



Graduate Prior Learning Portfolio Guide
for
Health Administration and Business Students
SJC Online
Fall 2025

Prior Learning Portfolio

Introduction

Students may earn credit for significant learning experiences. If the learning experience is legitimate within the context of course learning outcomes, as stated in a course syllabus, credit may be given.

What Is Prior Learning Assessment?

According to the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning:

Prior learning is a term used by educators to describe learning that a person acquires outside a traditional academic environment. This learning may have been acquired through work experience, employer training programs, independent study, non-credit courses, volunteer or community service, travel, or non-college courses or seminars. Prior learning assessment (PLA) is a term used to describe the process by which an individual's experiential learning is assessed and evaluated for purposes of granting college credit, certification, or advanced standing toward further education or training. There are four generally accepted approaches to PLA and, when properly conducted, all ensure academic quality: (1) national standardized exams in specified disciplines, e.g., Advanced Placement (AP) exams, College Level Examination Program (CLEP) tests, Excelsior college exams, Dantes Subject Standardized Tests (DSST); (2) challenge exams for local courses; (3) evaluated non college programs, e.g., American Council on Education (ACE) evaluations of corporate training and military training; and (4) individualized assessments, particularly portfolio-based assessments.

In this course you must select an **graduate course** where you believe you have sufficient prior learning to create a portfolio to be awarded credit in lieu of this course. The benefit of this course is that if you have prior learning experience that can be proven in lieu of tuition, only a fee is charged for this course, which is considerably lower than tuition.

The New England Commission for Higher Education limits credit for prior learning to less than 25% of undergraduate or graduate degrees.

Grading and Awarding of Credit

You must demonstrate prior learning for 80% or more of the course outcomes to be considered for experiential credit. If you are weak in a particular area when you start this class, you can do remediation in that area so you can document it in your portfolio if you are unsure if you can prove prior learning so you can attain this minimum of 80%. In addition, your portfolio work related to the course outcomes must be considered to be work at the C level or higher.

This course is pass or fail. If you receive a passing grade in this course, your portfolio will be forwarded to Academic Affairs for final approval. Credit is not guaranteed even with a passing grade on the portfolio course. Academic Affairs will review the submitted portfolio and will make the final determination if credit will be awarded. **Prior to this determination, Academic Affairs may request a meeting with the student to validate the portfolio.** Then this course will be substituted in the student's degree plan and transcribed as a prior learning course on your transcript.

If you fail to meet the requirements, you will receive zero credit.

Portfolio Process

Students must submit supporting documentation that experiential learning has taken place. This can include letters from employers, community organizations or other agencies documenting experience and duties performed that meet the intent of the outcomes of the selected course. In addition, students may also submit a resume, micro-credentials, certificates, military experience, evidence of continuing education, or other documentation to prove experience in the selected area. Students will be required to write a narrative clearly explaining prior experiential learning and how this learned meets selected course outcomes and to reflect on the learning that has taken place.

Some questions students should consider:

- Is there an experience I have had that relates to the selected course outcomes?
- If so, was the previous experience robust enough to allow me to be able to describe and assess the experience?
- Will I be able to effectively reflect on the experience as it relates to the course outcomes?
- Do I have or will I have the supporting documentation necessary to complete the experiential equivalency?
- Do I understand what reflecting on prior learning means?

Course Deliverables

Students will be required to submit a complete portfolio of experiential/prior learning. This portfolio will include the following sections (at a minimum)

- Cover page
- Table of Contents
- Release Form
- Resume
- Autobiography
- Narrative (Part 1 & 2)
- Reflection
- Supporting Materials
- Final Conclusion/Summary

Review of Portfolio

Your portfolio will be reviewed by the faculty member who is a subject matter expert. If the faculty member approves it, the portfolio will be sent to Academic Affairs for final approval. The portfolio must be approved by both the faculty member and Academic Affairs for credit to be awarded.

PORTFOLIO STRUCTURE

Item	Description	Suggested Page Count
Cover Page	See attached template	1 page
Table of Contents	The table of contents must list each major item in the portfolio and the page it can be found	1-2 pages
Resume	Your resume should identify and briefly describe your educational history, training history, employment history, military service history, important personal/professional activities and interests, certifications or micro-credentials and a statement indicating how the assessor can request personal references	1-2 pages maximum
Autobiography	<p>This narrative allows you to communicate to the assessor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • who you are • how do your learning experiences have relate to areas of personal and professional growth and competencies? • your educational goals and reasons for seeking prior learning assessment through portfolio development. <p>This section should include the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce yourself to the reviewer • Include a brief description of your educational and career goals • Describe how your educational goals are linked to your work and other areas of your life • Discuss the degree you are seeking and why • A conclusion with a brief statement that specifically affirms your intent to your intention to apply for credit by developing and submitting a learning portfolio for prior learning assessment 	3-5 pages
Narrative Part 1: Significant Learning Experiences and Competencies	<p>Provide an overview of your prior learning experience(s).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe what you did, • When you did it • Where it occurred, • Who was there with you • What you did and how it related to your personal learning. See Significant Learning Worksheet to develop an outline for this section. This completed worksheet will serve as the information source for this narrative. 	2-4 pages

Item	Description	Suggested Page Count
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A description of how you have applied what you learned (knowledge, skills and abilities/competencies) in specific jobs and/or other areas of your life (e.g., manager, computer operator) • A description of how these competencies positively affected your work 	
Narrative Part 2: Relationship Between Prior Learning and Specific Course Outcomes	<p>Reflect on your prior learning experience and how this experience specifically impacted your learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you specifically learn from these experiences • How have you applied this knowledge to your specific jobs, experiences, or other areas of your life? • What are the key things you have learned? • How does your experiential learning relate to university learning? • Reflect on how your learning meets or exceeds the required course outcomes 	2-4- pages
Reflection	<p>Reflect on your prior learning experience and how this experience specifically impacted your learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you specifically learn from these experiences • How have you applied this knowledge to your specific jobs or other areas of your life • What are the key things you have learned? • Reflect on how your learning meets or exceeds the required course outcomes 	2-4 pages
Supporting Materials	<p>This section of your portfolio provides evidence that the learning took place. Your goal for completing this portion of your portfolio should be to provide effective documentation as evidence of your prior learning. Effective documentation is characterized by the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It provides evidence and support of what you know and your competencies. • It is specifically geared to the area of knowledge in which you are petitioning for credit. • It is logically and attractively presented. · Each piece of documentation is accurately identified and labeled. • It is not redundant. 	Variable

Item	Description	Suggested Page Count
	<p>Excessive documentation tends to frustrate and confuse the evaluator. There are several types of documentation that can be used to support your portfolio and petition for equivalent credit.</p> <p>Direct Sources of Evidence: Some examples of direct sources of evidence/documentation to showcase previous learning include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licenses and Certification held: Copies of your licenses and/or certificates held as documentation. The college must verify all unofficial copies of licenses and certificates. Note: In some cases, only currently held and/or unencumbered licenses and/or certificates are acceptable. • Certificates of Completion for Training: Certificates of Completion along with a detailed description of the training content as documentation for specific training programs/courses that you have successfully completed. • Work Samples: You may submit samples of your own work (copies of reports, project papers, something you created, etc.) as documentation. • Indirect Sources of Evidence: Some examples of indirect sources of evidence/documentation are to showcase previous learning: • Letters from Employers / Trainers Written on Your Behalf: Letters must identify and discuss your learning and competencies in specific content area(s) and appear on official letterhead. • Newspaper Articles: Newspaper article(s) written about you, or about an activity in which you participated that reflects learning and competencies in a specific subject area. Note: Keep original versions of all important and irreplaceable documentation. • Additionally, you should not submit actual examples of any products and/or physical creation that you wish to have evaluated. Photographs of the object(s) along with detailed descriptions will be accepted as evidence • Unofficial academic transcripts. 	
Summary	Create a 1–2-page portfolio summary briefly addressing main aspects of your portfolio	1 page
Appendices	Copies of signed permission forms	As needed

Additional Forms in the Appendices of This Guide

Item	Name	Purpose
A	Prior Learning Release Form SJCME Personnel	This must be signed and submitted in the first week of class giving your faculty member the right to validate any prior learning documentation if required. A signed copy must also be included in the appendices of your portfolio.
B	Prior Learning Release Form	This form is sent to any references or employers so that they have permission to speak to SJCME representatives to validate your experience. A signed copy must also be included in the appendices of your portfolio.
C	Significant Learning Worksheet	This can be used to guide your portfolio narrative
D	Portfolio Cover Sheet	This is required as the first page of your portfolio

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A



Prior Learning Assessment Information Release Form: SJCME Representatives

Date: _____ Student ID: _____
Student Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

I, _____ give my SJC Online faculty evaluator/Academic Affairs permission to contact prior employers and organizations as required to validate prior learning experience as required. I understand I can revoke this permission at any time.

_____	_____	_____
Student Name	Student Signature	Date

.....
I hereby revoke the permission above.

_____	_____	_____
Student Name	Student Signature	Date

APPENDIX B



Office of Academic Affairs
Saint Joseph's College of Maine
278 Whites Bridge Road
Standish, ME 04084

Prior Learning Assessment Information Release Form

Date: _____ Student ID: _____
Student Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

I, _____ authorize you to release information regarding my training, credentials, certificates and job experience to Saint Joseph's College of Maine faculty, staff or their representative for the purpose of assessing my prior learning credentials.

This release is valid unless it is revoked at my request.

_____	_____	_____
Student Name	Student Signature	Date

.....
I hereby revoke the permission above.

_____	_____	_____
Student Name	Student Signature	Date

APPENDIX C

Significant Learning Worksheet

The Significant Learning Worksheet serves to guide you through an analysis of your learning experiences and competencies. This must include information about content or subject area that best describes what you learned from your prior learning experiences (i.e. Health Delivery, Human Resources, Marketing, etc.)

EXPERIENCE: Employment (List all employment)

Time Spent on the Activity (Dates):

Description of the Duties and Activities:

Subject or Content Area Addressed:

Supporting Documentation (list):

EXPERIENCE: Training and Work-Related Workshops

Time Spent on the Activity (Dates):

Description of the Duties and Activities:

Subject or Content Area Addressed:

Supporting Documentation (list):

EXPERIENCE: Volunteer Experience Related to Education

Time Spent on the Activity (Dates):

Description of the Duties and Activities:

Subject or Content Area Addressed:

Supporting Documentation (list):

EXPERIENCE: Military Experience

Time Spent on the Activity (Dates):

Description of the Duties and Activities:

Subject or Content Area Addressed:

Supporting Documentation (list):

EXPERIENCE: Certifications, Licenses, Awards and Other related Material

Time Spent on the Activity (Dates):

Description of the Duties and Activities:

Subject or Content Area Addressed:

Supporting Documentation (list):

EXPERIENCE: Other (Specify)

Time Spent on the Activity (Dates):

Description of the Duties and Activities:

Subject or Content Area Addressed:

Supporting Documentation (list):

APPENDIX D

Portfolio Cover Page



Portfolio Submitted by:

Student Name

Student ID

Submitted to the Office of Academic Affairs

For

Prior Learning Assessment and Equivalency Evaluation

Request Replacement in Degree Audit for

HA/BA XXX Course Name

Date

I, _____, certify the information in this portfolio and the supporting documentation submitted is true, accurate, and represents my original work.

Signature

Date

Sample Resume Template

Name
Address
City/State
Email/Phone

Education

List your educational history beginning with the degree program you are currently pursuing. Continue listing any educational degrees you have completed, from the most recent until you list your high school diploma, or your GED.

- Type of Degree: (including major or area of concentration)
- Granting Institution:
- Address of Granting Institution:
- Degree Completion Date:

Training and Continuing Education

List your training history beginning with the most recent training program you have completed or are currently taking. Continue listing training programs you have completed, from the most recent until you list your first (oldest) significant training program.)

- Type of Training: (including area of concentration)
- Granting Institution:
- Address of Granting Institution
- Training Completion Date:
- Brief Description of Training:

Employment History

List your current or most current employment first. Continue listing the positions you have held from the most recent until you list your first (oldest) significant employment experience.) Do not go back further than 10 years unless the experience is relevant to your portfolio.

- Company/Organization Name
- Job Title
- Employment Dates:
- Brief Description of Job Responsibilities:

Certifications or Micro-Credentials

List all professional certifications or micro-credentials received

- Type (certification/license/credential)
- Organization where it was obtained
- Date obtained
- Brief description of credentials

References

List name and contact information for at least three individuals who can validate the prior learning experiences you are including in your portfolio.

- Reference Name
- Email and Telephone
- Relationship
- Related Experience this person can speak to