

**EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING  
PORTFOLIO  
GUIDELINES**

## **Introduction**

Upper Iowa University is committed to quality education and recognizes that learners in higher education come with many experiences and from varied backgrounds. Therefore, in accordance with guidelines established by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, Upper Iowa University has developed a way for learners to receive college credit for prior learning experiences.

The University accepts and awards credit based on the American Council on Education (ACE) recommendations and transcripts these credits at no cost to the student. Upper Iowa University recognizes the following: 1) ACE Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services, 2) ACE Guide to Educational Credit for Training Programs, 3) ACE Program on Non-collegiate Sponsored Instruction (PONSI), and 4) ACE Guide to Educational Credit by Examination.

Learners may also pursue credit through CLEP/DANTES/Excelsior College examinations. There is a minimal testing fee and credit by exam is transcribed without charge when the student's score is at the level recommended by ACE for credit.

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; the mass media; and participation in formal courses sponsored by associations, business, government, industry, the military and unions. Upper Iowa recognizes extra-institutional learning through a portfolio assessment process and in evaluating such adheres to guidelines established by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning.

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 with respect to the learner's degree plan.

## **The portfolio defined**

A portfolio is a compilation of information presented by the learner to equate experiential learning to a specific college course for a specified number of semester hours. It includes a Request for Experiential Learning Credit Form, a table of contents, an autobiography, a resume, a copy of the degree plan (from your academic advisor), a significant learning outline, a narrative, a bibliography, and documentation.

The portfolio is reviewed by an evaluator who determines whether there is sufficient explanation and documentation to assess learning and award credit as requested.

## **Eligibility to submit a portfolio**

The learner is eligible to submit a portfolio upon meeting the four criteria below:

1. Admission to Upper Iowa University as a degree-seeking student according to the procedures outlined in the Upper Iowa University Catalog.
2. Completion of a review by advisor of all previous college credit, credit by exam, and training with American Council on Education (ACE) credit recommendations.
3. Registration for at least one course, after which portfolios may be submitted at any time during your enrollment at Upper Iowa University.
4. Completion of the Request for Experiential Learning Credit Form (Exhibit 1) including advisor's approval.

Completion of Basic Composition and English Composition II, or their equivalents, is strongly recommended prior to submitting a portfolio.

## **Beginning the process**

Make an appointment with your advisor to discuss your remaining course requirements and develop a plan for completion of your degree. Your advisor will then help outline a sequence of courses to complete through Upper Iowa University, keeping in mind prerequisites, Center schedules, Online Program schedule, summer Institute for Experiential Learning classes on the Fayette campus, and independent study courses through the External Degree Program.

Based on your strengths and experiences, your advisor will help determine how best to receive experiential learning credit. Some coursework may be satisfied by "testing out", via a standardized exam in CLEP (College Level Examination Program), PEP (Proficiency Examination Program), or DAN TES (Defense Activity for Nontraditional Education Support). CLEP and DAN TES exams are a standardized way of assessing knowledge in a particular course. Study guides are available to help you prepare for the exams. Excelsior College also offers exams for credit.

If standardized exams are not appropriate, the next step is to consider submitting a portfolio. Your advisor can help you determine which course would be appropriate for your portfolio development. Titles and course descriptions must be chosen from the Upper Iowa University catalog if UIU offers the course. If the course is not offered by Upper Iowa University you may choose a current course offered at any other regionally accredited college or university. Once you have chosen the appropriate course description and objectives for your portfolio development, you must complete the Request for Experiential Learning Credit Form (Exhibit 1) and submit it to your advisor.

*Advisor approval is required before beginning the portfolio.*

## COMPONENTS OF A PORTFOLIO

**Request for Experiential Learning Credit Form:** The Request for Experiential Learning Credit (Exhibit 1) is the cover sheet of the portfolio. It includes the learner's name, Center location, course number and title, semester credits requested, college or university and catalog information from which the course number and title were obtained, course description, course objectives (if available), and information on the specific degree requirement the portfolio is to fulfill. At the bottom, the learner verifies that the information included in the portfolio is true and accurate with a signature and date.

- Make a photocopy of the course description and record the college name, catalog year and page number on the Request for Experiential Learning Credit form. For courses in the Upper Iowa University catalog(s), include the specific course objectives, available from your advisor.

**Table of Contents:** Include a table of contents of the portfolio with supporting documents also noted.

**Autobiography:** The autobiography is a complete picture of the learner – who you are, what you have done, what you know, and what you want to accomplish. To determine what course(s) to request credit for, prepare an autobiographical essay based on your life experiences using your resume as a guide. The autobiography introduces you to the evaluator and helps him or her 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.

- The essay should be two to four pages in length and summarize the significant learning experiences in your life, define your personal, educational, and career goals, and describe how the learning and goals are related.
- Your autobiography and resume must be included in each specific course portfolio you submit.
- *This document is general in nature and can be used if submitting other portfolios.*

**Resume:** Provide an updated resume to include education and work experiences.

**Degree Plan:** Obtain an updated degree plan from your advisor to include in your portfolio packet.

**Significant Learning Outline:** The Significant Learning Outline (Exhibit 2) is a worksheet to reflect on your life experiences as they directly relate to this portfolio.

A Significant Learning Outline addressing learning competencies of the course for which credit is being requested must be included in each specific course portfolio you submit.

- Develop a chronological outline of your applicable life experiences. The categories listed on the worksheet include employment, workshops, volunteer work, recreation, military service, licenses, and travel. Others you might add could 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, list what you have done, indicate how much time was involved, and describe the activities.
- Next, explain what you learned using action verbs (i.e., differentiate, compare, contrast, list, calculate, solve, construct, organize, etc.). These lists of competencies will be used to draw parallels to the college courses for which you request credit in your portfolios.
- The last section of the outline is documentation, or evidence, to verify both the experience and the learning. For example, a certificate of completion for a training seminar in word processing may document your attendance at the activity but it may not necessarily indicate how well you performed -or if you learned anything at all. To document learning, you may need a sample of your work, a copy of the notes you took in class, a letter from your supervisor explaining how your word processing skills on the job improved after the training, or a combination of these.
- *This document is specific in nature to the course for which credit is being sought, and may only be used in the portfolio for which it was originally written.*

**Narrative:** From the information and supporting documentation on your Significant Learning Outline, you will develop an essay to relate the learning from your experiences to the concepts summarized in the course description selected. This essay, or "narrative", is a detailed explanation of your activities and the resulting competencies achieved.

- Use the course objectives to guide your discussion of your accomplishment. If these are not available, consult an appropriate text for the course. Use the chapter topics or learning outcomes to structure your narrative.
- In a chronological order, explain where, why, and what experiences were involved and how the learning relates to your degree plan. Explain how this learning is applicable outside the specific job or context in which it was learned.
- For a course that includes a substantial amount of theory, demonstrate that you have the appropriate balance of theory and application.
- The narrative will incorporate terminology appropriate to the course and examples of applications of the concepts as demonstrated through your accomplishments. Consider the narrative as an "open book" take-home test. Make sure it is clear, concise and free of errors in sentence structure, grammar, or spelling. It needs to demonstrate college-level writing and critical thinking. The narrative may be three to ten pages in length, depending on the course.
- *This document is specific in nature to the course for which credit is being sought, and may only be used in the portfolio for which it was originally written.*

**Bibliography:** The bibliography indicates reading done on the portfolio subject. Cite sources when you make reference to theorists, laws, and statistical data in the portfolio. References must be cited in APA style.

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

- Completion of training programs, workshops, seminars, etc., may be verified through certificates, personnel records, or letters from the instructors. In addition, outline each workshop, training program, or seminar on the description form (Exhibit 3).

- Employment history and job responsibilities may be documented on copies of performance appraisals, company job descriptions, 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:
  - 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.
- 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 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 your experiential learning and provide a copy of what might be included in a letter of verification (Exhibit 4).

As you collect documentation, make clear to the evaluator how the documentation relates to your learning. You may need to add an explanation to the documentation or, if the correlation is not clear, you may need to ask yourself if it is relevant and whether it should be included at all. Extraneous or inappropriate documentation may indicate to the evaluator that you lack understanding of how your experiences relate to your learning.

*When submitting multiple portfolios it is important that documentation be specific to the course description used in your portfolio. It may be appropriate to use the same documentation in more than one portfolio; however, if you do this it is essential that you clearly indicate which portion of the documentation applies to the specific portfolio.*

## **Academic Honesty**

Plagiarism, falsification, or misrepresentation are unacceptable and will result in rejection of the portfolio.

## **Organization of the portfolio**

Your work must be displayed in a format that will be clear and logical to the evaluator. Provide the required items in the following order:

- Request for Experiential Learning Credit Form,
- table of contents,
- autobiography,
- resume,
- degree plan,
- The Significant Learning Outline form,
- narrative,
- bibliography page, and
- Documentation.

Complete the Learner Checklist for Portfolio Submission (Exhibit 5) and include it with the completed portfolio.

Be sure to include your e-mail address, telephone number and times when you may be reached. If the evaluator has questions or would like to discuss aspects of your narrative it may be necessary for him or her to contact you.

### **The completed portfolio**

Before submitting your portfolio, it is recommended that you make a copy for your file in the unlikely event that it may be lost during shipment. Include the evaluation fee of \$60 (nonrefundable) per portfolio with your packet and mail or deliver to your Center Advisor.

A subject area expert will be identified to review your portfolio and complete the Evaluator Response Form (Exhibit 6). Review the criteria on this form for key areas the evaluator is considering. The evaluator makes a recommendation to grant full credit, deny credit, or return the portfolio for further explanation and/or documentation. Expect to receive the results in approximately six weeks.

When credit is granted, an invoice will be sent indicating \$60 per semester credit granted, minus the portfolio assessment fee. For example, if you are awarded credit for a three-semester credit course, the balance due will be \$120 (\$180 minus \$60 paid when the portfolio was submitted). Fees are due within 90 days of assessment and before credit will be recorded on your transcript.

If the portfolio is returned for revision, determine if you can make the appropriate revisions or additions per the evaluator's comments on the Evaluator Response Sheet. Resubmission of the portfolio must be made within 60 days of learner's receipt of the returned portfolio.

If credit is denied, you may appeal the decision using the following procedure:

1. **Within 30 days** of the evaluator's recommendation, notify your advisor in writing that you will appeal the portfolio evaluator's decision.
2. Request in writing to the Dean of the Extended University a review of the decision. Include the reason(s) you feel the decision was unfair or inappropriate.
3. The Dean of the Extended University will review your appeal, contacting the evaluator and any additional personnel as needed to discuss the portfolio recommendation.
4. The Dean of the Extended University will render a written decision within 60 days of receiving the appeal.

Upon final credit award, the faculty portfolio response form will be sent to you. Your portfolio will be retained by the University.

**The maximum number of credits possible for the total of all portfolios submitted to Upper Iowa University is thirty (30) semester credits.**

# Upper Iowa University Request for Experiential Learning Credit

|                                     |                              |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| _____<br>Learner Name               | _____<br>Center              |
| _____<br>Course Number & Title      | _____<br>Semester credits    |
| _____<br>College or University Name | _____<br>Catalog Year & Page |

Course Description: (attach a photocopy)

**Reminder:** You are required to use the Upper Iowa University course description for all courses offered by UIU. All other course descriptions must be obtained from an accredited college catalog.

Course Objectives: (if available)

This course is requested to satisfy the specific degree requirement for:

(Check one)

\_\_\_\_ general education core subject in \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ major in \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ general elective

The information included in this portfolio being submitted to Upper Iowa University is true and correct. I understand failure to provide accurate information is considered adequate grounds for dismissal from the University and for revocation of credits granted.

|                            |               |
|----------------------------|---------------|
| _____<br>Learner Signature | _____<br>Date |
|----------------------------|---------------|

Advisor approval required. See page 2.

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**To be completed by the learner's advisor:**

\_\_\_\_\_ The learner has been officially accepted by Upper Iowa University

\_\_\_\_\_ The learner has enrolled in his or her first course with UIU

\_\_\_\_\_ The course recommended for portfolio submission is acceptable and will meet a requirement on the learner's degree plan.

\_\_\_\_\_ The course recommended for portfolio submission has been denied.

Reason for denial: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Advisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Original to learner file and copy returned to learner within two weeks from receipt.

This form is valid for one year after the date above.

## Significant Learning Outline

Use this worksheet to identify specific competencies and learning outcomes as they directly relate to this portfolio.

| Experience                          | Time Spent In Activity | Description of Duties & Activities | Learning Outcomes & Competencies Reached | Documentation |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|--|---------------|
| Employment                          |                        |                                    |  |               |
| Workshops<br>Training &<br>Seminars |                        |                                    |  |               |
| Volunteer<br>Experiences            |                        |                                    |  |               |

| Experience                     | Time Spent In Activity | Description of Duties and Activities | Learning Outcomes & Competencies Reached | Documentation |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|---------------|
| Recreation & Hobbies           |                        |                                      |  |               |
| Military Experience            |                        |                                      |  |               |
| Licenses, Awards, Publications |                        |                                      |  |               |
| Travel                         |                        |                                      |  |               |
| Other                          |                        |                                      |  |               |

## Workshop, Training Program, or Seminar Description

Evidence in support of \_\_\_\_\_  
(Course Name)

Learner Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Workshop/Seminar/Training \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Workshop/Seminar/Training \_\_\_\_\_

Presenter of Workshop/Seminar/Training \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Training \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Total Number of Class Hours of CEU's Earned \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Workshop/Seminar/Training:

- Include purpose for attending
- Method of instruction
- Homework or preparation required outside sessions
- Supplement with copy of agenda and/or table of contents from materials
- Include notes taken during sessions
- Examples of assignments or resulting projects
- Method of evaluation (test, class participation, reports, etc.)

Document with certificate of completion, personnel training record, letter of verification from instructor or employer (**NOTE**: a certificate stating attendance does not prove the student learned anything).

The same Workshop Description might be submitted to support more than one course request. Example: attending a seminar on the Americans with Disabilities Act might pertain to both Human Resources Management and Personnel Selection and Evaluation. Clearly indicate in the narrative and on the documentation itself which portion of the material submitted applies to this specific portfolio.

# Letter of Verification

(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 appropriate.

If qualified to do so, the individual writing the letter may equate the learner's knowledge with what would be taught in an average comparable college course.

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.

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

Sincerely,

Original Signature

# Learner Checklist for Portfolio Submission

Learner Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Center \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Follow order outlined in portfolio guide

\_\_\_\_ Request for Experiential Learning Credit Form

\_\_\_\_ Table of contents

\_\_\_\_ Autobiography

\_\_\_\_ Current resume

\_\_\_\_ Degree plan

\_\_\_\_ Significant Learning Outline

\_\_\_\_ Narrative

\_\_\_\_ Bibliography

\_\_\_\_ Documentation

\_\_\_\_ Portfolio professionally formatted and developed?

\_\_\_\_ College level writing skills apparent?

# Experiential Learning Portfolio Evaluator Response Form

\_\_\_\_\_  
Learner's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Center

\_\_\_\_\_  
Course Number and Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Credit Hours

**Are each of the following included?**

|  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| Request for Experiential Learning Credit | Yes | No |
| Table of Contents                        | Yes | No |
| Autobiography                            | Yes | No |
| Résumé                                   | Yes | No |
| Degree Plan                              | Yes | No |
| Significant Learning Outline             | Yes | No |
| Narrative                                | Yes | No |
| Bibliography                             | Yes | No |
| Documentation                            | Yes | No |

Has the learner addressed each topic in the course description (and each course objective if available) as shown on the Request for Experiential Learning Credit? **Yes**      **No**

If no, please elaborate:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Does the learner, using a mixture of theory and practice as well as appropriate terminology, indicate a competent understanding of the course material and demonstrate how the learning was acquired? **Yes**      **No**

If no, please elaborate:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Continued...

Has the learner established quality and authenticity of evidence in the field?

**Yes**      **No**

If no, please elaborate:

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Message from Portfolio Evaluator to learner:

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**Recommendation:**

Credit Awarded?    **Yes**    **No**                      If yes, how many? \_\_\_\_\_

Revision Needed?    **Yes**    **No**                      If yes, explain:

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Credit Denied?    **Yes**    **No**                      If yes, explain:

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Portfolio Evaluator (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Center

\_\_\_\_\_  
Portfolio Evaluator Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date