



## GUIDELINES FOR CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING THROUGH PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

### RATIONALE

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. Prior to pursuing to the Portfolio Assessment option, students should consider 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

### 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. A student may earn the maximum of 25% of the total semester credits required toward a degree or certificate through portfolio assessment.
3. 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. The student must also enroll in a 1 semester credit hour Portfolio Development Workshop which will cover principles of adult learning as applied to portfolio organization and development. Successful completion of the portfolio workshop does not guarantee, however, that the student's portfolio will be approved for prior learning course credit.
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. The University will assess a fee of one-half in-state tuition for each semester hour of prior learning credit earned through portfolio assessment.

6. 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.
7. The completed portfolio must be submitted by the student's "Petition to Graduate" deadline.
8. Credit for prior learning does not meet requirements for residency credit.
9. Ordinarily, credit will not be awarded for courses that are prerequisites of courses already completed.
10. 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).
11. 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.

#### APPLICATION AND ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES/PROCEDURES

1. The student who wishes to apply for prior learning credit can obtain an Application for Prior Learning Credit, Portfolio Assessment Agreement and information on enrolling in a Portfolio Development Workshop from the Registrar's Office. All questions about the procedure may be directed to the Registrar or another designated administrator.
2. The student should then contact the appropriate Department Head 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).
3. The Department Faculty will be notified that a Portfolio Assessment Agreement has been requested and that a faculty mentor is needed to guide the student in the content of the portfolio. The student will then 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 and provide a copy of the appropriate syllabus to the student.
4. After the Portfolio Assessment Agreement is signed, the student must enroll in a 1 credit Portfolio Development Workshop to prepare and develop a portfolio; the student will continue to work with the faculty member on the content of the portfolio throughout this process. Students need only take the Portfolio Development Workshop once regardless of the number of portfolios created/submitted for evaluation. After the course completion, the student has at most one calendar year to submit the portfolio to the department for evaluation (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 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 may be requested from the student.

7. Using the faculty evaluation form, the faculty mentor will review the portfolio to determine the extent to which the applicant has achieved the learning objectives outlined in the current and official course syllabus.

8. After evaluating the portfolio and indicating the overall decision on the application 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 transcribing. The "per credit hour" fee 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.

## 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
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) Faculty evaluation form
  - c) 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.
  - d) Appropriate documentation (certificates, work samples, job descriptions, letters, awards, licenses, or any other documents appropriate to the specific course).

## PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

The Portfolio Development Workshop is a 5-week (in the classroom) one-credit course offered each semester. The course is required for any student wishing to develop a prior learning assessment portfolio. The course will provide a

foundation for the student to develop a high-quality portfolio for departmental evaluation, but does not guarantee that a student's portfolio will be successfully approved by the Department. 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. After the course completion, the student has one calendar year to submit the portfolio to the department for evaluation.

Please contact the Registrar's Office to speak to someone about this option. The Registrar's staff will help you identify the faculty member to consult to determine if this is an appropriate option for you, and try to answer any questions you might have.

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.

**Benefits of Portfolio Workshop:**

- Creates a road map for what may seem like an overwhelming process to students that is clear, consistent, structured and guided.
- More efficient –provides more information to more people at one time.
- Insures the consistent quality of all completed portfolios.
- Provides an opportunity for students to be successful with the development of a portfolio.
- Quality portfolio and to maximize the number of prior learning credit.
- Saves faculty in each department the task of going through each step with each student –portfolio presented to them once it is complete

Approved 12/2008



PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT AGREEMENT

APPLICANT: \_\_\_\_\_ Student # \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

I have already considered alternative ways of receiving credit for based on prior learning (CLEP, DANTEs, Department Challenge, and/or military credits) and have determined that this is the best option for my circumstances. Therefore, I request an assessment of a prior learning portfolio for the course, \_\_\_\_\_. I understand that I will be working with a faculty mentor on the content of the portfolio and will also complete the Portfolio Development Workshop. 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 faculty mentor and submit a new agreement.

Applicant Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

FACULTY  
MENTOR: \_\_\_\_\_ Department \_\_\_\_\_  
(please print)

I agree to work with \_\_\_\_\_ on the development of a Prior Learning Portfolio for the course \_\_\_\_\_. 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 syllabus. 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.

Faculty Mentor signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



**APPLICATION FOR PRIOR LEARNING CREDIT**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, request academic credit for the following  
 STUDENT NAME (Please print) STUDENT NUMBER

Mesa University course(s) for the \_\_\_\_\_ semester, 20\_\_.

DEGREE (circle one): Baccalaureate / Associate/Certificate MAJOR: \_\_\_\_\_

Courses Requested (please use one line for each course / attach additional sheet if necessary)

DEPARTMENT & COURSE NUMBER	NUMBER OF CREDITS	COURSE TITLE	COURSE USABLE TOWARDS:	Faculty Reviewer's signature (if course credit is approved)
			Major / Electives	
			Major / Electives	
			Major / Electives	
			Major / Electives	

**Preparation of Portfolio:** The student completes a 1 semester credit hour Portfolio Development Workshop, prepares a portfolio which supports credit requested.

**Approval Process:** The student will be notified of the evaluation decision based on the Guidelines for Credit for Prior Learning. If approved by the department, the completed Application for Prior Learning Credit form will be forwarded to the Registrar's Office for further processing. If not approved, the student will be notified by the Department Head of the faculty mentor.

**If approved, payment of per credit hour fee:** Student pays one-half in-state tuition for each semester hour earned to the Accounting Office. Once paid, the courses will be added to the transcript as transfer courses with a grade of TP (transfer pass).

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Student Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Department Head Date Indicate "approve or disapprove"

<b>Registrar's Office Use:</b> Date Student Notified of Approval/Denial: ____/____/____ Date Input: ____/____/____ by ____
--