



Chartered
Institute of
Environmental
Health

SUCCESS IN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

The CIEH Requirements for Work-Based Experiential Learning and Your Guide to Fulfilling Them

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Introduction

So you've started on the road that will ultimately lead to your qualification as an Environmental Health Practitioner (EHP) - you've taken the first step by working towards attainment of a degree accredited by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH). The next steps are:-

i) Successful completion of work-based experiential learning;

and

ii) Successful completion of the CIEH Professional Examination - further details of which can be found on the CIEH website (www.cieh.org)

This guidance is concerned with the first of these two steps.

What is experiential learning ?

Experiential learning, as its name implies, is learning that takes place as a result of you undergoing certain experiences. In the context of the EHP qualification process, this learning takes place in the workplace; hence, its full title is "Work-Based Experiential Learning".

Experiential learning is more than just watching what other professionals do in the workplace and then trying and repeating it for yourself. This is likely to lead to

incorrect or incomplete learning resulting in the perpetuation of inherited errors or mistakes.

Experiential learning, as required by the CIEH, is learning that involves both 'seeing' and 'doing' but, additionally, involves 'checking', 'questioning', 'reflection' and, hopefully, the development of real understanding. Learning conducted in this way is much less likely to produce a practitioner who relies on inherited and incorrect 'wisdom', but one who is able to think for him / herself and who has the skills to develop and justify a course of action and to amend it if it doesn't work out.

So, throughout the time you devote to experiential learning you will come to develop skills in the following:-

- i) Preparing and researching problems
- ii) Developing appropriate aims and supporting objectives for your 'interventions'
- iii) Inspecting, auditing and investigating
- iv) Identifying, selecting and justifying options for your intervention
- v) Critically reviewing and reflecting on the effectiveness of your intervention in comparison with your initial aim and objectives
- vi) Demonstrating and applying underpinning knowledge.
- vii) Communications

It is these skills that the CIEH will pay particular attention to, in order to make a determination about the progress of your development during the period of time you devote to experiential learning.

How long will experiential learning take?

All people learn at different speeds and student EHPs are no different in this respect.

The CIEH recognises that the speed of your journey through experiential learning will be determined by a number of factors, such as:-

- i) The amount of time you can devote to the process.
- ii) Your ability to manage your own learning.
- iii) The availability of support from colleagues in the workplace.
- iv) The availability of support from your managers.

It is important to remember that experiential learning is not a race and there is no officially set maximum or minimum timescale. It is learning that takes place at your own pace; however, your employer may wish to specify a maximum timescale. The CIEH believes, however, that for the majority of people, the task is likely to take around 9 to 12 months.

Where can experiential learning be undertaken?

Experiential learning can take place in any workplace where environmental health is being practised as a whole, or where individual aspects are being practised. It may take place within an Environmental Health department within a local authority, or it could take place within a Bank, Building Society, Insurance Company, Consultancy, University, Government Agency, etc. The list of possibilities is almost endless.

For some students it will be possible to secure a contract with a single organisation to complete the whole of the process; for others, it may be necessary to take-up a series of short-term learning opportunities. All are possible.

Students should, however, realise that the attainment of certain enforcement-related experiences may only be normally possible within a local environmental health department or other agency responsible for environmental health enforcement. If you have any doubts regarding the suitability of an organisation to provide experiential learning, then please contact the Education & Professional Standards Unit at the Chartered Institute for advice (Tel: 0207 928 6006).

Your ultimate goal, irrespective of the organisation within which you are placed or employed, is the successful completion of the CIEH requirements.

What does the CIEH require of you?

Our requirements are quite straightforward. Briefly, over the period you spend in work-based experiential learning, you must:-

i) **Gain experience of practice in a number of prescribed intervention areas.**

(‘Interventions’ are those actions that EHPs take to control, eliminate or mitigate the public health implications that arise from the impact of environmental ‘stressors’ on the physical, social and human worlds.) These prescribed intervention areas are listed across the top of each of the five matrices, to be found in Appendix 1 of this document. The headings, given to each intervention area, have been kept

deliberately broad so as to give you the widest opportunity to demonstrate your attainment of the necessary experience.

ii) **Develop the prescribed 'skills' within the prescribed intervention areas.**

These prescribed skills are also listed on the left-hand side of the five matrices to be found in Appendix 1 of this document.

iii) **Produce 'evidence' in a portfolio to show that you have gained experience in the prescribed intervention areas and developed the prescribed skills.**

iv) **Produce five reflective reports (to be included within your portfolio) that demonstrate your development in the prescribed 'key' intervention areas.** Prescribed 'key' intervention areas are shaded in grey on each matrix.

What are 'prescribed intervention areas' ?

The 'prescribed intervention areas' are broad areas of environmental health work in food safety, health and safety, housing, environmental protection and health protection and development that generate 'interventions' by EHPs. 'Interventions' are as defined previously.

The intervention areas, prescribed by the CIEH for inclusion in the five matrices to be found in Appendix 1 of this document, are deemed to be particularly important areas of work that are crucial to the development of experience, skills and learning in the student EHP. The experience gained, skills developed and learning completed in these interventions, will act as a crucial foundation from which 'competence' should develop in the future.

You will see from the matrices in Appendix 1 that the terms used to define each intervention area have been left very broad; as an example, intervention area F4 on the Food Safety matrix merely says: “Food Inspection and Fitness”. You might, therefore, reasonably ask what the CIEH expects of you in respect of this ? The simple answer is to gain experience of interventions concerned with food inspection and fitness ! No other constraint is placed on you and, amongst other things, you might reasonably include any of the following within this intervention area:

- i) Dealing with a complaint concerning a mouldy pie being sold from a market stall
- ii) Investigating an allegation of unfit meat finding its way into the human food chain
- iii) Inspecting food at a UK Port of Entry
- iv) Investigating a complaint that a cod fillet, sold from the fresh fish counter in a local supermarket, is “off”.

Over and above these few examples, many others are possible and are likely to be experienced by a student EHP during their period of work-based learning.

***If you are unsure whether a issue that you are dealing with falls within a particular intervention area, then seek advice from any of the following:
Training Officer, Learning Co-ordinator, University Lecturers or the Education and Professional Standards Unit of the Chartered Institute.***

What is 'evidence' and how is it presented ?

Evidence that may be included in your portfolio will be of several types and the requirements are determined by the requirements of each Intervention Group matrix (see Appendix 1); however, the over-riding requirement is that evidence must be provided by you to demonstrate that you have experienced prescribed interventions and developed prescribed core skills.

Let's take the Food Safety matrix as an example to be followed in all cases:

First of all, for each of the prescribed food intervention areas (seven in total - F1 to F7), you will need to ensure that you have *THREE* sources of evidence. (Sources of evidence are visits to premises that you have undertaken for the purposes of carrying out investigations, inspections or audits.)

From the three evidence sources, you should then choose what you consider to be your best investigation, inspection or audit in each intervention area and designate it as the 'primary' source by deleting the 'S' in the appropriate box at the top of the matrix sheet. The remaining evidence sources will, therefore, be designated as 'supplementary' by deleting the 'P' in the appropriate boxes at the top of the matrix sheet (see Figure 1 for a worked example).

There is, however, one exception to this - on each matrix, one intervention area is shaded in grey to signify that it is designated as the '*KEY*' intervention area.

For each *KEY* intervention area, you will need to ensure that that you have TWO 'primary' and ONE 'supplementary' evidence sources.

Secondly, across all of the prescribed food intervention areas it is necessary to show that that you have practised all of the prescribed core skills.

For each core skill (14 in total), evidence of its development must come from a minimum of 3 different intervention evidence sources identified by you on the matrix. From these sources you should choose one as being you best piece of evidence and this should be designated by you as being "primary" and marked with a 'P' in the appropriate box on the matrix; the remaining two evidence sources will then be designated by you as being "supplementary" sources and marked with an 'S' in the appropriate matrix boxes (see Figure 1 for a worked example of this).

It is, of course, perfectly acceptable for a single evidence source to not only demonstrate the attainment of experiences in several intervention areas but also the development of several skills. Under these circumstances, you are encouraged to make life easier for yourself and to get the most from your evidence via a system of cross-referencing. An example of cross-referencing in action can be seen in the model evidence matrix included in Figure 1.

Each evidence source will generate physical evidence that you need to include in your portfolio. Irrespective of whether an evidence source has been designated by you as being 'primary' or 'supplementary' for the attainment of experience in an intervention area, you must include in your portfolio a brief narrative, written by you,

Figure 1

Intervention Areas [Food Safety]

		F1 Contamination of Food			F2 Food Preservation			F3 HACCP			F4 Food Inspection and Fitness			F5 Auditing of Food Premises			F6 Food Standards			F7 Food Poisoning Investigation		
		P/S	P/S	P/S	P/S	P/S	P/S	P/S	P/S	P/S	P/S	P/S	P/S	P/S	P/S	P/S	P/S	P/S	P/S	P/S	P/S	
		Ref: F5/2	Ref: F7/1	Ref: F1/1	Ref: F2/1	Ref: F4/1	Ref: F3/1	Ref: F5/2	Ref: F4/1	Ref: F6/3	Ref: F4/2	Ref: F4/1	Ref: F5/1	Ref: F5/2	Ref: F5/3	Ref: F6/2	Ref: F6/2	Ref: F6/3	Ref: F7/1	Ref: F7/2	Ref: F7/3	
Core Skills	* Inspecting, Investigating & Auditing							S			P								S			
	Sampling Using a Variety of Techniques and Regimes	P								S							S					
	* Analysing & Interpreting Data	P			S											S						
	* Identifying Hazards & Quantifying Associated Risks							P	S				S									
	* Interpreting Legislative Requirements										P	S									S	
	Working With and Within Legal Processes	P								S							S					
	Undertaking Appropriate Research				P		S												S			
	* Identifying Solutions to Problems							P							S						S	
	* Determining the Most Appropriate Course of Action to Achieve Compliance			S											P				S			
	Identifying the Rights & Responsibilities of Individuals											P					S			S		
	Working with Others				P											S		S				
	Developing Policies & Strategies						S								S							P
	Identifying and Utilising Appropriate Management Skills		S						P											S		
	* Developing Good Communication Skills			S						S				P								

One of these interventions must generate the reflective report and must demonstrate the skills marked with an *

that gives your personal account of your practice in that intervention. The narrative must include:

- i) A consideration of all your considered intervention options
- ii) Selection and justification of your preferred option
- iii) Personal reflection on your learning and skill development that has taken place during the intervention.

Item (iii) in the above list is particularly important.

In addition, you should also include some or all of the following in support of your narrative:

- i) Copies of your inspection / audit notes.
- ii) Copies of any photographs, sketches, plans or measurements taken or made by you.
- iii) Copies of letters, memos or reports produced by you.
- iv) Copies of any Notices drafted by you.
- v) Copies of any statements taken by you.

*** In determining how much evidence from the above list you should include in your portfolio, you should note that your task is to include sufficient evidence to demonstrate to the Portfolio Assessor that you have developed your skills and that you have been set on the road to becoming competent in your practice of that intervention.***

Finally, remember that each intervention group matrix includes a key intervention that is shaded in grey - these are interventions that are considered as being particularly important. For each key intervention, you are reminded that you must designate two 'primary' and one 'supplementary' evidence sources. One of these identified 'primary' evidence sources must be the subject of a substantial reflective report that specifically addresses your development in the skills marked with an asterisk (*) on the left-hand side of each matrix. You should note that the Chartered Institute's requirements in respect of this report are detailed in Appendix 2 of this document.

The presentation of your portfolio and referencing within it

The amount of evidence that you include within your portfolio is really up to you; however, you are reminded that this is YOUR portfolio that charts YOUR learning and development – subject to one exception, detailed below, it is not appropriate to include material produced by others. However, you may include material produced by others IF you do so in order to offer reflection on it, or criticism of it.

As a general guide, around 2 lever-arch files should be sufficient to include all of your experiential learning evidence.

When constructing your portfolio, you should ensure that each of the five intervention groups are clearly identified and physically separated by a coloured separating page. Each section should begin with the inclusion of the relevant matrix from Appendix 1 of this document – electronic versions of these matrices in Microsoft Excel and Adobe Acrobat formats may be downloaded from the 'Student Resource' area of the

Chartered Institute's website (www.cieh.org). In addition, A3 sized, colour printed versions of these matrices can be obtained, upon request, from the Education and Professional Standards Unit of the Chartered Institute.

The matrices are provided as an index to your portfolio sections, in as much as they must show which evidence sources are designated as being 'primary' (P) and 'supplementary' (S) for each prescribed intervention area. The matrices must also show which interventions provide the 'primary' (P) and 'supplementary' (S) sources to demonstrate your core skill development. Each matrix should end up annotated in a similar manner to that shown in Figure 1.

In order to make the task of compiling your portfolio as easy as possible, you are encouraged to make the best use of each intervention experience that you attain by cross-referencing – both within a single intervention group and across all intervention groups. Figure 1 shows cross-referencing in action within the food intervention group only !

The need for confirmatory signatures

When you have completed the attainment of an experience and documented your skill development within it, as well as completing entries on the matrices and providing documentary evidence in the portfolio, you must ask the person who supervised or managed you in the intervention to sign to confirm that you have, indeed, attained the experience claimed and that your portfolio entry is your own work.

It is not necessary for the signatory to be a qualified EHP but it is necessary for that person to have supervised in the attainment of the experience and can vouch that your portfolio entry is your own work. Details relating to the signatory – his / her designation, contact address and telephone number must also be provided on a form, to be found in Appendix 3 of this document and available to download from the website. The completed form should then be included as the second page in your portfolio.

Getting help and advice in compiling your portfolio

Whilst the compilation of learning portfolios and the charting of skill development is commonplace as part of some environmental health degrees, on others it is not. It is, therefore, perfectly acceptable for you to seek and receive help and advice in completing this portfolio. You are reminded, however, that any help and advice provided should not replace your own input to the process but be utilised as an adjunct to it !

Help and advice is available from a number of sources:

- i) The CIEH Education and Professional Standards Unit at Chadwick Court
- ii) Training Officers / Learning Co-ordinators
- iii) The CIEH Experiential Learning Portfolio Mentoring Scheme (contact the Education and Professional Standards Unit for details)
- iv) Work Colleagues
- v) University Lecturers

If in doubt, seek help from any of these sources.

What to do on completing the portfolio

The objective of your work on the portfolio is to chart your experiences and skill development in order to successfully demonstrate that you have been set on the road to achieving competence in all of the core intervention groups. The determination that you have reached this stage is made by a group of specially trained peers known as Portfolio Assessors.

Your portfolio must be submitted for assessment as a whole. When you feel that you are ready to submit the portfolio, you should first check that you have fully met all of the requirements detailed in this document. Having ensured practical completion you are advised to pass the portfolio to a friend or colleague and ask them to check that they can find the relevant evidence utilising your referencing scheme. Once this check has been successfully completed your portfolio is ready for assessment.

Assessment of your portfolio

Assessment of your portfolio may take place at any one of the formal assessment sessions held across the country every year. The process of entering your portfolio for assessment is as follows – you should download an assessment application form from the Student Resources area of the CIEH website, complete it, attach a copy of your self-assessed completion checklist and return it, together with the appropriate fee to the Education and Professional Standards Unit of the CIEH (address provided

on the application form). Details of the fee to be paid for assessment are provided on the Student Resources area of the Chartered Institute's website.

Once your application form has been received by us, you will receive an emailed confirmation of the receipt of your application and fee. The confirmation will indicate the date and venue for the assessment of your portfolio.

Details of your responsibilities in respect of the conveyance of your portfolio for assessment are provided on the assessment application form and you are strongly advised to fully equate yourself with them before sending in your application.

Copies of the CIEH Regulations governing the assessment of your portfolio can also be viewed and downloaded from the Student Resources area of the website – again, you are strongly advised to make yourself familiar with these before submitting your application for assessment.

Your portfolio will be assessed in accordance with the Regulations and full details of the assessment criteria, including a sample copy of assessor's mark sheet, can be downloaded from the website.

Finally, a few words about plagiarism or other irregularities !

The CIEH treats proven cases of plagiarism or other forms of cheating very seriously. You should be aware that all confirmatory signatures are visually checked for authenticity and random telephone checks with the named persons are made. Do

not be tempted to falsify entries, forge signatures or copy from another person's portfolio. If such cases are suspected by an assessor, your portfolio will be seized, pending a full investigation and, upon a case being proven, the CIEH Qualifications Board may impose a severe penalty.

Good luck, enjoy the task ahead and, if in doubt – ASK !

**Chartered Institute of Environmental Health
Education and Professional Standards Unit,
Chadwick Court,
15 Hatfields,
London
SE1 8DJ
Tel: 0207 928 6006**

APPENDIX 1

The Intervention Group Matrices

Intervention Areas [Housing]

		H1 Maintenance and Improvement of Private Sector Housing			H2 The Suitability of Houses for Occupation			H3 Multi-Occupancy Housing			H4 Area Renewal			H5 Financial Support for Private Sector Housing			
		P / S	P / S	P / S	P / S	P / S	P / S	P / S	P / S	P / S	P / S	P / S	P / S	P / S			
		Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.		
Core Skills	*	Inspecting, Investigating & Auditing															
		Sampling Using a Variety of Techniques and Regimes															
		Analysing & Interpreting Data															
	*	Identifying Hazards & Quantifying Associated Risks															
	*	Interpreting Legislative Requirements															
	*	Working With and Within Legal Processes															
		Undertaking Appropriate Research															
	*	Identifying Solutions to Problems															
	*	Determining the Most Appropriate Course of Action to Achieve Compliance															
		Identifying the Rights & Responsibilities of Individuals															
	*	Working with Others															
		Developing Policy & Strategies															
		Identifying and Utilising Appropriate Management Skills															
*	Developing Good Communication Skills																

APPENDIX 2

Required Layout for the Key Intervention Reports

The Layout of Key Intervention Reports

You must ensure that your report, drafted in support of each Key Intervention, is structured in accordance with the following layout. Adherence to this layout is a requirement of this portion of the assessment !

Heading:	Must Address:
Preparation and research	The problem / reason for intervention Premises history, description/plan and previous rating (if appropriate) Description of activity Relevant legislation / guidance considered
Developing an appropriate aim and supporting objectives for your intervention	What are you trying to achieve and what are the benchmarks that demonstrate progress i.e. Preparation plans for organization of inspection Timing and consultation with management Powers of entry How information collected Documents requested
Inspecting, auditing and investigating	Auditing of any hazard analysis or formal management system and identification of unforeseen hazards or Identification and evaluation of all hazards and any current controls.
Identifying, selecting and justifying options for resolution	Possible options Factors Influencing option selection Description of action taken and justification Possible evaluation of premises rating (if appropriate)
Critically reviewing and reflecting on the effectiveness of your intervention in comparison with your initial aim and objectives	Critical review of effectiveness of inspection / audit and outcomes Reflection of what learned and how applied in future with evidence
Demonstrating and applying underpinning knowledge	This is subject specific and hence determines those things to be covered
Communications	As demonstrated in case study report, letters etc.

APPENDIX 3

Confirmatory Signatures

Details of Verifying Signatories

The details and signature of each person who has verified an experience in your Portfolio should be included in this appendix. An experience may be deemed invalid if the signatory is not included in this appendix.

The purpose of this appendix is to confirm you have completed an activity and that the entry in the Portfolio is your own work. The verifying signatory is signing to confirm this. The signatory does not have to be an EHP. The signature does NOT prove that any evidence you produce meets the learning requirements.

Make all efforts to obtain these verifying signatures at the time you complete the work. Thoroughly explain any missing signatures. DO NOT be tempted to forge any entries.

Name, Designation and Tel. No.	Organisation and Address	Signature	Comments

Name, Designation and Tel. No.	Organisation and Address	Signature	Comments