Using Adult-Learning Principles to Evaluate the Prior Learning Process

Prior Learning Assessment Briefing for Portfolio Development
Agenda

• Welcome
• Overview
• Developing a Portfolio
• Evaluation Process
• Summary & Tips
• Questions
PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT (PLA)

College credit awarded for learning gained through employment, training, and life experiences, as self-assessed and documented in a portfolio.
## Adult Learning Principles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adult Learning Theory Principles</th>
<th>Preparation</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adults are internally motivated and self-directed</td>
<td>Briefing</td>
<td>Writing Workshop Hotline Email Program Director</td>
<td>Recommendation Feedback Re-evaluation</td>
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<td>Adults bring life experiences and knowledge to learning experiences</td>
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History:

• CMU began offering prior learning credit in the 1970’s for military throughout the world

• Have evaluated approximately 9,000 portfolios

• CMU uses a Competency Model (not course challenge)
PLA Philosophy:

- College level learning can occur in many settings, including work, training, and/or life experiences.

- Students can express (write) an analysis of what they learned and how they apply this knowledge in the work environment.
Awards based on:

- Length of employment and/or hours in training determine the maximum possible credits (American Colleges of Education (ACE) guidelines)

- Quality of the self-assessment determines the actual credits awarded
Portfolio: Eligibility

Undergraduate:

• from high school graduation to present
Portfolio: Eligibility

Graduate:

• from date of the undergraduate degree or 7 years prior, whichever is shorter.
Portfolio – Self-Assessment & Learning

• Experiences must be supported by self-assessment of learning. (No credit for observations, experiences, or trainings without self-assessment.)

• Must reflect college level learning

• Must explain learning with adequate details and examples, i.e., show analysis and synthesis of learning (in standard written English)

• Learning claimed must be supported in the documentation
Portfolio - Applying Credits

- Undergraduate: UNV 297 or 497
- Undergraduate: 60 credits max
Portfolio - Applying Credits

- Graduate: UNV 697
- Graduate: 10 credits max
- Normally do not substitute for core courses
A Portfolio Includes:

- Portfolio checklist
- Tabs I and II (General information; transcripts and TCE)
- Tab III (Table of Contents)
- Tab IV (Job - if requesting credit)
- Tab V (Training - if requesting credit)
- Tab VI (Life Experiences - if requesting credit)
- Tab VII (Notarized page, attests to portfolio and “present” date)
Portfolio – Presentation

- Use a three-ring binder (only)
- Use tabbed dividers between each section: I/II, III, IV (1,2,3,etc.), V (1,2,3,etc.) VI (1,2,3,etc.) and VII
- **Do not** use plastic page protectors
- Use the required forms (**do not revise/retype** these forms)
Portfolio – Organization

• Use separate header sheet (PLA Forms) for each work, training, and life experience

• Start with most recent experiences (work, training, and/or life), then proceed backwards (reverse chronological order)

• Fully assess the learning for each tab
IV-Tab, Work Experience: 
Header Form (see handout)

- WORK EXPERIENCE ID: IV-1 (number EACH, with current job first)
- Dates of Employment (month & year, e.g., 10/94)
- Exact Title of Position, and Rank or Salary
- From: ________ To: __
- Full Time / part time: # hours/week: __
- Name and Title of Immediate Supervisor 
  Name of Employer (firm, organization, etc.) and Address Including Zip Code
- Address of Supervisor
IV-Tab: Work Experience

- Majority of credits awarded come from work experiences (spend time developing the self-assessment for these).

- Must work 10 months to get any credit. If jobs overlap, be sure to explain the hours/time for each.

- Self-assessment = explaining the *learning* that occurred during a work experience.
IV-Tab: Work Experience

• Provide documentation that supports the learning.

• Quality of the self-assessment is critical for awarding credits.

• Writing must show analysis, value judgment and synthesis (process of applying learning acquired through the value judgment process; adapts and applies knowledge).

• Quality of the writing is important.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A1a</th>
<th>A1b</th>
<th>A2</th>
<th>A3</th>
<th>A4</th>
<th>Documentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List responsibilities from your job description for this employment.</td>
<td>List responsibilities that were NOT stated on your job description?</td>
<td>What <strong>NEW</strong> skills and knowledge did you gain from this job (think about technical, interpersonal, and organizational learning)?</td>
<td>What were areas where your knowledge and skills have <strong>IMPROVED</strong> in this job?</td>
<td>What trainings have you had that applied to the skills and knowledge gained in this job?</td>
<td>List the documents or artifacts that you can provide to verify employment and to support the time, skills, and knowledge gained?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A1. a
A1. b

After completing this keyword worksheet, begin drafting. In writing your self-assessment, especially questions A-2 and A-3, you want to focus on what you learned while in this position, i.e., fully explain what the items above entail and the skills and knowledge you gained, including examples and details that show your learning.
Graphic Organizer: IV-Tabs

• List some of the items from your current (or recent) job description.
Graphic Organizer: IV-Tabs

• List some of the items from your current (or recent) job description.

• What else do you do? List some things not in the job description.
Graphic Organizer: IV-Tabs

• List some of the items from your current (or recent) job description.

• What else do you do? – things not in the job description.

• What new things have you learned from doing your job?
Writing is the key

- Self-assessment
- Demonstrate college level competencies
- Focus on what has been learned not what has been done.
Writing is the key

- PLA briefing sessions
- CMU Writing Center
- CMU Global Campus hotline
Graphic Organizer: IV-Tabs

• List some of the items from your current (or recent) job description.
• What else do you do? – things not in the job description.
• What new things have you learned from doing your job?
• How have you improved?
• Any training experiences?
• Documentation have/available?
Graphic Organizer: IV-Tabs

- List some of the items from your job description. (A1)
- What else do you do? – things not in the job description (A1)
- What new things have you learned from doing your job? (A2)
- How have you improved? (A3)
- Any training experiences? (A4)
- Documentation (support)
V-Tab: Training Experiences

• Submit each experience separately

• Be sure to answer each question:
  V-A1 – Why did you take the training?
  V-A2 – What did you learn from the training?
  V-A3 – Where/how do you use the things learned from the training?
V-Tab: Training Cont’d

- Includes required training as well as courses and workshops attended to gain new skills or knowledge beyond those directly associated with job.

- Time: varies, e.g., 4 hours to over 200. Details in the self-assessment should correspond to the length of time.

- Think about the length of a college course as a reference for time.
V-Tab (Training) Outline/Keyword Worksheet

Training Session Title _______  Dates/Hours ______

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A1 – Why did you enroll in this training</th>
<th>A2—What <strong>NEW</strong> skills and knowledge did you gain from this training? Be specific and consider technical, interpersonal, etc</th>
<th>A3—How and where has the new knowledge/skills been applied in your work or personal life.</th>
<th>Documentation—List the documents or artifacts that you can provide to verify the training and to support the time, skills, and knowledge gained?</th>
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<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>A3</td>
<td>documents to be included:</td>
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After completing this keyword worksheet, begin drafting. In writing your self-assessment, especially questions A-2 and A-3, you want to focus on what you learned during this training, i.e., fully explain what the items above entail and the skills and knowledge you gained, including examples and details that show your learning.
VI-Tab: Life Experience

• Any experience that does not fit into work or training may be fit here.

• must be for a significant amount/duration of time, e.g., minimum 2 years for leisure area.

• Typically receive least credit.

• Are the most difficult to self-assess and evaluate.
### VI-Tab (Life Experiences) Outline/Keyword Worksheet

**Session Title _______ Dates/Hours ____**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>A1 – A detailed explanation of the experience</th>
<th>A2—What <strong>NEW</strong> skills and knowledge did you gain from this experience? Be specific and consider technical, interpersonal, etc.</th>
<th>A3—How and where has the new knowledge/skills been applied in your work or personal life.</th>
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