APIOL holder and IOL Coach. Ideally you will meet your

IOL Coach face-to-face but online (skype/facetime) or phone is also acceptable. Whether you followed the IOL Coaching pathway or the Reflective pathway to prepare your application you will need an IOL Coach statement to endorse your application.

What happens in the Assessment Interview?

The Assessment Interview is a professional discussion usually conducted with two assessors. It lasts 60-75 minutes during which the assessors will confirm:

- You can describe your influences, style, personal qualities and ethics when delivering outdoor learning.
- You have a safe, effective and professional approach to delivering learning, decision-making and leadership in the outdoors.
- You can describe how your outdoor instruction / teaching has changed through reflective practice and professional development.
- You have demonstrated meeting the APIOL criteria.
- You demonstrate the professional attitude of an APIOL.

How do I arrange an assessment interview

IOL Assessment interview dates are listed on the IOL website. When you have completed your APIOL application in full email it to Louise in the IOL Central Office and let her know your preferred date.

Next Steps

Please contact Louise at IOL Central office and she will send you the APIOL application pack or put you in touch with a member of the Professional Development Team who will support you to become an Accredited Practitioner of the Institute for Outdoor Learning.

All the required documents are available for download at <https://www.outdoor-learning.org/APIOL>