

CMU OFF-CAMPUS PROGRAMS

Prior Learning Assessment Briefing

For Portfolio Development

March 2010



www.cel.cmich.edu/prior-learning

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CENTRAL MICHIGAN
UNIVERSITY
OFF-CAMPUS & ONLINE

Agenda

- **Welcome**
- **Overview**
- **Developing a Portfolio**
- **Evaluation Process**
- **Summary**
- **Questions**



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PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT (PLA)

**College Credit Awarded for the
Knowledge Gained Through
Employment, Training, and
Life Experiences,
As Self-assessed &
Documented in a Portfolio**

Portfolio Overview

Tabs I and II: General information, transcripts and TCE

Tab III: Table of Contents

Tab IV: Employment - 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 Checklist



History:

- **CMU began offering prior learning credit in the 1970's for military personnel throughout the world**
- **Approximately 9,000 portfolios evaluated**
- **CMU uses a competency model, not a course challenge model**

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

- **The 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**

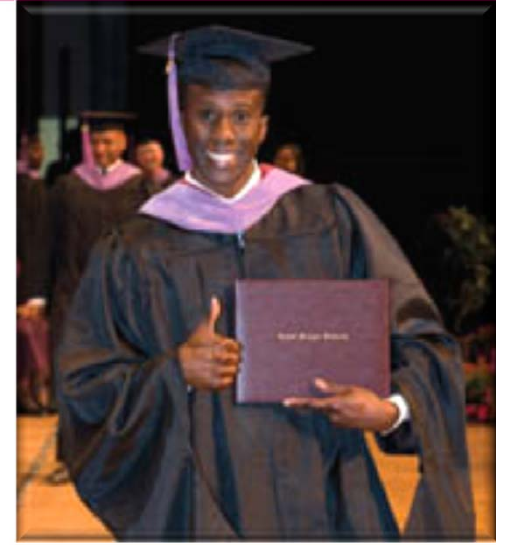
Developing a Portfolio

- **Meet with your academic advisor to discuss potential use of prior learning credits on your program**
- **Download the Prior Learning Student Handbook and Forms**

<http://www.cel.cmich.edu/priorlearning/handbook.aspx>

Eligibility

- **Undergraduate:** from high school graduation to present
- **Graduate:** from date of the undergraduate degree or 7 years prior, whichever is shorter



Self-Assessment

- Experiences must be supported by self-assessment of learning (No credit for observations, experiences, or trainings without self-assessment)
- Must reflect college level learning
- Self-assessment 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

Applying Credits

- **Undergraduate: UNV 297 or 497**
- **Graduate: UNV 697**
- **5 CMU credits from CMU must be posted on the transcript before prior learning credits may be applied**
- **Undergraduate: 60 credits max**
- **Graduate: 10 credits max; normally do not substitute for core courses**

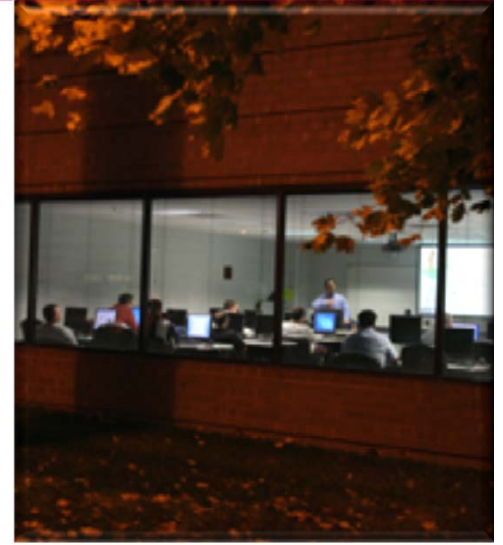


Organization

- **Use separate header sheet 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**

Presentation

- **Use a three-ring binder (only)**
- **Use tabbed dividers**
 - between each major segment
 - between each required section (I/II, III, IV, V, VI, and VII tabs)
- **Do not use plastic page protectors**
- **Use the required forms (do not revise these forms)**



Tab I: General Information

- **Be sure your name is same as appears on CMU transcript**
- **Use student ID number**
- **Do not include social security number in any of the documents (black out)**

Tab II: Education Background

- Indicate degree or certificate program desired
- Indicate date of high school bachelor degree completion
- Include a transcript for all college course work (CMU & other institutions, unofficial copy is ok)
- Include a copy of your CMU Transfer Credit Evaluation (TCE) form, if applicable



Tab III: Table of Contents

- **Very important!**
 - basis for organizing materials
 - overview of contents to follow
- **Identify all Tabs:**
 - List current experiences first
 - List different work responsibilities / positions as separate experiences
 - List ALL documents included for each Tab

Note: Copy documents relevant to more than one experience (work or training); highlight information and insert with relevant tab

Tip: List documents **ONLY after they have been acquired, organized, and placed in the correct section of the portfolio**

Cross-check all dates for accuracy



IV-Tab: Work Experience

- **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**

- **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**

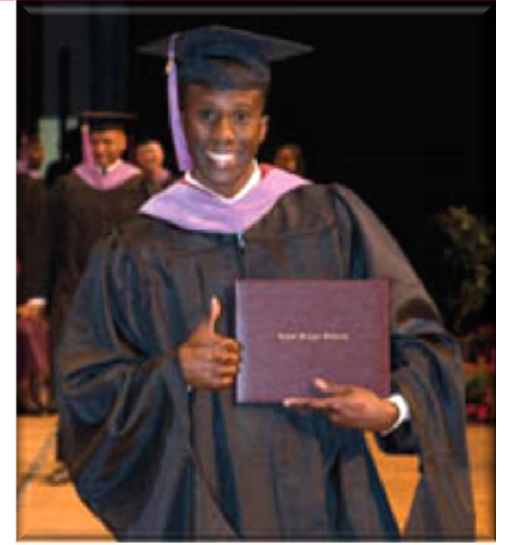


Instructions for the Worksheet

- **A1a & b - list key job responsibilities**
 - **A2 – list new skills that you learned while doing this job**
 - **A3 – list improved skills that you learned while doing this job**
 - **A4a & b – list any recognition or training**
- **Convert each listed item into paragraph form and expand on the thoughts, description of learning, and skills acquired**

V-Tab: Training Experiences

- 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



- **Submit each experience separately**
- **Be sure to answer each question**
 - V-A1 – Why did you take the training**
 - V-A2 – What new skills and knowledge did you learn from the training**
 - V-A3 – How/where/ has the new knowledge/skills been applied in your work or personal life**

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

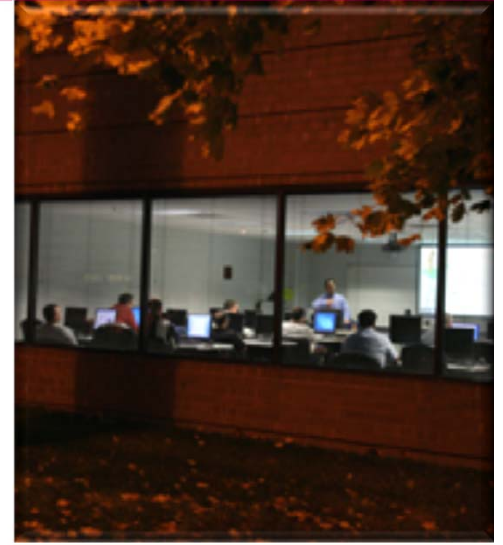


VII-Tab: Signature Block

- **Re-check accuracy between TOC and work, training, and life experience tabs**
- **Be sure all copies of transcripts and documentation are inserted in the correct portfolio sections**
- **Include Portfolio Checklist; be sure to indicate if any documentation is missing and why**
- **Get signature notarized (last)**

Tips & Hints

- Complete the self-assessment for one experience/tab, then take a break from writing; use this time to collect documentation and have others read/give feedback
- Have a friend (not a co-worker or spouse) read the self-assessment for clarity
- Have a co-worker read the self-assessment to provide suggestions for additional responsibilities and/or learning
- Use the CMU Writing Center (see handout or brochure)
- Read and revise again



- **Forms**
 - Use the interactive forms that are posted on the web site
 - Complete interactive forms instructed
 - Forms are required, do not edit or submit any self-created header pages
- Be sure all information in the Table of Contents matches each of the header sheets and the documentation
- Proofread everything – twice!
- The signature block must be signed, dated, and notarized



- **Evaluators look for learned competencies (what you learned) not for CMU course equivalency**
- **Skills and competencies are identified based on documents AND quality and thoroughness of self-assessment**
- **PLA guidelines determine the maximum number of credits possible for time on the job**

Submission

- Complete the portfolio checklist
- Enclose the processing fee. This is a one-time fee for evaluation, re-evaluation, and additional submissions per degree. Any credits used towards your degree will be charged at the current prior learning rate. For current rates, please go to <http://www.cel.cmich.edu/finances/tuition.aspx>
- Prepare 3 complete portfolios; send two, along with the processing fee; keep one original
- Portfolios will not be returned: make 3; send 2; keep 1!!!

Evaluation Process (9-10 weeks)

- Documents with inconsistent information may be disallowed
- Random portfolios are selected for verification of documents
- Three faculty evaluate each portfolio independently; each recommendation must be within 6 credits for undergraduate, 3 for graduate



•Re-evaluation

- One within 45 days from date on award letter
- Submit letter of request with additional information
- Credits may increase, decrease, or stay the same depending on additional information and/or self-assessment

•Additional Submissions

- Unlimited for undergraduate students
- Within 7 year limit for graduate students

Comments

- **As with any class, the time and effort put into developing a quality portfolio, especially a quality self-assessment, will be reflected in getting the maximum credits possible**
- **A three credit hour collegiate course requires work on the part of the student; a portfolio also requires a fair amount of work/time**

- Competency titles are based on the nature of the experience, and the quality of the self-assessment
- The number of credits are determined by duration of the experience (documented) and the quality of the self-assessment
- Many people feel good about developing a portfolio and feel a real sense of accomplishment. Enjoy the process!

Contact Information

- **Hotline:**
 - 866-774-1018 Option 1
 - E-mail - priorlrn@cmich.edu
- **Brochure, handbook, and forms are available online -**
www.cel.cmich.edu/prior-learning

