



**APEL (Assessment of Prior Experience and/or Learning)
Guidelines for Applicants**

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1. Welcome to the APEL process

Welcome to the guidance and support document for the Animal Behaviour and Training Council's APEL (Assessment of Prior Experience and/or Learning) process.

This document is intended for APEL applicants and is designed to provide a clear explanation of the structure and process of APEL Assessment.

If you require further assistance after reading through this document, please contact the ABTC Assessment Administrator (assessments@abtc.org.uk).

2. Before you get started

The first thing to consider is which ABTC role is appropriate for you (*for further information please see Section 4 - which ABTC role is right for me?*).

Each ABTC role standard is split into two parts, both of which are assessed.

1. Knowledge & Understanding (theoretical/academic understanding)
2. Practical Skills (the practical application of knowledge and skills)

This guidance document is ONLY concerned with part one, the assessment of Knowledge and Understanding.

Part two, assessment of Practical Skills, is carried out by an [ABTC Assessing Organisation \(AO\)](#) ONLY once your Knowledge and Understanding (K&U) has been assessed.

Secondly, you may have already met the Knowledge and Understanding (K&U) requirements if you have successfully completed an ABTC recognised course.

If so, then you do *not* need to apply for APEL.

A list of all ABTC recognised courses can be found [HERE](#).

If your course is not listed, or you completed your course before it became ABTC recognised, then APEL is for you.

3. What is APEL?

APEL enables vocational learners to progress into an ABTC role and from one ABTC role to another.

Applicants do not need to have practical experience to apply for APEL. The purpose of APEL is to ensure applicants have the knowledge and understanding to see cases within the role they are applying for.

However, if an applicant is seeing cases and is coming through the process from industry experience, great!

This accessible route acknowledges that knowledge and understanding can be gained through practical experience and both formal and informal learning. These can include:

- A formal course not recognised by the ABTC
- Life experience
- Work experience, both within and outside of the **professional animal** industry
- Unassessed learning eg conferences, webinars, reading and courses

APEL enables applicants to demonstrate they meet the Knowledge and Understanding (K&U) as set out in the relevant Role Standard.

This is done through written evidence, interviews and reflection of relevant learning activities.

This may be relevant for individuals who:

- Have not had the opportunity to undertake formal study at a college/university
- Have undertaken formal study but in a different subject area
- Have undertaken formal study relevant to animal behaviour and training but the course is not recognised by the ABTC as meeting the K&U requirements

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

APEL applications are assessed by ABTC Assessors all of whom have undergone assessment training and attend regular updating sessions to ensure comparability and standardisation across the assessment team.

For further information about the APEL Assessment team please see **Appendix A** and for information about the ABTC Quality Assurance (QA) processes please see **Appendix B**.

4. Which ABTC role is right for me?

Before applying for APEL, you should consider which role best suits your professional practice. The ABTC roles are Animal Trainer, Animal Training Instructor, Animal Behaviour Technician or Clinical Animal Behaviourist.

4.1 Animal Trainer (AT)

The AT role is a good fit if:

- The applicant wants to plan and manage the training of animals (this may involve training the animal to undertake specific tasks, or more general training).

Some examples of this role in practice might include:

- An animal keeper carrying out training plans in a zoo, wildlife park or aquarium.
- A practitioner working in rescue carrying out training plans with the animals in their care.
- A practitioner planning and managing the training of assistance dogs.

For a more detailed overview of the AT role please refer to the [ABTC AT Standard](#).

4.2 Animal Training Instructor (ATI)

The ATI role is a good fit if:

- The applicant wants to instruct and coach owners/handlers/guardians to train the animals in their care (this may involve training the animal to undertake specific tasks, or more general training).

Some examples of this role in practice might include:

- A practitioner in a zoo, wildlife park or aquarium instructing and coaching animal keepers to train the animals in their care.
- A practitioner instructing and coaching owners to train their animal in groups eg dog training classes.
- A practitioner instructing and coaching owners to train their animal on a 1:1 basis as part of a training plan devised by a CAB (Clinical Animal Behaviourist).

For a more detailed overview of the ATI role please refer to the [ABTC ATI Standard](#).

4.3 Animal Behaviour Technician (ABT)

The ABT role is a good fit if:

- The applicant wants to provide preventative advice to owners/handlers/guardians and/or co-professionals to protect against the development of problem behaviours.
- The applicant wants to provide behavioural first-aid advice to owners/handlers/guardians (to prevent the problem from worsening) prior to referral to a suitably qualified practitioner.
- The applicant wants to implement behaviour modification plans developed by a Clinical Animal Behaviourist (CAB), Veterinary Behaviourist (VB) or Accredited Animal Behaviourist (AAB).

Some examples of this role in practice might include:

- A veterinary nurse running puppy parties offering advice to owners to protect against the development of problem behaviours.
- A practitioner working in a rescue setting providing behavioural first-aid to owners of a newly adopted dog before referring to a local animal behaviourist (CAB/VB/AAB).
- A practitioner working in private practice implementing a behaviour modification plan in conjunction with a CAB/VB/AAB, following assessment/evaluation by that same CAB/VB/AAB.

For a more detailed overview of the ABT role please refer to the [ABTC ABT Standard](#).

4.4 Clinical Animal Behaviourist (CAB)

The CAB role is a good fit if:

- The applicant has an extensive understanding of clinical animal behaviour and the related scientific/clinical literature.
- The applicant wants to assess and evaluate the behaviour of animals demonstrating all types of undesirable, inappropriate, problematic or dangerous behaviour.
- The applicant wants to develop effective behaviour modification plans for owners/guardians/handlers and/or co-professionals caring for the animal.

Some examples of this role in practice might include:

- A practitioner in private practice assesses, evaluates, develops and implements a behaviour modification plan.
- A practitioner in private practice assesses, evaluates, develops and implements a behaviour modification plan and works in conjunction with a local ABT and/or ATI.
- A practitioner in private practice assesses, evaluates and develops a behaviour modification plan before referring to a local Animal Behaviour Technician (ABT) to implement the plan.

- A practitioner working in the rescue and rehabilitation sector who assesses, evaluates and develops a behaviour modification plan for animals within a centre or going to a new home.

For a more detailed overview of the CAB role please refer to the [ABTC CAB Standard](#).

5. What is assessed in APEL?

APEL is about providing assurance that an applicant knows and understands the science and theory underlying their practice. Each ABTC role has a list of K&U (numbered statements). These address different areas of the role that have been agreed by the ABTC Assessing Organisations as relevant and required for good professional practice.

All ABTC practitioners must successfully demonstrate they meet the Knowledge and Understanding (K&U) part of the standard before having their Practical Skills assessed.

For your convenience, the K&U (numbered statements) for each role can be found in **Appendices C - F** of this guidance document.

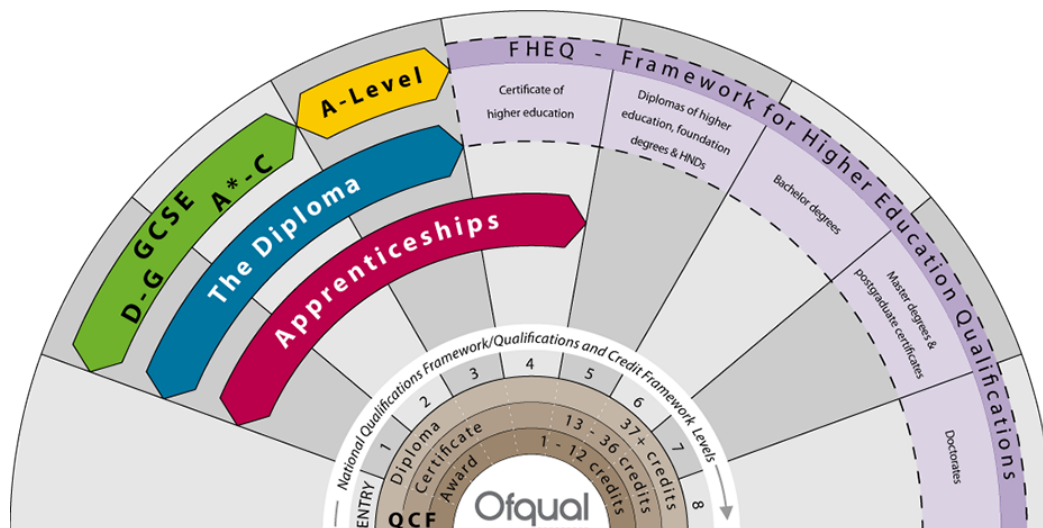
Whether you have undertaken formal learning or have gained knowledge and understanding through informal study and life experience, all applicants should reflect on where their experiences demonstrate their *knowledge*.

A minimum depth of *understanding* is required for each role. This is described as the Level of Understanding. It is important that applicants demonstrate how their *understanding* meets the required Level for the role they are applying for.

6. K&U Levels

Levels are defined in the [National Qualifications Framework](#). The Levels applied to the ABTC roles are Level 3 (A-Level) to Level 6 (BSc degree).

Figure 1: National Qualification Levels.



The different Levels build on previous knowledge to increase depth of understanding synthesis and critical thinking. The level for each ABTC role is described in more detail below:

6.1 Animal Trainer - Level 3

The K&U for the ABTC AT role must be demonstrated at Level 3 which is the equivalent to A Level, National Certificate or the final year of a Diploma.

Those who are taught to Level 3 are expected to have a good level of factual, procedural and theoretical knowledge. They can solve non-routine problems within their field based on their knowledge and understanding.

For example this could be demonstrated by comparing areas of knowledge, such as describing the similarities and differences between operant and classical learning and their use in teaching (training) an animal to be at ease in certain contexts.

6.2 Animal Training Instructor - Level 4

The K&U for the ABTC ATI role must be demonstrated at Level 4 which is equivalent to a Higher National Certificate.

Those who are taught to Level 4 can work on complex and non-routine issues within their field based on their knowledge and understanding.

For example this could be demonstrated by considering and describing how both classical and operant learning may support or undermine communication between an animal and its owner/guardian/handler during training sessions.

6.3 Animal Behaviour Technician – Level 5

The K&U for the ABTC ABT role must be demonstrated at Level 5 which is equivalent to a Foundation degree or Higher National Diploma.

Those who are taught to Level 5 are expected to have the knowledge and understanding needed to respond to complex problems and situations. They will evaluate the situation and respond based on their knowledge and understanding of the situation.

For example this could be demonstrated by considering and evaluating how learning theory and management may contribute to a problem behaviour such as intermittent (friendly) jumping up at people (dogs), intermittent pocket mugging (horse) or intermittent litter tray 'accidents' (cats).

6.4 Clinical Animal Behaviourist – Level 6

The K&U for the ABTC CAB role must be demonstrated at Level 6 which is equivalent to the final year of study for a University (Bachelor) degree.

Those who are taught to Level 6 are expected to have more highly developed and complex levels of knowledge, which enables them to **critically evaluate** a situation and develop **original responses** to complicated and unpredictable problems and situations.

For example this could be demonstrated by considering the potential motivations and associated emotions for a dog intermittently jumping up at people (dogs), intermittent pocket mugging (horse) or intermittent litter tray 'accidents' (cats). If it is a learnt behaviour, analyse in learning theory terms how this behaviour may have been learnt, maintained and any foreseeable difficulties in its resolution. Then using this information, create a plan for the animal and its owner/guardian/handler.

7. The APEL application process (AT and ATI roles)

From 1 January 2026 the APEL process for the AT and ATI roles will be carried out by ABTC Assessing Organisations. A list of ABTC Assessing Organisations for the Animal Trainer (AT) and Animal Training Instructor (ATI) roles can be found [HERE](#).

If you would like to become an ABTC registered AT or ATI, please contact one of these ABTC Assessing Organisations to find out how you can have your K&U assessed with them.

8. The APEL application process (ABT and CAB roles)

8.1 The steps to APEL assessment

Step 1 - Join the APEL mailing list

Please contact the ABTC assessment administrator (assessments@abtc.org.uk) and place your name and email address on the mailing list. We will keep you updated with any changes to the APEL process or paperwork. We will also inform you when new assessment slots become available to book online.

Please note: you are welcome to begin working on your APEL application whilst you are waiting for an assessment slot to become available.

Step 2 - Secure an assessment slot

When assessment slots become available, everyone will be emailed the online booking link. Available spaces will be offered on a first come first served basis. Please complete the online registration form and make payment (currently £460) to secure your space.

Please note: The APEL process is offered at cost and not at a profit to the ABTC. For full transparency, a breakdown of the costs is outlined below.

The APEL fee includes a non-refundable administration fee of £160. If an applicant chooses not to proceed with their APEL application and fails to provide at least one month's notice, no refund will be issued. Any refund granted in other circumstances will exclude the £160 administration fee.

APEL Assessor 1 (1 day)	£150
APEL Assessor 2 (1 day)	£150
ABTC administrative costs (APEL Chair, Assessment administrator, EQA)	£160 (non-refundable fee)
TOTAL COST TO APPLICANT	£460

Step 3 - Assessment window allocation

Once you have made payment you will be assigned to an assessment window. This assessment window will indicate the timeframe in which your application will be reviewed.

ASSESSMENT WINDOW	APPLICATION SUBMISSION DATE (LATEST)
1 February - 31 March	Last working day of January
1 April - 31 May	Last working day of March
1 June - 31 July	Last working day of May
1 August - 30 September	Last working day of July
1 October - 30 November	Last working day of September

Step 4 - Assessor allocation

The ABTC assessment administrator will allocate two Assessors to review your APEL application. You will be given the opportunity to request different Assessor(s), if for example the person is known to you or if you feel there is another conflict of interest. If you would like to view our conflict of interest policy in full, please contact assessments@abtc.org.uk.

Step 5 - Complete APEL documentation

Your documentation should include:

- a. List of learning activities
- b. List of relevant work experience (paid/voluntary)
- c. Reflective accounts forms
- d. Additional supporting documents

Please see section 8.3 for more detailed information regarding how to complete this documentation.

Step 6 - Upload documentation

When you book your assessment slot online, an account will automatically be set up on the ABTC website with an online portal to upload your APEL documentation. This must be completed by the latest application submission date for your assigned assessment window eg if your assessment window starts on 1 February you must have uploaded your documentation by the last working day of January.

The online portal will accept the following file formats: word, excel, pdf, jpg and open document format. These should all upload with no issues. If you are experiencing problems uploading any documents, please try clearing your cache or using a different browser. If problems in uploading your documents persist, please contact the ABTC Assessment Administrator (assessments@abtc.org.uk).

Please check that all documents have been uploaded. If a document is found to be missing from your application you will be contacted by the ABTC assessment administrator, normally within 10 days of submission. The assessment process will be paused for five working days to allow you to address this. Please note if the missing documents are not provided, it may mean that you forfeit your place and payment for this assessment window. Please understand this is because there are a limited number of spaces in each assessment window.

Step 7 - Initial review of submission

Your allocated Assessors will complete an initial review of your paperwork. This will usually be completed within the first month of your allocated assessment window.

Step 8 - Initial written feedback

You will receive a feedback form from your Assessors which clearly outlines which of the K&U have been Fully met (Y), Partially met (P) or Not yet met (N).

Feedback will specifically address any areas that have not been fully met. This constructive feedback will help you consider what information is missing from your application and how you might be able to address it at interview.

Written feedback is also given after each interview (see below).

Feedback (both written and in the oral interview) will be supportive, objective, fair, transparent, timely (SOFTT) and of sufficient detail to enable you to fully understand the decision.

Step 9 - Oral interviews

All applicants will be invited to **two** oral interviews.

The purpose of each interview is for Assessors to further explore with you and for you to explain to us aspects of your written submission, to ensure all K&U are fully met. This is much more about dialogue with you and is not meant to be a formal question and answer examination. This is an 'open book' style of discussion, emphasising your understanding of your knowledge rather

than rote memorisation. You are welcome to keep notes handy and readily available to refer back to throughout the session.

Oral interview 1

If your written evidence fully meets all the K&U, the oral interview provides Assessors the opportunity to verify the originality of the application and thus your understanding.

If your written application does not fully meet all K&U statements, you will be invited to an oral interview to discuss any statements which remain partially (P) or not yet met (N). The purpose of the oral interview is to give you further opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding.

Oral interview 2

APEL Assessors will invite applicants to a second oral interview if needed to fully meet any remaining K&U.

However, in some cases the number of K&U remaining partially (P) or not yet met (N) will be too many to cover in just one additional oral interview. In this situation the applicant can choose how they would like to use the second oral interview. It can either be used as an opportunity to continue discussing the K&U or, if the Applicant would prefer, the Assessors can use this time to give constructive, objective feedback to help the Applicant with a resubmission.

Please note: if a resubmission is required, any K&U that have already been fully met (Y) will not be re-assessed. The full assessment fee (£460) applies to a resubmission.

Additional (3rd) oral interview

Where only a small number of K&U remain (six or fewer) after the second oral interview, Applicants may choose to pay an additional fee and continue their assessment through a 3rd oral interview rather than a full resubmission. This interview follows the same format as oral interviews 1 & 2, with discussion focused only on the remaining K&U.

Please note: An additional oral interview is offered at cost and not at a profit to the ABTC. For full transparency, a breakdown of the costs is outlined below.

APEL Assessor 1 (2 hours)	£50
APEL Assessor 2 (2 hours)	£50
ABTC administrative costs (APEL Chair, Assessment administrator, EQA)	£80 (non-refundable fee)
TOTAL COST TO APPLICANT	£180

Step 10 - APEL Certification

Once all Knowledge and Understanding has been demonstrated as Fully Met (Y), and you have provided a signed copy of the final feedback form, the APEL process is complete.

A certificate will then be sent as proof of demonstrating knowledge and understanding for the ABTC role.

Successful APEL applicants are encouraged to join an [ABTC Assessing Organisation](#) as a provisional/associate member to support their continued journey towards registration as an ABTC practitioner and work towards assessment of their Practical Skills. Only once your Practical Skills have also been assessed may you join the register of ABTC practitioners.

Step 11 - What if I am unsuccessful?

Where an applicant has not succeeded, they will be provided with clear information of potential next steps regarding:

- a. Potential CPD opportunities to help meet the K&U requirements for the role
- b. How to re-apply
- c. Appeals procedure

Step 12 - Appeals

Appeals can be made on the following grounds only:

1. The assessment process has been unfair or not been properly followed in some way
2. There is clear evidence to dispute the assessment outcome

You will not be disadvantaged by submitting an appeal in good faith. Appeals which are judged to be vexatious, malicious, or frivolous will not be considered.

Please see Appendix G for further information about the appeals process.

8.2 Support for applicants

ABTC offers regular Q&A sessions (first Wednesday of every month at 7.00 pm) to potential or current applicants via Zoom. Please contact assessments@abtc.org.uk for dates and further information about upcoming Q&A zoom sessions.

8.3 Reasonable adjustments

8.3.1 Access to assessment

The ABTC is committed to ensuring that everyone can take part in the APEL process fairly, in line with the Equality Act 2010.

We understand that some applicants may face barriers when accessing assessment. These may relate to:

- Communication needs e.g. speech or language differences
- Mental health or emotional wellbeing e.g. anxiety, ADHD, depression
- Learning difficulties e.g. dyslexia
- Neurodivergence e.g. autism, ADHD
- Sensory or physical conditions e.g. visual/hearing impairments, epilepsy

Our aim is to reduce or remove these barriers wherever reasonably possible.

8.3.2 How the APEL process supports you

The APEL process has been designed to be inclusive from the outset. Many supportive measures are already built in:

Flexible and accessible approach

- Fully online - removing the need to travel
- Cost effective - avoiding the expense of formal courses
- Flexible routes to demonstrate knowledge and understanding - recognising that learning can come from experience and professional development, not just formal education

Written assessment

- No time limits - completing your submission at your own pace
- Apply when you feel ready - helping to reduce pressure
- Complete from home - with access to your usual tools, assistive technology or calming aids eg dictate/read aloud functions, spelling/grammar tools or fidget toys

Oral assessment (interview)

- Conducted online so you can take part in a familiar and comfortable environment
- You can choose a quiet, low distraction space, controlling lighting and noise
- Written feedback is provided one week in advance so you have time to prepare responses
- Written feedback gives clear guidance on discussion topics based on your written submission
- Open-book format so you can refer to notes during the interview
- You may use assistive technology e.g. screen readers

Supportive assessors

- Using clear and straightforward language
- Checking your understanding and rephrasing questions if needed
- Offering flexibility to reschedule if you are unwell or experiencing difficulties

8.3.3 Additional support (reasonable adjustments)

If you need extra support, we will work with you to agree adjustments that are appropriate and practical for your situation. Adjustments might include:

- Alternative formats e.g. more written work instead of an oral interview (if written communication is easier or verbal communication increases anxiety or leads to cognitive freezing/panic)
- Splitting oral interviews into several shorter sessions
- Extra time in oral assessments to support processing and reduce pressure
- Rest breaks during oral assessments e.g. to take medications, move about, reduce communication fatigue
- Flexible scheduling including choosing the best time of day for you e.g. avoiding times of high pain, low concentration
- Having a named support person present if helpful
- Communication support during oral assessment
 - Captions or live transcripts
 - Written questions using the chat function
 - Adjustments to support lip reading

There is no one-size-fits-all approach. Adjustments are always tailored to your individual needs.

8.3.4 Requesting additional support

When you apply you will be asked to tell us about any additional needs. After you submit your application:

1. You will be invited to complete a reasonable adjustments request form
2. You can explain:
 - a) Any barriers you experience
 - b) The support or adjustments you feel would help
3. We will review your request and agree any appropriate adjustments with you

We may contact you for further information if needed.

8.4 Completing the paperwork

8.4.1 Application form

Please complete the online application form in full. This enables us to allocate the most appropriate Assessors to your APEL submission. The application form is also where you can declare any additional needs or requirements relating to your APEL assessment.

8.4.2 List of learning activities

Please clearly divide into two sections, **Section A (formal learning)** and **Section B (informal learning)**.

Learning activity	Date of learning
Section A	
BSc Animal Health and Welfare X University	2020 – 2023
Section B	
Psychopharmacology webinar Speaker name	June 2019
Client counselling skills book Author name	Aug 2023
Diversity and Inclusion workshop Workshop organiser name	Nov 2024

When naming your document please follow the format: *Learning activities Applicant Name*

Section A - Formal Learning

This may be from non-ABTC recognised university or professional courses that have required some form of graded assessment/examination (written, oral or practical).

This might include completed modules from an ABTC recognised course, even if the applicant is still in the process of completing the whole course. Likewise, an applicant may list relevant modules from a non-ABTC recognised course. For example, specifically mentioning Anatomy and Physiology modules from an Animal Science degree, or Psychopharmacology from a Human Pharmacy degree.

You will also need to provide certificates, transcripts and module descriptors as evidence of this learning (*please see section 8.3.5.1*).

Section B - Informal learning

1.Non-assessed courses or events - here applicants can list relevant activities where a formal assessment was not carried out. These may include, but are not limited to, workplace-based training, informal courses, webinars, conferences etc.

2.Self-directed learning - Here applicants can highlight any learning they have chosen to undertake that was not course based. This may include, but is not limited to, books read, podcasts listened to, articles or courses written, family responsibilities, hobbies or any other life experience which has provided them with transferable knowledge relevant to the role.

8.4.3 List of relevant work experience

You may provide this as a list or, if you prefer, please attach the most recent version of your CV. Please include both paid and voluntary work experience that is relevant to the role, along with the dates you performed each role.

Please note - Whilst some applicants may have work experience, this is not a requirement for APEL assessment as it is only the Knowledge and Understanding that is being assessed at this time (not Practical Skill).

When naming your document please follow the format: *Work experience Applicant Name* or *CV Applicant Name*

8.4.4 Reflective account forms

The reflective account forms are where you provide evidence of your Knowledge and Understanding (K&U) at the required level. You should provide a reflective account form for each K&U section. This means there should be a minimum of six completed reflective account forms for the ABT role and a minimum of seven reflective account forms for the CAB role (see table below).

Animal Behaviour Technician K&U sections	Clinical Animal Behaviourist K&U sections
1. Animal Behaviour	1. Animal Behaviour
2. Animal Health and Welfare	2. Animal Health and Welfare
3. Animal Learning and Training	3. Animal Learning and Training
4. The Interaction between Health and Behaviour	4. The Interaction between Health and Behaviour
5. Clinical Procedures	5. Clinical Procedures
6. Law and Ethics	6. Law and Ethics
	7. Critical Analysis and Research

A reflective account should give examples of how your experience and learning has allowed you to acquire the Knowledge **and Understanding** for each of the K&U statements. Understanding at Level 5 & 6 is related to depth of knowledge, how it links across different areas and how it is used in problem solving.

Applicants will complete the reflective account forms in different ways. You are not expected to write an account for each numbered K&U statement but it is important to address the links between each, both within and between each section. It is in demonstrating these links that you will evidence your depth of understanding.

When writing your reflective account and discussing K&U statements try to keep the discussion relevant. This makes it easier for the Assessors to track. However, if you discuss something in an example that touches on another K&U (relevant to another reflective account form), please indicate the K&U in brackets so the Assessors can easily note it eg (K&U12).

Always have in mind why what you are writing is relevant to the K&Us. Providing definitions and examples can be useful to demonstrate the **knowledge** for some statements, but they do not demonstrate **understanding**. However, explaining a situation or giving examples about why you would or would not do something, based on your knowledge can help to evidence your understanding.

When naming your documents please follow the format:

Reflective Account Section X Applicant Name

8.4.5 Additional supporting documents

8.4.5.1 Certificates and transcripts

Please provide evidence of formal learning listed in **Section A** of your list of learning activities. This should include certificates and transcripts related to the course. Where an applicant has listed specific modules from a non-ABTC recognised course, the module descriptors should also be included.

When naming your documents please follow the format: *Degree certificate Applicant Name* or *Degree transcript Applicant Name*

8.4.5.2 Illustrative case studies and scenarios (optional)

To help demonstrate your knowledge and understanding more fully, you may wish to include illustrative case studies or scenarios within your application. These examples can be drawn from real cases you have encountered in practice, or they may be hypothetical scenarios that you construct to show how your knowledge could be applied to explain, evaluate and respond to specific situations (Level 5) or critically evaluate a situation and develop original responses to complicated and unpredictable problems and situations (Level 6).

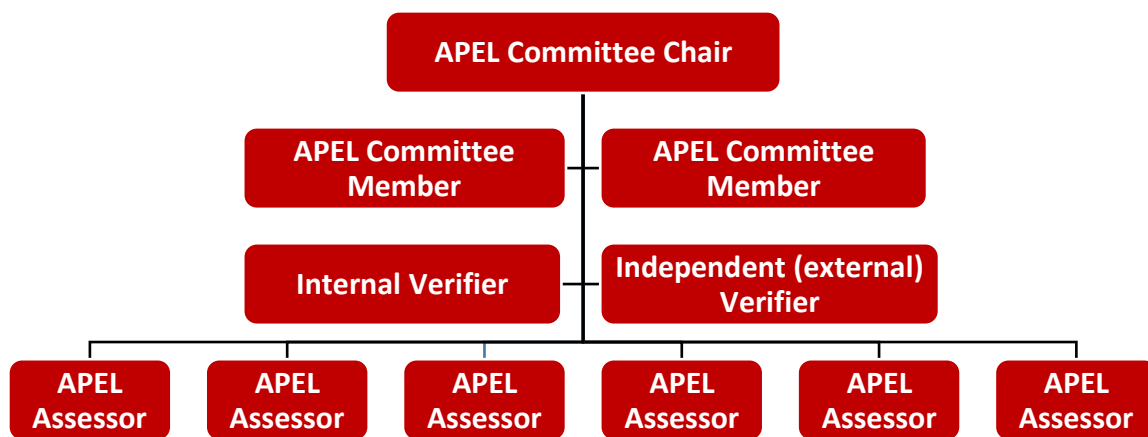
If real examples are used, you may wish to discuss what you thought did or did not go well and why and what changes to practice would be relevant.

Whilst not required, this approach of using case studies and scenarios can be an effective way to provide clear and relevant evidence which helps your Assessors to evaluate not only what you know, but also how well you understand and apply that knowledge in context.

When naming your documents please follow the format: *Case example 1 Applicant Name* or *Scenario 2 Applicant Name*

Appendix A - The APEL Assessment Team

The ABTC APEL Committee oversees the assessment process for prospective ATs, ATIs, ABTs and CABs who have not completed an ABTC recognised course, to gain recognition for their Knowledge and Understanding for the respective roles.



All APEL Applicants are assessed by two APEL Assessors from the APEL assessment team. Applicants have the right to choose not to be assessed by someone they know due to conflict of interest.

APEL Assessors have demonstrated competence in the [Standards](#) for any of the roles for which they are assessing, having been assessed as competent in those roles. APEL Assessors must be independent and hold relevant expertise in animal behaviour, training and/or related fields, and appropriate qualifications and/or demonstrable competence in assessment.

Any person assessing an ABTC Standard will be acting on behalf of the ABTC regardless of their personal membership to any other Organisation. No Assessor may assess any person with whom they have a personal relationship and will sign such a declaration prior to commencing work. All Assessors are required to carry out their role with impartiality.

All Assessors are trained and competent. Their work is subject to verification processes as part of Quality Assurance.

Appendix B – Quality Assurance (QA) of the APEL process

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, objective, fair, transparent, timely and confidential.

The assessments are only undertaken by persons that have necessary 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 an ABTC agreed set of standards, and to maintain clear and sufficient records of their assessments, including using agreed recording processes and documents.

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 conflict of interest. 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, eg due to Assessor illness, then the applicant must be informed of the new proposed Assessor and have the same right to request an alternative or delay until their application can be assessed by the originally agreed parties.

Applicants will receive timely written feedback which has been agreed by the Assessors. Should there be a discrepancy between the two Assessors, a third person who has declared no personal knowledge of the applicant will be allocated to further review the application.

The ABTC will regulate the standard of assessment through annual review of randomly selected applications across all roles and Assessors. It may also choose to appoint a third Assessor to observe and peer review assessment processes as they are conducted. In this way quality assurance of the process is ensured.

Assessment decisions are subject to the ABTC verification process by an independent verifier.

Appendix C – K&U for the Animal Trainer (AT) role

Animal Behaviour

1. Describe the natural behaviour patterns, body language and communication methods of the animal(s).

Animal Health and Welfare

2. Explain how the needs of animals under your duty of care may be assessed and addressed.

3. Explain the suitability, action, welfare and ethical considerations of training equipment and techniques for the species' and animals' physical and mental capabilities and for other animals in the vicinity.

4. Explain how training situations and circumstances will impact on animal welfare and how to assess whether training is in the best interests of the animal(s) involved at that time.

5. Explain how to assess when training might be harmful, unsafe or not recommended

Animal Learning and Training

6. Explain the process of establishing measurable goals and objectives for the training of animals.

7. Explain how to formulate training plans based on the objectives agreed between the Animal Trainer and owner/guardian/handler and available resources.

8. Describe factors which may affect the progress and success of training.

9. Explain learning theory including operant conditioning, e.g. luring, shaping, capturing; its use, effects and practical application, including the differences between positive and negative reinforcement and positive and negative punishment.

10. Describe the practical effects and consequences of classical conditioning on animal learning and behaviour.

11. Explain schedules of reinforcement and how they can be used to establish and maintain desired behaviour.

12. Explain the reasoning behind the need to guard against unintentional classical and operant conditioning creating undesirable behaviour.

13. Explain how learned behaviour can be extinguished by the removal of reinforcement, and the principle of spontaneous recovery.

14. Explain the importance of reviewing and revising a training plan to meet the objectives.

Animal Husbandry, Management and Welfare Legislation

15. Describe your responsibility and accountability for duty of care of animals under the current animal welfare and other applicable legislation.
16. Explain health and safety policy and how to carry out a risk assessment related to the training environment.
17. Explain the importance of establishing and maintaining training records.
18. Summarise Employment law, the Equality Act, health and safety legislation and the UK-GDPR (United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation); and their implications for the Animal Trainer, their clients and others.
19. Demonstrate awareness of disease presentation, risk and mitigation specific to the range of species as well as individual animals.
20. Demonstrate awareness of both intra and inter specific risks (human to human/zoonoses) and how to identify detection of relevant threats; reporting procedures; management of the training environment.
21. Demonstrate awareness of the potential environmental impacts associated with the role, and how they can be minimised.

Communication

22. Outline the benefits of using technology to improve the quality of service offered e.g. to support record keeping and collaboration with colleagues and owner/handler/guardian.
23. Describe a range of effective and inclusive communication techniques when collecting and disseminating information, providing support and resolving issues relating to owner/handler/guardian understanding.
24. Describe how to recognise compassion fatigue and emotional burden in self, colleagues and owner/guardian/handler, and when and where to seek support.

Appendix D – K&U for the Animal Training Instructor (ATI) role

Animal Behaviour

1. Describe the natural behaviour patterns, body language and communication methods of the animal(s).

Animal Health and Welfare

2. Explain how the needs of animals under your duty of care may be assessed and addressed.

3. Explain the suitability, action, welfare and ethical considerations of training equipment and techniques for the species' and animals' physical and mental capabilities, and for other animals in the vicinity.

4. Explain how training situations and circumstances will impact on animal welfare and how to assess whether training is in the best interests of the animal involved at that time.

5. Explain how to assess when training might be harmful, unsafe or not recommended.

Animal Learning and Training

6. Explain the process of establishing measurable goals and objectives for the training of animals.

7. Explain how to formulate training plans based on the objectives agreed between the Animal Training Instructor and owner/guardian/handler and available resources.

8. Describe factors which may affect the progress and success of training.

9. Explain learning theory including operant conditioning e.g. luring, shaping, capturing; its use, effects and practical application, including the differences between positive and negative reinforcement and positive and negative punishment.

10. Describe the practical effects and consequences of classical conditioning on animal learning and behaviour.

11. Explain schedules of reinforcement and how they can be used to establish and maintain desired behaviour.

12. Explain the reasoning behind the need to guard against unintentional classical and operant conditioning creating undesirable behaviour.

13. Explain how learned behaviour can be extinguished by the removal of reinforcement, and the principle of spontaneous recovery.

14. Explain the importance of reviewing and revising a training plan to meet the objectives.

Animal Husbandry, Management and Welfare Legislation

15. Describe your responsibility and accountability for duty of care of animals under the current animal welfare legislation and other applicable legislation.
16. Explain health and safety policy and how to carry out a risk assessment related to the training environment.
17. Explain the importance of establishing and maintaining training records.
18. Summarise employment law, the Equality Act, health and safety legislation and the UK-GDPR (United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation); and their implications for the Animal Training Instructor, their clients and others.
19. Demonstrate awareness of disease including presentation, risk and mitigation specific to the range of species, as well as individual animals.
20. Demonstrate awareness of both intra and inter specific risks (human to human/zoonoses) and how to identify detection of relevant threats; reporting procedures; management of the training environment.
21. Demonstrate an awareness of the potential environmental impacts associated with the role, and how they can be minimised.

Communication and Instruction

22. Demonstrate awareness of what motivates owners/guardians/handlers generally and individually.
23. How to adapt exercises to the specific needs of the owner/guardian/handler.
24. How to identify people's need for information and knowledge and their motivations for acquiring it.
25. How to establish people's preferred communication media, styles, timing and pace.
26. The need to check that the information and knowledge you are communicating are current, accurate and complete and how to do so.
27. How to take action to minimise any interference or disruption to your communication.
28. How to structure your communication in ways that facilitate people's reception and understanding.
29. How to use a variety of techniques to gain and maintain people's attention and interest and to help them retain information and knowledge.
30. How to use verbal and non-verbal feedback to help you fine-tune your communication.
31. How to communicate the level of confidence that can be placed on the information and knowledge, i.e. whether it is based on rigorously researched evidence, widely accepted facts personal or anecdotal opinion.

32. The need to minimise the use of jargon, technical terms or abbreviations and to carefully explain meaning, to avoid any confusion, to owners/guardians/handlers.
33. That people have received the information and knowledge you have communicated.
34. Outline the benefits of using technology to improve the quality of service offered e.g. to support record keeping and collaboration with colleagues and owner/guardian/handler
35. Describe a range of effective and inclusive communication techniques when collecting and disseminating information, providing support and when assessing and resolving issues relating to owner/guardian/handler understanding.
36. How to recognise compassion fatigue and emotional burden in self, colleagues and owner/guardian/handler, and when and where to seek support.

Appendix E – K&U for the Animal Behaviour Technician (ABT) role

Animal Behaviour

1. Evaluate and analyse the ethology of vertebrate animals, including perceptual abilities, maintenance and survival behaviours and communication, their function and their motivational basis in a range of animal species and taxa.
2. Recognise, evaluate and report on the behavioural states of a range of animal species and those that most commonly contribute to the caseload of the practitioners they might refer to, including signals indicative of ill health as well as key behavioural states such as fear, nervousness, aggression, frustration, threat-reduction, play and relaxation.
3. Evaluate the effects of behavioural ontogeny; to include sensitive periods, socialisation and attachment theory in a range of animals and their possible role in the development of unwanted behaviours.
4. Evaluate the interaction between biological and evolutionary influences and the environment in which an animal is kept, and their roles in the development of behavioural disorders for a range of animal species.

Animal Health and Welfare

5. Compare, analyse and evaluate the key ethological, psychological and physiological concepts that underpin animal welfare in a range of taxa.
6. Evaluate the welfare considerations in the management and training of animals.
7. Demonstrate an awareness of disease presentation, risk and mitigation in a range of species, as well as individual animals seen in practice.
8. Demonstrate understanding of both intra and inter specific risks (human to human/and zoonoses) and how to identify/ detect relevant threats; reporting procedures; management of the training and consultation environment.

Animal Learning and Training

9. Evaluate how animals learn to include habituation; sensitisation, classical conditioning, operant conditioning, insight and social learning, animal cognition and the concept of sentience.
10. Evaluate the principles underlying unwanted behaviours and how they may develop and be maintained.
11. Evaluate the principles and rationale behind the use of a range of training, preventative and behavioural modification techniques, to include (but not limited to) systematic desensitisation, counter-conditioning and the use of clickers or other markers/conditioned reinforcers.
12. Evaluate and analyse the strategies and range of techniques for the implementation of preventative behavioural interventions in animals of all ages; the rationale for their use/application; and the strengths and weaknesses of each.

The Interaction between Health and Behaviour

13. Explain the functional anatomy and physiology of animals and the role of the nervous and endocrine systems in mediating behaviour.
14. Demonstrate awareness of the signs of physical ill-health, common conditions influencing behaviour and associated veterinary terminology.
15. Demonstrate awareness of the behavioural indicators and consequences of mental and emotional state (both positive and negative).
16. Evaluate the mode of action and application of the major classes of psychopharmaceutical medications used in clinical animal behaviour.
17. Evaluate commonly used complementary, or non-prescription therapies or products, their claimed/potential efficacy and the ethics of their use.

Clinical Procedures

18. Demonstrate understanding of the range of common behavioural disorders in animals.
19. Explain the application of the principles of ethology and learning theory for the prevention of unwanted behaviour and/or giving of first aid behavioural information.
20. Demonstrate the ability to construct and deliver structured behaviour change programmes to effectively address the delivery of structured programmes for the prevention of unwanted behaviour and/or giving of first aid behavioural information, that are likely to be effective for target behaviours identified.
21. Effective techniques for the measurement and recording of progress of an animal/animals through a remedial plan for behaviour change and the reporting of progress to owners/guardians/handlers and other professionals.
22. Assess situations where further action may be necessary, including ways in which compliance with an extended programme for the prevention of unwanted behaviour and/or giving of first aid behavioural information, may be encouraged.
23. Demonstrate awareness of a range of effective and inclusive communication techniques when collecting and disseminating information, providing support and when assessing and resolving issues relating to owner/guardian/handler understanding.
24. Demonstrate awareness of the common professional, ethical or other issues that need to be considered in all settings as part of the professional interactions of this role, and the need to refer to other professionals.
25. Recognise signs of compassion fatigue and emotional burden in self, colleagues and owner/guardian/handler, and when and where to seek support.
26. Demonstrate awareness of the potential environmental impacts associated with the role, and how they can be minimised.

Law and Ethics

27. Demonstrate awareness of legislation relating to ownership, welfare and use of animals; employment law, health and safety legislation, safeguarding, DEI and the UK-GDPR (United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation). This includes the implications and professional liability for the Animal Behaviour Technician, allied professionals, clients, veterinary staff and others.
28. Demonstrate awareness of the ethical frameworks and Codes of Practice relating to the welfare, ownership and use of animals.

Appendix F – K&U for the Clinical Animal Behaviourist (CAB) role

Animal Behaviour

1. Critically evaluate and analyse the ethology of vertebrate animals, including perceptual abilities, maintenance and survival behaviours and communication, their function and their motivational basis in a range of animal species and taxa.
2. Recognise, critically evaluate and report on the behavioural states of a range of animal species and those that most commonly contribute to the caseload of the practitioners they might refer to, including signals indicative of ill health as well as key behavioural states such as fear, nervousness, aggression, frustration, threat-reduction, play and relaxation.
3. Critically evaluate the effects of behavioural ontogeny; to include sensitive periods, socialisation and attachment theory in a range of animals and their possible role in the development of unwanted behaviours.
4. Critically evaluate the interaction between biological and evolutionary influences and the environment in which an animal is kept, and their roles in the development of behavioural disorders for a range of animal species.
5. Demonstrate awareness of the process of domestication and its effects on the behaviour of animals; human/animal interactions and how these can contribute to the development of animal misuse, abuse, abandonment, animal-hoarding.

Animal Health and Welfare

6. Compare, analyse and critically evaluate the key ethological, psychological and physiological concepts that underpin animal welfare in a range of taxa.
7. Critically evaluate the welfare considerations in the management and training of animals and in clinical practice.
8. Demonstrate an awareness of disease presentation, risk and mitigation in a range of species, as well as individual animals seen in practice.
9. Demonstrate understanding of both intra and inter specific risks (human to human/zoonoses) and how to identify/ detect relevant threats; reporting procedures; management of the training and consultation environment.

Animal Learning and Training

10. How animals learn to include habituation; sensitisation, classical conditioning, operant conditioning, insight and social learning, animal cognition and the concept of sentience.

11. Critically evaluate the principles underlying unwanted behaviours and how they may develop and be maintained.
12. Critically evaluate the principles and rationale behind the use of a range of training, preventative and behavioural modification techniques, to include (but not limited to) systematic desensitisation, counter-conditioning and the use of clickers or other markers/conditioned reinforcers.
13. Critically evaluate and analyse the strategies and the range of techniques for the prevention and/or modification of unwanted behaviour, the rationale for their use/application, and the strengths and weaknesses of each, in animals of all ages.

The Interaction between Health and Behaviour

14. Critically analyse the role of key anatomical and physiological systems (including the nervous and endocrine systems) in mediating behaviour.
15. Explain the concept of neural plasticity and the relevance and influence of environmental and genetic factors in the development of the nervous system.
16. Demonstrate awareness of the signs of physical ill-health, common conditions influencing behaviour and associated veterinary terminology.
17. Demonstrate awareness of the behavioural indicators and consequences of mental and emotional state (both positive and negative), and of medical disorders.
18. Critically evaluate the impact that mental and emotional state (both positive and negative), and medical issues may have on behaviour.
19. Critically evaluate the mode of action, the potential efficacy, constraints and contraindications, and the application of the major classes of psychopharmaceutical medications used in clinical animal behaviour.
20. Critically evaluate commonly used complementary, or non-prescription therapies or products, their claimed/potential efficacy and the ethics of their use.
21. Recognise the ethical implications of psychopharmacological intervention and the legal position of the Clinical Animal Behaviourist, Veterinary Surgeon, and others, regarding diagnosis, prescription, use of drugs, and provision of information.

Clinical Procedures

22. Critically evaluate underlying causations (differentials) and contributing factors (predisposing, initiating and maintenance factors) for a range of common behavioural disorders in animals to include phobias; aggression; abnormal repetitive behaviours; anxiety related behaviours.
23. Demonstrate the ability to apply the principles of ethology and learning theory to the assessment and treatment of a range of behaviour problems.

24. Record and critically evaluate all information gathered, in order to assess unwanted behaviours, utilising a range of assessment tools.
25. Demonstrate the ability to construct and deliver structured behaviour modification programmes to effectively address a range of unwanted behaviours.
26. Effective techniques for the measurement and recording of progress of an animal/animals through a remedial plan for behaviour change and the reporting of progress to owners/guardians/handlers and other professionals.
27. Assess situations where further action may be necessary, including ways in which compliance with an extended programme for the prevention and/or modification of unwanted behaviour may be encouraged.
28. Demonstrate awareness of a range of effective and inclusive communication techniques when collecting and disseminating information, providing support and when assessing and resolving issues relating to owner/guardian/handler understanding.
29. Apply underlying principles in human and family psychology, to include attitude theory, processes of inter-personal relationships, grief and bereavement.
30. Apply the principles of effective counselling to facilitate and maintain behavioural change, both short and long term, including where the behaviour modification programme may need several revisions.
31. Demonstrate awareness of potential professional, ethical, welfare, safeguarding or other issues; and the actions necessary to address these, including appreciation of the importance of professional relationships and wider referral.
32. How to recognise compassion fatigue and emotional burden in self, colleagues and owner/guardian/handler, and when and where to seek support.
33. Demonstrate awareness of the potential environmental impacts associated with the role, and how they can be minimised.

Law and Ethics

34. Demonstrate awareness of legislation relating to ownership, welfare and use of animals; employment law, health and safety legislation, safeguarding, DEI and the UK-GDPR (United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation). This includes the implications and professional liability for the Clinical Animal Behaviourist, allied professionals, clients, veterinary staff and others.
35. Demonstrate awareness of employment law, Equality Act, health and safety legislation, safeguarding, DEI, and the UK-GDPR (United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation); and their implications for the Clinical Animal Behaviourist, their clients and others.
36. Demonstrate awareness of the ethical frameworks and Codes of Practice relating to the welfare, ownership and use of animals.

Critical Analysis and Research

37. Demonstrate an ability to critically evaluate the quality of research in terms of the methodology; robustness of data gathered and validity of findings and conclusions; from a range of publications and other sources, in order to judge its suitability as evidence on which to base clinical practice.

38. Demonstrate awareness of cognitive biases (e.g. availability and confirmation) and their impact on the clinician and clients.

39. Demonstrate awareness of evidence-based methods to assess the effectiveness of behaviour modification programmes.

Appendix G – How to Appeal

All information submitted in relation to appeals will be dealt with confidentially and will only be disclosed to those persons involved in decision making, or as necessary to progress the appeal.

Appeals should be submitted to the ABTC in writing within six weeks of receiving notification of the assessment outcome.

The applicant has six weeks from the aforementioned date to produce the evidence underpinning their appeal. This will include:

1. Clear written evidence to show where the assessment process was not followed and/or
2. Clear written evidence to show that disputed assessment criteria have been met

The applicant is asked to ensure all submitted information is clearly labelled, easy to access and navigate.

The appeal documents will be considered by the original Assessors and two further ABTC Assessors who have declared no conflict of interest.

Applicants will be informed of the identity of the further Assessors and will be given the opportunity to indicate if they are concerned about any potential conflict of interest. Such concerns will be respected, and new Assessor(s) allocated should the applicant wish.

It may be felt necessary for the parties involved in the appeals process to meet. This would be best achieved by video conferencing. The meeting would be recorded with the undertaking that no recordings may be shared by any party outside of the immediate appeals process. The applicant may have a chosen individual to represent, advocate for, or support them at the meeting.

The applicant will be sent written notification of the outcome of the appeal within eight weeks of all relevant documentation having been provided to the ABTC and after any conference with the applicant.