

A photograph of four diverse students walking on a paved path outdoors. From left to right: a Black woman with curly hair wearing a grey tank top and a black patterned cardigan; a woman with dark curly hair wearing a blue t-shirt and a black backpack; a blonde woman wearing a light-colored patterned sweater; and a man with glasses wearing a light blue shirt and dark trousers. They are all smiling and looking towards the right. The background shows a modern building with large glass windows and some greenery.

A Guide to Portfolio Development

Reading Area Community College

RACC

racc.edu

Table of Contents

Preface	1
Introduction	2
What is a Portfolio	3
Overview of the Assessment Process	4
Steps for the Development of a Portfolio	5
Evaluation of Portfolio by a Faculty Evaluator	10
Other Prior Learning Assessment Options	11

Preface

Reading Area Community College has made a significant investment in the development of a competency-based format in a variety of curriculums. This competency-based approach to education assists the college in assessing the institutional effectiveness on student learning.

Much of the information gathered from this assessment process focuses on the perception of student learning and student performance in instructional situations.

Reading Area Community College recognizes that learning takes place in a variety of environments, as well as in the college classroom. On-the-job experience, professional seminars, continuing education courses, technical and business schools, volunteer training, community involvement, travel and self-study may all be considered college-equivalent learning.

One of the methods of requesting an assessment of your knowledge for a specific course or courses is through written documentation, known as the “portfolio” process. It consists of what you know, how you learned it and how that relates to a particular course or courses. Students use the specific course competencies of a course syllabus as their guide in the development of their portfolio.

This booklet will provide the guidance and assistance needed to formulate your personal strategy in the development of a portfolio.

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Introduction

The theory of assessing prior learning is the belief that what a student knows is more important than how this knowledge was learned. If a student can demonstrate that their knowledge and skills are current and comparable to what the college-educated student knows, then equal credit may be awarded. If the learning experience occurred in the distant past, the student should be able to demonstrate that they have retained the knowledge and skills.

The Prior Learning Assessment Portfolio Specialist will take the initial meeting with the student to explain the components of the portfolio, identifying associate deans as partners in the process, and the assessment process through RACC's offices. Eligible students for Prior Learning Assessment by Portfolio have to apply to Reading Area Community College and to be registered for courses, and are actively pursuing a degree at the college.

The assessment of portfolio for the purpose of awarding academic credit differs from examination programs such as CLEP, Credit by Exam, DANTES/CLEP, and articulation agreements for Advanced Placement.

So, if learning is to be recognized by the awarding of college credit, the learning must be stated, documented, measured and evaluated. A portfolio can be used as a means to organize prior learning experiences into a manageable form for assessment. This booklet is designed as a guide for portfolio development.

The College reserves the right to determine which courses can be assessed through the portfolio evaluation option.

What is a portfolio?

Portfolios vary tremendously in size and style. However, for the purpose of continuity, this institution requires an organized binder to hold the information.

It is an organized document that states specific past experiences and accomplishments that have resulted in college-level learning. It links the student's learning to the course competency statements that appear on course syllabi. These competencies describe the desired learning outcomes of each course for which the student is seeking credit.

A portfolio may not always be the best way to assess all experiences. If a student's experiential learning consists primarily of skills such as keyboarding, music, machine tool technology or lab sciences, etc., a competency test can more accurately evaluate the learning. When such skill-oriented courses are to be assessed, the Prior Learning Assessment Portfolio Specialist will arrange for the appropriate examinations with the appropriate faculty members. his process is called Credit by Examination.

How does the portfolio assessment fit into the college's residency requirement?

Credit for prior learning assessments are considered non-resident credits. A candidate for graduation must have earned at least 15 of his/her credit hours at Reading Area Community College, by taking courses graded in the traditional "A" through "F" classroom format.

Overview of the Assessment Process

- Students who express an interest in the portfolio process shall be referred to the Director of Academic Partnerships.
- He/she will meet with a staff member to discuss goals, the process and possible courses for which portfolios may be developed.
- The Prior Learning Assessment Portfolio Specialist will review a chronological resume and any other evidence of learning outcomes, such as industry certificates, awards, and employer letters, and identify course(s) for which they want to produce a portfolio. The Prior Learning Assessment Portfolio Specialist will give the student the appropriate course competencies in syllabus format.
- Develop portfolio following this general format:
 1. A statement of the person's goals, both personal and academic
 2. Chronological resume
 3. Documentation
 4. Cross reference of course competencies and documentation
 5. Statement of accuracy of portfolio contents
- Submit portfolio to the Director of Academic Partnerships, and pay any necessary fees to the Cashier's Office.
- Assessment conducted by faculty content expert.
- Transcription of portfolio assessment results.

Steps for the development of a portfolio

Meet with Associate Dean or Prior Learning Assessment Portfolio Specialist

Make an appointment to meet with an associate dean or Director of Academic Partnerships, who will conduct a mini-interview. At the meeting you will discuss your academic goals, your experiential background and how they connect. An example of this would be: if your goal is an accounting degree, do you know how to keep books? Do you know the theory of how and why accounting practices are followed? However, if your educational goal is early childhood teaching and your background is in electronics technology, the two things are not compatible as far as degree requirements at Reading Area Community College.

A second important factor to be discussed at this initial meeting is the meaning of college-level learning. Simply stated, college-level learning means that students know and understand theories and principles as well as their applications. The student considering assessment should be able to relate theoretical principles to their job tasks and responsibilities.

In addition, at this initial meeting, the staff member will review the steps of the assessment process. One of the most important elements is that assessment for prior learning is course specific. This means that all evaluations of a portfolio are done based on the competencies of a specific course(s) taught at Reading Area Community College. Appropriate candidates for this evaluation process are those who upon the review of the specific course competencies are able to state they have mastered 80-85 percent of the content of a specific course.

Prepare a chronological resume

Before preparing a portfolio and gathering the documentation, it is important to develop a detailed chronological resume. A chronological resume is a presentation of your experience, education, and related activities presented in reverse chronological order; i.e. your most recent experience listed first. It should include dates of employment and education, as well as brief but detailed descriptions of your job duties.

Meet again with the Prior Learning Assessment Portfolio Specialist who will help you organize your ideas for a portfolio for award of credit for a course or courses.

You are now ready to set up a second appointment with the Prior Learning Assessment Portfolio Specialist. At this meeting your chronological resume will be reviewed. Based on your background, you and the staff member will identify possible courses to be evaluated through a portfolio.

When reviewing your outline, the following questions should be kept in mind:

1. Are your knowledge and/or skills current? Current skills and knowledge are important factors.
2. Is your knowledge applicable in other cases outside the specific job? Example: Can you apply the management principles required in one position to an entirely different work situation?
3. Is your learning at college-level? Can you apply the theoretical principles of the knowledge you have attained? Example: If you are seeking credit in management, can you identify the principles of management?
4. Can your knowledge be measured and evaluated? Can you show a faculty member how much you know and how well you learned it? Example: Can you discuss computer technology? Can you run a computer program?
5. Is your prior learning composed of both knowledge of theory and the ability to apply it?
6. Can you identify and articulate the relationship between your prior learning and your current educational (degree) goal?

You will then choose the course(s) for which you will compile a portfolio. You will be given the competency statements for each course.

Develop the portfolio

The portfolio represents documentation of your significant learning as it relates to the specific course competencies of Reading Area Community College. The purpose of your portfolio is to demonstrate to the various academic divisions that you have actually learned from experience and not merely had experience. You want to convince the faculty member who reviews your portfolio that for each course your knowledge is equivalent to that of a student who has completed the actual course with a grade of “C”.

A student may challenge up to 45 credits, which is maximum for portfolio process.

A student may not challenge through Life Experience Assessment Portfolio a course that they have previously failed at RACC.

The portfolio should contain the following:

1. Title Page
 - a. Essential personal data
Name, address, home phone, business phone, e-mail
 - b. Optional personal data
Date of birth, place of employment, position/job title
 - c. Educational goal statement
 - d. Specific course(s) to be assessed
Course number, title, number of contents
2. Statement attesting to accuracy of portfolio contents
3. Cross-reference table
Course competencies cross-referenced with location of appropriate documentation for each competency.
4. Chronological resume

5. Documentation that has been systematically labeled. Examples of documentation that can be provided in numerous ways:

- Letters of verification from employers or supervisors
- Certificates
- Course descriptions of non-college credit training
- Newspaper clippings
- Tapes, discs
- Photographs
- List of books, readings, etc.
- Products or samples of work
- Job descriptions
- Job performance evaluations
- Official forms and records
- Licenses
- Personal documentation (a written account by you) when it is not possible to obtain more direct documentation. This should not be used as the primary source of documentation for the majority of the competencies.

In compiling the portfolio, assume that the instructor reviews the portfolio competency by competency and checks off each one as they think you have demonstrated your knowledge of it. In order for the evaluator to do this, it is important that you prepare your portfolio in an organized format.

Sample portfolios may be viewed, however, remember that a portfolio is a very personalized document. Therefore no two portfolios should be expected to be the same.

Submission of portfolio for examiner, the faculty content expert

1. Students must be admitted as a RACC student prior to applying for the Prior Life Experience Assessment.
2. Students must complete the requirements for admission, complete the application and pay the non-refundable application fee, one credit of tuition for every three credits that are being assessed. Students pay the Cashier's Office.

Students shall complete the portfolio assessments process within the term they register for the assessment.

Submit your portfolio to the Prior Learning Assessment Portfolio Specialist who will work with the Associate Dean to have the portfolio evaluated by a faculty content expert.

Time frame for assessments:

1. Assessments must be completed at least two weeks before the end of the term in which they begin.
2. In order to allow sufficient time for the assessment process, completed portfolios will not be accepted for evaluation later than six weeks before the end of the term.
3. If not completed by the end of the term, the Prior Learning Assessment Portfolio Specialist and the student will make arrangements for a new deadline to complete within range of the graduation.

Summer assessments:

Portfolios can only be accepted during summer when a faculty member voluntarily agrees to review a portfolio during summer semester. Faculty on contract for fall and spring semesters only. Students are strongly encouraged to complete all previous steps and submit the portfolio in preparation for an early fall assessment.

Evaluation of portfolio by a faculty evaluator

- The Prior Learning Assessment Portfolio Specialist and/or Associate Dean delivers the portfolio to the faculty member.
- The Prior Learning Assessment Portfolio Specialist will inform the student of the name of the faculty evaluator and how they can be reached. It is the student's responsibility to contact and meet with each instructor for an interview.
- You have an interview with the faculty evaluator assigned for each course to be assessed. Please be aware that although review of the portfolio and an interview with student are the principle methods of portfolio assessment, the faculty evaluator has the option to utilize a number of other techniques. Examples would be: written examination, assigned writings, structured oral interview or laboratory tests where appropriate.
- The faculty evaluator makes recommendations to award credit or not to award credit.

Transcription of portfolio assessment

Approved course credit is recorded on a student's permanent record as "PA".

When credit is **not approved**:

- The assessment will not be reflected on the student's permanent college record. The assessment will not affect the student's grade point average.
- The assessment fee cannot be refunded or credit to any other college tuition/fees.
- Once credit has been denied, the student may not request a second assessment either by portfolio or credit by examination in that course.

Other Prior Learning Assessment Options

The following are other methods for earning college credit for prior learning through Reading Area Community College.

Credit by Examination

These exams are developed and proctored by RACC faculty members. Students who have previous experience or knowledge in specific areas are eligible to apply for Credit by Exam. Credit by Examination can only be pursued if students are not enrolled in the course for which credit is sought. The fee for each exam is equivalent to one credit hour. This is a non-refundable fee. Credit by Examination will appear as “IE” on transcripts when credit is awarded. Credit by Examination is considered resident credit and may not transfer to other institutions.

College Level Examination Program (CLEP)

CLEP examinations are standardized test that measure a person’s knowledge of the material covered in introductory college courses. The CLEP program is an option for individuals who have had learning experiences in informal settings. CLEP credit is treated as transfer credit and is awarded on a credit/no credit basis. Only passing scores appear on transcripts as “NE”. There is a proctor fee for this process.

Credit for Military Training

The Assessment Coordinator will evaluate military education experience and training for transfer credit. Validated DD214 and records of training programs or military courses must be submitted to begin the process. The American Council on Education must recommend the military training school/course for credit. Students are evaluated on an individual basis. Transfer credit will be posted on transcripts as “ME”.

Non-Collegiate Sponsored Instruction

Courses and programs offered through organizations such as large corporations, Pennsylvania State Police, police academies, etc. may be evaluated for transfer credit. Credit is awarded when an existing articulation agreement between the college and the organization approves such educational experiences.

Transfer Credits from Other Colleges

Students may transfer course credits to RACC from approved colleges and universities. An official transcript must be sent by each college or university previously attended to the Office of Admissions to begin this process. See current catalog for transfer policy.

Sample: Chronological Resume

This is a typical chronological resume. It shows major responsibilities for all positions. It leaves no time gaps between experiences.

ROBERTA SMITH
123 North First Street
Portland, Oregon 97208

Work Experience: (most recent first)

- 1987 - Present Staff Assistant to Chairman
Department of Math, University of Oregon
- Responsible for daily functions of department of 20 persons
 - Prepared university and government surveys and reports
 - Prepared agenda and faculty meeting minutes
 - Prepared quarterly audits, projections and financial statements.
- 1977 - 1987 Assistant to Chairman of Sociology Department Portland State University
- Carried out administrative policies of section processing, payroll, coordinating work schedules, ordering supplies and equipment
 - Scheduled meetings and appointments
- 1974 - 1977 Secretary/Editor, Journal of Applied Mathematics
- Directed daily journal operation. Handled all general queries regarding communication with authors, referees and publisher.
 - Prepared statistics, agenda and minutes of editor's meetings.
- 1973 - 1974 Secretary, Journal of Applied Mathematics
- Typed letters, articles, statistical reports. Took dictation.
Answered telephone.

Education: Roosevelt High School, 1973, Seattle, Washington
Secretarial Science Major

Activities: (Community and/or professional memberships, certificates, licenses, etc.)
Member, Women in Business Volunteer
Big Sisters of America

Sample: Cross Referenced Table

Course Competency Number	Competency Description	Document Page
1	Measure Length accurately	1, 3, 5
2	Interpret engineering drawings and schematics.	3, 5, 9, 11
3	Use basic hand tools and machinery for mechanical tool creation.	1, 3, 5, 9
4	Perform basic electrical measurement	5, 7, 9, 11
5	Able to operate numerically controlled and computerized numerically controlled machine tool programmer.	7, 9, 11

Reading Area Community College
10 South Second Street
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STATEMENT OF ACCURACY OF PORTFOLIO CONTENTS

I HEREBY ATTEST TO THE AUTHENTICITY AND ACCURACY OF THE
CONTENTS AND DECLARATIONS CONTAINED WITHIN THIS PORFTOLIO.

Signed

Date

Print your name

