



Mount Aloysius College

Prior Learning Assessment

Policy

Davenport University has graciously given permission to Mount Aloysius College to utilize their Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Portfolio - Student Guidebook for DU Graduate Programs as a reference and guide in developing our Portfolio Process. See the Davenport University website for their complete manual: <http://www.davenport.edu/experiential-learning/prior-learning-assessment-pla>

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An Overview of Prior Learning Assessment Policy

How is Prior Learning Assessment structured at Mount Aloysius College?

To recognize college level learning students acquire outside of formal higher education, Mount Aloysius College relies on the following policy to ensure its practices are consistent with academic integrity and are responsive to adult learners. Such learning may be derived from various life and work experiences. The term “prior learning assessment” refers to all of the processes the Mount Aloysius College uses to review and evaluate evidence of learning and to award academic credit in accordance with academic and administrative standards. Adherence to this policy is intended to support transparent transfer of prior learning assessment credit among institutions of higher education.

Who is eligible for receiving credit for prior learning?

All students who have been admitted to the college and are currently in good academic standing are eligible to participate in prior learning assessment as it relates to their program of study requirements. Prior learning assessment is intended for work completed prior to enrolling at Mount Aloysius College.

How many credits can be earned through the assessment of prior learning?

Students may earn up to 12 credits toward their degree program requirements through prior learning assessment as long as the residency requirement is satisfied. Credits earned through prior learning assessment are not considered part of the residency requirement.

What types of methods exist to assess prior learning?

The following methods are acceptable for validating prior learning for awarding credits:

- Credit recommendations listed in the American Council on Education (ACE) National Guide to College Credit for Workforce Training and the ACE Military Guide.
- Credit recommendations provided by the National College Credit Recommendation Service (NCCRS) at www.nationalccrs.org.
- Credit demonstrated by successfully passing national for-credit examination programs such as:
 - i. DSST Exams (formerly DANTEs) - Must carry a standard score equal to or above the 70th percentile.
 - ii. UExcel Exams (formerly Excelsior College Examinations) - A grade of C and recommendation consistent with the policies established by the American Council on Education College Credit Recommendation Service.
 - iii. The College Board College Level Examination Program (CLEP) - Scores of 50 or greater will be awarded MAC credit.

- iv. Advanced Placement (AP) Exams - Scores of four and five earn credit in all areas. Scores of three waive the course requirement but is not awarded credit.
 - v. International Baccalaureate exams or IB – See complete policy on the College’s website
- Individual experiential learning portfolios evaluated locally using the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) guidelines and principles.
 - Faculty-developed Institutional Challenge Examinations.

How are prior learning credits applied to a student’s record?

Prior learning credits shall be applied to degree or academic program requirements in the same manner as credits earned at this institution.

Prior learning credits will be designated on the transcript by the appropriate course title, course number, and number of credits awarded as aligned with the course/curriculum for which the credit was awarded. The neutral grades of “P” for Pass or “T” for transfer shall be utilized. Credits will be awarded, but there will be no impact on the semester or cumulative grade point average. PLA credits are only posted to the transcript when credit is awarded.

What are the fees associated with prior learning assessment?

The fees for challenge exams and prior learning assessment portfolios can be found below:

Challenge Exams	\$100
CAPL – Application Fee	\$200
Fee for Credits Earned	\$25 per credit

Other forms of Prior Learning Assessment Fees, such as CLEP, AP Exam, UExcel, fees are determined by the organization providing the service.

An Overview of the Prior Learning Assessment Portfolio

As an adult student, you may have gained college-level knowledge in non-collegiate settings through work, travel, reading, community service, and other educational experiences. This policy is a means for documenting and accrediting that knowledge using a Prior Learning Assessment Portfolio (PLP). This handbook is designed to assist you in the process of developing a prior learning portfolio.

A prior learning portfolio is not merely a description of past learning and experience. You must also analyze your learning by asking yourself, which college course(s) would teach what you have learned and explain how your knowledge corresponds to that course's theoretical as well as practical content. This task can be daunting, and we find it takes dedication to succeed in earning a significant number of credit hours through portfolios.

PLPs are evaluated by faculty members whose academic expertise matches the course(s) for which students are requesting credit. It is important to be focused and specific when writing a portfolio. Learning that is not described and documented will not count toward credit. Presented written portfolios may be supplemented by other means of assessment such as simulations, demonstrations, interviews, or oral defenses of learning as deemed necessary by the faculty evaluators.

The Portfolio Process

Student who wishes to earn credit through the PLA process will:

1. Contact the Registrar to discuss the requirements of the PLP process.
2. Identify course or courses in which he or she would like to attempt to obtain credit for prior learning.
3. Make an appointment with a subject matter faculty member of the course or courses he or she is interested in developing a portfolio. The Registrar will direct the student to the correct faculty member or department chairperson.
4. Attend a PLP workshop (what is this and who is responsible) and obtain the syllabus for any course he or she plans to work toward the development of a portfolio.
5. Submit the portfolio fee (\$200) to the Controller's Office.
6. Review all the required sections of this guide and submit a final version of the portfolio Registrar, who will direct the portfolio to the subject matter faculty member.
7. Set up a meeting with the subject matter faculty member to review the results of the portfolio assessment process. At this time, additional requirements such as skills demonstrations can be discussed.
8. Please note that all portfolios should be submitted at least one month prior to enrollment.

Descriptions and Components of the Prior Learning Portfolio

All elements of the portfolio should follow the style guidelines of the 6th edition of the APA Style Manual and include clear headers for each of the following sections:

I. Letter of Intent

This is a letter of introduction to the portfolio, which identifies the student, his/her academic program, the course(s) for which he/she is seeking credit, and provides the student's pertinent ID #, and contact information. See p.12 for a sample Letter of Intent.

Requirements:

- No longer than one page and must follow the sample format on p. 12.

II. Table of Contents Description

This is a bulleted list of the contents of the portfolio, including titled and numbered Appendices (1, 2, 3, etc.) of provided documentation.

Requirements:

- Appendices should be labeled by number (i.e. Appendix 1, 2, 3, etc.) and also include a title (i.e. Appendix 1: Sample Financial Analysis) and included at the end of the portfolio

III. The Prior Learning Autobiography Description

The autobiography focuses on the student's professional and personal learning endeavors.

In writing the autobiography, students begin to analyze their past experiences in terms of critical incidents that led to learning. This part of the portfolio helps the faculty evaluator to understand when, how, and why the student's learning has occurred.

Requirements:

At least three pages addressing the following topics:

- A description of the contexts (workplace, training, education) in which students have acquired graduate-level learning related to the course outcomes
- Critical incidents in students' learning related to the skills necessary to be successful in their career field, including what specifically they have learned
- Areas of accomplishment in students' professional careers and the learning acquired from those accomplishments
- Describes how students' intend to progress in their academic and professional lives

IV. The Prior Learning Resume Description

A resume allows students to highlight more detail about responsibilities and accomplishments that have supported learning. The resume provides the faculty evaluator with a time line and demonstrates the progression of learning.

Requirements:

- A hybrid skills-based and traditional format resume which also includes detailed position descriptions/duties related to all relevant employment, training, volunteer, etc. positions held related to learning applicable to the program course(s) as well as a list of professional references
- Includes, as applicable, descriptions of previous certifications, trainings, or other experiences relevant to the PLA petition

V. The Learning Narrative Essay Description

When writing the narrative, students focus on the learning outcomes for a specific course(s). Students must address each learning outcome and refer to documentation in support of each. If credit is sought for multiple courses, outcomes should be clear for each course. Students must be able to demonstrate that they have met the learning outcomes to the same extent as students who have completed the equivalent course.

Requirements:

For each learning outcome, students must address all four stages of the Kolb Experiential Learning Model on the next page. The narrative should be at least two pages for each course learning objective and all narratives must be supported by at least one piece of documentation or supplemental assessment identified in Section VII.

Explanation of the Kolb Learning Model

The Kolb Experiential Learning Model may help the portfolio preparer to answer questions related to each learning outcome. The Kolb Experiential Learning Model may be thought of as answering three fundamental questions related to how we learn:

WHAT?	What experience lead to our leading of particular knowledge of skills?
SO WHAT?	What was actually learned and why was it important?
NOW WHAT?	What has, could, or should the student do with the new learning in situations after the learning occurred?

Figure 1: The Experiential Learning Cycle. Adapted from “Kolb Learning Styles” by S. McLeod (2013) at <http://www.simplypsychology.org/learning-kolb.html>

Kolb Model Stage I: Concrete Experience (WHAT?)

Describe what experiences led to the learning related to the learning outcome:

- Identify employment, professional, and/or life experience(s) where learning related to the specific outcome occurred (i.e. include names, dates, places)
- Describe activities/tasks performed related to the learning outcome
- Indicate organizational, institutional, or program results/outcomes related to the learning outcome

Kolb Model Stage II: Observation & Reflection (SO WHAT?)

Explain what was actually learned and its impact on the student:

- Reflect on what the student learned about the subject
- Explain who/what influenced his/her thinking and why
- Point to specific samples of documentation of learning (i.e. Appendices)
- Explain clearly how the documentation is evidence of learning
- Discuss effects of experience(s) on the student and/or other persons

Kolb Model Stage III: Forming Abstract Concepts (SO WHAT?)

Argue why the learning was important and how it relates to other learning:

- Explain conclusions drawn from experience(s) which reflect a depth and breadth of the learning outcome
- Discuss the important academic theories, concepts, models, or principles related to the learning outcome described
- Explain how the learning described reasonably corresponds to the learning outcome
- Describe and discuss new knowledge and skills acquired

Kolb Model Stage IV: Testing in New Situations (NOW WHAT?)

Describe how the learning was applied in new situations or contexts:

- Explain how the new learning was applied in professional or other contexts
- Describe formations or reformations of concepts and ideas because of their application to professional situations
- Describe how the new learning changed the student's professional practice
- Discuss how this new learning can or should be applied in future professional situations

Required Structure of Learning Narrative for Course Learning Outcomes

Each outcome should be addressed briefly, including information about how past experiences fulfilled the outcomes.

VI. Documentation (Submitted as Numbered Appendices) Description

Students supply documentation to support the Learning Narrative Essay. Documentation is as individual as the learner. It may include items such as work products (reports, projects, plans, etc.), training certificates or programs, performance evaluations, letters of recommendation and letters of learning verification, etc.

Requirements:

- Appropriate documentation should be provided to illustrate how outcomes were met.
- **All portfolios must include at least two Verification of Learning Letters** from current and/or past employers which follow the required template for Letters of Verification on p. 12.

VII. Authentication and Release of Information Form Description

This form allows students to authenticate that the information provided in the portfolio is their work, allows for release of information to Mount Aloysius faculty/staff, including permission to contact former employers, and indicates that they have permission to share documentation provided in their portfolio.

Requirements:

- Students **must sign the Authentication and Release of Information Form on p. 14** in order for the portfolio to be considered complete and to be assessed.

VIII. Supplemental Assessment Activities Description

Additional activities may be required by the evaluating faculty member to assess a student's knowledge or skills related to a course(s) learning outcome. These may involve simulations, demonstrations, interviews, or oral defenses of learning as deemed necessary by the graduate program director and/or faculty evaluators in collaboration with the student.

Requirements:

- List and describe any Supplemental Assessment Activities (interview, skills demonstration, etc) agreed upon with the - program director and/or faculty evaluator, including a timeline for completion of these assessments. If none, simply list NONE.

After the Portfolio

Once students have completed their PLA Portfolio, they must provide it to the Registrar who will deliver the portfolio to the faculty member responsible for the assessment of the portfolio.

When the portfolio is received and reviewed as complete by the Registrar, a \$200 non-refundable evaluation fee will be added to the student's bill. Please note this fee is charged per portfolio.

Faculty evaluators will determine if the portfolio demonstrates appropriate learning. Depending upon what point in the academic year a portfolio is submitted, it may take 2-4 weeks for the evaluator(s) to review it.

Once an evaluator reviews the portfolio, students will receive a letter indicating whether or not credits were granted. If a student is not granted credit for a course(s) via the portfolio, he or she may revise and resubmit the portfolio by the end of the next full semester from the time of receiving the evaluation results. The resubmitted portfolio must have been substantially revised in content, and contain an addendum detailing revisions. The student must also file an appeals process form with the Registrar. A portfolio may not be revised and resubmitted more than once and the same assessment process will be followed. Any portfolios submitted under the appeals process will also be reviewed by the Associate Dean of the appropriate Division. Students will not be charged an additional fee for a revised and resubmitted portfolio or for an appeal.

Student concerns regarding the assessment process should be submitted in writing to the Registrar.

Appendix A: Portfolio Letter of Intent

[Insert Date]

Christopher M. Lovett, Ph.D.
Registrar
Mount Aloysius College
7373 Admiral Peary Highway
Cresson, PA 16630

Re: Prior Learning Assessment Portfolio

[Insert Student's Name]

[Insert Student's ID Number]

[Insert Student's Major]

[Insert Student's Address, Telephone Number, and Email Address]

Dear Dr. Lovett,

Enclosed please find my Prior Learning Assessment Portfolio for the Mount Aloysius College course(s) listed below:

[Insert the Complete Course(s) and Titles]

Following the portfolio instructions, I have provided evidence of achievement of each course learning outcome through a combination of descriptive narrative and documentation. Furthermore, as noted in my resume, I have demonstrated my knowledge of these outcomes through a variety of professional employment assignments and tasks.

Thank you for the opportunity to petition Mount Aloysius College for credit in recognition of demonstrated professional learning.

Sincerely,

[Insert Student's Typed Name and Signature]

Appendix B: Learning Verification Letter Template

(Please Provide on Organizational Letterhead)

[Insert Date]

Christopher M. Lovett, Ph.D.
Registrar
Mount Aloysius College
7373 Admiral Peary Highway
Cresson, PA 16630

Re: Learning Verification Letter of **[Insert Learner's Name]**

Dear Dr. Lovett,

I am writing to provide Learner Verification for **[insert learner's name]** as part of his/her Prior Learning Assessment portfolio at Mount Aloysius College.

Directions to the individual writing this letter:

Please include the following information in the letter and also please keep in mind that the Learning Verification Letter is not a personal recommendation or testimony of character, but rather an outline of facts to support the learner's PLA narrative.

- Provide an introduction of how you are acquainted with the learner and the length of time you have known him/her
- Provide a description of the learner's experience and responsibilities, and a detailed explanation of the learning related to the learning outcomes of the course(s) the learner is seeking credit for through the PLA portfolio. How has the learner demonstrated his/her learning through the responsibilities?
- Explain why you are qualified to verify the learner's learning and experience.
- Verify that any project, report, etc., submitted by the learner as documentation for academic credit from his/her experience with your organization is authentic

Sincerely,

[Insert Your Name, Signature, Address, and Contact Information]

Appendix C: PLA Student Authentication and Release of Information Form

I hereby acknowledge that the information submitted in this PLA Portfolio is my own work and true and correct to the best of my knowledge. Willful failure to give accurate information or plagiarism is considered adequate grounds for dismissal from Mount Aloysius College and/or revocation of credits granted as a result of falsified information.

I hereby acknowledge that I have permission to provide the documentation included in my PLA portfolio, including any information considered confidential and/or proprietary.

I hereby authorize Mount Aloysius College (the "College") to make any investigation into my background for the purposes of evaluating my application for Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) credit.

I authorize former employers, educational institutions, and any other third party referenced in my Portfolio to give the College any information they have regarding me without providing me notice of the same. Such information may include educational transcripts and records, verification of employment records, verification of learning references, information about my job performance, and other information that may be relevant to my application for Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) credit.

I hereby waive my right to access any such information, and without limitation, hereby release the College, its employees, representatives and agents, and the reference sources from any liability in connection with the release or use of such information.

Student's Printed Name: _____ Date: _____

Student's Signature: _____

Appendix D: Examples of Experiential Learning Activities

Type of Activity	Documentation
Work Experience	Job descriptions, awards, letters of commendation, performance evaluations, samples of work produced, explanation of tasks performed, licenses earned, performance standards for acquiring licenses, membership in professional organizations, scores and outcomes of licensing exams
Non-College Course and Training	Transcripts, enrollment verification, learning outcomes or objectives for the program/course, syllabi, program descriptions with outlines – number of class instructional hours, number of clinical or practicum hours, diploma
Special Accomplishments	Books published, speeches given, programs for performances, writing samples, presentation materials, professional written proposals, commendations, awards, news coverage, letters of corroboration from co-volunteers-clients served-supervisors