Introduction

University of the Cumberlands is committed to quality education and recognizes that learners in higher education come with many experiences from varied backgrounds. Therefore, University of the Cumberlands has developed a process through which learners may earn college credit for prior learning experiences that do not fit into another category of recognized credit (e.g. external standardized credit-by-exam, articulated licensure, or certification).

Extra-institutional learning is defined as learning that is attained outside the sponsorship of legally authorized and accredited postsecondary educational institutions. The term applies to learning acquired from work and life experiences; independent reading and study; mass media; and participation in formal courses sponsored by associations, business, government, industry, the military, and unions. University of the Cumberlands recognizes extra-institutional learning through a portfolio assessment process. The guidelines presented are intended to provide a foundation for the experiential learning process, with an emphasis on learning outcomes and competencies that the learner will document in each portfolio. Credit proposed by the learner and granted by the evaluator will be course specific. Students may earn a maximum of 25% of the credit in the academic program for which they are enrolled through PLA.

Policy

Advanced Standing/Academic Credit Through Experiential Learning– It is possible for a student to receive academic credit for certain types of innovative and meaningful work experience related to the student's academic program and objectives. An example might be satisfactory research experience in an organization or institution which does not give academic credit. The proposal for such academic credit must be approved in advance by the appropriate departmental chair and the Registrar, under the oversight of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. A determination of the credit awarded is made only after a thorough evaluation has been completed. (Policies and Procedures Addendum for Faculty, p. 41)

Prior Learning Portfolio Process

Student candidates for Prior Learning Assessment will follow these steps toward possible approval of their portfolio for course credit.

1. STUDENT REVIEWS PROCESS INFORMATION AND CONDUCTS SELF-REVIEW to determine if he/she is a candidate for PLA:
   - http://inside.ucumberlands.edu/academics/registrar/pla - all forms and PLA requirements are located on the PLA site
   - Student must be a degree-seeking student at University of the Cumberlands
   - Student reviews PLA Information and Orientation presentation to complete self-review
   - Student follows process steps under #2 prior to portfolio development

2. STUDENT REQUESTS APPROVAL TO PURSUE THE PLA
   Student will submit the completed Prior Learning Assessment Credit by Experience Application (found at http://inside.ucumberlands.edu/academics/registrar/pla) and submit to his/her Program Director or Department Chair.
• Request Packet: submit the “PLA Request to Pursue” form and unofficial transcripts (if not already on file with Admissions) via email.
• Program Director or Department Chair reviews the request.
  - Request is APPROVED for PLA Student takes PLA course to compile portfolio
  - Request is DENIED for PLA Student takes regular course

Note: If the request does not meet basic requirements, the student may ask to speak with a program director to determine if there is any recourse other than to take the regular course.

Students must keep a copy of the submitted/approved Prior Learning Assessment Request to Pursue form and the attachments to include in the portfolio.

3. COMPLETE THE REQUIRED PLA PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT COURSE
• These are a non-credit courses required to guide the student through development and formatting of the portfolio. They can be taken by registering at any time during the main session and are provided as “open entry/open exit” courses.
  - OLCP 100 for Undergraduate Students
  - OLCP 500 for Graduate Students

4. STUDENT SUBMITS COMPLETED PORTFOLIO TO PROGRAM DIRECTOR/DISTRICT DEAN
• Student’s portfolio is APPROVED PLA credit applied to transcript
• Student’s portfolio is DENIED Student has an opportunity to correct any minor problems and resubmit once if reviewer indicates it as an option; otherwise, student must take the regular course.

For questions or more information contact: Dr. Susan Rose, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs at susan.rose@ucumberlands.edu or (606) 539-4213.

Portfolio Components

A portfolio is a compilation of information presented by the learner to equate experiential learning to a specific college course or courses for a specified number of semester hours. It includes:

A. Cover Page: The cover page will include your name, student identification number, address, phone number, and e-mail address.

B. Table of Contents: The table of contents includes the portfolio page numbers with supporting documents properly cataloged and noted.

C. PLA Application: This is included to provide a background for the evaluator in order to assist him/her in reviewing the portfolio.

D. Resume: Provide an updated resume to include education and work experiences. Detail significant activities, exact dates, accomplishments in the workplace, and all non-formal and work related training.

E. Significant Learning Worksheet-Course Objective Matrix: The Significant Learning Worksheet-Course Objective Matrix is a worksheet to organize, categorize and reflect on your life experiences as
they directly relate to the course and the specific course objectives. Your completed document must address the outcomes of the course for which credit is being requested. For each course objective, complete a **Significant Learning Worksheet/Matrix** using a chronological outline of your applicable life experiences. The categories listed on the worksheet include employment, workshops, volunteer work, recreation, self-directed learning, military service, licenses, travel, and other items. Other items might include personal crisis (e.g., death or divorce), health (e.g., disability or illness), relationships (e.g., parenting or elder care), and many more. For each category under each learning outcome, list what you have done, indicate how much time was involved, and describe the activities. Each learning outcome that you justify must refer to documentation you have collected. Explain what you learned using action verbs (i.e., differentiate, compare, contrast, list, calculate, solve, construct, organize, etc.).

*If you do not have valid documentation you will be unable to use the experience. Your Matrix must tie the experience to a specific learning objective and you must be able to indicate how it enabled you to achieve the learning outcomes.

**F. Narrative:** From the information and supporting documentation on your **Significant Learning Worksheet/Matrix**, you will develop an essay to summarize the learning from your experiences based on the course description and outcomes to convey the knowledge acquired for this specific course. This narrative is an in-depth, detailed explanation and reflection of your activities and the resulting competencies achieved related to objectives from course and how they were met.

1. Use the course objectives to guide your discussion of your accomplishments.
2. Pull in details from the related **Significant Learning Worksheet/Matrix**; explain where, why, and what experiences were involved.
3. For a course that includes a substantial amount of theory, demonstrate that you have the appropriate balance of theory and application.
4. The narrative will incorporate terminology appropriate to the course and examples of applications of the concepts as demonstrated through your accomplishments.

The reflection helps the evaluator understand the context of your learning for the particular course you are requesting. More importantly, it is intended to help you reflect on how experiences from different times in your life may have come together for a common goal. To summarize, the essay should be two-four pages and summarize the significant learning experiences in your life; define your personal, educational, and career goals; and describe how your experiences will validate your knowledge of the course content and meet the course outcomes being petitioned for credit.

**G. Documentation:** Each of your experiences and competencies will require verification (evidence). This evidence can take several forms:

Completion of training programs, workshops, seminars, etc., may be verified through certificates; personnel records, specifically performance reviews showing competencies; job descriptions; transcripts; samples of work; testimonials; certificates of attendance; and/or evidence of knowledge or letters of verification listing proven competencies from instructors or employers. Each piece of documentation for a workshop or training program must be accompanied by a description page of content for each workshop, training program, or seminar and must show how the evidence relates to the course learning outcomes.

Employment history and job responsibilities may be documented on copies of performance appraisals, company job descriptions, and examples of projects or reports (verified as your work), or a supervisor’s letter of verification.
Evidence of volunteer work may include awards, newspaper articles, or letters of commendation.

If your portfolio is a request for credit for a performance or activity-based course, you will need to submit evidence such as:

- A videotape of your speech, theatre work, or music recital
- Samples of your painting, drawing, photography, or ceramics for a studio art course
- Samples of presentations or reports you have generated and verified as your work to document competency in spreadsheets or other software

Letters are a common form of verification and can be very effective if the writer understands the purpose of the letter. When you request an individual to write a letter of verification, provide the person with the course description you are presenting in your portfolio. Explain you are requesting equivalent college credit for experiential learning and provide a copy of what might be included in a verification letter.

Extraneous or inappropriate documentation may indicate to the evaluator that you lack understanding of how your experiences relate to your learning.

Note: When submitting your portfolio, it is important that documentation be specific to the course description and learning outcomes used in your portfolio.

H. References (if applicable)

Portfolio Rating and Credit

When credit is approved, the evaluator makes a recommendation to grant credit for the course requested and the student will receive a copy of the Evaluator Response/Rubric form from the Registrar’s office after credit has been posted to the student record.

Alternatively, the evaluator may return the portfolio for minor explanation and/or documentation revisions. The determination regarding option to revise is based on the evaluator’s assessment of the portfolio via the Rating Rubric. If the portfolio is returned for minor revisions, a date of return will be listed on the Evaluator Response/Rubric form. The student must return the portfolio by the date listed or forfeit the credit with an automatic denial.

If credit is denied, the evaluator will provide feedback on the portfolio along with the Evaluator Response/Rubric. The student may appeal in writing to the Program Director or District Dean, who may determine whether to resubmit to another evaluator or make other recommendations to the student. All appeals must be requested within 30 days of the student notification mail-out date.
**Significant Learning Worksheet**  
(Course Objective Matrix)

Use this worksheet to identify specific competencies and learning outcomes as they directly relate to this portfolio. Please obtain an electronic copy at [http://inside.ucumberlands.edu/academics/registrar/pla](http://inside.ucumberlands.edu/academics/registrar/pla) for use with your portfolio.

**Course:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Time spent in activity</th>
<th>Description of duties and activities</th>
<th>Learning outcomes as applied to course objective</th>
<th>Documentation (evidence of experience)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment, Work Experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Workshops, Webinars, Training, Seminars, Professional Development</td>
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<td>Volunteer Activities, Community Service, Committees, Groups</td>
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<td>Military Experience/Training</td>
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<td>Licenses (that do not qualify for articulated credit)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Directed Study, Independent Reading, on-line non-credit courses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recreation, Hobbies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Awards</td>
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<td>Publications</td>
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<td>Travel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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**NOTE:** For each course learning objective an experience must be applied and detailed. For each experience being used in the portfolio, the student must clearly specify:
- **What** the experience was: the time spent in activity; description of duties and activities
- **How** it relates to the **Learning Objectives** for the course targeted
- **Documentation** as evidence of the experience as used toward the course objective, and as an indication of the level and appropriateness of content.
Letter of Verification Guide

(Company Letterhead)

Date

To whom it may concern:

Introduction of how the individual writing the letter is acquainted with the learner and the length of time. (Why he/she is qualified to verify the learning and experience.)

A description of the learner’s experience and responsibilities, and a detailed explanation of the learning.

Statement of authenticity for a project, report, etc., submitted by the learner, if applicable.

If qualified to do so, the individual writing the letter may equate the learner’s knowledge with what would be taught in a comparable college course. (Note: The letter of verification is not a personal recommendation or testimony of character, but rather an outline of facts to support the learner’s narrative.)

A telephone number, if different than letterhead, where the writer may be reached if the evaluator has questions.

Sincerely,

Original Signature
University of the Cumberlands  
Prior Learning Assessment  
EVALUATOR RESPONSE / RATING RUBRIC

Student Name: ___________________________  ID #: ___________________________

Evaluator: ___________________________  Date: ___________________________

PLA submitted as credit for:

Course Number __________  Course Title_________________________  Credits _______

Summary of Evaluation (see Rubric for details)

The student documented competencies in at least 70% of the course content per the course learning objectives. ________ Yes ________ No

If no, please elaborate: __________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

The learner, using a mixture of theory and practice as well as appropriate terminology, indicated a competent understanding of the course material and demonstrate how the learning was acquired. ________ Yes ________ No

If no, please elaborate: __________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Comments from Portfolio Evaluator: ______________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

RATING RUBRIC

Criteria for Satisfactory grade: Candidates must score the minimum of 70 overall points and a minimum score of 7 in any category. See points key at the end of rubric.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Item Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOURCES OF LEARNING (EXPERIENCES)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Validity:</td>
<td>Portfolio content succinctly narrates and describes the significance of the candidate’s relevant learning experiences and supplies relevant documentation as evidence in order to establish the candidate as qualified to write on the subject. Completed in PLA course</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Evidence (overall)</td>
<td>Candidate provides evidence of learning from experience.</td>
<td></td>
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| EVIDENCE OF LEARNING (COMPETENCIES) |                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------          |            |
| 2. Evidence (overall)               | Candidate provides evidence of learning from experience.                 |            |
3. **Accuracy:** Evidence properly formatted and aligned with *specific learning outcomes*  
    Candidate provides adequate and appropriate evidence of each learning outcome for the targeted course per the course syllabus/BCI.  
    Student has constructed an electronic portfolio accurately formatted, and with complete information for each section and learning objective.

4. **Reliability:**  
    Evidence aligned with *personal experience*  
    From the candidate’s description of personal examples, it is clear that the learning arose from the candidate’s direct experience and/or experience represents the candidate’s understanding of the topic.

5. **Matrix:**  
    Evidence aligned with *academic theory / learning objectives*  
    Appropriate amount and use of academic theory is integrated within the submission, so that the candidate’s learning is grounded in the academic frameworks of the topic.

### QUALITY OF PRESENTATION OF SUBMISSION

6. **Breadth / Depth of Submission**  
   There is an appropriate depth and breadth of discussion related to requested credits (upper vs. lower division, and amount).

7. **Narratives**  
   Narratives clearly introduce the prior learning experience and its relevance to the targeted course as well as effectively summarize the main points and critical details, and state outcomes achieved through the experience.

8. **Source Material**  
   In-text and end-of-text citations of all sourced materials are correct, complete, and verifiable.

9. **Documentation**  
   Documentation provided is effective evidence of experience; documentation is effectively referred to within submission, and its significance and relevance is clear.

10. **Sentence Structure, Mechanics, and Overall Presentation**  
    - Submission is well-organized in a professional presentation, uses appropriate format aligned with objectives and outcomes, and progresses in logical, convincing order.  
    - Virtually free of punctuation, spelling, capitalization errors; appropriate format and presentation for assignment.  
    - Effective use of vocabulary, and correct and effective grammatical form(s).

### TOTAL POINTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points:</th>
</tr>
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| 0 = item/content not evidenced or missing.  
| 1/2 = item/content unsatisfactorily evidenced  
| 3/4 = item/content minimally evidenced  
| 5/6 = item/content inconsistently evidenced  
| 7/8 = item/content satisfactorily evidenced  
| 9/10 = item/content fully evidenced |
| Total points possible: 100 |
| Minimum to pass: 70 |
DETERMINATION OF PLA:

Recommendation:

_____ Portfolio Approved. Credits Awarded for course requested.

_____ Minor Revisions Necessary. Resubmit deadline: ____________________________  
(Once the submission deadline is past, the student may no longer be granted credits for the portfolio.)

If revisions necessary, please explain: ____________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

_______ Extensive Revisions Necessary. No credit awarded.

If credits are denied, please explain:

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Portfolio Evaluator

Evaluator Name (please print) ________________________________________________

Evaluator Signature _______________________________ Date _____________________

Supervising Academic Dean (please print) _______________________________________

Dean Signature _______________________________ Date _________________________

Registrar’s Office:

Registrar Approval. _______________________________ Date ______________________

Credits entered into record. _________________________________________________

Staff Signature _______________________________ Date _________________________