



WILMINGTON

UNIVERSITY

Graduate Portfolio
Assessment
Guide for Students

May, 2014

The Portfolio Assessment Guide for Students

The Portfolio Assessment Guide for Students was adapted from *The Student Handbook for Competency-based Evaluation* by Wilmington University, *The Handbook for Preparing A Portfolio* by the East Central Colleges with offices at Bethany College in Bethany, West Virginia, and *Portfolio Development* from the University of Wisconsin, Superior. Wilmington University acknowledges their efforts and appreciates their permission to use these publications as a model.

**Wilmington University
320 North DuPont Highway
New Castle, DE 19720**

PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

Wilmington University recognizes that college level learning takes place both in and out of the classroom. The process to recognize this is called Portfolio Assessment.

This guide describes the portfolio development and assessment process.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

What is Portfolio Assessment?

- A process that enables you to gain credit for what you have already learned through professional training, life experiences, job related activities, or volunteer work.

What are the benefits of Portfolio Assessment?

- Achieve your educational goals in less time
- Receive college credit for what you have learned.

How do I get credit for my prior learning?

- You will prepare a portfolio documenting your prior learning.
- In the portfolio, you will include evidence that you have the knowledge and skills which match the outcomes identified for a particular course or courses.
- Applying for portfolio assessment and preparing a portfolio does not guarantee that credit will be awarded.

How much credit can I earn using Portfolio Assessment?

- Graduate students should speak with their academic program chair to determine how much credit, if any, may be earned through PA.
- You and your program chair will discuss the number of courses and credit hours that you can realistically apply for using prior learning.
-

How much does it cost?

- Fees for portfolio assessment credit are significantly less than tuition fees for traditional courses.
- Current portfolio assessment fees are listed on the University's web page.

Will someone guide me in developing a portfolio?

- A faculty advisor will work with you.

How long will it take?

- Putting together a portfolio which successfully earns credit may require a significant amount of time and organization. This will vary from student to student.

Do I need a separate portfolio for each course?

- You may be able to develop one portfolio for several courses, however check with the faculty assigned to your portfolio assessment review since some programs may require a separate portfolio for each course.
- You may be required to write a separate reflective essay for each course for which you are seeking portfolio assessment credit.

Who evaluates my portfolio?

- Your portfolio assessment faculty will evaluate your finished portfolio.

Will I receive a grade?

- Portfolios are given either a satisfactory (credit awarded) or unsatisfactory (no credit awarded).
- Any credits awarded will not affect your GPA.

Can I complete a course I have already failed through portfolio assessment?

- No, you may not use portfolio assessment credit for any courses you have failed at Wilmington University.

Are there methods of earning credit other than developing a portfolio?

Yes, there are specific industry-recognized certifications that have been articulated to graduate level academic credit at Wilmington University. Consult with your faculty advisor for additional information.

IS PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT FOR YOU?

QUALIFICATIONS FOR PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

To be eligible for portfolio assessment:

- you must be fully matriculated
- the University must be in receipt of all of your transcripts.

1. Learning must be verifiable and at the post-baccalaureate level. Based on your submitted portfolio the faculty advisor should be able to measure the learning which you have acquired from sources such as:

a. Formal, recognized, and well documented training programs conducted by:

- 1) U.S. military
- 2) business, industry and trade groups
- 3) government organizations
- 4) professional organizations
- 5) certificates
- 6) employment records

2. The learning must have a subject matter knowledge base.

Credit is awarded for skills that require theoretical knowledge. For example, if you have ten years of experience as a manager or supervisor and you are seeking credit for a management course, your reflective essay must indicate how your experience relates to the management theories taught in the course. It is a good idea to read the syllabus and textbook(s) used in the course.

3. The learning should have a general applicability outside of the specific situation in which it was acquired. For example, Wilmington University will not award credit for knowing the specific procedure for processing personnel applications which apply to only one firm/company. In each reflective essay for the course in which you are seeking credit through portfolio assessment, you must explain how you gained the knowledge in your professional environment and also how you applied that knowledge to other situations.

PROCEDURES

Once you have spoken to your program chair and gained their approval, to develop a portfolio for academic credit, the following steps are provided to help you:

1. Make an appointment with your Program Chair to discuss the course(s) for which you desire to receive credit through portfolio. Your Program Chair will assign a portfolio faculty advisor and will complete an Academic Approval Form.
2. After your Program Chair submits the Academic Approval Form, you will be able to register for the portfolio through *Webcampus* – choose the course & then choose PLA. You will be directed to submit the web form to register for this option. You will be assessed the PLA fees at the time of registration.

3. Make an appointment with your portfolio faculty advisor(s). You may have more than one portfolio faculty advisor if you are completing multiple courses from different academic areas.
4. Begin developing your portfolio.
5. Maintain contact with your portfolio faculty advisor(s) throughout the portfolio development process. Be sure that your advisor(s) know about your progress and about any delays that occur.
6. Submit your completed portfolio to your portfolio faculty advisor. From the time of portfolio registration, you have a maximum of 15 weeks to complete the portfolio. If you have unforeseen delays, you may request an extension from your advisor. Your advisor will then post a grade of "I" for Incomplete. This is not an automatic process, you must request the extension.
7. Your portfolio faculty advisor will review your submitted portfolio and notify you when the evaluation is complete. If credit is awarded, your portfolio faculty advisor will submit a grade to the Registrar's Office.

DEVELOPING YOUR PORTFOLIO

PORTFOLIO CONTENTS

A portfolio is a comprehensive document. It requires that you:

1. examine and list your previous experience in order to identify areas of post-baccalaureate college-level learning;
2. communicate in the reflective essay exactly what learning took place and where and how it was applied;
3. prove through documentation that learning occurred.

Listed below is a checklist of the required sections of a portfolio and a brief description of each. They should appear in the order presented unless there are compelling reasons for altering the presentation. The following will explain each section in greater detail with suggestions, guidelines, and examples.

✓ **1. Resume**

Name, Address

Goals/objectives

Occupation

Work experience

Education

Interests and activities

Affiliations/memberships/volunteer/community service

✓ **2. Inventory of Experience**

A list of relevant learning experiences since high school

✓ **3. Specific Credit Requests**

List the course(s) for which credit is requested. The list should include the course number and title, course description, course learning objectives, description and amount of credit requested.

✓ **4. Reflective Essay(s)**

The reflective essay is a narrative, focusing on post-baccalaureate experience which resulted in learning outcomes for which credit is sought. A separate reflective essay may be necessary for each course for which you are requesting PA credit. The goals and learning outcomes for each course must be referenced in the corresponding narrative.

✓ **5. Documentation**

Include letters, certificates, clippings, etc. that constitute evidence that you have the experience which has yielded knowledge equivalent to learning at the post-baccalaureate level.

PREPARING THE PORTFOLIO

Now that you understand the rationale for preparing a portfolio and have an overview of the contents your PA faculty advisor will clarify any of the requirements of the portfolio.

Reflective Essay(s)

In this section, you will demonstrate that your prior learning experience is post-baccalaureate college-level knowledge. You will need to provide exact descriptions of your knowledge of both theory and application in a separate essay for each course for which you are requesting credit through portfolio. The essay should include the course number, title, and goals and learning outcomes for that course.

While reading your essay(s), the portfolio assessment faculty advisor(s) will look for several points of discussion which are not directly related to a given field of knowledge, but are an important part of conveying what you have learned.

- 1) Your experience
- 2) How knowledge was acquired from your experience
- 3) How knowledge was applied and used—the learning outcomes

You must demonstrate understanding of the basic theories, issues, topics, or principles of the course in order to receive credit. The course syllabus and textbook would be very helpful at this point.

You are also expected to know and appropriately use the terminology pertinent to the course. A reference to the documentation which supports your knowledge is also required.

Once you complete the theoretical component, you should then explain how you gained the knowledge. Was it through workshops and training seminars? Perhaps it included discussions with experts in the field, on-the-job training from a supervisor, or reading textbooks on the subject. In this section, you should also tell your reader how you have applied your knowledge. If you have documentation of the above, it should be included in the portfolio.

DOCUMENTATION

The purpose of documentation is to prove that you have the knowledge that you say you have or that you have accomplished what you say you have accomplished. Documentation supports and strengthens your credit requests. Generally, the best documentation is something you have produced. Documentation should be tangible, and it must be submitted along with your portfolio.

The following recommendations regarding documentation may be helpful:

1. Be prepared to furnish proof that you did, in fact, produce the document/product which you are presenting.
2. A variety of products/documentation will support your claim for credit better than a single item.
3. The documentation should verify both the quantity and the quality of the experience.
4. Products should be clearly identified and logically connected to the credit requested.
5. Unless you state otherwise, the documentation/products provided will be considered to be public information.
6. When individual documentation is long or comprehensive, underline/highlight those parts of the document that are relevant to the credits requested.
7. Finally, you can furnish too much documentation. The portfolio assessment faculty advisor is only interested in the proof that supports the credits being requested. He/she is not interested in superfluous information.

EVALUATION PROCEDURE

After submission, your portfolio is evaluated by faculty experts who do the actual awarding of credit. Students are notified of credits awarded when the faculty evaluation is complete.

Normally, one copy of the portfolio is required to be submitted. If additional copies are needed, your PA faculty advisor will tell you how many additional copies will be required.

PRESENTATION

The professional appearance of your portfolio will lend additional credibility to your post-baccalaureate college-level skills. The exact format of your portfolio will be determined by your portfolio assessment faculty advisor.