



PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT HANDBOOK

for Prior Learning Assessment

The practice of awarding credit for college-level prior learning is based upon the belief that the education which builds on, interprets, and incorporates past and present knowledge is the education that is most meaningful to the student. At Kennebec Valley Community College, we value the college-level knowledge students may have acquired through past work, independent reading and study, training programs or in-service courses, volunteer service or other experiences. Consequently, KVCC offers a portfolio review process by which prior learning can be analyzed, articulated, documented, and assessed for credit.

Portfolio Review is only one way for students to obtain credit based on prior learning. Prior to pursuing to the Portfolio Review option, students should consider other options available to them, including credit through national and/or department examinations (CLEP, DSST, and Challenge Exams), as well as military or proficiency credits for non-accredited training.

The portfolio includes several major sections including a thorough resume, a narrative summary of relevant work and learning experiences, demonstrated skills and training in specialized areas, and applied knowledge and competencies in a specific course for which KVCC credit is available. This handbook will guide you in the process of assembling your portfolio, providing support to complete each of the sections you will need to assemble for your final submission to the college.

As you begin working on this process, remember that the primary purpose of a portfolio is to provide a format for students to express, and the college to assess, the prior learning competencies and knowledge acquired. The importance of planning ahead cannot be ignored when it comes to a project of this type. A plan of action will not only help ensure completion, but also a well-done portfolio.

The expectation from the college is the submission of a well-organized, formatted, detailed and academically written document, which is the standard for a college assignment of any sort. If you need assistance with any part of the portfolio compilation, or you have questions pertaining to any of the sections outlined in this handbook, please contact the PLA Portfolio Advisor at pla@kvcc.me.edu.

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KVCC Policy 2.08 Portfolio Review for Credit

The portfolio review process, a form of Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), is one option that a student may select to obtain credit for college-level knowledge acquired through past work, independent reading and study, training programs or in-service courses, volunteer service or other experiences. The portfolio is a written presentation plus pieces of evidence, assembled and submitted for assessment of college-level learning equivalent to specific course/content area elective learning outcomes. Credit may be awarded for learning that has a balance between theory and practical application. Prior to pursuing to the Portfolio Review option, students should consider other options available to them, including credit through national and/or department examinations, as well as military or proficiency credits for non-accredited training. Students may refer to the KVCC's Portfolio Development Handbook, available on the website, for detailed instructions.

Student Eligibility

- Students will be matriculated in one of the College's degree programs.
- Students will have a requirement(s) in their academic programs, to which prior learning credits could apply.
- The student has significant prior learning and none of the PLA methods listed in Policy 2.XX can help demonstrate the learning for College credit.
- The student must show proof of college-level writing credit or be concurrently enrolled in college writing, prior to preparing any portfolio for credit.

Fees

- \$125 per Portfolio attempted (\$100 reviewer remuneration, \$25 administrative processing)

Submission Requirements

- *Request for Prior Learning Assessment* form
- Cover Page (include your name, address, phone number and email address)
- Letter of introduction
- Resume
- KVCC Course syllabus
- Narrative to include proof paragraphs, explanations of how the student has met each course objective on the syllabus
- Artifacts to support your assertions in your proof paragraphs and to help demonstrate the application of your knowledge or competencies.
- Signed *Statement of Authenticity* form
- Submit of the complete portfolio(s) to Academic Affairs for review

Award of Credit

- The award of PLA Portfolio credit is dependent on relevancy to courses in the degree program; including general education, major and elective courses.
- A Portfolio is reviewed by a subject matter expert, using the Maine Community College System portfolio review rubric. A recommendation for credit/no credit is based on the student showing narrative and evidence of learning outcomes that would constitute a grade level of C or better for the course.
- Submitting a PLA Portfolio does not guarantee credit award. Students wishing to appeal a PLA credit award/denial may do so via the College's academic appeals policy and procedure.
- The student will receive notification of the credit award within ___ days from the Registrar's Office.

Course Selection

In order to make sure that developing a portfolio for credit is a worthwhile endeavor, you have to do some research and make some decisions. The course(s) you choose for your portfolio must be part of your degree program. (Students enrolled in either Career Studies or Trade and Technical Occupations should work closely with the Portfolio Advisor to understand their expanded options.)

1. Confirm your program of study and year of matriculation.
2. Review the course requirements for your program.
3. Read the current course descriptions in the catalog for the courses in which you believe you have already attained college-level understanding.
4. After reading the course descriptions, choose the course(s) you would like to further research.
5. Work with the Portfolio Advisor to obtain the course outlines that you are interested in pursuing.
6. Each course outline contains course objectives. Review these objectives thoroughly, as these are the objectives you will seek to prove your attainment of college-level learning and competencies in through the narrative documentation/proof paragraphs.

The catalog and course descriptions can be found on the KVCC website.

Artifacts

Now that you have selected the course(s) you believe your prior learning is strong enough in, and you have read the related course objectives, you can begin looking at what you will need for artifacts. These artifacts should help support your assertions in your proof paragraphs and help demonstrate the application of your knowledge or competencies.

Collect Artifacts

Take some time to locate every document that you currently have in your possession that you can use as an artifact.

Some examples include:

- training certificates
- training outlines, handouts, etc.
- award certificates
- award plaques
- certificates of recognition
- letters of appreciation (for work performance/community service projects)
- job descriptions
- work performance evaluations
- work project descriptions or assignments
- samples of completed work projects (flow charts, graphs, web pages, written procedures, training manuals, presentations, graphic designs, spreadsheets, etc.)
- photographs of completed projects (such as machinery, etc.)
- and many more...

Request Artifacts

In addition, to the items listed above, you may request copies of projects that demonstrate your skills, job descriptions, etc. from former employers, as well as, a copy of your employment file from the personnel department. Make your request in writing, keeping a copy for yourself. Include information about why you are making the request and ask for it by a certain date, normally within 2 weeks.

Organize Your Artifacts

As you collect your artifacts, you must find a way to keep them organized. Refer to the course objectives for all of your courses, and decide what type of organizational method you want to use in your portfolio. If you will be using the same artifact for more than one course, you may want to set up your portfolio to have an artifact section. You can begin now by labeling each artifact as an appendix.

If your artifact seems to work with just one course's objectives, place your artifact with the objectives for that specific course, separated from the other courses. In this case, a file folder system may work better. Once you have a system for your artifacts, it is much easier to see what you need to request for letters of verification, etc. Be sure to label your artifacts clearly as you organize them, and in a manner that will be clear to the person reviewing your portfolio.

Letters of Verification

A letter of verification is critical if you do not have many of the previously listed artifacts. This type of letter differs from a letter of recommendation in that it simply verifies what you have done. For instance, your former supervisor may have written a letter of recommendation for you to obtain your current job, which can be an artifact. However, this letter may not have mentioned a number of trainings you received, conferences you attended or responsibilities you were given over the course of your employment.

You may want to contact your former supervisor and request a letter of documentation that outlines skills and competencies you gained while working for them, that cannot be verified any other way. You may also ask community service organizations for this type of letter if you have helped with fundraising or other projects. Perhaps you have served on a committee. Ask the chairperson to verify your participation and your responsibilities as related to that committee.

You must be specific in your request for this type of letter! Most people have not had the opportunity to write this type of letter. They are much more used to letters of recommendation. You will have to explain the difference between the types of letters, as well as, inform the person about which skills and competencies you need documented for your portfolio. Do not ask them to write everything; rather, have them fill in the gaps. Exhaust your collection of artifacts first. Then ask for whatever is still needed.

Use your imagination to come up with creative ways to authenticate your prior learning, particularly as it relates to the course objectives for whichever course(s) you are trying to “prove”.

Narrative Documentation

The writing section is the most difficult and time consuming part of the project. Each piece of writing plays a significant part in your portfolio. The content of your writing and how you present yourself will affect your portfolio presentation. The reviewer does not know you personally, but they need to know you through your writing in order to make an informed decision about your credit award.

No matter which piece of writing you are working on, your goal is to present yourself as a college-level learner. Therefore, you must include college level writing! Remember the skills you learned in ENG 101, College Composition.

Please revise and edit your work. Academic and formal business writings require there to be no typographical or grammatical errors! Have a friend, family member, or instructor read your work for general errors and for paragraphs or sentences that seem out of place or do not make sense. Read your writing out loud to yourself – you may feel silly but it is a great strategy for really hearing what you have said. Use any spell-check or grammar-check functions in your word processing program as well.

You will complete three or more major pieces of writing; the letter of introduction, the resume, and the proof paragraphs. You will write proof paragraphs for every course objective that you are attempting to prove. It may be helpful to get your ideas down on paper in draft form first. Do not worry about perfect spelling, etc. as you draft. You can go back to what you have written and modify it later. Just start writing!

General Formatting Guidelines

1. Portfolios must be presented in an academic and professional manner.
2. The written portions of the portfolio must be typed. Please use Times New Roman 12–point font for narratives and 14–point for headings, as appropriate.
3. Each section of the portfolio needs to be separated with a divider to allow ease in evaluation.
4. As items in a portfolio may include originals, the college suggests only copies be submitted for evaluation.
5. Neat and organized portfolios are easier for reviewers to navigate.

Proof Paragraphs

Proof paragraphs are the writing you do to explain how you have met each objective of the course(s) you have chosen for your portfolio. Take a look at one of your course outlines and read the first objective for the course. Explain in writing what you did that meets that objective, then pick out an artifact that documents your work. If you can talk your way through the objectives for a course, then you can write about them.

Effective proof paragraphs are critical to your success in earning a credit award. You should plan to spend the majority of your time, energy and patience on this part of the project. Take one course at a time!

How you prove to the reviewer that you do not need to take a certain course is by writing about what you learned outside the classroom compared with what you would have learned if you had taken the actual course from an instructor at KVCC. This is why the course objectives are so important. If you met the objectives through work experience, you now need to put your work learning into the language of college learning. The languages are similar, but not exactly the same. Imagine that you are a translator – you translate work language and experiences so that college personnel can understand what you mean. The course objectives are the bridge between these two worlds of communication, but it is your responsibility to ensure that the portfolio reviewer understands your interpretation of them.

Remember, your goal is to show college level learning, not just work experience. The way you do this is to write about what you learned! Reflection is a key component of higher education. Thinking and writing about your learning are considered higher thought processes and are associated with college level learning. In other words, you have not just done a job or completed a work-related task—you learned from your experience and can talk about it, as well as use it in other situations.

Suggestions

Although everyone's proof paragraphs may look different, each one should contain:

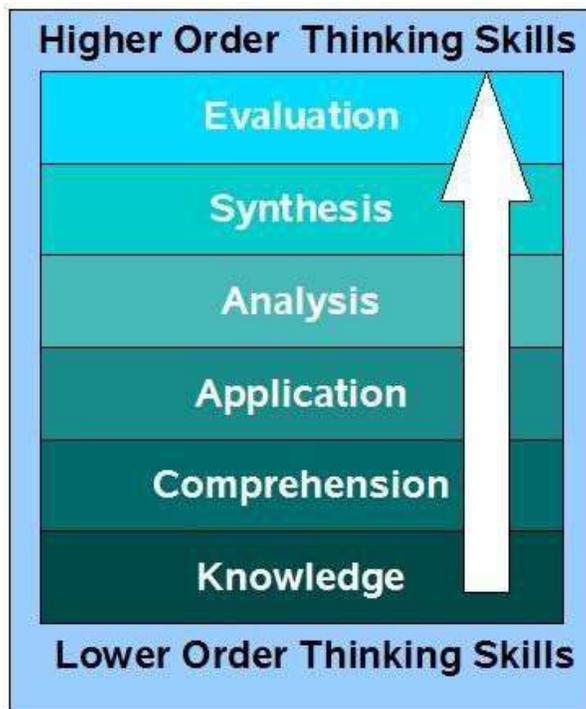
- A detailed explanation of how you have met the course objectives. Perhaps give an example of how you learned it, and later applied it to another project.
- Use terms from the course objective(s) to help explain what you did at work.
- At the end of the paragraphs, refer to the artifact(s) that supports your claim, such as “see appendix D”.

- Paragraphs can be from 5 to 10 sentences long, but the purpose is to fully explain how you met the objective(s), not the number of sentences you write. Make a draft, then go back and edit.
- You may not be able to cover every single objective of every single course. If you have not met an objective, it does not mean that you won't get credit for the course. Acknowledge that you have not met one specifically, but explain how it compares with or fits in with what you have already done and learned.

Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives

Consider Bloom's Taxonomy when writing your proof statements. Your proof statements should align or prove you have college-level learning that meets the course objectives.

Evaluate what you know and how you want to articulate it using Bloom's hierarchy of learning and verb lists. If a course objective requires 'analysis' of a topic it may help you to frame your argument utilizing verbs from #4 relating to 'analysis'.



In 1956, Benjamin Bloom headed a group of educational psychologists who developed a classification of levels of intellectual behavior important in learning. Bloom found that over 95% of the test questions students encounter require them to think only at the lowest possible level...the recall of information.

Bloom identified six levels within the cognitive domain, from the simple recall or recognition of facts, as the lowest level, through increasingly more complex and abstract mental levels, to the highest order which is classified as evaluation. Verb examples that represent intellectual activity on each level are listed here.

1. **Knowledge:** arrange, define, duplicate, label, list, memorize, name, order, recognize, relate, recall, repeat, reproduce, and state.
2. **Comprehension:** classify, describe, discuss, explain, express, identify, indicate, locate, recognize, report, restate, review, select, and translate.
3. **Application:** apply, choose, demonstrate, dramatize, employ, illustrate, interpret, operate, practice, schedule, sketch, solve, use, and write.
4. **Analysis:** analyze, appraise, calculate, categorize, compare, contrast, criticize, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, and test.
5. **Synthesis:** arrange, assemble, collect, compose, construct, create, design, develop, formulate, manage, organize, plan, prepare, propose, set up, and write.
6. **Evaluation:** appraise, argue, assess, attach, choose compare, defend estimate, judge, predict, rate, core, select, support, value, and evaluate.

Resume

If you have experiential learning that would make you eligible for prior learning credits, it is likely that you already have a resume documenting your years of work-related experience. If so, please take some time to review your information, check for any errors and compare your format with up-to-date trends.

If you do not have a resume developed, now is the time to do so. Numerous resources are available online. Even word processing programs, such as Microsoft Word, have resume templates you can choose from to get started. You may also visit KVCC's library or your local library to find current books on the topic. KVCC's Career & Transfer Services can also provide help developing and critiquing resumes.

Online Resources

www.theresumebuilder.com

<http://jobstar.org/tools/resume/yana24.php>

www.sampleresumes.com (click on the "Sample Resumes" on the left-hand pane)

<http://jobsearchtech.about.com/od/resumesandletters/tp/Resumes---Tips-and-samples.htm>

Important Points

- You cannot have any errors!
- Be consistent with formatting and do not get too fancy.
- Do not use "I" statements. Instead, use words from the *Resume Action Verbs* list.
- Use a bullet style format.
- Use reverse chronological order for work experience (most current job is listed first).
- Write more than one draft. Get your ideas down on paper. Then start organizing and formatting.

Action Verbs for Resume Writing

DECISION MAKING

Accept
 Activate
 Approve
 Authorize
 Decide
 Render
 Required
 Solve
 Terminate
 Test

MANAGEMENT

Adjudicate
 Analyze
 Anticipate
 Approve
 Direct
 Establish
 Evaluate
 Execute
 Manage
 Meet
 Organize

CHANGES

Activate
 Compare
 Create
 Design
 Establish
 Improve
 Make
 Modify
 Stimulate
 Upgrade

PERSONNEL

Appraise
 Discharge
 Employ
 Handle
 Interview
 Promote
 Recruit
 Screen
 Seek
 Select
 Train

SUPERVISION

Adhere
 Assess
 Assign
 Counsel
 Define
 Delegate
 Demonstrate
 Develop
 Encourage
 Exercise
 Foster
 Manage
 Meet
 Participate
 Report
 Request

ADMINISTRATION

Administer
 Engage
 Furnish
 Insure
 Justify
 Process
 Procure
 Purchase
 Receive
 Reclaim
 Reject
 Requisition
 Secure
 Ship
 Store

RESEARCH

Analyze
 Compile
 Define
 Determine
 Develop
 Evaluate
 Identify
 Investigate
 Prepare
 Propose
 Recommend
 Research
 Review

PLANNING & CONTROL

Acquire
 Allocate
 Assume
 Control
 Extend
 Forecast
 Formulate
 Measure
 Monitor
 Plan
 Progress
 Schedule

HELPING

Arrange
 Assist
 Contribute
 Counsel
 Give Guide
 Initiate
 Serve
 Solve

PERSONNEL

Appraise
 Discharge
 Employ
 Handle
 Interview
 Promote
 Recruit
 Screen
 Seek
 Select
 Train

COMMUNICATION

Contact
 Critique
 Declare
 Display
 Inform
 Interpret
 Issue
 Speak
 Testify
 Write

EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

Cooperate
 Coordinate
 Negotiate
 Publicize
 Represent
 Strengthen

Letter of Introduction

Your letter of introduction makes the first major impression on the portfolio reviewer, in terms of your professionalism and writing proficiency. The letter of introduction serves a few purposes: you introduce your portfolio; you inform the reviewer of your academic and professional goals; you identify which course(s) for which you are seeking credit; you describe what your portfolio contains and how it is set up; and you thank them for taking the time to review your materials.

This letter is a highly professional document and should be written in formal business format. If you are unfamiliar with this style, please take the time to research information on developing cover letters. You can find samples of business writing online. Once you have a sense of what this type of writing looks and sounds like, you can combine that knowledge with the expectations for this letter.

Suggestions

- Your letter should be between one and two typed pages when formatted.
- Single space block-style paragraphs and double space between paragraphs.
- Use 12 point size and whatever professional font you used in your other writings.
- Get feedback on the content of your letter, revise it and edit for errors!

Portfolio Compilation

You are ready to complete the final details of this project! After all of your hard work, keeping your focus now will ensure that you submit a polished product.

Now is the time to make sure that each section of your portfolio is complete. Create your divider pages (or tabs) and put your documents behind them properly. This process will help you identify if you have missed anything for each section. Follow the *Checklist*, actually checking items off as you go! Make sure you have not forgotten anything! Be sure to complete the signature page and put it in your portfolio. It contains your *Statement of Authenticity*, which means you certify that everything in your portfolio is true and belongs to you.

After you complete the checklist, take the time to read through your proof paragraphs and actually flip to your artifacts. This ensures that what you say in the proof paragraph matches the proper artifact. You may need to do some editing or rearranging to better your chances at being awarded credit.

Once you are completely satisfied that you have completed the portfolio, schedule a meeting with the PLA Portfolio Advisor to critique it and check for completeness. They may make suggestions for revision that you would not have thought of, and any feedback is extremely valuable. They may also ask questions about the portfolio that will help you prepare for the possibility of an interview with the faculty reviewer. Be sure to schedule approximately one hour and remember not leave your original portfolio behind!

After your portfolio has been critiqued, make any necessary changes and then have your original photocopied at least twice. You must submit two copies to Academic. The College will keep one copy of the portfolio and return the other to you with the credit decision.

Portfolio Checklist

If you organized your portfolio from the very beginning, this step should be very easy to complete. Please go through the following checklist page by page to ensure that nothing is missing from your portfolio prior to photocopying it.

- Copy of *Request for Prior Learning Assessment* form
- Cover Page (include your name, address, phone number and email address)
- Table of Contents
- Divider Page or Tab (for Letter of Introduction)
- Actual Letter of Introduction
- Divider Page or Tab (for Resume)
- Actual Resume
- Divider Page or Tab (for Signature Page)
- Actual Signature Page
- Divider Page or Tab (for first course you will prove)
- KVCC official course objectives for this course (from department chair)
- Proof Paragraphs (one for each objective; refer to an artifact)
- Optional: The artifacts you refer to for this course can either go here, or you can have one section for artifacts at the end of the portfolio, called the appendices. Either way, make it easy for the reviewer to flip back and forth from your proof paragraphs to your artifacts!
- Divider Page or Tab (for second course you will prove)
- KVCC official course objectives for this course (from department chair)
- Proof Paragraphs (one for each objective; refer to an artifact)
- Artifacts
- Use the same set-up for as many courses as you are attempting to prove
- If necessary: Divider Page or Tab (for artifacts, if you use them this way)
- Artifacts

Statement of Authenticity



PRIOR LEARNING PORTFOLIO

Statement of Authenticity:

I certify that the documents contained herein belong to me. All samples, materials and documents were developed by me and fairly represent my abilities, skills and talents.

Student Signature

Date

Interview Preparation

The faculty reviewer may request an interview in person or by phone in order to best evaluate your portfolio and discuss your work. As in any interview situation, a few points are worth mentioning. Interviews are partly about content (what is in your portfolio), and partly about your professional demeanor.

Content

In terms of content, be completely familiar with your portfolio from the reviewer's perspective. As you create the portfolio, remember your writing, know which artifacts go with which courses, etc. Once it is completely put together, it is easy to feel like you are "all done." However, if you are called in for an interview, you will be expected to be familiar with every document and every detail in order to discuss your work.

If you have taken the time to get a critique from a writing tutor or the portfolio advisor, your academic advisor or your department chair, you will be in a strong position to go into this interview because you will have seen your portfolio through someone else's eyes already. If you have not, you must anticipate what questions or concerns the reviewer may have regarding your portfolio. What questions may they ask in order to confirm your college level learning? It is your responsibility to look at your portfolio critically and determine which parts of your portfolio are not as strong as other parts. If you take the time to do this, you will be more prepared to defend your portfolio verbally.

Professional Demeanor

Professional demeanor is demonstrated through your professionalism in the interview, which includes the formality of your dress. Professionalism also includes your handshake, eye contact, listening skills and attitude. Carry yourself confidently and be respectful of the reviewer. Phone interviews should be planned ahead for a time and place that is free from distractions.

You will become very attached to your portfolio because of the effort and time involved in putting it together. You should be very proud of your work; however, it is the reviewer's job to question every part of it. They are looking to award credits through a process that is not common to all students, and they have to be sure that the quality of your prior learning matches the quality of the education you would receive by taking KVCC courses. Therefore, you must maintain an open mind and a willingness to accept feedback from them. The ability to do this without becoming defensive or hostile will go far in showing that you are a college-level learner and a true professional!

Suggestions

- Ask as many people as possible to go through your portfolio and come up with questions about any part of it, no matter how critical.
- Anticipate questions the reviewer may have and be prepared to answer them verbally.
- Bring your own copy of the portfolio with you to the interview.