

# POLK STATE PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT PORTFOLIO GUIDELINES

## Introduction

Polk State College is committed to quality education and recognizes that learners in higher education come with many experiences from varied backgrounds. Therefore, in accordance with guidelines established by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), Polk State College has developed a process through which learners may earn college credit for prior learning experiences that do not fit into another category of recognized credit (e.g. external standardized credit-by-exam, articulated licensure, or certification).

Extra-institutional learning is defined as learning that is attained outside the sponsorship of legally authorized and accredited postsecondary educational institutions. The term applies to learning acquired from work and life experiences; independent reading and study; mass media; and participation in formal courses sponsored by associations, business, government, industry, the military, and unions. Polk State recognizes extra-institutional learning through a portfolio assessment process and adheres to the guidelines established by the CAEL.

The guidelines presented are intended to provide a foundation for the experiential learning process, with an emphasis on learning outcomes and competencies that the learner will document in each portfolio. Credit proposed by the learner and granted by the evaluator will be course specific. Students may earn a maximum of 25% of the credit in the academic program for which they are enrolled through PLA.

Students will complete the following before they will be accepted to complete the Prior Learning Portfolio Process:

1. Review the PLA Information and Orientation Presentation found on the [polk.edu/pla](http://polk.edu/pla) website to gain an overview of the process and to self-assess eligibility for PLA.

2. Verify you meet the following qualifications for PLA:

- Enrolled in a degree-seeking program at Polk State College
- Completed ENC 1101 (or equivalent)
- Minimum of 3 years professional experience

3. Submit the completed **Prior Learning Assessment Request to Pursue** form (found at [www.polk.edu/pla](http://www.polk.edu/pla)) and submit to Matina Wagner, Internship/PLA Coordinator.

Include in your "Request" packet:

- Abstract from Polk State Prior Learning Portfolio Guidelines
- Basic Course Information (BCI) Sheet for the specific course you are requesting credit for (see [www.polk.edu/bci](http://www.polk.edu/bci)) / Course syllabus
- Resume
- Unofficial college transcripts (if applicable)

Request packets may be submitted electronically at [mwagner@polk.edu](mailto:mwagner@polk.edu).

Students must keep a copy of the submitted/approved **Prior Learning Assessment Request to Pursue** form and the attachments to include in the portfolio.

4. The PLA Coordinator will assure that your Request Packet is complete and meets basic criteria and will forward it to the appropriate Program Director/District Dean for approval to proceed with the PLA portfolio.

5. Once the program director approves your request to pursue PLA, the student must take the **Prior Learning Assessment Portfolio Development course**. Polk State College provides a non-credit, online course called SLS 2371 *Prior Learning Assessment Portfolio Development*. Students requesting PLA credit are required to take this course for the first portfolio, but may opt not to retake it for subsequent portfolio submissions. This course provides further explanation for PLA portfolio development through guided step-by-step instruction and instructor availability while the student prepares the first portfolio. This course can be taken by registering in Higher Reach and is provided as an “open entry/open exit” course.

6. Build portfolio. It can be helpful to review this information and to identify and gather your documentation prior to taking the portfolio class in order to expedite your progress.

### **The Portfolio Defined**

A portfolio is a compilation of information presented by the learner to equate experiential learning to a specific college course or courses for a specified number of semester hours. It includes:

- Cover page
- Table of contents
- Abstract
- Copy showing student paid for credit-by-assessment (non-refundable)
- PLA Request to Pursue** form
- Course BCI with the course’s learning outcomes delineated for each course for which the student is requesting credit
- Student autobiography, chronological record
- Resume
- Introduction, goal statements
- Significant learning statements/outcomes with learning narratives
- Completed **Significant Learning Worksheet** for each learning objective
- Narrative to convey knowledge acquired
- Bibliography
- Documentation – index, letters of verification, documentation with captions or artifacts if needed
- Appendices
- Evaluation form(s) for each course for the evaluator to complete the portfolio is reviewed by an evaluator who determines whether there is sufficient explanation and documentation to assess learning and award credit.

### **Portfolio Components in Detail –**

Each of these items must be in each portfolio submitted and in this sequence.

**A. Cover Page:** The cover page will include your name, student identification number, address, phone number, and e-mail address.

**B. Abstract:** The one-page abstract includes an executive summary justifying your request and stating the documentation you will be providing to substantiate your PLA. The abstract should

be succinct, but should also clearly indicate the link between the experience, what learning took place, and the course the student wishes to use the experience in place of.

It will be submitted as part of the (electronically is acceptable) **Request to Pursue** packet, and then included in your portfolio.

**C. Table of Contents:** The table of contents includes the portfolio page numbers, supporting documents properly cataloged, and noted.

**D. Autobiography:** The autobiography is a complete picture of the learner – who you are, what you have done, what you know, and what you want to accomplish. To demonstrate why you have selected the course in this portfolio, prepare an autobiographical essay based on your life experiences using your resume as a guide. Relate the relevant experiences to the course in a general explanation. (Specifics will be detailed in the **Significant Learning Worksheet**). The autobiography introduces you to the evaluator and helps him/her understand the context of your learning for the particular course you are requesting. This should include your educational and career goals. More importantly, it is intended to help you reflect on how experiences from different times in your life may have come together for a common goal.

To summarize, the essay should be two-four pages and summarize the significant learning experiences in your life; define your personal, educational, and career goals; and describe how your experiences will validate your knowledge of the course content and meet the course outcomes being petitioned for credit.

**E. Resume:** Provide an updated resume to include education and work experiences. Detail significant activities, exact dates, accomplishments in the workplace, and all non-formal and work related training.

**F. Degree Audit:** Include a print out of your program-objective degree audit, highlighting the courses for which you are trying to earn credit.

**Significant Learning Worksheet-Course Objective Matrix:** The **Significant Learning Worksheet-Course Objective Matrix** is a worksheet to organize, categorize and reflect on your life experiences as they directly relate to the course and the specific course objectives. Your completed document must address the outcomes of the course for which credit is being requested. For each course objective, complete a **Significant Learning Worksheet/Matrix** using a chronological outline of your applicable life experiences. The categories listed on the worksheet include employment, workshops, volunteer work, recreation, self-directed learning, military service, licenses, travel, and other items. Other items might include personal crisis (e.g., death or divorce), health (e.g., disability or illness), relationships (e.g., parenting or elder care), and many more. For each category under each learning outcome, list what you have done, indicate how much time was involved, and describe the activities. Each learning outcome that you justify must refer to documentation you have collected. Explain what you learned using action verbs (i.e., *differentiate, compare, contrast, list, calculate, solve, construct, organize*, etc.). \*If you do not have valid documentation you will be unable to use the experience. Your Matrix must tie the experience to a specific learning objective and you must be able to indicate how it enabled you to achieve the learning outcomes.

**G. Narrative:** From the information and supporting documentation on your **Significant Learning Worksheet/Matrix**, you will develop an essay to summarize the learning from your

experiences based on the course description and outcomes. This essay (or narrative) is a detailed explanation of your activities and the resulting competencies achieved.

1. Use the course objectives to guide your discussion of your accomplishments.
2. Pull in details from the related **Significant Learning Worksheet/Matrix**; explain where, why, and what experiences were involved.
3. For a course that includes a substantial amount of theory, demonstrate that you have the appropriate balance of theory and application.
4. The narrative will incorporate terminology appropriate to the course and examples of applications of the concepts as demonstrated through your accomplishments.

Consider the narrative as an open-book take-home test. Make sure it is clear, concise, and free of errors in sentence structure, grammar, and spelling. It needs to demonstrate college-level writing and critical thinking. The narrative may be three-ten pages in length, depending on the course.

**H. Bibliography:** The bibliography indicates reading done on the portfolio subject. You should have at least 3-10 references, probably including the course's textbook. Cite sources when you make reference to theorists, laws, statistical data, and any information that does not come from your own mind in the portfolio. References must be cited in American Psychological Association (APA) style.

**I. Documentation:** Each of your experiences and competencies will require verification (evidence). This evidence can take several forms:

Completion of training programs, workshops, seminars, etc., may be verified through certificates; personnel records, specifically performance reviews showing competencies; job descriptions; transcripts; samples of work; testimonials; certificates of attendance; and/or evidence of knowledge or letters of verification listing proven competencies from instructors or employers. Each piece of documentation for a workshop or training program must be accompanied by a description page of content for each workshop, training program, or seminar and must show how the evidence relates to the course learning outcomes.

Employment history and job responsibilities may be documented on copies of performance appraisals, company job descriptions, and examples of projects or reports (verified as your work), or a supervisor's letter of verification.

Evidence of volunteer work may include awards, newspaper articles, or letters of commendation.

If your portfolio is a request for credit for a performance or activity-based course, you will need to submit evidence such as:

- A videotape of your speech, theatre work, or music recital
- Samples of your painting, drawing, photography, or ceramics for a studio art course
- Samples of presentations or reports you have generated and verified as your work to

document competency in spreadsheets or other software

Letters are a common form of verification and can be very effective if the writer understands the purpose of the letter. When you request an individual to write a letter of verification, provide the person with the course description you are presenting in your portfolio. Explain you are requesting equivalent college credit for experiential learning and provide a copy of what might be included in a verification letter.

Extraneous or inappropriate documentation may indicate to the evaluator that you lack understanding of how your experiences relate to your learning.

*Note: When submitting your portfolio, it is important that documentation be specific to the course description and learning outcomes used in your portfolio.*

**J. APPENDICES:** Documentation of additional materials such as references used in citation.

**Evaluation Forms:** Student will include a **Prior Learning Assessment Portfolio Evaluator Response / Rating Rubric** form for the course requested for evaluation.

### **Academic Honesty**

Plagiarism, falsification, or misrepresentation are unacceptable and will result in disqualification of the portfolio.

### **The Completed Portfolio**

Before submitting your portfolio, it is recommended that you make a copy for your own records.

**6.** Pay PLA fee of \$50/course credit sought (e.g., if the course you wish to use PLA credit for is 3 credits the fee will be \$150). This is a nonrefundable fee. Submit the receipt with portfolio.

**7.** Submit the portfolio to the program director or district dean who approved your request packet. The evaluator will review the documentation and complete the **Evaluator Response/ Rating Rubric**. Expect to receive the results in approximately six weeks.

### **Portfolio Rating and Credit**

When credit is *approved*, the evaluator makes a recommendation to grant credit for the course requested and the student will receive a copy of the **Evaluator Response/Rubric** form from the Registrar's office after credit has been posted to the student record.

Alternatively, the evaluator may return the portfolio for minor explanation and/or documentation revisions. Large revisions will not be allowed. The determination regarding option to revise is based on the evaluator's assessment of the portfolio via the Rating Rubric. If the portfolio is returned for minor revisions, a date of return will be listed on the **Evaluator Response/Rubric** form. The student must return the portfolio by the date listed or forfeit the credit with an automatic denial.

If credit is *denied*, the evaluator will provide feedback on the portfolio along with the **Evaluator Response/Rubric**. The student may appeal in writing to the Program Director or District Dean, who may determine whether to resubmit to another evaluator or make other recommendations to the student. All appeals must be requested within 30 days of the student notification mail-out date.

## Significant Learning Worksheet (Course Objective Matrix)

Use this worksheet to identify specific competencies and learning outcomes as they directly relate to this portfolio. Please obtain an electronic copy at [polk.edu/pla](http://polk.edu/pla) for use with your portfolio.

### Course Learning Objective:

Experience	Time spent in activity	Description of duties and activities	Learning outcomes as applied to course objective	Documentation (evidence of experience)
Employment, Work Experience				
Workshops, Webinars, Training, Seminars, Professional Development				
Volunteer Activities, Community Service, Committees, Groups				
Military Experience/training				
Licenses (that do not qualify for articulated credit)				
Self-Directed Study, Independent Reading, on-line non-credit courses				
Recreation, Hobbies				
Awards				
Publications				
Travel				
Other				

NOTE: For each course learning objective an experience must be applied and detailed.

For each experience being used in portfolio, the student must clearly specify:

- **What** the experience was: the time spent in activity; description of duties and activities
- **How** it relates to the **Learning Objectives** for the course targeted
- **Documentation** as evidence of the experience as used toward the course objective, and as an indication of the level and appropriateness of content.

# Letter of Verification Guide

(Company Letterhead)

Date

To whom it may concern:

Introduction of how the individual writing the letter is acquainted with the learner and the length of time. (Why he/she is qualified to verify the learning and experience.)

A description of the learner's experience and responsibilities, and a detailed explanation of the learning. Statement of authenticity for a project, report, etc., submitted by the learner, if applicable.

If qualified to do so, the individual writing the letter may equate the learner's knowledge with what would be taught in a comparable college course. (Note: The letter of verification is not a personal recommendation or testimony of character, but rather an outline of facts to support the learner's narrative.)

A telephone number, if different than letterhead, where the writer may be reached if the evaluator has questions.

Sincerely,

Original Signature

**Polk State College  
Prior Learning Assessment  
EVALUATOR RESPONSE / RATING RUBRIC**

**Student Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **ID #:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Assessor:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**PLA submitted as credit for:**

Course Number \_\_\_\_\_ Credits \_\_\_\_\_  
Course Title \_\_\_\_\_

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**1. Item Inventory (all components must be included in this order)**

- Cover page
  - Table of contents
  - Request to Pursue Prior Learning Assessment Credit – signed approval
  - Course syllabus with learning outcomes delineated (from BCI)
  - Abstract
  - Copy of paid receipt for PLA (non-refundable)
  - Autobiography, including chronological record
  - Resume
  - Goal statements/degree audit, highlighting requirement to be achieved
  - Significant Learning Worksheet/Course Objective Matrix
  - Narrative of knowledge acquired
  - Bibliography
  - Substantiating documentation
  - Appendix (as needed)
  - Evaluator forms (provided by the portfolio reviewer)
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**2. Summary of Evaluation (see Rubric for details)**

The student documented competencies in at least 70% of the course content per the course learning objectives. \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If no, please elaborate: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The learner, using a mixture of theory and practice as well as appropriate terminology, indicated a competent understanding of the course material and demonstrate how the learning was acquired. \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If no, please elaborate: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Comments from Portfolio Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## RATING RUBRIC

**Criteria for Satisfactory grade:** Candidates must score the minimum of 70 overall points and a minimum score of 7 in any category. See points key at the end of rubric.

ITEM	Target	✓	Item Score
<b>SOURCES OF LEARNING (EXPERIENCES)</b>			
<b>1. Validity:</b> Documentation and description of experiences as a <b>valid basis for PLA.</b>	Portfolio content succinctly narrates and describes the significance of the candidate's relevant learning experiences and supplies relevant documentation as evidence in order to establish the candidate as qualified to write on the subject. Completed in PLA course		
<b>EVIDENCE OF LEARNING (COMPETENCIES)</b>			
<b>2. Evidence (overall)</b>	Candidate provides evidence of learning from experience.		
<b>3. Accuracy:</b> Evidence properly formatted and aligned with <b>specific learning outcomes</b>	Candidate provides adequate and appropriate evidence of each learning outcome for the targeted course per the course syllabus/BCI.  Student has constructed an electronic portfolio accurately formatted, and with complete information for each section and learning objective.		
<b>4. Reliability:</b> Evidence aligned <b>with personal experience</b>	From the candidate's description of personal examples, it is clear that the learning arose from the candidate's direct experience and/or experience represents the candidate's understanding of the topic.		
<b>5. Matrix:</b> Evidence aligned with academic theory / <b>learning objectives</b>	Appropriate amount and use of academic theory is integrated within the submission, so that the candidate's learning is grounded in the academic frameworks of the topic.		
<b>QUALITY OF PRESENTATION OF SUBMISSION</b>			
<b>6. Breadth / Depth of Submission</b>	There is an appropriate depth and breadth of discussion related to requested credits (upper vs. lower division, and amount).		
<b>7. Narratives</b>	Narratives clearly introduce the prior learning experience and its relevance to the targeted course.		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>┆ Narratives effectively summarize the main points and critical details, and state outcomes achieved through the experience.</li> </ul>		
<b>8. Source Material</b>	In-text and end-of-text citations of all sourced materials are correct, complete, and verifiable.		
<b>9. Documentation</b>	Documentation provided is effective evidence of experience; documentation is effectively referred to within submission, and its significance and relevance is clear.		
<b>10. Sentence Structure, Mechanics, and Overall Presentation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>┆ PLA submission is well-organized, uses appropriate format aligned with objectives and outcomes, and progresses in logical, convincing order.</li> <li>┆ Each sentence is structured effectively.</li> <li>┆ Virtually free of punctuation, spelling, capitalization errors; appropriate format and presentation for assignment.</li> <li>┆ Effective use of vocabulary, and correct and effective grammatical form(s).</li> <li>┆ PLA submission is professionally presented, complete, and clear.</li> </ul>		
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b>			

Course Objective (abbreviated)	Comments relative to ratings above.	Obj. Incl. ✓	Obj. Met/ Not
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BREAK-DOWN OF EVALUATION OF COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES			
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
(add as needed)			

<b>Points:</b>	
0 = item/content not evidenced or missing. 1 = item/content insufficiently evidenced 3 = item/content minimally evidenced 5 = item/content inconsistently evidenced 7 = item/content satisfactorily evidenced 10 = item/content fully evidenced	Total points possible: 100 Minimum to pass: 70

**DETERMINATION OF PLA:**

**Recommendation:**

\_\_\_\_\_Portfolio Approved. Credits Awarded for course requested.

\_\_\_\_\_Minor Revisions Necessary. Resubmit deadline\_\_\_\_\_ **(Once the submission deadline is past, the student may no longer be granted credits for the portfolio.)**

If revisions necessary, please explain:

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\_\_\_\_\_Extensive Revisions Necessary. No credit awarded.  
If credits are denied, please explain:

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**Portfolio Evaluator**

Evaluator Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Supervising Academic Dean (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Dean Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Registrar's Office:**

Registrar Approval. \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Credits entered into record. \_\_\_\_\_

Staff Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_