



GUIDELINES FOR CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING THROUGH PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

Section 1: Introduction

The practice of awarding credit for college-level prior learning is based upon the belief that the education which builds on, interprets, and incorporates past and present knowledge is the education that is most meaningful to the student. Colorado Mesa University (CMU) recognizes that students may have gained college-level knowledge and competencies through their work and life experiences which can be incorporated into their academic programs. Consequently, CMU offers a portfolio assessment process by which prior learning can be analyzed, articulated, documented, and assessed for credit.

Portfolio assessment is only one way for students to obtain credit based on prior learning. To begin the process of obtaining credit for prior learning, the student should contact the Head of the Department in which credit is sought to discuss whether portfolio assessment is a good option for them to pursue. The student will be advised of other options available to them, including credit through national and/or department examinations (CLEP, DANTES, and Department Challenge), as well as military credits for non-accredited training. The total combination of non-traditional credit is limited by academic residency requirements for the degree.

Section 2: Policies

1. CMU may award credit through the portfolio assessment process for a regularly established course in a department through portfolio assessment when the student demonstrates that learning gained through work and/or other experience is equivalent to the learning objectives outlined in the current, official CMU syllabus for that course.
2. The student who wishes an assessment of prior learning for credit through portfolio assessment will prepare a well-documented portfolio, detailing learning objectives for which they are requesting credit through work and/or life experience. The student will develop the content of the portfolio under the guidance of a faculty member (hereafter termed Faculty Mentor) in the appropriate discipline. To improve the chance of a successful portfolio application, it is strongly recommended (and may be required at the discretion of the Department Head or Faculty Mentor) that the student enroll in a 1-credit hour **Portfolio Development Workshop**, particularly if credit for more than 1 course is sought. This Workshop will cover principles of adult learning as applied to portfolio organization and development (please see Section 5 for more information). Note that successful completion of the portfolio workshop does not guarantee that the student's portfolio will be approved for prior learning course credit.
3. The university will assess an application fee of \$50 per *portfolio* plus a partial tuition assessment of \$100 for each *course* accepted through the portfolio assessment.
4. The Faculty Mentor in the appropriate discipline will evaluate the portfolio and make the initial decision about awarding the requested course credit. The Department Head for that discipline will also review the portfolio before giving final approval.

5. Applicants may submit a portfolio for assessment after they have been accepted to CMU and are enrolled in classes. Students must be enrolled in a declared degree or licensure program at CMU. Prior learning credit will be posted to students' transcripts when they have earned at least 12 semester hours of residency credit at CMU.
6. The completed portfolio must be submitted by the student's "Petition to Graduate" deadline.
7. Credit for prior learning does not meet requirements for residency credit.
8. Ordinarily, credit will not be awarded for courses that are prerequisites of courses already completed.
9. Grades will not be assigned for credit awarded through portfolio assessment. Specific courses will be identified on the transcript by department prefix, course number, course title and credit awarded. The transcript notation will read "Prior Learning" with a grade of TP (transfer pass).
10. It is possible that credit awarded through portfolio assessment may not transfer to another institution. Students are encouraged to check with the specific college or university that they are interested in transferring to about their transfer policies.

Section 3: Application and Assessment Procedures

1. The student who wishes to apply for prior learning credit should begin by contacting the Head of the Department in which course credit is sought to discuss the planned application for credit and to obtain whatever departmental guidelines are necessary. The student is advised to take a transcript, the transfer equivalency report if applicable, and a resume to assist the Department Head in the preliminary assessment process. The student will be advised of any alternative ways to seek course credit (for example, CLEP and challenging a course).
2. If consultation with the Department Head suggests that portfolio assessment is the best course of action, the student should continue reading this document carefully. The Department Faculty will be notified that a portfolio assessment has been requested and that a Faculty Mentor is needed to guide the student in the content of the portfolio. Once assigned, the student will meet with the Faculty Mentor to discuss the applicability of the student's work and/or life experience to course material. If the Faculty Mentor agrees to assess the portfolio, s/he will sign the Portfolio Assessment Agreement (appended to this document) and provide a copy of the appropriate syllabi to the student. The Department Head or Faculty Mentor will determine whether the student is required to take the Portfolio Development Workshop.
3. The Portfolio Assessment Agreement should be submitted to the Registrar's Office to officially begin the application process. If the student is required (or desires) to take the Portfolio Development Workshop, the student should contact the Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs for Student and Faculty Success for enrollment information. Questions about the application process may be directed to the Registrar or another designated administrator.
4. At the time when the Portfolio Assessment Agreement is submitted to the Registrar's Office, the student will pay the \$50 Portfolio Application Fee and, if desired (or required by the Department Head or Faculty Mentor), the student will enroll in the recommended 1-credit Portfolio Development Workshop. The student will continue to work with the faculty member on the content of the portfolio throughout this process. Students who take the Portfolio Development Workshop should only do so once regardless of the number of portfolios created/submitted for evaluation. After the Portfolio Assessment Agreement is submitted, the student has at most one calendar year to submit the portfolio to the department for evaluation. Note that all portfolios must be submitted by the student's "Petition to Graduate" deadline. The purpose of the Portfolio Workshop is to aid in and assess the organization and completion of a portfolio for prior learning experiences. No content will be assessed by the Workshop instructor. Therefore, successful completion of the Workshop is unrelated to awarding of prior learning course credit.

5. When the portfolio is complete, the student will submit it to the Department Head and/or the Faculty Mentor. The portfolio will be reviewed with attention to the quality of the presentation and the inclusion of all required items, particularly how the Student Learning Objectives for the requested course have been met. The portfolio will not be returned to the student but will be retained by the department for a period of two years. The applicant may retrieve his/her portfolio at the end of the two years or leave a mailing address to which s/he would like it mailed. If the portfolio is not retrieved, or a current mailing address has not been given to the department, the portfolio will be destroyed at the end of the two-year period. Therefore, the student should retain a complete copy, including all original documents from the portfolio which the applicant may need for his/her own future use.
6. Timely assessment of portfolio during a summer term or during the final two weeks of any semester cannot be guaranteed. At all other times, the department will complete its review of the portfolio within four weeks after the application has been submitted. During this review process additional materials/ documentation and/or an interview with the student may be requested by the reviewer(s).
7. The Faculty Mentor will review the portfolio to determine the extent to which the applicant has achieved the Student Learning Objectives outlined in each of the current and official course syllabi and write a formal evaluation of the portfolio, including a recommendation of whether to award the credits sought.
8. After evaluating the portfolio and indicating the overall decision on the Application for Prior Learning Credit page included in the portfolio, the faculty reviewer will return it with the completed evaluation form to the Department Head for review and signature.
9. If prior learning credit is awarded by the department, then the Department Head will forward the completed application and approval to the Registrar's Office for transcription. The \$100 partial tuition assessment per course is due before the credit can be transcribed. The Department Head will notify the student of the outcome of the assessment process.
10. Should the department determine that no credit be awarded, the review process ends. The student will be notified by the Department Head. The credit determination may be appealed following the university's grade appeal process.

Section 4: The Portfolio

Each portfolio will be unique, reflecting the competencies, knowledge, and experience particular to each applicant, but will follow an established format. Each portfolio will be typed or printed and presented in a professional manner. The portfolio will consist of the following:

1. Table of Contents
2. Application for Prior Learning Credit (appended to this document)
3. Portfolio Assessment Agreement
4. Resume
5. A brief autobiography that discusses the applicant's career and educational history, and any other experiences that will be the basis for her/his request for credit, and the applicant's academic/career goals.
6. The most recent CMU transcript and transfer equivalency report should also be included.
7. For each course for which credit is requested:
 - a) Current official course syllabus
 - b) An essay which analyzes and articulates what was learned, how it was learned, how the knowledge has been used, and specifically, how this knowledge relates to learning objectives listed in the course syllabus.
 - c) Appropriate documentation (certificates, work samples, job descriptions, letters, awards, licenses, or any other documents appropriate to the specific course).

Section 5: The Portfolio Development Workshop

The Portfolio Development Workshop is a 5-week one-credit course offered each semester. The course is strongly recommended for any student wishing to develop a prior learning assessment portfolio, particularly if credit for more than one course is sought. Note that this Workshop may be required at the discretion of the Department Head or Faculty Mentor. The Portfolio Development Workshop will provide a foundation for the student to develop a high-quality portfolio for departmental evaluation, but successful completion of the Workshop does not guarantee that a student's portfolio will be approved by the Department for course credit. Group work will be combined with attention to individual portfolio development. The instructor will be available during the length of the semester of course enrollment to assist each student in the portfolio creation.

Benefits of Portfolio Workshop:

- Creates a road map for the portfolio construction that is clear, consistent, structured, and guided.
- Provides an opportunity for more direct support and feedback regarding the organization and structure of the portfolio from a faculty member.
- Helps students to produce a high-quality portfolio, which may help to maximize the number of prior learning credits.

For more information on how to enroll in this Workshop, students should contact the Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs for Student and Faculty Success.

Tuition for this one credit hour course is charged at the current undergraduate in-state rate. This course is not eligible for the COF/Stipend; students pay only the "student's share of tuition" (per semester hour) and are not responsible for paying the stipend amount.

Approved: 10/2020



PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT AGREEMENT

APPLICANT NAME: _____ Student # _____
(please print)

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

FACULTY MENTOR: _____ Department _____
(please print)

To be completed by the Faculty Mentor:

I, the Faculty Mentor, agree to work with _____ on the development of a Prior Learning Portfolio for the course(s) _____.

I agree to assess the portfolio submitted by the applicant and recommend or refuse credit based on the learning objectives stated in the attached official course syllabi. Any other criteria or additional learning objectives from my specific course syllabi which will be used for assessment are attached.

Per policy, I agree to complete this portfolio review and evaluation within four weeks of submission to my department and send my recommendation to the Department Head for action.

I have completed a preliminary assessment of this student’s proposal and have determined that the Portfolio Development Workshop:

- Is required for this student to complete prior to portfolio submission.
- Is recommended for this student to complete prior to portfolio submission.

Faculty Mentor signature _____ Date _____

To be completed by the Applicant:

I, the Applicant, have considered alternative ways of receiving credit for based on prior learning (CLEP, DANTES, Department Challenge, and/or military credits) and have determined, after consultation with my Faculty Mentor, that portfolio assessment is the best option for my circumstances. Therefore, I request an assessment of a prior learning portfolio for the course(s), _____.

I understand that I will be working with a Faculty Mentor on the content of the portfolio and that it is recommended that I complete the Portfolio Development Workshop. If required by the Department Head or my Faculty Mentor, I understand that I will need to successfully complete the Portfolio Development Workshop before my portfolio can be submitted to the Academic Department. I understand that successful completion of the Portfolio Development Workshop does not guarantee that I will receive the prior learning course credit that I am seeking. Upon completion of the portfolio, I agree to submit the portfolio to the Department Head or Faculty Mentor for their review by no later than _____. If circumstances require a later submission, I will contact the Department Head or Faculty Mentor to restart the portfolio application process.

Applicant Signature _____ Date _____

Only one Portfolio Assessment Agreement is required per portfolio (1 per set of courses submitted at any one time)

