



30.005: Experiential Learning Policy

Responsible Executive: Vice President for Academic Affairs
Responsible Office: Office of Academic Affairs
Related Policy:
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Policy Statement

Norfolk State University (NSU) adheres to the philosophy that education is a process of life-long learning. The University recognizes that (1) college level learning can be gained outside of a traditional college classroom or university setting through various activities such as work experience, volunteerism, travel, self-study, or training, and (2) experiential learning merits credit when it is properly demonstrated and validated.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the process for the award of credit for experiential learning.

Procedures

I. Definition of Terms

- A. Experiential Learning is a term that refers to learning that is acquired outside of a traditional classroom. This can be a co curricular activity linked to a traditional classroom or professional standards in a particular field of study such as in the case of practica, internships, student teaching, service learning or cooperative education.
- B. Prior Learning is learning that is equal to college level learning and has been gained outside of a traditional classroom prior to a student's enrollment in a university degree program e.g. work or military experience, self-study, volunteerism, training, or travel, etc.
- C. Prior Learning Assessment is a method of evaluating and recognizing learning that is equal to college level learning that has been gained outside of a traditional classroom prior to a student's enrollment in a university degree program.
- D. Portfolio is an organized collection of material which documents prior learning achievements and relates them to learning outcomes of college courses. Usually the portfolio is developed to capture several fields of study for which there are no specific examinations.

II. Criteria for Consideration

- A. To earn credit for experiential learning a student must be enrolled as a degree seeking student at Norfolk State University.
- B. Experiential Learning Credit Options (Undergraduate Level)
 - a. *Credit for Training. Military and professional training that is evaluated and recommended for college credit by the American Council on Education (ACE) and training that is within an articulated agreement with Norfolk State University and is approved for credit.
 - b. Departmental Examinations. Upon approval of the department head of the student's major and the department head and dean of the school in which the course is housed, a student make take a comprehensive exam in an academic course in which he or she can demonstrate proficiency and upon passing the examination, receive credit for that course. A course may be challenged only one time.
 - c. *External Examinations. Upon approval of the department head and dean, of the student's major, a student may submit satisfactory scores on external professional examinations. This includes Advanced Placement (AP), the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES), International Baccalaureate (IB) and other professional certifications or examinations evaluated by the American Council of Education (ACE) for college level credit.
 - d. Portfolio Development. Upon approval of the department head of the student's major and the department head and dean of the course(s) involved, a student may develop a portfolio for a course (s) offered by Norfolk State University. This portfolio will be reviewed by a faculty member appointed by the head of the appropriate department and school involved.

III. Guidelines and Considerations

- A. Credit is awarded for learning that can be demonstrated, not for experience.
- B. Credit is awarded for learning which is college level and meets the standards of NSU. That is, it is relevant to actual course competencies.
- C. Assessment of experiential learning is completed by faculty experts in the relevant subject area.
- D. Credit earned through an assessment of experiential learning cannot be duplicated through other mechanisms for earning credit.
- E. Experiential learning credit will be granted upon the written recommendation of the department head having jurisdiction over the courses involved with the dean's approval.
- F. The applicability of experiential learning credit toward a *specific* degree program is subject to departmental approval.
- G. A student may not fail a course at Norfolk State University and later receive credit for the same course through an experiential learning option.
- H. The satisfactory scores for knowledge-based or professional examinations are determined by the appropriate department and the dean of the school involved.

- I. No letter grade will be entered on the student's transcript for experiential learning credit. Experiential learning credit will be treated in the same way as transfer credit. A "P" will be assigned and it will not count toward the student's grade point average.
- J. A student may earn a maximum of 60 semester hours at the undergraduate level through experiential learning credit. However, each department determines the maximum credit that can be awarded for a particular degree and will establish its own process for evaluating and awarding credit. The student must meet all University and departmental residency requirements.
- K. The opportunity to seek experiential learning credit is open to full and part-time degree seeking students.

*These mechanisms are being used currently at NSU.

IV. **Portfolio Development**

- A. Portfolio development is an organized collection of essays and documentation, demonstrating learning skills through work and life experiences. The portfolio, specifically, must articulate knowledge equivalent to that which is taught in a college course.

- B. There are several steps and processes involved in Portfolio Development.

The enrollment in a course or workshop is a pre-requisite for portfolio development and is considered essential for preparation and successful completion and approval for credit. Students must complete the preparation for portfolio development by enrolling in either of the three:

1. A traditional portfolio development course
2. A non-traditional portfolio development course
3. A traditional or non-traditional workshop either for credit or non-credit

- C. The department determines the courses that may be completed by portfolio development and provides the specifications. Not all courses will be considered for portfolio development.
- D. The portfolio can include knowledge and skills gained from a wide variety of sources, but these are some of the more common ones used for Portfolio Assessment
 - a. full or part-time jobs
 - b. independent reading and study
 - c. training programs or in-service courses
 - d. volunteer work
 - e. cultural and artistic pursuits
 - f. military service
 - g. travel study
- E. An Advanced Standing Committee will be formed and will be assigned the task of reviewing the portfolio and making decisions using uniform guidelines as established by the University.
- F. The Advanced Standing Committee will be asked to assess several things
 - a. Is the knowledge sufficient?
 - b. Has the student demonstrated application of this knowledge?
 - c. Has the student shown the relationship between the knowledge and the evidence?
- G. The Advanced Standing Committee will determine whether or not knowledge of the subject is equal to a college level grade of "C" or better.

- a. If so, then credit will be recommended.
- b. **If the knowledge is judged to be insufficient, the Advanced Standing Committee will recommend that credit be denied.
- c. **If the Advanced Standing Committee decides that more information is needed in order to make a determination, the student may be asked to submit additional evidence, take an examination/and or be interviewed.

**The latter practices are often used in cases where students have acquired knowledge of a subject that cannot be documented.

- H. The Advanced Standing Committee should consist of the student's department chair, faculty advisor, the representative of the department from which the course originates, and the workshop/course instructor.
- V. Experimental Learning Policy Committee
- A. The committee will be appointed annually.
 - B. Each school Dean will appoint one representative
 - C. The following persons will also serve on the committee:
 - a. Dr. Dennis Montgomery, Acting Director of Virginia Beach Higher Education Center
 - b. Dr. Nuria Cuevas, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Director, Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment
 - c. Dr. Marilyn Broadus-Gay, Dean of School of Liberal Arts