



Center for
Professional
Advancement

CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING
STUDENT HANDBOOK
2014-15

Pfeiffer currently accepts credit for learning demonstrated by the following:

- **American Council on Education (ACE) Guides for Military Training**—Published credit recommendations for formal instructional programs offered by the military.
- **College Level Examination Program (CLEP) Exams**
- **DSST Credit by Exam Program**
- **Challenge Exams**—tests developed by departments to verify learning achievement.
- **Portfolio**

INTRODUCTION TO CREDIT THROUGH PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

Portfolio is a method by which students may earn academic credit for college-level learning completed outside of the traditional classroom setting. Although the ideal learning environment is a classroom setting, learning may occur through videos, online distance learning, volunteer or civic involvement, business training, or other learning settings. Credit through Portfolio is designed to assist adult learners in attaining their academic and career goals by validating their professional competencies. Through the Center for Professional Advancement we have developed a process to assess this learning and apply college credit. Credit is granted for college level learning and not for the experience alone and is not awarded for duplicating previous or future coursework. Pfeiffer adheres to CAEL's Ten Standards of Assessment for PLA.

Why is Prior Learning Important?

The Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) portfolio development and assessment process recognizes the value of prior or experiential adult learning and translates that learning into academic credit. We recognize that as an adult, you have gained personal and professional development outside the traditional academic classroom. By developing your own CPL portfolio, you are able to translate these experiences into college credit in various areas through the Degree Completion Program. Up to thirty hours of credit awarded through the CPL portfolio assessment process may be applied to the elective hour requirements in the Degree Completion Program.

Approved hours will be awarded through the evaluation of a Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) portfolio, which is an organized collection of essays and documentation demonstrating your learning through work and life experiences.

How do I get started on my CPL portfolio?

First, be enrolled as a student in the Degree Completion Program at Pfeiffer University. Once enrolled, your academic advisor will review your degree plan with you to determine the remaining course hour needs. Your advisor will help you determine what credit might be earned through experiential learning, including testing, and if the portfolio course is recommended.

If it is determined that your experience positions you as a good candidate for possible credit for prior learning, you will register for CPL 2000: Prior Learning Assessment as part of your course load. This course will develop critical thinking skills as it applies to your learning experiences and assist you in

development of the final portfolio. Upon registration for the course you will submit a proposal of courses for which you hope to receive credit to the Review Committee. (See Appendix A)

What is included in my portfolio?

A portfolio tells the evaluators who you are and verifies the things you know as well as what you can do.

The portfolio contains the following materials:

- A cover and/or a title page
- A table of contents
- A résumé
- A short autobiographical essay (a personal narrative)
- An overview of your prior learning, demonstrated through written learning outcome statements
- Supporting material and documents to verify learning activities
- Petition for Credit form(s) (Appendix B)

1.0 Portfolio Categories

Students may petition for credit through portfolio in five categories: Professional Courses, Professionally Accredited Colleges and Schools, Licenses and Certifications, Language Proficiencies and Life Learning Essays. Students may petition in one category or a combination of any or all categories.

1.1 Professional Courses

Professional Courses are courses students may have completed individually or through an employer. If a number of courses were taken in a specific subject area the courses may be combined to optimize the amount of credit awarded. The following are types of professional courses which qualify through portfolio:

- Workshops
- Conferences
- Seminars
- Training meetings/In-services
- Courses completed through a college's school of continuing education
- Classroom teacher's aide experience

1.2 Professional Colleges and Schools

Professional Colleges and Schools are schools which are not regionally accredited. If a student can obtain three letters of articulation from said school, credit may be awarded. If students can obtain these letters they are encouraged to contact their academic advisor for more guidance. Generally courses from regionally accredited schools transfer directly into a student's program at Pfeiffer with a grade of "C" or better. If a course is presented on a transcript from a regionally accredited school, but the course does not transfer, it cannot be submitted through portfolio. The following are types of professional colleges and schools which qualify through portfolio:

- Colleges and schools which are not regionally accredited
- Community colleges offering courses through their school of continuing education
- Professional colleges and schools accredited through an accreditation body other regional accreditation.

1.3 Licenses and Certifications

Licenses and Certifications allow a student to carry out a task or duty which the student would otherwise not be allowed to perform. The following are some of the types of licenses and certifications that may qualify through portfolio:

- Real estate license
- Aviation certificates
- Stock broker licenses
- Nursing assistant certification
- Computer certifications
- Engineering certificates

Certificates received at the completion of a course or seminar should not be confused with a certification or license a person is granted in order to perform a certain task or duty. Licenses and certifications are normally required to perform a job, task or duty. Several licenses and certifications have been reviewed and are included in the list of Pre-Assessed Licenses and Certifications as recommended by ACE. (Found [here](#))

1.4 Language Proficiency

The Language Proficiency category is provided for students who are proficient in a foreign language. Credit will not be awarded to students who have previously transferred the same foreign language credit from regionally accredited schools or CLEP tests. Students with fluency in Spanish, French and/or German should consult with their advisors regarding the appropriate CLEP test. Documentation should verify oral proficiency and reading and writing skills. Sign language does not qualify in this category. However formal courses/classroom hours to learn sign language may be submitted under the *Professional Courses* category.

1.5 Life Learning Essays

Life learning essays focus on career or personal experiences that involve learning objectives which match courses offered at Pfeiffer University or through the North Carolina Community College system.

A total of thirty (30) semester hours may be earned through any combination of credit by challenge exams, national standardized examinations, ACE credits, and CPL by portfolio.

2.0 Documentation

CPL Portfolio Development

If prospective students have other learning experiences not served by departmental examination or by national standardized examination, they may be advised to consider prior learning assessment by portfolio. Students will then be advised to sign up for the Prior Learning Assessment course (CPL 2000). This course is the method by which students will develop documentation for the courses for which they hope to earn prior learning credit. The Prior Learning Assessment course is a two credit hour course offered online. In this course, students will learn how to develop the appropriate documentation sets for the classes for which they wish to seek credit. By the end of the course, they should have materials ready to submit to the review committee.

Three areas of criteria must be documented for each professional course:

- Content
- Hours
- Verification of completion

2.1 Content

Each course submitted must include a course description. The description can come from:

- A flier
- A school catalog
- A table of contents from the curriculum used
- A copy of the syllabus
- A letter from an employer or trainer

2.2 Hours

Hours are necessary to determine the possible number of credits a student will receive for each course or certificate completed. Credit is typically calculated as follows:

- 20 classroom hours = 1 semester hour of credit
- 2 continuing education units = 1 semester hour of credit
- 30 lab hours = 1 semester hour of credit
- 30 classroom teacher's aide experience hours = 1 semester hour of credit

A certificate of completion or classroom hour verification referring to units of measure other than continuing education units will be treated as classroom hours.

One of the following verifications of classroom hours is needed for each course:

- A signed certificate of completion that specifies classroom hours, lab hours or continuing education units.

- An official transcript from the institution offering the course that specifies classroom hours, lab hours or continuing education units.
- A course description from a college catalog or equivalent that specifies classroom hours, lab hours or continuing education units.
- A Letter of Completion from an employer or sponsoring entity specifying the number of classroom hours, lab hours or continuing education units.

2.3 Verification of Completion

Any of the following methods may be included in your portfolio to verify a course has been completed:

- A signed certificate of completion
- An official transcript
- A signed Letter of Completion from an employer or trainer

2.4 Letter of Completion

A Letter of Completion may be used as documentation to replace items 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3.

Documentation will be considered complete with a signed and dated letter, with each page written on company letterhead from (a) the employer with which a student was employed at the time the classes were taken or (b) the trainer (sponsoring entity) from which the courses were taken specifying the following:

- Date of course
- Name of course
- Number of classroom hours, lab hours or continuing education units
- A brief description of the course

Letters of Completion must be written in third person with specific reference to the person for whom the training is documented.

2.5 Life Learning Essay Documentation and Hours

Life learning essay documentation may be completed using any of the other forms of documentation. Documentation may also include pictures, videos, certificates, etc.

3.0 LEARNING OUTCOME STATEMENTS

Each student petitioning for portfolio documented learning credit is required to submit a Learning Outcome Statement for each topic area in the portfolio. The Learning Outcome Statements are provided in addition to and separate from other portfolio documentation. The statement must be a minimum of 1 ½ - 2 pages in length per topic, explaining the outcome of the student's learning. The essay should include:

- What the student learned and how it has been applied in the student's work or personal environment

- What new skills and abilities did the student gain from this training? How has this training helped the student reach his/her goals?
- What practical application or learning does this experience have?
- What insight has the student gained from this experience?
- What are the implications of this learning? What are the positive and negative outcomes?

An example of a Learning Outcome Statement will be provided. One outcome statement may be used to cover a broad range of training if all training applies to one topic. Evaluators are looking for college level writing and critical thinking skills.

4.0 EVALUATION AND PROCEDURES

Pfeiffer University adheres to the academic standards established by its governing body, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and guidelines set forth by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) as the method by which portfolios are evaluated. Procedures established for the evaluation process are in compliance with SACS and CAEL.

4.1. Criteria for Evaluation

The following criteria apply to the portfolio evaluation process:

- Credit should be awarded only for learning and not for experience.
- College credit should be awarded only for college-level learning.
- Credit should be awarded only for learning that shows balance between theory and practical application and is appropriate to the subject.
- Competence levels and credit awarded is made by academic experts and must include appropriate subject matter.
- Credit should be appropriate to the academic context in which it is accepted.
- Student generated documentation will not be evaluated.

4.2 Evaluators

Portfolios will be submitted to an Evaluation Committee made up of Pfeiffer University faculty chaired by the Dean of Adult Studies. Evaluators adhere to the guidelines established by the Academic Services Office, based on the guidelines developed by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), the American Council on Education (ACE) and the National College Credit Recommendation Service (National CCRS).

4.3 Awarding of Credit

Evaluators will review the documentation provided to determine authenticity and whether college-level learning has occurred. The Evaluation Committee shall determine whether Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) will be granted and if so, how much. The committee may meet with the student if appropriate and may request additional information or assistance of any consultant it considers will be useful for the evaluation. The portfolio may only be submitted once and all decisions of the committee are final.

The Dean of Adult Studies shall transmit the decisions of the committee to the Vice-President for Academic Affairs, who shall review the portfolio, and the student will be notified by the Registrar's office regarding the credit awarded and it shall be entered on the official transcript as CPL hours.

The maximum amount of credit awarded through the combined prior learning process is 30 credits. Elective credit only is awarded and does not count toward the residency requirement.

The Vice-President for Academic Affairs along with the Dean of Adult Studies shall maintain a continuous review of the program to insure its academic effectiveness.

4.5 Portfolio Assessment Fees

Portfolio processing fees are a flat rate of \$200 for assessment and transcription regardless of the number of credits earned.

The processing fee is due at the time the portfolio is submitted.

4.6 Submission Dates and Deadlines

Please allow 4 to 6 weeks for the portfolio evaluation process once submitted. It is recommended that portfolios are submitted no later than one year prior to the planned graduation date. This timeline allows for portfolio credit to be awarded in order to avoid unnecessary delays in meeting graduation requirements. Such delays may occur when the number of portfolio credits received is less than expected and additional coursework is required.