

Portfolio Guidelines

A Guide for Students

How Does the Student Prepare a “Portfolio”?

Students may feel that some non-traditional learning and experience are equivalent to college courses and they should receive credit toward a college degree for these non-traditional experiences. In addressing this, the salient questions are: “What learning can be demonstrated?” and “How does this learning compare to the objectives of an existing academic credit course?”

The goal of the assessment procedure is to analyze the student’s knowledge. Since colleges generally do not award credit just for the experience, the awarding of credit is for the verifiable learning outcomes of experience. For example, an individual may have had 12 years of experience as a supervisor in an industrial manufacturing concern. Most colleges will not award credit simply on the basis of those 12 years of experience, but ask the individual to demonstrate what has been learned, for example, about production problem solving, cost effectiveness, supervision, and labor problems, and how that learning can be related to the objectives of a specific college course.

The assessment procedure utilizes faculty assessors to help the student identify what prior learning might be eligible for college credit recognition. They will help the student to understand how to relate experience to his/her educational goals through the preparation of a portfolio. The portfolio helps the institution clarify and verify the student’s prior learning. This portfolio then becomes part of the student’s presentation to the evaluators.

The college will require that the student’s knowledge meet certain criteria:

1. Prior learning must be publicly verifiable. Students must be able to demonstrate to a qualified assessor that they possess the appropriate skills and/or knowledge. The College should be able to objectively measure and evaluate a student’s learning.
2. The student’s prior experience should be equivalent to quality college level learning in order to award credit.
3. Because both theory and practice are important, the student’s prior learning should have a subject matter knowledge base. College credit recognition will not be awarded for mere application of a manual skill or a narrowly prescribed routine or procedure. The student must understand why he is able to do what he/she is able to do.
4. The student’s prior learning should have a general applicability outside of the specific situation in which it was acquired. Learning should indicate knowledge of basic principles of the subject area.

Are PLA Credits Transferrable?

By themselves, PLA credits are probably not transferable; however, if students earn an Associate Degree these credits may transfer. Students who intend to transfer should contact the four year college for information about the acceptance of PLA credits. Your advisor can assist in this process. Most colleges reserve the right to accept or reject credits awarded by another college.

Suggestions for Students Preparing an ePortfolio

Most portfolio submissions will require 3 sections of material. While this information will offer some general guidelines, it will be important for you to follow the instructions of your college.

The Portfolio

Compare the learning outcomes of the course to learning gained through prior experiences. From the syllabus, or course outline, of the course listed on each Catalog Report form, clearly identify the learning outcomes/competencies required for each student to master in order to receive credit for the course. List experience that provides similar learning. Experiences could include volunteer activities, work experience, non-credit courses. Putting both in a chart can help see if the two are comparable. **The more information that is entered into this section, the easier it will be to evaluate the experience.**

1st section: Demographic Information (Could include the following)

- Name
- Class
- Candidate for what degree/program
- Reason you are challenging the course
- Title Page, Introduction

2nd section: Narrative

- 2 – 5 page student personal essay
 - Identify the student's life goals and describe how they relate to course that is being challenged. Try to be brief and specific. State the student's competencies for each area of the student's life experience.
 - Ask your advisor if these guidelines are appropriate for your narrative
 - My advisor has approved the topic of my narrative?
 - My narrative is written in first person (1st) without reference.
 - I have included supporting documentation that validates my personal/professional experience with the essay course description/topic.
 - My narrative is based on personal, life learning experiences, not based on research, history, or another person's experience.
 - Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (Owl) can help you organize an essay.
<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/685/04/>

3rd section: Supporting Documentation (Could include the following)

- Include documentation/evidence of competency in objectives of course
 - Resume
 - Purdue University's Online writing Lab (OWL) can help you organize a resume.
 - <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/927/1/>
 - Evaluations
 - Online Certs
 - Art work
 - Written material
 - Awards
 - Recognized Industry Certificates

Additional information requested by faculty may also be required. For example, in cases where the student's learning experiences does not meet all areas included in the course syllabus' objectives, the faculty evaluator may assign further reading or other activities.

Once students have assembled the portfolio information/artifacts to be evaluated and have received approval from their college advisor, work can be uploaded onto the portal. The evaluation will be carried out by a college assessor (faculty member or dean) who has expertise in the subject area.