

BLOOMFIELD COLLEGE

***Portfolio Learning
Assessment
Handbook***



**See how your life
experiences can help
you earn college
degree.**



MISSION OF THE COLLEGE

Bloomfield College, founded in 1868, is an independent college historically related to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and strategically located in the New Jersey-New York metropolitan region. The College offers academic programs leading to the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees. The curriculum is designed to provide students with a sound liberal arts grounding as well as with the expertise they will need in their careers. **The mission of Bloomfield College is to prepare students to attain academic, personal, and professional excellence in a multicultural and global society.**

The College is committed to enabling students, particularly those who have traditionally been excluded from higher education, to realize their intellectual and personal goals. Programs of study are rooted in the liberal arts and assist students in obtaining the skills, knowledge, and values they need to become empowered, active individuals engaged in renewing themselves, their relationships, their workplaces, and their communities.

Programs are designed to help students think critically and quantitatively, speak effectively, write clearly, develop aesthetic appreciation, and integrate feelings and values. We believe students must gain a greater understanding of, and appreciation for, other cultures and for the unique racial and cultural diversity of the United States.

One of the strengths of the College is the rich diversity of its students. The College is committed to this richness because it provides an ideal context for personal growth and a basis for a better society. In joining Bloomfield College, each person assumes a personal responsibility to strive to achieve academic excellence, to take full advantage of the resources offered, and to contribute to the quality of the College community.

Approved by the Faculty May 18, 2000
Approved by the Board of Trustees June 22, 2000



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INTRODUCTION

Not all college-level learning occurs in a classroom. Bloomfield College accepts credit through alternative means such as the CollegeLevel Examination Program (CLEP) and Portfolio Learning Assessment (PLA). PLA is the process by which an individual's *learning* from experience is evaluated and weighed for purposes of granting college credit (Fiddler, Marienau, & Whitaker, 2006). Credit is given for learning, not for the experience.



This *Handbook* is designed to help you navigate the process of applying for and receiving college credit for life experiences through portfolio learning assessment. In the *Handbook* you will find instructions to guide you through each step of the process and guidelines for creating the kind of portfolio that will be awarded college credit. Descriptions of the different forms a portfolio make take are included at the end of the *Handbook*.

Students may earn up to 16.0 course units through any combination of alternative learning assessments such as CLEP and PLA. Credit can be guaranteed for Bloomfield College only; PLA credit may not be transferable.

Assessment of life experience is often associated with adult learners, but all of us are lifelong learners and PLA can be appropriate for students of any age.



OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO LEARNING ASSESSMENT

Assessment of life learning experience is a flexible, efficient way of earning college credits for what you have learned outside the classroom. Awarding of credit for life experience operates on the belief that college-level learning, no matter how it is gained, deserves college credits. Therefore, nearly any type of experiential learning can gain college credit as long as (a) it is equivalent to a course or courses at Bloomfield College and (b) you can prove your expertise. A portfolio is a compilation of documentation assembled in an approved format to demonstrate college-level knowledge for an award of credit. The portfolio you submit will serve as proof of your expertise and the value it has in the academic world. It can include knowledge or skills gained from a wide variety of sources, including but not limited to:

- Full- or part-time jobs
- Independent reading and study
- Training programs or in-service courses
- Volunteer work
- Cultural and artistic pursuits
- Hobbies and recreational pastimes
- Community or religious activities
- Military service
- Travel





ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for portfolio learning assessment at Bloomfield College, you must

- a. be currently enrolled full-time or part-time
- b. have completed a *minimum* of 6.0 course units at Bloomfield College (4.0 course units for transfer students with an AA or AS degree)*
- c. have approval of the appropriate division chairperson for freshmen-level courses
- d. submit an application via email or interoffice mail to:
Carolyn I. Spies, Ph.D.,
Associate VP for Academic Affairs/Dean of Graduate Studies
73 Oakland Avenue, Room 2
carolyn_spies@bloomfield.edu
973.748.9000, x1285

* You may apply for portfolio learning assessment prior to completing 6.0 course units, however, credit will be awarded and recorded on your transcript only after completion of the 6.0 cus.



PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT PROCESS

1. Submit a completed application to the Associate Dean for Faculty and Program Development, along with required supporting documents.
2. Applications are forwarded to the appropriate division chair for review. Based upon the application materials, the division chairperson will approve or deny an application or request additional information. The chairperson's decision is based upon the potential for credit. It is the applicant's responsibility to make a good case. The Associate Dean will notify an applicant of the application decision. Applicants should not contact a division chair directly about a PLA application.
3. Once an application has been approved, a faculty mentor and a faculty evaluator are assigned by the Division Chairperson.
4. Student registers for PDC 150, a required, free online PLA preparation workshop. A tuition bill is issued to the student (\$500 for 2016-2017).
5. Student creates her or his portfolio with guidance from the faculty mentor.* *The portfolio must be submitted by the end of the semester in which it is begun.*
6. A completed portfolio is submitted to the Associate Dean and forwarded to the faculty evaluator for assessment. The evaluator has one month to submit her or his assessment.
7. Registrar records a grade of "satisfactory" on the student's transcript. The grade of satisfactory is *not* used in calculating the grade point average.

*For assessment of WRT 106/107 credit, see p. 8.



ASSESSMENT OF WRT 106/ENG 107

A student who tests out of WRT 106 or WRT 107 through placement testing at Bloomfield College may apply for assessment of credit for these courses via portfolio learning assessment. To do so,

1. Submit PLA application *along with several of your best writing samples* to the Associate Dean for Faculty and Program Development.
2. The Associate Dean forwards the application packet to the Writing and Analysis Program coordinator.
3. If the application is approved, the student receives credit for WRT 106 and a grade of satisfactory.
4. If the student has not yet taken ENG 107, she or he will take the WRT 107 exit exam through arrangement with the Writing and Analysis Program coordinator.
5. The exit exam is evaluated by the Writing and Analysis Program coordinator or an appropriate designee.
6. If the student passes the exit exam, she or he receives credit for WRT 107 and a grade of satisfactory. If the student does not pass the exit exam, she or he must take the WRT 107 course.

To get started on the road to credit for life experience, follow the “Preparing the Application” instruction on page 9.



PREPARING THE APPLICATION

Before you submit an application, you should...

1. Take written inventory of the knowledge you have gained through experience.

Review your job history, hobbies, areas of study or special training,* travel, hobbies, parenting, volunteer work, and other activities noted on p. 5. *Don't go it alone!* Use the "Taking Inventory" worksheet. Speak with your advisor and Associate Dean Spies, who can help you .

2. Choose the areas for which you want to seek college credit.

Evaluate the area you listed while taking inventory. Discuss with your advisor and Associate Dean Spies which subject areas to select for portfolio assessment and whether you need college credits in those subjects.

3. Find course descriptions to match your learning.

Search the Bloomfield College catalog to identify courses that reflect the subjects you have chosen.

4. Provide evidence of your knowledge. Assemble preliminary

evidence to document your learning. This material will be used by the Division Chairperson to evaluate your application.

5. Describe what you know and how you learned it.

Write a one-page essay outlining (*describing in brief*) your knowledge of the course subject and how that learning was acquired to accompany your application.

6. Fill out the application and submit!

*Experiential learning can occur through sponsored and unsponsored activities. Sponsored activities are those study experiences that were preplanned such as a training program at work. Unsponsored, or non-formal, learning activities are unplanned; the learning occurs somewhat unintentionally.



MEET WITH YOUR FACULTY MENTOR



Once your application has been approved, the next steps are to **register for PDC 150 and schedule a meeting with your faculty mentor.**

You must take the initiative to call or email your mentor; do not expect your mentor to seek you out.

The role of the faculty mentor is to guide you in the preparation of the portfolio and to review the portfolio for readiness.

The First Meeting with Your Faculty Mentor

At the initial meeting with your mentor,

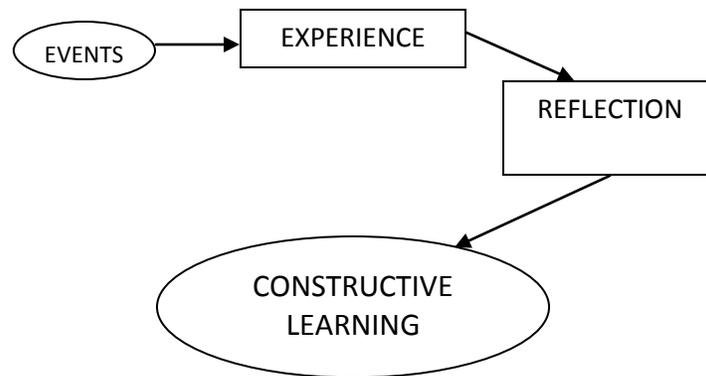
- review the course description
- review the course syllabus (and ask for a copy)
- discuss with her or him the subject areas and learning objectives for the course for which you will be building the portfolio.
- discuss the types of evidence you already possess and what additional documentation or evidence will be needed
- establish a timeline for the portfolio and deadlines
- establish meeting schedule and/or how you will maintain communication





PREPARING YOUR PORTFOLIO:

Experiential learning is constructive. This means that we create new knowledge from our experiences. Reflection is what we do to create that knowledge from an experience—we think about our experiences, make inferences about the experiences, and draw conclusions.



A Model of Experiential Learning^a

The portfolio assessment process is not a mechanism for getting credits “the easy way.” Developing a portfolio is a rigorous process that involves making an inventory of experiences, reflecting upon those experiences, and then documenting what has been learned in a way that is transparent to an evaluator.

^aAdapted from Fiddler, M., Marienau, C., & Whitaker, U. (2006). *Assessing Learning* (p. 5). Chicago, IL: The Council for Adult & Experiential Learning.



ELEMENTS OF A COMPLETE PORTFOLIO

A complete portfolio includes (in this order)

- 1. A Prior Learning Portfolio checklist**
- 2. Self-Reflective Essay**
- 3. List or description of course learning outcomes**
- 4. Relevance of learning statement**
- 5. Documentation and assessment of learning**
- 6. Appendixes**
 - A. Resume**
 - B. Course syllabus**
 - C. Identifying Types of Learning Chart**
 - D. Faculty Mentor Approval signature page**
 - E. Additional documentation (optional)**

You will learn about each of these elements in the PDC 150 course.

Portfolios must be submitted in good form—typed double-spaced using page numbers. Once submitted the portfolio is considered an academic record and is the property of Bloomfield College. Therefore, you should keep a copy of all portfolio materials for your own records. Do not submit any original documents which you may need in the future.



GATHERING EVIDENCE

Evidence, the material you submit to document your claim of college-level learning, is the foundation of your portfolio.

Assemble a packet of material that expands on your application packet, which **thoroughly** and **transparently** documents your knowledge of the subject matter and learning objectives of the course. As you compile the documentation, it may be helpful to create a chart with a list of the topics and learning objectives, knowledge gained, sources of knowledge, and the documentation that you will provide for each topic and objective (see Portfolio Worksheet). *Remember that the learning must be college-level.*

Selecting Evidence

What constitutes effective evidence? Effective evidence does the following:

- Provides *direct* documentation of your knowledge and skills
- Pertains specifically to the topics and learning objectives in your course
- Supports the statements in your narrative about your learning experiences

Direct evidence is documentation of actual learning. Indirect evidence is documentation that is associated with learning but only implies that learning has occurred. Indirect evidence may be included but does not constitute documentation of learning. Indirect evidence can confirm



GATHERING EVIDENCE CONTINUED...

that work submitted is actually yours or verify details about your learning activities.

Examples of Direct Evidence

- Samples of work performed—a report, project, or case study you prepared;
- Programs from artistic performances or artistic products
- Tests or quizzes
- Graded class assignments
- Lab reports
- Official verification of proficiency—a professional license or transcript
- Affidavit from a work supervisor or clients served
- Notes you took during a training session or class
- Performance ratings
- Work or conference presentation or publication
- Commendations or awards
- Newspaper clippings
- A list of countries visited or books read
- Your written testimony describing what you learned

Examples of Indirect Evidence

- Number of years on the job
- Number of hours spent earning a certificate, involved in a cultural activity, etc.
- Photographs of you working, engaged in community service, etc.
- Registration or course enrollment information



Examples of Direct and Indirect Evidence

Direct:

You completed a company-sponsored course in business law and can provide both an *official transcript* and a *graded research paper* as evidence that you passed the course.

Indirect:

The *syllabus* for the business law course.

Direct:

Your evidence of college-level skill as a photographer includes four issues of your *company newsletter* which features photos you took. You received credit for the photos in the newsletter.

Indirect:

The editor of the company newsletter writes a letter stating that the photos are yours.



If evidence is unavailable, you and your mentor may determine that a test or other demonstration is needed.



GATHERING EVIDENCE CONTINUED...

Obtaining Affidavits

Letters from employers, work associates, or community leaders who have first-hand knowledge of your involvement and abilities may be needed to verify your learning. Because these letters can be critical to the success of your portfolio, request them early enough to allow time for the individual to prepare and deliver the affidavit. Your request should be specific about what information to include in the affidavit.

When you make your request do so in writing and be sure the letter writer:

- knows that the purpose of the letter is for verification of your knowledge/learning rather than for verification of employment or a recommendation;
- explains the nature of his or her working relationship with you and the length of time it continued;
- specifies what was expected of you and how well you accomplished those tasks or projects;
- states her or his qualifications for commenting on your activities and expertise
- relates this information to the course description and learning objectives;
- comments directly and separately on each learning experience she or he has been asked to verify;
- Knows when you will need the letter (but be prepared to follow up with a second request as a reminder).





Bloomfield College



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