# Prior Learning Assessment

# Portfolio Review Handbook v. 8/16

Northern Maine Community College
33 Edgemont Drive
Presque Isle ME  04769
www.nmcc.edu

Northern Maine Community College is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution and employer.  For additional information, please call (207) 768-2700.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION

The practice of awarding credit for college-level prior learning is based upon the belief that the education which builds on, interprets, and incorporates past and present knowledge is the education that is most meaningful to the student. At Northern Maine Community College, we value the college-level knowledge students may have acquired through past work, independent reading and study, training programs or in-service courses, volunteer service or other experiences. Consequently, NMCC offers a portfolio review process by which prior learning can be analyzed, articulated, documented, and assessed for credit.

Portfolio Review is only one way for students to obtain credit based on prior learning. Prior to pursuing the Portfolio Review option, students should consider other options available to them, including transferring credit from other institutions of higher education, credit through national and/or department examinations (CLEP, DSST, and Challenge Exams), as well as military or proficiency credits for non-accredited training. You can find information in the Course Catalog and the Student Handbook.

A portfolio, in terms of prior learning, is an extensive written presentation of evidence assembled by the student and reviewed by a faculty member, under the direction of the Academic Dean. The award of prior learning portfolio credit is dependent on relevancy to courses in the student's NMCC degree program; including general education, major and elective courses. The portfolio includes several major sections including a thorough resume, a narrative summary of relevant work and learning experiences, demonstrated skills and training in specialized areas, and applied knowledge and competencies in a specific course for which NMCC credit is available.

Colleges within the Maine Community College System will accept by transfer credit received via Portfolio Review. However, it is recommended that students considering a transfer after NMCC, review the transfer policy with the specific college of university to which they are interested in transferring.

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIRMENTS

To be eligible for prior learning by Portfolio Review at NMCC, a student must;

- be matriculated into a degree program at NMCC
- be in good academic standing
- show proof of college-level writing credit/equivalent

## POLICY

1. Applicants may submit a portfolio for review, after they have met the Eligibility Requirements above.

2. NM may award credit through the portfolio review process for a regularly established catalog course in the student's degree program, when the student demonstrates that learning gained through work and/or other experience is equivalent to the learning objectives outlined in the current, official NMCC syllabus for that course.

3. The student, who wishes an assessment of prior learning for credit through portfolio review, will prepare a well-documented portfolio, detailing learning objectives for which they are requesting credit through work and/or life experience.

4. The College will assess a non-refundable review fee of $125 for each specific catalog course of prior learning credit through portfolio review. Payment to the Business Office is required at the submission of the portfolio. Payment of the fee does not guarantee that credit will be awarded.

5. The Department Chair and/or faculty member in the appropriate discipline will evaluate the portfolio and make the decision about awarding the requested course credit.

6. Grades will not be assigned for credit awarded through portfolio review. A portfolio is reviewed on a Pass/Fail basis. This recommendation is based on the student showing narrative and evidence of learning outcomes that would constitute a grade level of C (2.0) or better for the course. Specific courses will be identified on the transcript by department prefix, course number, course title and credit awarded. The transcript notation will read "Prior Learning" with a grade of P (Pass).

7. Credit awarded through portfolio review
   • does not meet requirements for residency credit.
   • will not satisfy credit load requirements for veteran benefits funding or other similar third party financial assistance programs.
   • will not be awarded for courses that are prerequisites of courses already completed.
   • may not transfer to another institution. Students are encouraged to review the transfer policy with the specific college or university to which they are interested in transferring.

## PORTFOLIO PROCESS

1. The student will meet with the appropriate department chair or faculty member to determine if her/his knowledge and experience seem appropriate for consideration in compiling for review a prior learning portfolio, and to obtain the syllabus for the targeted course.

2. The student may submit a paper copy or an electronic copy (PDF) of the portfolio to the Academic Dean.

3. Deadlines for Portfolio Submission:
   • October 1 – Portfolios submitted by this deadline will be reviewed before the start of the spring semester.
   • March 1 – Portfolios submitted by this deadline will be reviewed before the start of the fall semester.

4. A Request for Prior Learning Assessment form (found on the NMCC website, www.nmcc.edu/PLA) is needed. This completed form should accompany the portfolio submitted to the Academic Dean. The nonrefundable $125 review fee (paid at the Business Office) is needed for each catalog course for which the student is seeking credit.

5. Once submitted, the portfolio and materials are forwarded to the appropriate faculty evaluator within the department in which the course is taught.

6. Evaluation is completed and credit awarded/denied within 15 days. The portfolio and materials will be reviewed carefully and the faculty evaluator will recommend if:
   • Credit is awarded. If credit for portfolio is awarded, the student is notified of the decision by the Academic Dean and course equivalency credit is applied to the student's transcript by the Registrar's Office.
   • More documentation is needed for evaluation. If more documentation is needed, the student is notified via email by the by Academic Dean. Upon receipt of necessary additional documentation, credit is granted or denied, and the student is notified of the decision. If additional documentation is not received within 15 days, credit is denied.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Step 1** | Student determines if eligibility requirements for prior learning credit are met (see Eligibility Requirements on page 3). |
| **Step 2** | Student reviews NMCC catalog course descriptions to determine potential target course based on the student's work and/or life experience. |
| **Step 3** | Student contacts appropriate Department Chair or faculty member. |
| **Step 4** | Student completes the Portfolio for the targeted course. |
| **Step 5** | Student completes the *Request for Prior Learning Assessment* form and pays $125 fee. |
| **Step 6** | Student submits completed Portfolio to the Academic Dean by the deadline date (see page 4). |
| **Step 7** | Portfolio is graded within 15 working days. If passed (grade of C or higher), student will receive a P on the Portfolio and appropriate credits for the targeted course. |

## GENERAL PORTFOLIO REVIEW PROCESS OUTLINE

Each portfolio will be unique, reflecting the competencies, knowledge, and experience particular to each applicant, but will follow an established format. Each portfolio will be double-spaced, typed and presented in a professional manner.

Electronically submitted portfolio(s) should be in PDF format. Paper submissions are accepted.

## The Portfolio Contents

1. Completed *Request for Prior Learning Assessment* form indicating
   fee is paid

2. Title page (1 page)
3. Table of Contents (1 page)

4. Resume (1-4 pages)

5. A brief autobiography that discusses the student's
   - career history
   - educational history
   - other experiences that will be the basis for her/his request for credit
   - academic/career goals (1-4 pages)

6. Current NM transcript (may be unofficial)

7. Course related information:
   a. Current official NMCC course syllabus
   b. A narrative which analyzes and articulates what was learned, how it was learned, how the knowledge has been used, and specifically, how this knowledge relates to learning objectives listed in the course syllabus (5-20 pages)
   c. Appropriate documentation (certificates, work samples, job descriptions, letters, awards, licenses, or any other documents appropriate to the targeted course)

## What are your chances of earning credit by Portfolio Review?

If the student makes a reasonable and accurate selection, based on the course description, to challenge for credit, and has the appropriate background and knowledge as well as the skills to articulate that background and knowledge, the student should be able to earn credit. While no two prior learning candidates are exactly alike, those who succeed usually have the following elements in common:

- They have a realistic view of their knowledge
- They follow the instructions carefully
- They challenge a course that is appropriate to their knowledge and skills
- They submit a well-organized portfolio that pays attention to details
- They seek assistance from the Department Chair, faculty member, and NMCC's Academic Success Center

If you have questions about credit for prior learning or the portfolio review process, contact the Academic Dean.