

Guidelines for Faculty: Defining and Understanding a Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) Portfolio

Overview A Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) portfolio is a structured document created by a student to demonstrate college-level knowledge and skills acquired through non-traditional learning experiences. These experiences may include professional work, military service, volunteer work, independent study, certifications, or other forms of experiential learning. The portfolio serves as a means to assess whether the student's prior learning meets the academic standards required to earn credit for specific courses or programs.

Purpose of a CPL Portfolio The primary purpose of a CPL portfolio is to bridge the gap between experiential learning and academic credit. By providing concrete evidence of their knowledge and skills, students can:

- Demonstrate their competency in specific subject areas.
- Align their experiential learning with the learning outcomes of a course or program.
- Accelerate their academic journey by receiving credit for what they already know.

Key Components of a CPL Portfolio A comprehensive CPL portfolio typically includes the following elements:

- 1. Introduction and Overview**
 - A personal statement describing the student's learning journey, goals, and rationale for seeking CPL.
- 2. Learning Narrative**
 - A detailed explanation of the student's prior learning experiences and how they align with the learning outcomes of the targeted course or program. This narrative should include specific examples of activities, roles, and responsibilities.
- 3. Evidence of Learning**
 - Supporting documentation to substantiate the student's claims, such as:
 - Work samples (e.g., reports, presentations, designs)
 - Certifications, licenses, or training records
 - Letters of recommendation or verification from employers or mentors
 - Testimonies or evaluations of performance
- 4. Reflection**
 - A critical reflection on how the student's experiences have contributed to their knowledge, skills, and personal growth. This section often highlights how the learning aligns with theoretical frameworks or academic concepts.
- 5. Mapping to Course Learning Outcomes**
 - A clear alignment between the student's learning and the specific objectives or competencies of the course or program for which they are seeking credit.
- 6. Appendices**
 - Additional materials that provide context or supplementary evidence, organized and labeled for easy reference.

Role of Faculty in Evaluating CPL Portfolios Faculty evaluators play a critical role in ensuring the integrity and academic rigor of the CPL process. Key responsibilities include:

- Reviewing the portfolio against established course learning outcomes.
- Assessing the quality, relevance, and authenticity of the evidence provided.
- Providing constructive feedback and a final determination regarding the award of credit.

Standards for Evaluation Faculty should evaluate CPL portfolios based on the following criteria:

1. **Relevance:** The evidence must directly relate to the course's learning outcomes.
2. **Sufficiency:** The portfolio must provide adequate evidence to demonstrate competency.
3. **Authenticity:** The evidence must be the student's original work or verifiable accomplishments.
4. **Currency:** The learning must reflect current practices and knowledge in the field.

Rubric Used The Prior Learning Portal software is designed to support an online portfolio submission and grading process. The preloaded rubric in the software was adopted from the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning www.CAEL.org It is detailed on the next page.

Process and Costs All students who are vetted and approved for a portfolio submission will be guided through the www.uvu.edu/priorlearningportal Prior Learning Portal, where they will pay an application fee to the CPL office, and a portfolio assessment fee to the department who assesses the portfolio. The evaluator or subject matter expert will be assigned and contacted via email to access the software system for grading. Once the assessment has taken place, and departmental approval is received to award credit, the department fills out the [Faculty Credit for Prior Learning](#) form that is uploaded to the Registrar's Office for transcribing.

References and Resources Faculty are encouraged to consult the following resources for additional guidance:

1. Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
2. Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL). (2021). *Standards for Assessing Learning*. Retrieved from <https://www.cael.org/>
3. Fiddler, M., Marienau, C., & Whitaker, U. (2006). *Assessing Learning: Standards, Principles, & Procedures*. Chicago: Kendall Hunt Publishing.

Conclusion A CPL portfolio is a vital tool for recognizing and validating the diverse ways students acquire knowledge and skills outside of traditional academic settings. Faculty involvement in evaluating these portfolios ensures that academic standards are upheld while honoring the value of experiential learning. By understanding the structure and purpose of CPL portfolios, faculty can effectively support students on their educational pathways.

Assessment Guidance for Students and Faculty

The “assessment criteria” in this rubric are designed *to evaluate whether a portfolio provides clear evidence that a student who is requesting credit has mastered course learning outcomes and competencies.*

NOTE: Before a portfolio can be accepted for assessment, the specific course learning outcomes must be included. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the faculty assessor to ensure that any student seeking PLA credit is familiar with and understands the course learning outcomes before work on the portfolio begins.

The completed rubric must be completed by the faculty assessor.

Each portfolio should be assessed based on six criteria:

- 1. Sources of Learning**

The initial expectation is that a portfolio should portray the experiences that are related to the course learning outcomes, and should illustrate how the prior learning addresses the outcomes expected for the course. A successful candidate must document and describe the learning experiences and how the past education is appropriate for the stated learning outcomes and competencies.

- 2. Demonstration of Learning**

The portfolio should contain appropriate materials and artifacts that support the demonstration of learning outcomes. The artifacts chosen (e.g. certificates of completed training courses, military records, technical and professional materials produced by the student, work projects and programs from performances) should readily support the chosen learning and skills. The artifacts should be dependent upon and appropriate to the field of study.

- 3. Evidence of Learning**

The portfolio should demonstrate that the prior learning experience has resulted in learning tied to sound educational theory (or grounded in appropriate academic frameworks). It should demonstrate the experience has resulted in learned competencies – that learning is aligned with course learning outcomes. (The importance of theoretical and academic frameworks will vary from course to course.)

- 4. Mastering Knowledge and Skills**

The portfolio should demonstrate that the student has mastered the knowledge and skills for the course learning outcomes and can apply them in practice for a sustained period. (NOTE: Concrete experience should be long enough to allow the student to meet expectations (e.g., if a student worked in a position for two weeks, it is doubtful that she/he would have sufficient experience to meet the

expectations of the course learning outcomes.) It is not enough for the student to address all of the learning outcomes. It must also be shown that she/he can apply them in practice and to a different learning and problem solution.

5. Reflection on Learning

The portfolio should demonstrate that the student has employed self-evaluation and critical reflection to examine what produced her/his positive personal growth and expertise, and what learning actions were effective. Through the portfolio, the student should show an ability to build upon her/his knowledge and improve her/his performance by implementing strategies and recognizing knowledge gained by her/his concrete experience through reflection – and by applying that learning in her/his concrete experience. (Many adult learners employ self-reflection by completing an annual review when they self-identify their strengths and discuss how they will leverage their strengths to achieve goals for the coming year.)

6. Presentation

The portfolio should include all of the required elements and these elements should be presented in a clear and well-organized manner. In addition, the quality of the written, visual and/or digital presentation should meet postsecondary standards with only minor errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation.

The student should be scored on each of these sets of expectations, based on the following assessment ratings:

Assessment	Rating
Does not meet expectations	0 points
Partially meets expectations	1 point
Meets expectations	2 points
Exceeds expectations	3 points

Guidance for all of these ratings is provided in the assessment rubric. The recommended cut score for a successful (i.e., passing) portfolio *is 12, with a score of at least 1 in each of the six assessment criteria.*

Clarifying Expectations: Student-Friendly Instructions

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION OF EXPECTATIONS	EXPLANATIONS/EXAMPLES
Source of Learning	Your prior learning experience should be connected to the course learning outcomes, and your portfolio should demonstrate that you have met those learning outcomes.	Clearly describe and document your prior learning experience and show that you have met all course learning outcomes.
Demonstration of Learning	Your portfolio must include documentation (i.e., artifacts) that supports the knowledge and skills you have acquired.	Include concrete documentation (artifacts) that support your claim that you have met course learning outcomes (see sources of learning above). Artifacts may include written communications, videos, digital communications, annual reviews, samples of projects, pictures, letters of recommendation, successful workshop training, online trainings, projects and more.
Evidence of Learning	Your portfolio should tie your prior learning experience to educational theory.	Meet expectations for describing how your learning is associated with sound educational theory (or is grounded in appropriate academic frameworks).
Mastering Knowledge and Skills	You need to demonstrate that you have mastered the knowledge and skills reflected in the course learning outcomes, and that you have and/or can apply that learning in a real world experience.	Provide examples of how you have applied the course learning outcomes in real world experience(s) for a sustained length of time.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION OF EXPECTATIONS	EXPLANATIONS/EXAMPLES
Reflection on Learning	Your portfolio must include documentation of reflection (i.e., that you thought deeply about what produced your learning and what actions generated that personal growth).	Describe how you utilized reflection to acknowledge your learning and leverage your learning in your concrete experience.
Presentation	Your portfolio should include all required elements including all six assessment criteria; and the presentation must be clear and meet postsecondary-level expectations with relatively few spelling, punctuation or grammatical errors.	Make sure your portfolio includes all required elements. Address all assessment criteria. Organize your presentation and strive to be error free, although minor spelling, punctuation or grammatical errors will be tolerated.

RUBRIC FOR PORTFOLIO-BASED ASSESSMENT

Assessment Ratings	0 Does not meet expectations	1 Partially meets expectations	2 Meets expectations	3 Exceeds expectations	Score
Sources of Learning <i>Experiences relevant to learning outcomes</i>	Documentation and description of learning experiences related to course learning outcomes are lacking or substantially inadequate	Documentation and description of learning experiences related to course learning outcomes are not effectively or completely presented	Documentation and description of learning experiences related to course learning outcomes are appropriate and effectively presented	Documentation and description of learning experiences related to course learning outcomes exceed expectations	
Demonstration of Learning <i>Artifacts</i>	The portfolio's materials and artifacts are not appropriate and/or adequate , and are not supported by the presentation	The portfolio materials and artifacts are not fully supported by or connected to the course's learning outcomes	The portfolio includes appropriate artifacts that support the demonstration of learning outcomes	The presentation of artifacts is convincing , with strong support for the course's learning outcomes	
Evidence of Learning <i>Competencies</i>	The portfolio shows little or no evidence of learning tied to sound educational theory	The portfolio documents some, but not sufficient , learning tied to sound educational theory (or grounded in appropriate academic frameworks)	The portfolio adequately documents learning tied to sound educational theory (or grounded in appropriate academic frameworks)	The portfolio provides clear evidence of learning tied to sound educational theory (or grounded in appropriate academic frameworks)	
Mastering Knowledge & Skills <i>Application of Learning</i>	The portfolio provides little evidence of the student's ability to use knowledge and skills for the course's learning outcomes in practice	The portfolio demonstrates the student's ability to use the knowledge and skills for the course learning outcomes in practice is limited	The portfolio documents the acquisition of knowledge and skills for the course learning outcomes, with some ability to apply them in practice	The portfolio demonstrates the student has mastered the knowledge and skills for the course learning outcomes and can apply them in practice	
Reflection on Learning <i>Aligned with course learning outcomes</i>	The portfolio provides little or no evidence of reflection to increase learning aligned with the course learning outcomes for which credit is being sought	The portfolio provides inadequate evidence of reflection to increase learning aligned with the course learning outcomes for which credit is being sought	The portfolio provides evidence of reflection to increase learning aligned with the course learning outcomes for which credit is being sought	The portfolio shows that the student has reflected with substantial depth upon how the prior learning experience is aligned to the course learning outcomes for which credit is being sought	
Presentation <i>Completeness and quality of the portfolio presentation</i>	Assembly instructions have not been followed with critical portfolio elements not included; the quality of written, visual and/or digital presentation does not meet postsecondary standards	Most of the expected elements are included; the quality of written, visual and/or digital presentation does not meet postsecondary standards with too many errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation	The portfolio is well organized with all critical elements included; the quality of written, visual and/or digital the presentation is competent with minor errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation	The portfolio is well organized with all critical elements included; learning is well-documented with writing and production skills that exceed those of most college students	
Overall Assessment	The recommended cut score for a successful (i.e., passing) portfolio is 12 , with a score of at least 1 in each of the six assessment criteria .				TOTAL