

Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Guide

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Overview

The American Council on Education (ACE) and the Council on Post-secondary Accreditation (COPA) have acknowledged that “American society abounds in resources for learning at the post-secondary level. Associations, business, government, industry, and unions sponsor formal instruction. In addition, independent study and reading, work experiences, the mass media, and social interaction contribute to learning and competency.” The prior learning* assessment process assists Greenville College in fulfilling the ACE and COPA exhortation for post-secondary institutions to "assess extra-institutional learning* as part of their credentialing function."¹

Students' learning derived from academic, personal and professional experiences since high school is assessed through the prior learning assessment process. This handbook describes how students can earn credit for prior learning through the Organizational Leadership program at Greenville College.**

- * See Appendix A - Definition of Terms for a further explanation of prior and extra-institutional learning
- ** Greenville College cannot guarantee the transferability of prior learning credits to another institution.

¹ ACE/COPA Statement on *Awarding Credit for Extra-institutional Learning*.

Prior Learning Assessment

“Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is a process whereby learning you have acquired since high school and have not had transcribed by a college is evaluated to determine whether it is comparable with what is taught in college and, if so, is recognized by the award of college credit.” (Lamdin, 1992)

Methods for Evaluating Experiential Learning

The methods Greenville College uses to evaluate a student’s prior learning include:

1. Proficiency Examinations
2. Completion of Professional Training Programs
3. Professional Licenses or Certificates
4. Learning Experience Essays

Proficiency Examinations

CLEP. The College Level Examination Program is the most widely accepted **credit-by-examination program** in the United States, helping students earn college credit for what they already know. By receiving a satisfactory score, you can earn from 3 to 12 college credits toward your college degree for each test you take, depending on the exam subject.

There are two kinds of CLEP exams: *general* and *subject*.

General. Each of the general exams covers material taught in courses that most students take as requirements in the first two years of college. Each is 90 minutes long and, except for the English composition version with essay, consists entirely of multiple-choice questions to be answered in two separately timed sections. From 3 to 6 semester hours of credit are usually awarded for satisfactory scores on each general examination. General examinations are given in the following areas: English composition, or English composition with essay, humanities, mathematics, social sciences and history, and natural sciences. The general exams are useful if you have broad knowledge in one of these fields equivalent to what you would have learned in the first two years of college.

Subject. Each subject examination covers material taught in an undergraduate course with a similar title at most colleges and universities. A college that accepts CLEP subject exams usually grants the same amount of credit to students earning satisfactory scores as it grants to students passing that course.

See your local community college or visit the CLEP web site for further information - www.collegeboard.com/clep/.

DSST. Similar to CLEP, DSST offers 38 subject-level exams in diverse disciplines and cover upper and lower-level baccalaureate credit courses. For more information on DSST exams, visit their website at www.getcollegetcredit.com.

Completion of Professional Training Programs

Much of the formal adult education and training in the United States takes place in courses sponsored by the military, by corporations, and by government agencies. These courses are taught by experts in the field, cover the material in depth, and are highly demanding. In many cases, this level of training is equivalent to college-level learning.

There are national organizations that evaluate such courses and make credit recommendations. If the course or courses you took have already been evaluated, Greenville College will accept such recommendations provided the documentation is satisfactory.

The main sources for information on evaluated programs include:

National College Credit Recommendation Service
College Credit Recommendation Service (CREDIT)
Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services, American Council on Education

Training programs that do not appear in any of these guides are evaluated on a case by case basis by faculty evaluators at Greenville College. Use the form found in Appendix B for petitioning the College to evaluate training programs you have completed.

Professional Licenses and Certificates

Greenville College recognizes specific professional credentials and licenses as representing an established amount of college-level learning. Appendix C contains a partial list of programs that have been previously evaluated and the corresponding credit award. Use the petition form found in Appendix B to submit for evaluation.

Learning Experience Essays

The methods mentioned so far rely heavily on the presenting of existing documents that verify the student's learning. However, not all learning is done in formal settings and neatly documented. Some learning occurs over a period of time from a number of experiences where documentation proving what you know may not exist. This informal learning requires a different approach to validate the knowledge and competencies students have gained from experience.

The way students at Greenville College describe and document their informal learning experiences is by writing learning experience essays. Appendix D contains a partial list of essays written by former students.

The Parts of a Learning Experience Essay

Part One – The Petition for Academic Credit

The Petition for Academic Credit for Experiential Learning serves as the cover page for your learning experience essay. This form is found in Appendix E.

Complete the petition form as described below.

Original or Revised Submission	Mark whether you are submitting the original or revised essay. Include a new petition form for each revision. Always send your original essay back to the evaluator when they request a revision.
Group Number	Include your group number.
Department	Choose the department most appropriate for your topic from the list of subject areas for learning experience essays found in Appendix D. If you are unsure of the department name, leave this space blank and the PLA Advisor will fill in the department name.
Title	Provide a title for the essay. In five words or less choose a title similar to a college course title.
Credit Request	A college course usually earns one to three semester hours. Three semester hours is the maximum amount that you can request for a learning experience essay.
Learning Outcomes	List approximately 5-7 learning outcomes that you

acquired from your experiences. Your learning outcomes are similar to college course objectives in that they describe the types of tasks you are able to perform as a result of your learning. Use these learning outcomes to develop the outline for your essay. Your essay should then demonstrate and support the learning outcome claims you make.

Part Two - The Learning Experience Essay

Choosing an Essay Topic

Identifying knowledge, skills, or experiences are some of the ways you can begin to identify topics for learning experience essays. Your autobiography may also help you identify particular skills and competencies or significant learning experiences.

Knowledge - Do not limit exploration to work-related learning when identifying knowledge areas. In some subject areas you acquire knowledge from many experiences over a period of time rather than from a single experience. Identify knowledge areas first and then think about the experiences you associate with them.

Much college-equivalent learning we gain from experiences that are not related to work, e.g., hobbies (art, music, drama), travel (foreign cultures), reading (literature, history, psychology), church (teaching, directing) and community work (youth leadership, government).

Skills - Another approach is to make a list of skills or competencies. Begin each statement with "I know . . ." or "I can. . ." This approach is useful in further identifying knowledge and skills within a given course area; e.g., "Regarding supervision, I know . . ." or "I can. . ." Then discuss each knowledge area or skill in more detail.

Experience - Sometimes a body of knowledge will be associated with a single learning experience, and thinking about that experience will help to identify the knowledge area; e.g., knowledge of Mexican culture from living in Mexico. There may be other instances, however, where a given experience may be associated with several knowledge areas. For example, a financial manager may have acquired knowledge in supervision, budgeting and technical writing. It may be helpful to think of certain jobs or accomplishments and identify the skills and knowledge required for each.

Constructing an Outline

Once you decide on a topic, construct an informal outline consisting of the major learning outcomes from your experience(s). A sample outline follows that clearly identifies the learning outcomes of the student. As a result of her volunteer experience, she has learned how to plan and facilitate a meeting, plan and coordinate an event, motivate others, and identify community needs.

Volunteerism (Sample)

- I. Introduction
 - A. I have over fifteen years of experience volunteering with various organizations.
 - B. Thesis: It was through my volunteer experiences that I have learned how to run an effective meeting, plan events, motivate volunteers, and identify community needs.
- II. Planning and facilitating an organizational meeting
 - A. The value of planning before the meeting.
 - B. The value of preparing an agenda.
 - C. The value of recording minutes.
- III. Planning and coordinating special events
 - A. Knowing how and when to delegate responsibilities.
 - B. Knowing how to manage my time carefully.
 - C. Knowing how to recruit and train volunteers.
- IV. Motivating volunteers
 - A. The importance of recognition.
 - B. The importance of selecting the right person for the job.
- V. Identifying individual and community needs
 - A. Recognizing issues that affect the community.
 - B. Recognizing the importance of meeting individual needs.
 - C. Recognizing solutions to problems.
- VI. Conclusion

Writing the Introduction

Begin your essay with an introduction of 50 - 150 words. The first paragraph should serve as a guide for the rest of the essay and introduce the topic of your essay. Include a sentence or two about your experience and then summarize the general concepts or learning outcomes to be discussed in the remainder of the essay. This is a very important organizing tool, and it will assist your reader in knowing what to expect as they read on. For example, a student petitioning for credit in small business management might begin the essay like this:

I have been the owner-manager of the XYZ Tool Company since 1998. As owner-manager I have been responsible for all aspects of running a small business. I have learned a great deal about advertising, supervision of personnel, inventory, pricing, and the legal aspects of business. I have also learned how to assess the local market and to purchase raw materials at reasonable prices.

This student would develop the body of the essay by writing one or more paragraphs on each of the learning outcomes mentioned in their introduction (i.e., one or more paragraphs each on advertising, supervision, inventory, etc). A discussion of the knowledge, principles, sources, applications, and other examples derived from personal experience related to each area would then follow.

Writing the Body

James S. Coleman (1976) has outlined several differences between experiential and classroom learning. Coleman refers to classroom or "traditional" learning as INFORMATION ASSIMILATION. This mode of learning involves four steps: receiving information, understanding the general principles, identifying potential applications of the general principles, and taking action in specific experiences. This approach to learning is deductive, arriving at a practical application from the general principle.

In describing EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING, Coleman uses similar steps in the learning process, but in a different sequence. The four steps in this process involve taking action in specific experiences, analyzing the consequences of actions, understanding the general principle, and applying the general principle in new situations. This approach to learning is inductive, developing a general concept from specific experiences.

There are significant differences in how people learn in the traditional, information assimilation mode and how they learn via experiences. One of the differences concerns the individual's grasp of the knowledge base of the field. The traditionally educated have a greater *breadth* of the knowledge base and are familiar with many concepts/theories of the area; however, their *depth* of application of these concepts in "real life" is relatively shallow. The experientially educated, on the other hand, have a deep understanding of how a particular concept is applied, but rarely do they have a grasp on the other concepts of the field.

Two major items need to be covered in a learning experience essay:

1. GENERAL CONCEPTS of the field.
2. SPECIFIC EXPERIENCES of the individual.

Credit is awarded for an individual's grasp of general concepts; it is not given for their specific experiences. Experiences are used in a learning experience essay, however, to illustrate how the individual learned and has applied the general concepts. These practical applications of general concepts are crucial in demonstrating a thorough understanding of how concepts apply to new situations. The ideal learning experience essay should provide a balance between breadth of theory (general concepts) and depth of practical application (specific experiences).

When developing a learning experience essay, it is helpful to begin by identifying the general concepts of the field with which you are familiar. You could start by listing the key concepts or learning outcomes in outline form. These general concepts form the elements of the essay's thesis statement, providing the skeleton for the body of the essay.

After the concepts have been identified, you should reflect upon what specific experiences aided you in learning these concepts. This could include personal and professional experiences as well as the more traditional reading and research. When you are able to apply learning from a previous experience to a new situation, you demonstrate a balance between breadth of theory and depth of practical application.

Experience will be a thread throughout the essay; include it to explain a source of concepts, an application of theory, or as an illustration of a principle; e.g., giving examples from experience.

To get an idea of the interplay between all these factors, consider the following example, which is just part of several paragraphs on advertising principles and procedures:

I learned in an American Management Association course that the best advertisement is the one which costs the least and has the greatest coverage. However, it pays to be sure that the coverage is the best. For example, one of the newspapers offered a good deal on additional coverage in the entire northern area for a small extra charge. I thought this was advantageous until I began getting mail orders from 500 miles away and was spending my profits on postage.

In this excerpt, the student's experience is clear. In the experience are two principles of advertising: Advertising should cover manageable territory, and advertisers should use the lowest cost advertising that gives them the greatest coverage. The student clearly shows that part of the acquired knowledge about advertising came from work experience and part from a course taken from the American Management Association. The essayist refers to an application of the principle of greatest coverage for lowest cost and gives an observation from that experience: Too much profit was being spent for postage.

Writing the Conclusion

The conclusion should review the major learning outcomes discussed in the essay. Any global applications or conclusions are also appropriate in this section.

Part Three - Documentation

The final element evaluators look for in a learning experience essay is appropriate documentation verifying the student's specific learning experiences. Two to five pieces of documentation is generally sufficient to support your essay. It is acceptable to provide copies rather than originals of any documentation you include.

Examples of Documentation:

1. Documenting Professional Experience: employment or military records; awards; letters of commendation; letters of corroboration from supervisors, peers, clients; congratulations on high performance; promotion evaluations; evidence of promotion; evidence of suggestions adopted; samples of work produced; membership in professional or trade organizations; scores on licensing exams; bills of sale; rating forms; and work samples.

NOT acceptable as documentation alone, but useful in clarification: explanation of ranking, rating, or a classification system in a company or organization; performance standards; membership requirements; and job descriptions.

2. Documenting Community Service Activities: commendations; awards; newspaper and magazine clippings; letters of corroboration from co-volunteers, clients served or supervisors.
3. Documenting Special Accomplishments: books published; pictures painted; music written; patents obtained; mementos from countries lived in and traveled to; machines designed; exhibits such as shells or plants; speeches given; programs from performances; writing samples; auditorium presentations; proposals written.

Submit works of art in an appropriate visual form using appropriate lighting and get as close to the work as possible. Provide titles, media, size, and date of completion.

4. Using Letters as Documentation: letters can be used for verifying many learning outcomes. When asking someone to write a letter of verification, give explicit instructions as to what the letter should contain to the person from whom you are requesting the letter. Use the following guidelines in writing for letters of verification.
 - a. The individual writing the letter must know you and have first-hand knowledge of the experiential activity you describe in your essay.
 - b. The author of the letter should state clearly the nature of your relationship.

- c. The author of the letter should use official letterhead stationery of their company or organization.
- d. The content of the letter should focus on the duties, responsibilities, tasks or activities which were inherent in the experience under consideration. In addition, the letter should tell the context of the experience -- the who, what, when, where, why, and for how long.
- e. A special accomplishment resulting in a product requires documentation in the form of one or more letters of verification authored by persons who observed you while the product was being developed.
- f. Make it clear to the author that the letter to be written is one of verification, not recommendation.

Learning Experience Essay Quality and Length

Carefully proofread your learning experience essay to ensure it is free of typographical and grammatical errors. We also recommend you follow APA guidelines in writing your essays. Your essay should be **seven to ten pages** in length, not including the petition form and documentation. Evaluators will only evaluate essays that meet the minimum length requirement.

Duplication of Credit

In choosing the topics for learning experience essays:

1. Avoid areas which duplicate credit already earned through previous college course work or credit by examination.
2. Review prior college courses on your transcripts. Keep in mind that your instructor does not have a copy of your transcripts and may not be aware of previous courses you have taken.
3. Also, do not choose a topic which duplicates a course you will take in this program (e.g. an essay on group dynamics would duplicate the dynamics of group behavior course).

Credit Limits

Twenty-two credit hours are the maximum number hours Greenville College will award through the prior learning assessment process. The college will only accept a total of thirty credit hours of vocational, technical, or Bible courses. Your transcript evaluation will reveal how many of these credits have been accepted.

References

It is acceptable and desirable to include in the learning experience essay any books read, consultations with experts, and/or other references used in the past which have added to understanding. Be sure to include the title and author, especially if the author's ideas are discussed or quoted. Discuss why that resource was chosen and how it was used. A list of references is always appropriate as part of the documentation for an essay. Use the proper APA format when citing references.

Sample Petition Form and Learning Experience Essay

On the following pages is a sample Petition for Academic Credit for Experiential Learning form and Learning Experience Essay.

Petition for Academic Credit for Experiential Learning

Name: *Ima Jean*
 Essay Title: *Volunteerism*

Group Number: *128*
 Credit Request: *3*

Briefly describe the major learning outcomes acquired from your experience(s).

As a result of my fifteen years of volunteer experience with various organizations, I am able to do the following:

- 1. plan and facilitate an organizational meeting;*
- 2. plan and coordinate an event by utilizing the assistance and ability of others;*
- 3. employ techniques and strategies for motivating others;*
- 4. identify important community needs; and*
- 5. create and maintain a positive environment for children's growth.*

Evaluator's Use Only

	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Evidence of college-level learning outcomes					
Documentation of experience					
Proven ability to reflect upon and apply learning					
Written presentation					

Evaluator's Comments: (Use reverse side if necessary)

Credit Award: _____

Returned for Revision : _____

Course Number: 199

Department: General Studies (GS)

Evaluator's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Evaluator's Title: _____

Volunterrism

My experience as a volunteer for the past fifteen years has been a rewarding experience that has benefited my family, my community, and me. I have volunteered in the Head Start program for eight years, Parent Teacher Association for eight years, Girl Scouts for seven years and Boy Scouts for four years. I have also served on the board of directors for a neighborhood organization for two years. It was through my volunteer experiences that I learned how to run an effective meeting, plan events, motivate volunteers, and identify community needs.

I have developed leadership and organizational skills through community work which have helped me in my professional life. As president of the parent body at Head Start, I have learned to plan for meetings and to be knowledgeable about topics being discussed at the meetings. For example, shortly after I was elected and accepted the position of president for the first time in this organization, I was told I was expected to chair the first parent meeting. After inquiring as to what duties this consisted of, I was told of the topics that would appear on the agenda and that I was required only to name what was on the agenda. Also, I was told I would learn the format of the meetings as we went along.

During the meeting, after I read each item of business on the agenda, there was a discussion on each item. I realized I was not fully prepared as questions came up and were directed to me. I then realized that I was expected to know answers to these questions or some part of them. From that point on, I insisted that a brief meeting between the coordinator of the program and me be held with the coordinator informing, updating and explaining to me items on the agenda. I learned to be informed by taking notes and compiling information on each agenda item before the meeting. I then began to use this approach in my professional life, and I could see the difference this approach made in department and informational meetings. I have found that it

has made me feel more informed on issues and in a better position to respond. After one meeting I was told by my boss, "Nice job, I could tell you have done your homework."

Volunteering has given me the opportunity to obtain skills such as planning events, delegating and working with groups. In working with the Head Start program, I became familiar with leadership skills as I became more experienced in the program. I learned to acknowledge a job well done whenever possible and to delegate when possible. For example, after holding several lower positions in the Head Start program, I noticed there were some presidents of the parent body that seldom acknowledged a job well done by parents. I made a priority of recognizing special efforts by the parent volunteers because people need to know that their efforts are appreciated.

I have also become aware of the relationships that presidents built with other parents. I became very friendly with some presidents and very distant with others. I noticed I became very involved and was asked to help out when I became friendly with the president, and I was not as involved or seldom was asked to help out when I was not familiar with the president. I learned to use past presidents' leadership styles to motivate parents. I applied a few leadership styles such as acknowledgment of a job well done, building relationships by getting to know other parents, and delegating and showing involvement myself as much as possible. Gradually, I noticed a great respect for me by many parents. I also noticed the willingness to help out by other parents and found this made delegation easier.

I also began to recognize who was best qualified for a job and who was not, or who would not stick with the job until finished. I learned not to discourage parents from participation when they would not stick with a job. For example, I found one parent always volunteered to be on a committee or to be in charge of a project, but she never was around to complete the project. I

always had to complete the project myself at the last minute or find someone else to complete it. When a very important project came up at a parent meeting and she volunteered for it, I hesitated. The director of the program knew why I hesitated and immediately stepped in and gave her approval for the parent to assume the responsibility. I could not understand why she did this until she then asked for one other person to work with the parent. Another parent volunteered to help with the project. After the meeting the director explained to me that it is better not to discourage parents' participation because the program is supposed to be run by parents. She also explained to me in cases of a job that required only one person, she would often assign two people to ensure that the job would get done.

From this experience I learned to find a supplement for weaknesses and saw that it worked. I used this technique at work in a case where I had to delegate an important project. I had always overlooked one secretary when delegating because of her inability to complete a project before the expected due date. After discovering the technique of supplementing for weaknesses, I found if I divided the project in parts and delegated a small portion to her, she met her deadline. Each time she met her deadline, I praised her. Once when I had no one else to whom I could delegate half of a project, I had to depend on her to complete the whole project. She completed the project, and on time.

I have found that volunteering has aided me to become more aware of community and school issues that may or may not affect my family. There are many issues presented to the Parent Teacher Association. These include asking for their support for the selection of school board members, bills that are voted on that may affect the educational system, tax related bills, and community issues. For example, the re-zoning and demolition of many family dwellings for the building of a research center in Evanston was presented to the Parent Teacher Association.

Many of the families had lived in some of those buildings all their lives, and others lived there because they could not afford any place else. Another factor in this case was that the city of Evanston did not offer the appraised value for these homes. Then there was the matter of the type of research that would be conducted. Issues such as the type of chemicals the center would be using and the disposal of waste were presented. There was the probability of nuclear materials being tested. The issue was presented to the Parent Teacher Association in an effort to get its support and to build strength in uniting together against the building of this center in Evanston. Had I not been involved in the Parent Teacher Association, I would not have been as familiar with the issue. I have learned that volunteering with certain organizations keeps one informed on issues.

In working with the Girl Scouts, I have learned to work with the children to create and maintain a positive atmosphere for growth, adventure and fun. In teaching the Girl Scouts' promise, law, motto and slogan and explaining what each means, I have developed a concern and awareness for the well-being of my community and society. For example, after the completion of learning the Girl Scout law, the assignment for everyone for the next week was to list any Girl Scout laws that we could identify that were or were not abided by. We came up with numerous things: Turning off the light switches after one uses them was referred to as "the law to use resources wisely." Not littering was referred to as "the law to protect and improve the world around me." And helping someone to feel better or to be happy was referred to as "the law to be cheerful." Many others were also discussed. I learned that if I lived by the motto, slogan, and laws, I could contribute to my community and society and improve my values and my own well-being.

At weekly meetings we set aside times for girls to share their concerns, ideas, and any feelings without fear. No matter how bizarre an idea may have been, I learned from *The Girl Scout Leader's Manual* never to discourage an idea. By not discouraging ideas, we built a relationship with the girls in which they could express themselves without fear or rejection. I remember one girl suggested that our Brownie troop go to Disney World in Florida. Even though I felt we would not be able to earn enough money to do this that year and there was a very good chance our troop would not be together next year because of the age range of the girls, I appeared very enthusiastic about the idea while explaining to the girls that it would take a long time for us to save that amount of money.

I learned to be creative and to encourage and support self-help. For example, during a meeting of the Boy Scouts while the boys worked on a project, I noticed one child having difficulties with his project. As I helped him, several other children requested my assistance. After attempting to help with each child's project, I realized that more and more children requested my assistance. I found myself completing the project that was intended for the boys to complete. I also realized that it was not a matter of their needing assistance, but rather their request for my attention. At the next meeting we continued to work on the project, but whenever a child asked for my help, I called for all the boys' attention and demonstrated on a sample project that I had made for myself. Periodically, I praised the good work of each child, letting them know they were doing a good job. I learned that when I gave good instructions with examples when help was needed, it not only taught the individual a new skill, but it relieved me of actually doing the job myself. I found this to be a valuable tool in working with the Boy Scouts and on a job in a supervisory role. For instance, I found when an employee does not understand a job, I gave simple illustrations on a sample, explaining the work as I went along.

Then I asked the employee to complete one with me, explaining what he was doing as he went along to reinforce the procedure I had just explained to him. I have found that this has given me more time to work on projects that require my attention.

By following the Girl Scout and Boy Scout mottos and slogans and living by their laws, I have learned how to improve myself as a human being. I have become aware of community issues, school issues and how to plan programs through working with the Parent Teacher Association and Evanston Neighbors at Work. I have learned organizational and leadership skills in working with the Head Start program. All of these experiences have been helpful in making me a better human being.

Documentation for this essay includes:

1. A PTA membership card.
2. A letter from the administrative director of the neighborhood organization.
3. A certificate of accomplishment and certificate of training from the YMCA.
4. Two certificates of accomplishment from the Head Start program.

Evaluation Standards

The evaluation of prior learning experiences for college credit occurs on the basis of three standards set forth by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL).

Standard 1. The awarding of credit is for learning, not for experience.

The College does not award credit for experience alone, nor can the evaluators assume what the student knows based on a given experience. The evaluators can evaluate only the learning outcomes you demonstrate in your petition. According to Whitaker (1989), “seat time, hours on the job, and life experience should not be calculated in assessing learning. They may be effective educational inputs, but they don’t guarantee creditable learning outcomes.” Therefore, your petition for college credit through the prior learning assessment process must provide evidence that learning occurred.

Standard 2. The awarding of credit is only for learning that has a balance, appropriate to the subject, between theory and practical application.

Experiential learners can often describe what they are able to do in terms of tasks they can perform (in a specific setting), but often fall short on their ability to explain the general principles behind what they can do that demonstrates their ability to apply their learning to other settings. Consider the general principles that would allow you to apply your learning in new settings? For example, a student who has rewired their house should also be able to describe the basic principles of electricity. The student’s ability to describe the principles of electricity demonstrates that the student can apply their learning to other situations.

Standard 3. The awarding of credit is only for college-level learning.

Greenville College recognizes that there are many useful and valuable areas of knowledge that are not taught within the college system, such as certain industrial or commercial processes that are taught only within industry, or highly personal learning related to life experience. The purpose of evaluation is not so grandiose as to attempt to credit all learning, but only the subject areas normally studied within a college or university setting. Evaluators are looking for college equivalent learning that includes generalizations and concepts as well as the specific experiences from which it was gained and the specific applications of that knowledge. A college course catalog may help to identify relevant subject areas.

College-Level Learning

- 1) Is measurable;
- 2) is at a level of achievement defined by the faculty as college equivalent or consistent with the learning of other students engaged in college studies;
- 3) is applicable outside the specific job or context in which it was learned;
- 4) has a knowledge base;
- 5) is reasonably current;
- 6) implies a conceptual or theoretical as well as a practical understanding; and
- 7) doesn't repeat learning for which credit has already been awarded.

The Evaluation Process

The following overview provides an understanding of the steps in the evaluation process for Learning Experience Essays:

Step One - Submission of your Essay Draft to your PLA Advisor

Upon completion of a learning experience essay, your PLA Advisor reviews the essay for quality and completeness. This review is completely separate from the evaluation of content for credit.

Step Two - Submission of your Final Essay to your PLA Advisor

When this process is complete, the essay is ready for submission to a faculty evaluator by way of the PLA Advisor.

Step Three - Faculty Evaluation of your Essay

A faculty evaluator reviews your essay and either grants the credit you requested, recommends partial credit, awards partial credit, or denies credit. In some cases the evaluator requests a revision of your essay. Procedures for handling student appeals on the evaluation of a learning experience essay are outlined in Appendix F.

Step Four - Revising your Essay

The process is a formative one; that is, evaluators may give students the opportunity to further develop and resubmit learning experience essays that do not initially meet the requirements for full credit. In some cases, this may involve additional study or research to become familiar with the necessary theoretical framework in the content area. Revised essays include a new petition page and all revisions should follow the specific instructions of the evaluator. You will **submit the original essay with the evaluator's comments along with your revised essay.**

Step Five - Credit Award

When the evaluation process is complete, your Petition for Academic Credit for Experiential Learning is sent to the Records Office and the credit is added to your academic record.

Step Six - Billing for Credit

The Business Office receives notification of the credit award and places the appropriate charge on your account.

Step Seven - Notification of Credit

A copy of the petition form with the evaluator's comments and credit determination is sent to you along with your original essay.

Deadlines and Assessment Fees

Deadlines

We encourage you to complete as many learning experience essays as possible during term one, prior to starting your research project. However, you establish your own deadline for submitting learning experience essays for credit. Your PLA Advisor will provide assistance and advising only during the time you are enrolled at the College.

Late Fee

We require an additional administrative fee of \$100 per three month period following the end of term three for the processing and evaluation of essays you submit for credit.

Evaluation Fee

The fee for evaluation of each learning experience essay is \$100.00. The fee is due at the time you request evaluation of your essay by a faculty evaluator. This fee includes two revisions of each essay and is non-refundable.

Transcript Fee

The charge to post credits on your transcript through the prior learning assessment process is \$35 per credit hour.

References

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- Lamdin, L. (1992). *Earn college credit for what you know* (2nd ed.). The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), Chicago.
- Van Nostrand, A. D. et. al. (1982). *Process of writing: Discovery and control* (2nd ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Whitaker, U. (1989). *Assessing learning*. The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), Chicago.

Appendix A: Definition of Terms

Accreditation	The recognition of educational quality serving as the basic indicator that an institution meets the standards set by a recognized accrediting body. Greenville College is accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.
ACE	The American Council on Education -- an association representing all accredited post-secondary institutions as well as national and regional higher education associations. ACE has published a <i>Guide to Educational Programs in Non-Collegiate Organizations</i> which helps educational institutions correlate a specific number of academic credits for courses given by non-collegiate organizations, such as major industries that provide "in-house" classes for employees. ACE also publishes <i>The Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experience in the Armed Services</i> .
CAEL	The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning -- a national association of collegiate institutions and colleagues dedicated to fostering quality experiential learning and the valid, reliable assessment of its outcomes.
COPA	The Council on Postsecondary Accreditation --the umbrella organization for national, regional and specialized accrediting agencies.
Credit Unit	Official certification of a course completed satisfactorily, statement of competence, and other increments of verified educational accomplishment (theses, oral and written examinations, internships, etc.) accepted toward completion of requirements for certificates or degrees. Credit units are most often assigned semester or quarter hour values.*
Documentation	Materials gathered to verify prior extra-collegiate learning and personal involvement in specific learning experiences.

Duplication of Credit	A situation where two similar courses, learning experience essays and/or credit by exam topics, overlap to such an extent that credit cannot be awarded for both courses.
Extra-institutional Learning	Learning that is attained outside of the sponsorship of legally authorized and accredited post-secondary educational institutions. The term applies to learning acquired from work and life experiences, independent reading and study, the mass media, and participation in formal courses sponsored by associations, business, government, industry, the military, and unions.*
Learning Experience Essays	The student essays describing college-level knowledge, concepts, applications and reflections gained from life and work experiences.

* Source: American Council on Education publications.

Appendix B

Petition for Credit for Training Experience

Name: _____ Group: _____ Credit Request: _____ (optional)

Sponsoring Institution of Learning: _____

Specific Course or Program Title: _____

Greenville College recognizes training programs evaluated for credit by the American Council on Education (ACE). We consider training programs not evaluated by ACE on a case by case basis and must meet the following standards set by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL).

1. The awarding of credit is for learning, not for experience. Since experience is an input and learning is an outcome, it is important for you to demonstrate the learning acquired from your training.
2. The awarding of credit is only for college-level learning. We will consider for credit only those subjects typically studied within a college or university setting.
3. The awarding of credit is only for learning that has a balance appropriate to the subject, between theory and practical application. It is important to describe general principles gained from your training that will allow you to apply your learning to a different situation.

In order to properly evaluate your training program, submit each of the following:

1. A description of the contents of the training published by the sponsor of the training program. This should include the major learning outcomes or objectives of the training program.
2. Documentation from the sponsoring institution showing the dates and times of the training program.
3. Proof of successful completion of the training. This can include a copy of a certificate, license, or letter from the sponsoring institution or employer.
4. Copies of documents, rather than originals, are acceptable as long as they are readable.
5. Attach your documentation to this form and submit to the PLA Advisor for evaluation.

Note: Attendance at conferences, one day seminars, or workshops does not generally contain sufficient college level learning and will not be considered.

There is a charge of \$35 per credit hour to post credits to your transcript.

Evaluator's Use Only					
	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Evidence of college-level learning outcomes					
Documentation of training					
Balance of theory and application					

Evaluator's Comments:

Credit Award: _____ Category: (circle one) vocational, elective, humanities, social science, or math/science

Evaluator's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Title: _____

Appendix C - Professional Licenses and Certificates

Greenville College recognizes specific professional credentials and licenses as representing an established amount of college-level learning. Below is a partial list of programs that have been previously evaluated and the corresponding credit award.

Complete the Petition for Academic Credit for Training Experience form, include a copy of your certificate or license, and submit to the College in one of the following ways:

E-mail: steve.holler@greenville.edu

Fax: (618) 664-1461

Mail: Steve Holler
Greenville College
209 3rd Street
Greenville, IL 62246

Certificate or License	Credit Hours	Category
Basic Corrections Officer (Illinois Department of Corrections)	15	7 elective 8 vocational
Corrections Cycle Training	3	vocational
Certified Bookkeeper (AIPB)	10	elective
Certified Professional Secretary	32	various
Child Welfare Employee License	2	vocational
Commercial Driver's License (CLASS A or B)	4	vocational
Cosmetology License	20	vocational
Developmental Disability Aide Certificate	5	vocational

Emergency Medical Technician License	6	3 science 3 vocational
First Responder Certificate	3	2 science 1 elective
Food Service Sanitation Certification	.5	vocational
Fork Lift Operator	.5	vocational
Foster Parenting Course (IL)	1	elective
H & R Basic Tax Course	3	vocational
INS 21	3	elective
INS 22	3	elective
INS 23	3	elective
Insurance License		
Life and Health	1	vocational
Property	1	vocational
Casualty	1	vocational
Master Gardener (IL)	3	science
Nursing Assistant Certification	6	vocational
Open Water Diver (30 hours)	1	elective
Private Pilot License (no credit without license)	5	elective
Real Estate Appraiser License	5	vocational
Real Estate Broker License (includes 3 cr. for Salesperson Lic.)	6	vocational
Real Estate Salesperson License	3	vocational
School Nutrition Specialist	9	6 elective 3 science
Series 3: National Commodity Futures Exam	2	vocational
Series 4: Registered Options Principal Exam	1	vocational
Series 6: Investment Co./Variable Contracts Exam	2	vocational
Series 7: General Securities Representative Exam	3	vocational
Series 24: General Securities Principal Exam	3	vocational

Series 27: General Securities Financial Operations Principal Exam	3	vocational
Series 63: Uniform State Law Exam	2	vocational
Series 65: Registered Investment Adviser Exam	2	vocational
Series 66: Combined Investment Adviser/State Law Exam	3	vocational
Six Sigma (Yellow Belt)	2	elective
Six Sigma (Green Belt)	3	elective
Six Sigma (Black Belt)	3	elective
Six Sigma (Certification Special Studies Course)	3	elective
Walmart's Leaders Out in Front Training	6	elective

Appendix D: Subject Areas for Essays

Sociology - SOC

marriage and the family
divorce recovery
parenting
 single parenting
 foster parenting
 step parenting
 adoptive parenting
 parenting a child with special needs
social welfare agency
advocacy in social work
urban culture in America
caring for the elderly
homelessness

Psychology - PSY

addictive behaviors
substance abuse
eating disorders
behavior disorders
learning disabilities
psychology of adjustment
child development
adolescent development
educating the learning disabled child
problems and characteristics of the behavior disordered child_

Religion - REL

lay ministry
dynamics of youth leadership
death and dying
leadership in Christian education
pastoral strategy

Management Information Systems - MIS

computer programming
database management
systems design
data communications

General Studies – GS

training adults in the workplace
technical writing
grant writing
consumer economics
basic garment construction and design
interior design
house construction
art of quilt making
furniture and cabinet making
administrative office management
volunteerism and community service
introduction to library science
landscaping
aviation
automotive repair
building an airplane
fashion design

History - HIS

Bolivian study tour
Asian people and culture
history of folk dancing

Art - ART

photography principles
darkroom techniques
painting
drawing
sculpture
ceramics
stained glass

Health, Physical Education, and Recreation - HPR

health and physical fitness
coaching

Business Administration - BUS

total quality management
small business ownership
entrepreneurship
marketing

sales
quality control
management in manufacturing
project management
credit management

Science - SCI

crop science
pork production
disease and health management
survey of geological principles
nutrition and wellness
designing customized electrical control systems
aging and disease
cancer
arthritis
principles of horticulture

Appendix E – Petition for Academic Credit for Experiential Learning

Name: _____ Group Number _____

Essay Title: _____

Credit Request: _____ (optional)

Briefly describe the major learning outcomes acquired from your experience:

Evaluator's Use Only

	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Evidence of college-level learning outcomes					
Documentation of experience					
Proven ability to reflect upon and apply learning					
Written presentation					

Evaluator's Comments: (Use reverse side if necessary)

Credit Award: _____ Returned for Revision (include original essay with revision): _____

Evaluator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Evaluator's Title: _____

Appendix F - Appeals Process

If a student contacts the Program Director with a complaint about an evaluation of a learning experience essay, the Program Director will follow the procedure outlined below.

1. Listen to the student's concerns and attempt to interpret or explain any comments from the evaluator. Under no circumstances will the Program Director resubmit the essay to another evaluator for an evaluation of the essay.
2. Should a grievance still exist, the Program Director will contact the faculty evaluator and request that the evaluator speak to or meet with the student within two weeks. Usually this is accomplished through a telephone conversation.
3. Should the grievance not be resolved after the evaluator and the student have discussed the evaluation, the student may submit in writing to the Program Director a statement of the reasons for the grievance.* The essay will then be submitted to a second evaluator for review. If the second evaluation has a different result than the first evaluation, the two evaluations will be submitted to the Dean of Professional Studies. The Dean will decide the most appropriate evaluation for the essay and determine any further action.

*This statement must be received by the Program Director within three months of the original essay submission date.