

The University of Baltimore Policy VII-4.4 Credit for Prior Learning with VII-4.4a Portfolio Process

Approved University Faculty Senate, Provost, President May 5, 2021

In 2019, the president requested a review of prior learning policies and practices. A workgroup charged by the provost took on this work, and a sub-group, composed of faculty from Arts & Sciences, Public Affairs, & Business and CELTT staff developed a prior learning portfolio process, which went through shared governance.

I. Catalog policies

Credit for prior learning policies are catalog policies, and these were updated through shared governance in AY 20-21. In May 2021, the University Faculty Senate and University leadership approved the possibility of credit for prior learning for graduate students on a program-by-program basis.

Catalog policies as approved in spring 2021 follow. Current catalogs should always be consulted for the most current version of the policies. The appendix to this policy document details the portfolio process, which can be used for undergraduate credit for prior learning.

II. Policies approved May 2021

A. Graduate Policy:

The University of Baltimore's (UB) College of Public Affairs, Merrick School of Business, and Yale Gordon College of Arts and Sciences will consider awarding credit for prior learning through demonstrated completion of an approved industry credential or certification. Academic programs determine which courses, if any, may be eligible for prior learning credit. Students should consult with the academic program director, department chair, or associate dean if any credits are allowed. No more than 6 credits may be awarded for all forms of prior learning, and prior learning credits may not be applied to the last 12 credits of the degree. Post-baccalaureate and post-master's certificate programs will not accept prior learning credit.

B. Undergraduate Policy:

Credit for Prior Learning

The University of Baltimore's (UB) College of Public Affairs, Merrick School of Business, and Yale Gordon College of Arts and Sciences will consider awarding credit for prior learning through external standardized examinations (AP, IB, CLEP, DSST), military training, demonstrated completion of an approved industry credential, and portfolios, in addition to traditional transferred credits from accredited schools. Academic programs determine which courses may be eligible for prior learning credit, and they may agree to allow credit for general education or other requirements. Prior to awarding credit, faculty must review and approve the acceptance of these credits; course equivalencies for standardized exams and common industry credentials are maintained in the Office of Records and Registration. If prior learning credit cannot be awarded, students may discuss possible substitution options with their program.

No more than 45 credits may be awarded for all forms of prior learning, and no more than 12 may be applied to required courses in a major. No more than 9 credits may be awarded at the upper-division level, and no more than 12 in total may be awarded via portfolio credit. Programs may have lower limits, and some programs may not allow credit for prior learning in the major. Prior learning credits may not be applied to the last 30 credits of the degree.

Prior learning credit cannot be used to cancel the grade point average penalty of a low or failing grade from a course taken at the University of Baltimore; the repeat policy cannot be applied.

Prior Learning credit is not factored into admission eligibility. Prior Learning credit appearing on an official college or university transcript will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Students cannot use Prior Learning in duplication of other earned academic credit, nor can the credit replace coursework where the repeat policy is in effect. Students with questions should contact the Office of Admission at 410.837.4777 or admission@ubalt.edu.

External Standardized Examinations

UB will accept credit for external standardized examinations, provided the scores presented meet UB standards, and apply those credits to a student's degree program as appropriate. Students can find equivalencies at www.ubalt.edu/transferecredit; equivalencies may change as necessary. For specific exams:

- **Advanced Placement (AP):** UB may award credit for AP scores of 3 or higher; however, for WRIT 101 a score of 4 or higher is required for credit. Enrolling students are required to submit official AP scores from the College Board prior to matriculation to receive credit.
- **College-Level Examination Program (CLEP):** CLEP scores are acceptable for credit before completion of 90 credit hours. Once the student has begun the last 30 credits of study, CLEP scores are no longer acceptable for credit.
- **International Baccalaureate (IB) Examinations:** Students who have completed either the higher-level IB courses or who have completed the full diploma and have successfully completed the corresponding IB examinations may be entitled to credit at UB. UB awards 30 credits and sophomore standing to high school students who complete the full IB diploma. Each applicant's transcript will be reviewed by the Office of Records and Registration to determine how the 30 credits will be applied to the record of the student. Students who have completed higher-level IB courses without completing the full diploma and have successfully completed the corresponding IB examinations may be entitled to credit at UB. Students must have official exam scores sent from the International Baccalaureate Organization to UB prior to matriculation to receive credit.
- **DSST:** UB awards credit based on DSST test scores and follows the recommendations of the American Council on Education regarding the amount and type of credit awarded for minimum scores. Once the student has begun the last 30 credits of study, DSST scores are no longer acceptable for credit.

Military Training

UB awards credit for both MOS (Occupation) and Service School experiences. Students should submit their Joint Services Transcript (JST) to identify how coursework will be accepted.

Industry Credentials, Apprenticeships, and Certifications

UB will award credit for work experience based on the awarding of a state or industry license, an approved industry examination, a recommendation by the American Council on Education's *The National Guide* or the National College Credit Recommendation Service (formerly PONSI), or via prior review and approval by program and academic leadership. Individual colleges and programs may require that credentials be earned or held active within a specific timeframe. Students will be required to provide authenticated proof of those credentials before credit will be awarded.

Portfolio Credit

Individuals schools and programs may award portfolio credit for prior learning. To be eligible to petition for course credit via portfolio, a student must meet the following conditions:

- Successful completion with at least a C in 12 semester credit hours since enrolling as a degree-seeking student; exceptions could be made for successfully completed recent coursework as a non-degree student;
- Eligibility to enroll in WRIT 300 or prior completion of WRIT 300;
- The student may not have completed more than 30 semester credit hours when petitioning for prior learning credit.
- Successful completion of UB's [1-credit] portfolio course.

Portfolio Process:

There is an approved portfolio review process posted in the UB Policy Guide. Faculty periodically review these procedures to ensure they are up to date. Students pay a fee for the evaluation of the portfolio, but the combined cost of the portfolio course and the evaluation fee remains less than the cost of a 3-credit course.

Students may petition for credit for more than one course. The portfolio course does not need to be repeated, but a separate portfolio will be submitted for each course to be petitioned for credit. Some elements of the portfolio submissions may overlap, but the faculty evaluators decide what specific learning outcomes are to be demonstrated in a portfolio for a course, consistent with the general guidelines in the approved procedures.

As always, not all courses are eligible for prior learning credit because of accreditation and program assessment requirements. Students must consult with an academic advisor and the faculty leading a program or department to find out if a course can be petitioned for credit for prior learning.

VII-4.4 a. Portfolio Procedures (Appendix to policy)

This section contains subsections which may be amended through shared governance (curriculum process or policy process) as appropriate. In addition, faculty units may work with Records or other units to make process adjustments that do not require shared governance. These procedures are to be updated as needed and may be updated separate from the policy process, if appropriate. The Approved Curriculum Documents SharePoint site holds the course definition document for the 1-credit portfolio course.

1. Executive Summary of Portfolio Methods
2. **Faculty Guidelines for Reviewing Student Portfolios**

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1. Executive Summary of Portfolio Methods

ASSESSMENT OF PRIOR LEARNING: PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT

The provost charged a faculty and staff CELTT cohort last spring [2020] to develop a portfolio process based on sound pedagogy to accompany existing UB policy, which allows credit for prior learning by portfolio. There was no process in place for students to follow. The material that is attached here is the result of that committee's work. [CELTT Faculty Cohort: Ben Wright (CPA), Kate Demarest (MSB), Mohammed Ketel (CAS), John Chapin and Dr. Brandy Jenner (CELTT), M. Linda Martinak, Ed.D., Faculty Consultant]

RATIONALE

University of Baltimore (UB) will be like other American colleges and universities that credit documented college-level learning acquired through life and work experience if the Portfolio Development Process is approved. Students will petition their department and school through the series of documents and evidence where they demonstrate the knowledge that was gained outside of the classroom.

THEORY

The standards and criteria developed by UB for assessing prior learning (portfolio) were originally guidelines based on the theory of Kolb (a model of experiential learning) and used by the American on Education (ACE) and the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL). CAEL is a non-profit association of colleges, universities, organizations, educators, and individuals (institutions, agencies & individuals) dedicated to the advancement of experiential learning and the valid and reliable assessment of its outcomes, and to the expansion and improvement of educational services for adult learners.

THE PROCESS

Undergraduate students who meet specific qualifications will complete a **1-credit course** (7.5 weeks long), online or face-to-face, where they will learn the guidelines necessary to complete their portfolio. During the course, the student and instructor work together with the program director/department chair to identify a potential faculty evaluator for the course to be petitioned for credit by portfolio. Towards the end of the class, the student works with the faculty evaluator to identify specific portfolio contents for that class that conform to the portfolio standards and the course learning outcomes. The portfolio will then be submitted to that faculty evaluator for assessment. The portfolio deadline will be set by the faculty evaluator, but it must be within 2 months of when the student completed the portfolio course. Students will be limited to 12 credits at the undergraduate level earned through portfolio credit, and these may not be part of the last 30 credits

If the student already took the portfolio class and wants to submit additional portfolios, the student should seek guidance from their academic advisor as to which department chair/program director they should ask for a potential faculty evaluator.

During the course students will learn:

- The Theory of Prior Learning
- What constitutes college-level learning
- Complete a Lifeline Exercise to assist them in becoming familiar with an introspective mode of thinking and identifying situations where they learned different parts of a course
- Discuss how the portfolio will be assessed
- Determine the contents of the UB course they are petitioning for credit
- Reflect on their own Personal Learning Style
- Write a Personal Learning Theme based on Kolb's Theory of Experiential Learning: noting their own four categories in the learning process: Concrete Experiences, Reflecting and Observation, Forming Abstract Concepts and Experimenting with the concepts in new situations. Faculty members teaching the workshop will assist students with application of Kolb's theory.
- Gather evidence of learning to be included in the final Portfolio

To support the student's portfolio, documentation must be included along with the Petition form, Personal Learning Theme, and exercises completed during the course. Guidelines will be provided for completing the Portfolio during the Workshop, which will assist students in preparing their final packet.

PORTFOLIO EVALUATION

The completed Portfolio will be sent to the designated faculty member and department for assessment and determination of whether the student has shown enough evidence of having learned the course being petitioned. In some circumstances the evaluator may request a meeting with the student for further clarifications or questions. No letter grade is assigned to the Portfolio. Students will pay a fee for the evaluation that is separate from the cost of the course, and the faculty member who evaluates the portfolio will be paid for doing the evaluation.

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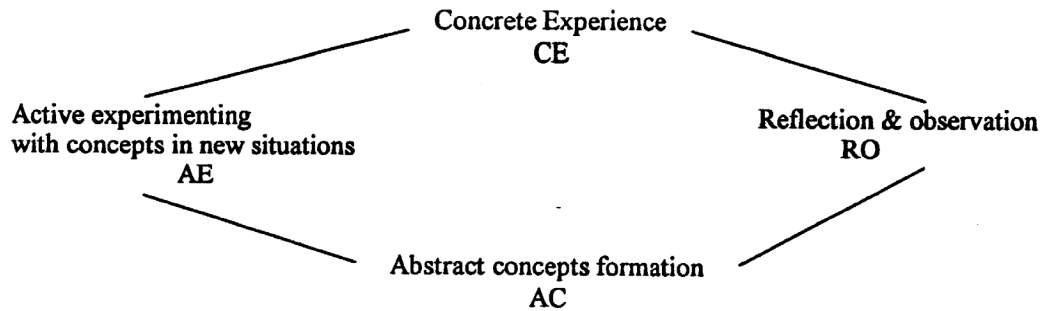
2. Faculty Guidelines for Reviewing Student Portfolios

Faculty Guidelines for Evaluating Student Portfolios

Theoretical Background

David Kolb provides a theoretical framework for understanding and evaluating experiential learning. Arguing from the work of Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget, Kolb maintains that all learning is experiential, in that it arises from the interaction between concrete experience and abstract concepts.¹ He illustrates this process with a model taken from Lewin:

¹ Kolb, David. (1984). Experiential learning. experience as the source of learning and development. p. 21
Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall



Concrete experiences always include every day or work life experiences. They may also include reading, consulting with others, or even attending lectures. Concrete experiences provide the subject matter for observation and reflection. These might involve noting similarities or differences in patterns or in the results of our actions.

Abstracting from our observations and reflections, we formulate theories about what we have observed. We then attempt to test those theories in the real world, thereby encountering new concrete experiences, and so on.

This process is repeated endlessly, so that "knowledge is continuously derived from and tested out in the experiences of the learner."² In the portfolio essay, students demonstrate how this process has enabled them to gain knowledge equivalent to that which is gained through college courses.

The essay should summarize the student's concrete experience and state the abstract concepts which were derived from that experience. The ideal essay would go on to show how these concepts were, in turn, tested and modified through new experiences. In practical terms, however, the student cannot go on following a process which we have already defined as endless. In practice, therefore, we ask only that the essay demonstrate that experience has led the student to the kind and quality of knowledge which would be expected of one who successfully completed the course for which credit is petitioned.

The Practice of Evaluation

You have been invited to evaluate a student's portfolio because of your expertise in the area for which credit has been petitioned. We sincerely hope the experience will prove valuable and rewarding.

To familiarize yourself with the student's background, read the learning autobiography. Next, turn to the petition and essay which have been assigned to you. *As you will see, the petition form incorporates an evaluation scale, ranging from 1 to 5. You are asked to evaluate the student's essay along this scale, according to the elements of the learning process described by Kolb.*

Discussion of concrete experience: Look for how well the student describes his/her experience.

² Ibid., p. 27

Are significant details provided? Does the experience correspond with the course for which credit is being petitioned?

Discussion and reflection and observation: Evaluate the student's thought processes, considerations, decisions, and rationale. How well is the concrete experience analyzed?

Formation of abstract concepts: Does the student display knowledge of the theories and principles in this field? Was the knowledge legitimately derived from the experiences and analyses previously described?

Testing of concepts: Does the student demonstrate how the theories and principles, which were derived from previous experiences, can be applied in the real world?

In addition, please rate the quality of the supporting documentation. If the documents verify the student's experience, they may be sufficient. More desirable are documents which testify to the quality of that experience and the learning that resulted from it. Normally, five documentary items of good quality are requested.

The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) has published a list of factors that may effect the reliability of assessment:

1. Leniency or Harshness Error. Does the evaluator tend to assess the material too easily and give a more favorable rating than deserved? Conversely are the evaluator's standards so strict that very few persons could "jump through the hoops" for a award of credit?
2. Error of Central Tendency. Does the evaluator tend to take the middle ground, never committing to an outstanding or a poor evaluation?
3. Halo Effect. If the evaluator is rating more than one subject area, does one good essay influence her or him to rate another better than it deserves? This tendency may operate in reverse as well.
4. Initial Impressions. This error may occur when the evaluator reads the learning autobiography and allows impressions of the person to influence the rating of the essay.
5. Stereotypes. Do strongly held beliefs or attitudes toward certain groups or individuals affect the evaluator's judgment, either positively or negatively?
6. Contrast effect. Rating one student may affect subsequent rating of others. For example, after reading an outstanding essay by one student, some may unfairly downgrade average essays by other students.
7. Similarity of Background. Do evaluators overrate students whose backgrounds are similar to theirs? Common examples are coming from the same city or state, attending the same schools, working for the same company.

Awareness of these influences, which can affect us all, is the first step in giving a reliable rating. Acting on that awareness assures students of a trustworthy evaluation of their learning.

The rating scale is

- 5 Superior/Excellent
- 4 Good
- 3 Average/Fair
- 2 Poor
- 1 Not Adequate/Failure

Usually, if your ratings for an essay do not average 3 or higher, credit cannot be granted. However, there may be other options. If you feel that the student has the appropriate experience and knowledge but has somehow failed to demonstrate them in the essay and documentation you may ask for an addendum to the essay or for additional documentation. If satisfactory additional material is submitted, you may then award credit.

Occasionally, evaluators judge that the essay does not merit credit for the course petitioned but does cover the content of some similar course; e. g. "Supervision" rather than "Management." In such a case, you may agree to award credit with a change of course title.

Please circle the appropriate number rating on each student's petition form. We also ask for your written comments, in the space provided on the form, with as much detail as possible regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the student's experiential learning. Students will have the opportunity to read your comments. Please sign the petition form, date it, and indicate whether credit has been awarded.

PORTFOLIO ASSESSOR'S GUIDE

(Excerpts taken from *Assessing Learning: A CAEL Handbook for Faculty*. CAEL is the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning.)

Basic Premises to Keep in Mind:

1. Adult students must delineate their theoretical understanding in the portfolio and must provide documentation which exhibits the application of theory.
2. It is the *learning* which is being assessed, not the experience, or the success of the individual.
3. While students have earned success and learned some things without the traditional classroom approach, you as professors have most often achieved your success and learning through the traditional academic means. Please try to view yourselves as "expert judges" vs. teachers. Remember, students may have learned what you teach without having been in your course.

How Are Learning Outcomes Determined? (How do we know the student should be awarded credit for the course?)

1. Faculty should have developed a set of learning objectives and performance criteria to guide the assessment of the portfolio.
2. The competency statements should focus on the fundamentals of the course.
3. The competencies may be organized around a textbook used in the course.
4. Awarding of credit for the portfolio should be based on the notion that a student has mastered the basic competencies.

What About Students Long on Applied Knowledge and Short on Theoretical Knowledge?

1. Regardless of the techniques used in assessments, faculty continue to rely on one common expectation that applies to all students. If the course includes a theory element, students must be able to demonstrate sufficient theoretical knowledge to receive credit for the course.
2. Additional readings and assignments may make up for the lack of theoretical knowledge.
3. Faculty may ask the student to do a research paper, be interviewed by themselves or another faculty member, or complete a special project to demonstrate their theoretical grasp of the course content.

4. In assigning students extra work or readings, the faculty member moves beyond that of an assessor and takes a step towards the traditional teaching role. Students may submit only one edited version of the portfolio if required by the faculty assessor.

Issues of Fairness to Students

1. Please remember that while classroom students have the benefit of a grade scale, Portfolio students do not receive a grade for the portfolio. Often this lack of a grade scale can result in the expectation that those submitting a portfolio must be exceptional rather than at the level to earn credit for the course if taken in the classroom.
2. It is recommended that faculty consider awarding credit if the student has manifested 75% of the listed competencies for the course, instead of demanding 100% of the competencies.
3. Remember, that even a student who knows almost all of the material, may only do an average job of presenting himself or herself.

What Kinds of Evidence or Demonstration Are Acceptable Proof of College Level Learning in Business Areas?

1. Articulation of theoretical knowledge that resembles the body of knowledge necessary to succeed in the course is the heart of the portfolio and can be found in the portfolio summary and portfolio essay.
2. Documentation (found in the Appendices) supports the learning statements and will be as varied as the students in the program. There is no particular set of acceptable support materials to be expected.
3. Documentation can include third party verifications, examples of the student's work, newspaper clippings, photos, and other items of evidence that indicate the student did do what he or she claims to have done. Students may include bibliographies of books they have read in the area. Any of the documentations submitted may serve as a basis for further questions by the assessor.

Credit for Prior Learning Theory and Practice

College-Level Learning Must

- be measurable
- be at a level of achievement defined by the faculty as college equivalent or consistent with the learning of other students engaged in college studies
- be applicable outside the specific job or context in which it was learned
- have a knowledge base
- be reasonably current
- imply a conceptual or theoretical as well as a practical understanding
- show some relationship to degree goals and/or lifelong learning goals
- not repeat learning for which credit has already been awarded

Parts of the Portfolio

1. Identification and definition of specific prior learning for which college credit is being requested, including competency statements for each course learning objective.
2. An essay or narrative explaining how this prior learning relates to the student's projected degree program, for what experiences it was gained and how it fits into his or her overall education and career plans
3. Documentation, or evidence, that the student has acquired the learning he or she is claiming
4. A credit request listing exactly how many credits the student is asking for in each Portfolio. Most courses carry 3 credits.

Portfolio Evaluation Steps

- Faculty Member Assesses the Portfolio
- Interview with student (if the requested by the Assessor)
- Results recorded on transcript (Registrar's Office)

[see Checklist on next page]

PORTFOLIO CONTENT CHECKLIST
(to be completed by the student and attached to the Portfolio)

Student: _____

Assessor: _____

Session: _____

CHECK IF COMPLETED:

- Cover or Title Page
- Table of Contents
- Petition Form
- Copy of Course Description from UB
- Personal Learning Theme
- Portfolio Summary
- Portfolio Essay
- Degree Plan from Student's Advisor
- Documentation
- Appendices (Optional)
- Name Label and Course Petitioned on Binder Spine
- Section Dividers Labeled and in Binder
- Portfolio Content Checklist Signed by Student _____