



Policies: Credit for Prior Learning

General Information

The New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE, the College's regional accreditation body) and the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) recommend that each institution make explicit and public its approach to prior-learning assessment. Together, these bodies have identified a number of elements of prior learning assessment for which the institution should define specific principles and standards. The College's principles support institutional integrity by ensuring that credit awards are credible and reflect student learning.

Credit for prior learning (PL) will be awarded based on assessment of documented college-level learning. This learning must demonstrate achievement of the course learning outcomes for a specific requirement, discipline area elective, or general elective in accordance with college policy. Students may be able to earn college credit for life experience, licenses, certificates, micro-credentials and other credentials that are proved to be comparable to learning in the college classroom. To earn this credit, students must sign up for a prior learning portfolio course in the area of interest (core courses, electives or major course work).

The submission of credential and experiential documentation *does not* guarantee the awarding of credit. Any type of credential, training, or experience will require valid proof of learning such as the license or certificate awarded, course materials, or other information.

Prior Learning Portfolio Courses

Any student who wishes to try to obtain college credit for experiential learning must enroll in a prior learning portfolio course with a faculty evaluator. In this course, the student will create an academic portfolio which includes demonstrations of college level learning students have developed through work, volunteer work, training, other types of credentials and life experience. A prior learning portfolio typically includes a written narrative presentation and supporting documentation, assembled and submitted for assessment of college-level learning equivalent to the learning outcomes of a specific course.

After faculty approval of the portfolio, the portfolio will be submitted to Academic Affairs for final approval. The final decision for awarding of credit rests with Academic Affairs. Submission of a portfolio does not guarantee the awarding of credit.

The criteria used to determine what credit is awarded is as follows:

- The portfolio must demonstrate learning for 80% or more of the overarching course outcomes
- The portfolio is determined to meet the equivalent of a level of a grade of C or higher in regards to the attainment of course outcomes

If these criteria are met, credit will be awarded for learning which demonstrates both theory and practical application.

Cost

These portfolio courses are graded as pass or fail and will not impact student GPA. In lieu of tuition, students will be required to pay a fee for each course that is considerably lower than tuition. Please see the current catalog listing. These types of courses are not eligible for Federal financial aid; therefore, students will be required to pay this fee out-of-pocket.

Credit for Military Experience

Prior learning related to military training and other military experiences will be considered the same way as any other type of prior experiential learning.

Credit Caps and Limits

Prior learning credit cannot exceed more than 25% of total degree requirements. This is in accordance with NECHE requirements. In addition, students cannot petition to take a prior learning portfolio course until after the successful completion of at least two 8-week terms, or one 16-week term at Saint Joseph's College of Maine.

Transfer of Prior Learning Credits

Prior learning credits obtained at Saint Joseph's College of Maine may not transfer to other institutions; this is dependent on the policies of the institutions accepting transfer credit.

Saint Joseph's College of Maine will accept up to 6 hours of undergraduate credit and 3 hours of graduate credit from other institutions of higher learning with programs that award experiential credit. This is subject to a review of the prior institution's processes for evaluating credit. If the processes at the previous institution are found in accordance with best practices for prior learning credit, then the credit may be accepted. If the process is not in accordance with best practices, Saint Joseph's College of Maine reserves the right to not accept this credit.

Data Tracking

Saint Joseph's College of Maine will collect data on the number of students that petition for the evaluation of prior learning credit and the number of students who are actually awarded credit. Collection of this data will allow for improvement to the prior learning experience process.

In addition, data will be collected on the number of faculty involved in the prior learning process to determine the impact of this on faculty load.

Methods of Evaluation

This policy only addresses prior learning that is awarded through a portfolio course. Policies for other accepted methods such as CLEP testing are addressed in a separate policy.

Certification or Licensure

Saint Joseph's College of Maine reserves the right to not award experiential credit for required courses that lead to national certification or state licensure based on specific credentialing and state licensure requirements.

Transcription Policy

Saint Joseph's College of Maine's Office of the Registrar has established policies and procedures for recording credit obtained through prior and experiential learning on a student's transcript. The specific number of credit hours will be awarded as prior learning credit which has been applied to either major coursework or electives.