



# **Handbook for Preparing a Portfolio for the Assessment of Learning Experiences**

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## INTRODUCTION

### PURPOSE

Amberton University is receptive to the idea of awarding academic credit for learning acquired through noncollegiate experiences at the undergraduate level. By definition, noncollegiate experiences will be considered as learning that has resulted from experiences occurring while the individual was not enrolled in an educational institution for academic credit.

Noncollegiate learning may be considered for transfer if such work is documented and submitted by means of the portfolio. The portfolio is a detailed and substantial and explicit document that clearly identifies sufficient noncollegiate learning that merits academic credit. The awarding of academic credit for noncollegiate learning is restricted to:

1. Verifiable learning
2. undergraduate credit only
3. disciplines offered by Amberton University, and
4. one attempt by submitting a portfolio during the first two sessions after a student has been accepted by the university.

This handbook is designed to assist the adult who is entering or returning to college and wishes to receive credit for prior life-learning experiences. It provides examples of life-learning experiences that are eligible for academic credit through the portfolio process, suggests ways to verify what was learned and provides instructions for compiling and communicating the information gathered through scholarly writing, and assists in maximizing the amount of credit available from Amberton University. In the process, the life-learning credit applicant should gain significant insight into his/her knowledge and needs.

### ASSESSMENT

The process used to determine how much credit an individual is to receive for prior experiential learning is called **assessment**. The steps involved in the assessment process are discussed in detail in this handbook.

### AWARDING CREDIT FOR NONCOLLEGIATE LEARNING

The following guidelines govern all noncollegiate learning that is awarded credit by Amberton University:

- Noncollegiate learning credit is considered transfer work and will not satisfy the residency requirements for a degree.
- After three years of nonenrollment at Amberton University, transfer work is deleted from Amberton University records. A student who subsequently re-enrolls will have to resubmit records for transfer of credit.
- The awarding of portfolio credit is restricted to undergraduate credit only.

Individuals interested in submitting noncollegiate learning for possible transfer credit via the Portfolio should submit a portfolio request form to the Vice President for Academic Services.

## THE PORTFOLIO

The portfolio is a detailed and explicit document that clearly identifies noncollegiate training that merits academic credit. The substance and support for claims made in the portfolio is paramount to its outcomes. The portfolios must demonstrate command of collegiate level presentation skills. Creativity, along with clear documentation is encouraged.

The awarding of academic credit for learning experiences is restricted to *verifiable learning*. Amberton University will award credit only for what a person **knows** and/or **can do** as a result of experiences. For example, an individual may have twelve years of experience working in a bank. The University will not award credit simply on the basis of that twelve years of experience. The individual will be asked to document and/or demonstrate what has been learned about banking as a result of the twelve years of experience. In this case, the individual may have learned little about banking beyond the first year on the job. It could be that the person has not had twelve years of learning experience, but rather one year of learning experience twelve times. The learning experience must address specific course competencies.

Before academic credit can be awarded for life-learning experiences, certain criteria must be met. These criteria generally include the following:

1. The learning should be publicly verifiable. The applicant must be able to document and/or demonstrate to an expert in the field that he/she possesses knowledge, which merits academic credit. The expert must be able to objectively measure and evaluate the learning, which has occurred. The expert's credentials must be verifiable. While this validation method may be helpful, the student must also include additional methods of establishing the learning.
2. The learning should be equivalent to college level work in terms of quality. Amberton University requires that the prior experiential learning be related to an academic discipline offered by the University. The faculty review of the work must result in at least a sufficient rating for all course competencies for each course attempted.
3. The learning should have a general applicability outside the specific situation in which it was acquired. For example, Amberton University will not award credit or recognition for knowing specific business procedures in accounting or inventorying which apply to only one company.

## AUTHENTICITY

The University is aware that the awarding of academic credit on the basis of information contained in a written document could lead to abuses. A signed and notarized form stating the honesty of the applicant on the first page of the portfolio is required. To prevent abuse, the applicant must have his/her portfolio validated, whenever possible, by certificates, a supervisor's signature, etc. Moreover, the contents of a portfolio are subject to investigation for authenticity by Amberton University. Any evidence of deception or fraud will result in the denial of life-learning experience credit and, if credit has already been awarded, the withdrawal of that credit without refund. Also, the applicant or student will be denied further admission to the University.

## REVIEW AMBERTON UNIVERSITY'S CATALOG

Before an applicant undertakes the process of developing a portfolio, a review of the University's academic offerings is critical. The *Amberton University Catalog* clearly identifies competencies associated with each course offered at the University. An applicant should review the catalog and become acquainted with the technique of grouping competencies for a specific course or discipline. The portfolio submitted must thoroughly address each competency of the course sought after to attain credit. The student should identify work experiences, which relate to each of the competencies.

Once the applicant is satisfied that he or she can demonstrate competencies for a specific course or discipline, the applicant is ready to begin the portfolio. To receive academic credit for a course, the applicant must clearly identify the body of knowledge gained through life-learning experiences by providing competency statements that describe the knowledge, skill, and values gained as a result of the experiences. To be meaningful, the knowledge gained should have taken approximately one hundred sixty cumulative hours of learning and be comparable to either a specific course in the *Amberton University Catalog* or closely related to a specific discipline (i.e., business, marketing, training, human resources, communication, etc.).

## **WRITING THE PORTFOLIO**

The applicant must carefully review the *Amberton University Catalog* to see how the competencies are grouped for each course offered at the University. The examples should assist the applicant in (1) addressing the competencies for a specific course, or (2) identifying competencies in a course closely related to the disciplines offered by the University. In developing identifiable competencies for a course to be awarded academic credit, the following should be remembered:

- \* The portfolio must document a sufficient body of knowledge to merit a three credit hour course.
- \* Competency statements must clearly identify the significant body of knowledge, which was learned from life-learning experiences. Each competency statement should be stated clearly and be sufficiently addressed by the applicant to evidence mastery of the competency being addressed.
- \* It will be necessary to include supporting pieces of evidence as documentation or proof that the applicant has experienced those activities that relate to the competencies of the course. The supporting evidence may include, but is not limited to the following methods:
  - 1) video-tapes of the student,
  - 2) written work by the student,
  - 3) documented research by the student which demonstrates knowledge of the discipline theory,
  - 4) syllabi from noncredit courses,
  - 5) material from training courses as well as proof that the student attended those courses,
  - 6) letters from experts explaining what the student did as well as why this person is an expert (example, your boss could help verify your skills if he or she was a CPA),
  - 7) PowerPoint presentations.

If more than one course is sought, it is strongly recommended that each course be distinguished. (An appendix is preferred to organize these documents.)

- \* An applicant seeking credit for a specific course must list and address all course competencies listed in the *Amberton University Catalog*.

## **POINTS TO CONSIDER WHILE WRITING THE LIFE EXPERIENCES PORTFOLIO AND ILLUSTRATIONS**

The following comments are intended as aids in developing the life experiences portfolio:

### SETTING UP

1. Select the areas of competency with care and base them on experiences for which distinct information exists and from which one can draw clear implications.
2. Try to pinpoint experiences that were special for an identified competency. The process is not to be a life history but a history of real and significant learning experiences that can be proven with written knowledge and/or documentation support.

3. All the competencies must be addressed.

### ORGANIZATION

Two portfolios must be submitted one with original documentation included (which will be returned to the student, and one with a copy of all documentation, which will be maintained as a university record.

1. Summary Page, notarized (an original must be in each of the two portfolios).
2. Table of Contents (providing the sections of each course attempted).
3. For each course provide the following:
  - a. Course number, title and description.
  - b. For each competency: list the competency in bold font then provide sufficient written details of mastery of the competency.
  - c. After all competencies are addressed, provide an appendix for the course documentation.

### TIPS

1. Do not get lost in reflective analysis; avoid overgeneralizing.
2. Use specific and concrete experiences and illustrations.
3. Make sure that all competencies listed are based on supporting evidence and illustrations within discussion.
4. Avoid giving a choppy, chronological listing of events.
5. Make statements clear and to the point.
6. Specifically demonstrate the knowledge and the skills necessary to complete the course.

## **DOCUMENTING LIFE-LEARNING EXPERIENCES**

Once prior experiential learning for which credit is sought has been identified, the applicant must gather and organize the documentation, which will verify that these experiences have, indeed, taken place.

**Letters of verification** are the most common form of documentation appearing in a portfolio to support prior experiential learning. However, several other forms of documentation may be considered: certificates (When certificates are included, they need to be supported by a description of the content.), commendations, published articles, job descriptions, official transcript of test scores, artistic works, military records, work samples, writing samples, awards, honors and licenses (pilot, broker, real estate, etc.).

The documentation should meet the following standards:

1. If someone is furnishing a written statement to verify experience, the following guidelines should be observed:
  - a. The person preparing the statement should have directly observed the experience and not simply learned about the experience second hand.
  - b. The writer of a verification statement should clearly identify the competency observed by himself/herself.
  - c. The person writing the letter of verification should identify his/her relationship to the applicant (supervisor, peer, subordinate, etc.) as well as his/her qualifications for commenting on the experience. It is critical that the expert be qualified to make that assessment.

- d. Contact information of the person/entity should be provided. Verifying supporting documents will be part of the portfolio review process.
  - e. The letter should be written on the official letterhead stationery of the company or organization with which the writer is or was associated.
  - f. The person writing must be informed that the letter is to be one of **verification**, not recommendation.
2. If the documentation is a **product of experience**, such as a work sample, the following guidelines may be helpful in deciding how to make the presentation:
    - a. The applicant should furnish proof that he/she did, in fact, produce the product presented.
    - b. Some products may be too large, cumbersome, or valuable to include in a portfolio. In such cases, it may be necessary to provide a photograph of the product and a statement of willingness to bring the product to a University official or to take the University official to the product being used as documentation of the experience.
    - c. The applicant should provide a number and diversity of products sufficient to persuade the appropriate University officials that the experience did actually take place.
  3. Documentation is to be directly related to experiences. It is to provide sufficient verification to convince a reasonable person that participation in the experiences described in the portfolio did, in fact, occur.
  4. The documentation should verify both the **quality and quantity** of the experience.
  5. Products which are included in the portfolio should be **clearly** labeled.
  6. All documentation is considered public information. In other words, a number of individuals will look at the documentation furnished by the applicant or furnished in the applicant's behalf. Persons providing letters of verification should be so informed.
  7. Even if the applicant attempts to trim the amount of documentation, some individual specimens may be quite long. The applicant should underline those parts of the document relevant to the learning outcomes with a colored pen.

## **PROCEDURE FOR ASSESSING ACADEMIC CREDIT FOR LEARNING EXPERIENCES**

The development of a good portfolio that provides a comprehensive and quality assessment of an individual's learning experiences can be difficult. An applicant must submit the two completed portfolios physically to Student Services with the portfolio fee or mail the portfolios with the included portfolio fee to the Vice President for Academic Services to be received no later than the end of week 5 of the same session. **Please see the Experiential Learning Portfolio Template at the end of this handbook as a guide for completing a portfolio.**

The portfolio should include the following:

- A. Title Page
  1. Title: A presentation to Amberton University requesting academic credit for life experiences.
  2. Presented by: Applicant's name.
  3. Date: Date of presentation.
- B. Summary page (first page)
 

The summary page should clearly identify the number of academic credits being sought and the courses for which credit is desired (a copy of the form is provided in the back of this booklet).

- C. Presentation of course competencies
  1. Identify the course(s) for which academic credit is being sought.
  2. Identify each course's competencies, followed with sufficient written proof of experience and supporting documentation. All competencies must be addressed.
  3. Include within the evidence statement references to documents included in the appendix, which support the claim of competency.
- D. Appendix

The appendix must include (where appropriate) letters, certificates of verification, current video-links to the student's work on YouTube, written material by the student and other such support materials that provide evidence of achievement for referenced competencies. The materials presented must address the skills and the theory of the courses.

## METHODOLOGY

An applicant submitting a portfolio for evaluation must complete and sign *The Summary Page*, which is the first page in the organization of the actual portfolio. (A copy of the form is provided in the back of this booklet). Any portfolio that is submitted without the summary page included and the signed notary statement will not be reviewed and no refund of fees will be made to the applicant. An applicant's completed portfolio will be delivered to the Vice President for Academic Services, who will assign the portfolio to a faculty committee.

After carefully assessing the portfolio, the committee will submit their findings to the Vice President for Academic Services. The student will be awarded credit based upon the verification of competencies, as perceived by the committee.

The process for evaluation may take a few weeks at the end of the semester as multiple experts will evaluate the portfolio. To submit a portfolio for review in a particular session, the student must submit a form and initial fee during registration dates of a session. Then, the student must submit the portfolio no later than the end of week 5 of the same session for review. The student will be notified in writing of the results of the evaluation of the portfolio. First, each portfolio course will be evaluated by an expert professor in the discipline area related to the course(s) attempted. Then, the entire portfolio will be evaluated by two different members of the experiential committee. Finally, the entire portfolio will be reviewed and approved by the Vice President for Academic Services when a credit per course decision is made.

## LEVEL OF COURSES ELIGIBLE FOR CREDIT

Amberton University restricts the awarding of academic credit to undergraduate courses.

## COSTS

To have a portfolio evaluated, the applicant must have applied for admission and been accepted. Submit a portfolio for review in the first two sessions after admittance to Amberton. There are two fees associated with the portfolio process: 1) an **application fee** due during the registration period each session (see Portfolio Application Form below), and 2) a **portfolio fee** per course attempted due when the portfolio is submitted by the end of week 5 of the same session. Please see Amberton schedule of fees for both fee amounts. **The fees associated with the portfolio process are not eligible for Title IV financial aid.** Both fees are nonrefundable. If granted credit, there is no charge for recording the credits on a Transfer of Credit Report at Amberton University.



## Portfolio Application Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ AUID : \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_  
City,St,Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### COURSE(S) TO BE EVALUATED

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Discipline:      Course Number      Course Title

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Discipline:      Course Number      Course Title

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Discipline:      Course Number      Course Title

### FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:

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**Portfolio Fee(s) Amount      Date Payment Received      Business Office Signature**

## **DISCIPLINES OFFERED BY AMBERTON UNIVERSITY**

(See the *Amberton University Catalog* for details)

### **BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION**

ACC = Accounting

BUS = Business

ECO = Economics

FIN = Finance

MGT = Management

MIS = Management Information Systems

MKT = Marketing

COM = Communication

ENG = English

HIS = History

HBD = Human Behavior and Development

HUM = Humanities

MAT = Mathematics

PSY = Psychology

REL = Religion

SCI = Science

**TEMPLATE FOR REQUESTING ACADEMIC CREDIT FOR LIFE**

**EXPERIENCES**

**TITLE PAGE SHOULD INCLUDE:**

Presented by

<Insert Applicant's Name>

Course Identification

<Insert Course Number and Title>

Date

<Insert date application is presented.>

**SUMMARY PAGE**

<Please include a signed original form in both portfolios>

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ AUID : \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

City,St,Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**COURSE(s) TO BE EVALUATED**

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Discipline:      Course Number      Course Title

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Discipline:      Course Number      Course Title

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Discipline:      Course Number      Course Title

**FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:**

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**Portfolio Fee(s) Amount      Date Payment Received      Business Office Signature**

**STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY**

I have read, understood, and abided by Amberton University's Policies and Procedures for requesting Academic Credit for Life Experiences.

I certify that this portfolio is my own work and is accurate and truthfully reflects my personal experiential learning.

Student  
Signature and  
date

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

Date

**NOTARY SIGNATURE**

**(THIS SHOULD BE THE FIRST PAGE OF THE PORTFOLIO. IF THIS PAGE IS NOT INCLUDED THE PORTFOLIO WILL NOT BE EVALUATED)**

State of Texas

County of \_\_\_\_\_

Before me, \_\_\_\_\_ (insert the name and character of Notary officer), on this day personally appeared \_\_\_\_\_, proved to me through \_\_\_\_\_ (description of identity card or other document) to be the person whose name is subscribed to the foregoing instrument and acknowledged to me that he/she executed the same for the purposes and consideration therein expressed.

Given under my hand and seal of office this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_

(seal)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Notary Public Signature

## **PRESENTATION OF COURSE COMPETENCIES**

1. Identify the course(s) for which academic credit is being sought on the Summary Page.
2. Identify each course with a title page in the Portfolio so it is clear which course is being presented.
3. Using a separate section in the Portfolio for each course submitted, identify each course's competencies, followed with sufficient written proof of experience and supporting documentation. All competencies must be addressed.
4. Include within the evidence statement references to documents included in the appendix which support the claim of competency

### **APPENDIX**

The appendix must include a separate appendix section for each course that is attempted in the portfolio. The appendix should include (as appropriate) letters, certificates of verification, written material by the student and other such support materials that provide evidence of achievement for referenced competencies. The materials presented must address the skills and the theory of the courses.