



***HANDBOOK FOR PREPARING A
PORTFOLIO
FOR THE
ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT OF
LEARNING EXPERIENCES***

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

Amberton University is receptive to the idea of awarding academic credit for learning acquired through noncollegiate experiences. By definition, noncollegiate experiences will be considered as learning that has resulted from experiences occurring while the individual was not enrolled in an educational institution for academic credit.

Noncollegiate learning may be considered for transfer if such work is documented and submitted by means of the portfolio. The portfolio is a concise and explicit document that clearly identifies noncollegiate learning that merits academic credit. The awarding of academic credit for noncollegiate learning is restricted to:

1. verifiable learning
2. undergraduate credit only, and
3. disciplines offered by Amberton University.

This handbook is designed to assist the adult who is entering or returning to college and wishes to receive credit for prior life-learning experiences. It provides examples of life-learning experiences that might be eligible for academic credit through the portfolio process, suggests ways to verify what one has learned, provides instructions for compiling and communicating the information gathered, and assists in maximizing the amount of credit available from Amberton University. In the process, the life-learning credit applicant should gain significant insight into his/her knowledge base and needs.

ASSESSMENT

The process used to determine how much credit or recognition an individual is to receive for prior experiential learning is called **assessment**. The steps involved in the assessment process are discussed in detail in this handbook.

AWARDING CREDIT FOR NONCOLLEGIATE LEARNING

The following guidelines govern all noncollegiate learning that is awarded credit by Amberton University:

- Noncollegiate learning credit is considered transfer work and will not satisfy the residency requirements for a degree.
- After three years of nonenrollment at Amberton University, transfer work is deleted from Amberton University records. A student who subsequently re-enrolls will have to resubmit records for transfer of credit.
- The awarding of portfolio credit is restricted to undergraduate credit only.

Individuals interested in submitting noncollegiate learning for possible transfer credit via the Portfolio should direct their inquiries to the Vice President for Academic Services.

THE PORTFOLIO

The portfolio is a concise and explicit document that clearly identifies noncollegiate training that merits academic credit. The style or type of presentation is not as important as substance. However, whatever presentation methodology is employed must demonstrate command of collegiate level presentation skills. Creativity, along with concise documentation, is encouraged.

The awarding of academic credit for learning experiences is restricted to *verifiable learning*. Amberton University will award credit only for what a person **knows** and/or **can do** as a result of

experiences. For example, an individual may have twelve years of experience working in a bank. The University will not award credit simply on the basis of that twelve years of experience. The individual will be asked to document and/or demonstrate what has been learned about banking as a result of the twelve years of experience. In this case, the individual may have learned little about banking beyond the first year on the job. It could be that the person has not had twelve years of learning experience, but rather one year of learning experience twelve times.

Before academic credit can be awarded for life-learning experiences, certain criteria must be met. These criteria generally include the following:

1. The learning should be publicly verifiable. The applicant must be able to document and/or demonstrate to an expert in the field that he/she possesses knowledge which merits academic credit. The expert must be able to objectively measure and evaluate the learning which has occurred.
2. The learning should be equivalent to college level work in terms of quality. Amberton University requires that the prior experiential learning be related to an academic discipline offered by the University.
3. The learning should have a general applicability outside the specific situation in which it was acquired. For example, Amberton University will not award credit or recognition for knowing specific business procedures in accounting or inventorying which apply to only one company.

AUTHENTICITY

The University is aware that the awarding of academic credit on the basis of information contained in a written document could lead to abuses. To prevent abuse, the applicant must have his/her portfolio validated, whenever possible, by certificates, a supervisor's signature, etc. The final document must be signed by the applicant and verified as being correct and truthful. Moreover, the contents of a portfolio are subject to investigation for authenticity by Amberton University. Any evidence of deception or fraud will result in the denial of life-learning experience credit and, if credit has already been awarded, the withdrawal of that credit without refund. Also, the applicant or student will be denied further admission to the University.

REVIEW AMBERTON UNIVERSITY'S CATALOG

Before an applicant undertakes the process of developing a portfolio, a review of the University's academic offerings is advisable. The *Amberton University Catalog* clearly identifies competencies associated with each course offered at the University. An applicant should review the catalog and become acquainted with the technique of grouping competencies for a specific course or discipline.

Once the applicant is satisfied that he or she can demonstrate competencies for a specific course or discipline, the applicant is ready to begin the portfolio. To receive academic credit for a course, the applicant must clearly identify the body of knowledge gained through life-learning experiences by providing competency statements that describe the knowledge, skill, and values gained as a result of the experiences. To be meaningful, the knowledge gained should have taken approximately one hundred cumulative hours of learning and be comparable to either a specific course in the *Amberton University Catalog* or closely related to a specific discipline (i.e., business, marketing, training, human resources, communication, etc.).

WRITING THE PORTFOLIO

Previously it was recommended that the applicant carefully review the *Amberton University Catalog* to see how competencies are grouped for each course offered at the University. The examples should assist the applicant in (1) addressing the competencies for a specific course, or (2) identifying competencies in a course closely related to the disciplines offered by the University. In developing identifiable competencies for a course to be awarded academic credit, the following should be remembered:

- * The portfolio must document a sufficient body of knowledge to merit a three credit hour course.
- * Competency statements must clearly identify the significant body of knowledge which was learned from life-learning experiences. Each competency statement should be stated concisely in

- one, two, or at most, three sentences.
- * It will be necessary to include supporting pieces of evidence as documentation or proof that the applicant has experienced those activities that relate to the competencies of the course.

It is strongly recommended that only one course be submitted for evaluation at one time. However, not more than three courses may be submitted for evaluation at any given time. Each course that is being challenged must be carefully separated and clearly identified in the portfolio. A course challenge may be directed toward a specific course in the *Amberton University Catalog* or toward a general discipline offered by the University. Perhaps examples may help.

- * An applicant seeking credit for a specific course must list and address all the course competencies listed in the *Amberton University Catalog*.
- * An applicant seeking credit for learning gained through noncollegiate training in computer programming, might challenge the MIS (Management Information Systems) discipline for credit. While the University does not offer a specific course in computer programming, the discipline is offered and the faculty are qualified to assess the portfolio.

POINTS TO CONSIDER WHILE WRITING THE LIFE EXPERIENCES PORTFOLIO AND ILLUSTRATIONS

The following comments are intended as aids in developing the life experiences portfolio:

SETTING UP

1. Select the areas of competency with care and base them on experiences for which distinct information exists and from which one can draw clear implications.
2. Try to pinpoint experiences that were special for an identified competency. The process is not to be a life history but a history of real and significant learning experiences.

ORGANIZATION

1. Do not get lost in reflective analysis; avoid overgeneralizing.
2. Use specific and concrete experiences and illustrations.
3. Make sure that all competencies listed are based on supporting evidence and illustrations within discussion.
4. Avoid giving a choppy, chronological listing of events.
5. Make statements clear and to the point.

DOCUMENTING LIFE-LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Once prior experiential learning for which credit is sought has been identified, the applicant must gather and organize the documentation which will verify that these experiences have, indeed, taken place.

Letters of verification are the most common form of documentation appearing in a portfolio to support prior experiential learning. However, several other forms of documentation may be considered: certificates, commendations, published articles, job descriptions, course outlines or syllabi, official transcript of test scores, artistic works, military records, work samples, writing samples, awards, honors and licenses (pilot, broker, real estate, etc.).

The documentation should meet the following standards:

1. If someone is furnishing a written statement to verify experience, the following guidelines should be observed:
 - a. The person preparing the statement should have directly observed the experience and not simply learned about the experience second hand.
 - b. The writer of a verification statement should clearly identify the competency observed by himself/herself.
 - c. The person writing the letter of verification should identify his/her relationship to the applicant (supervisor, peer, subordinate, etc.) as well as his/her qualifications for commenting on the experience.

- d. The letter should be written on the official letterhead stationery of the company or organization with which the writer is or was associated.
 - e. The person writing must be informed that the letter is to be one of **verification**, not recommendation.
2. If the documentation is a **product of experience**, such as a work sample, the following guidelines may be helpful in deciding how to make the presentation:
 - a. The applicant should be prepared to furnish proof that he/she did, in fact, produce the product presented. This may involve a supplemental letter of verification from someone who observed the process of producing the product.
 - b. Some products may be too large, cumbersome, or valuable to include in a portfolio. In such cases, it may be necessary to provide a photograph of the product and a statement of willingness to bring the product to a University official or to take the University official to the product being used as documentation of the experience.
 - c. The applicant should provide a number and diversity of products sufficient to persuade the appropriate University officials that the experience did actually take place.
 3. It is possible to provide too much documentation. Documentation is to be directly related to experiences. It is to provide sufficient verification to convince a reasonable person that participation in the experiences described in the portfolio did, in fact, occur.
 4. The documentation should verify both the **quality and quantity** of the experience.
 5. Products which are included in the portfolio should be **clearly** labeled.
 6. All documentation is considered public information. In other words, a number of individuals will look at the documentation furnished by the applicant or furnished in the applicant's behalf. Persons providing letters of verification should be so informed.
 7. Even if the applicant attempts to trim the amount of documentation, some individual specimens may be quite long. The applicant should underline those parts of the document relevant to the learning outcomes with a colored pen.

**AMBERTON UNIVERSITY'S PROCEDURE FOR
ASSESSING ACADEMIC CREDIT FOR
LEARNING EXPERIENCES**

The development of a good portfolio that provides a comprehensive and quality assessment of an individual's learning experiences can be difficult. To assist the student in developing a portfolio that will allow an accurate evaluation, the University has developed a course entitled, *Human Resource Inventory (HBD4735)*. The course is designed to acquaint the student, through the experiential approach of a self-assessment, with the techniques and skills needed for inventorying the human assets of an individual or an organization. Regardless of the outcome of the request for awarding academic credit for learning experiences, the *Human Resource Inventory* course will prove invaluable as an informative and interesting study in inventorying human assets.

Although the *Human Resource Inventory* course is recommended for individuals seeking academic credit for learning experiences, it is not required. An applicant may choose to prepare the portfolio on his/her own and submit it to the Vice President for Academic Services for processing.

The portfolio should include the following:

- A. Title Page
 1. Title: A presentation to Amberton University requesting academic credit for life experiences.
 2. Presented by: Applicant's name.
 3. Date: Date of presentation.
- B. Summary page

The summary page should clearly identify the number of academic credits being sought and the courses for which credit is desired (a copy of the form is provided in the back of this booklet).

C. Presentation of course competencies

1. Identify the course(s) for which academic credit is being sought.
2. Identify each course's competencies, followed with an evidence statement verifying that each competency has been obtained.
3. Include within the evidence statement references to documents included in the appendix which support the claim of competency.

D. Appendix

The appendix must include letters, certificates of verification, and other such support materials that provide evidence of achievement for referenced competencies.

METHODOLOGY

An applicant submitting a portfolio for evaluation must complete and sign *The Summary Page* (a copy of the form is provided in the back of this booklet). An applicant's completed portfolio will be delivered to the Vice President for Academic Services, who will assign the portfolio to a faculty committee.

After carefully assessing the portfolio, the committee will submit their findings to the Vice President for Academic Services. The student will be awarded credit based upon the verification of competencies, as perceived by the committee.

The process for evaluation takes approximately three weeks from the time the portfolio is presented. The student will be notified in writing of the results of the evaluation of the portfolio.

RE-SUBMISSION OF A DENIED PORTFOLIO

The re-submission of a portfolio for a specific course may be permitted if:

1. the portfolio is not submitted in the same session in which it was evaluated and denied and
2. the student has additional learning/training that enhances the documentation provided.

LEVEL OF COURSES ELIGIBLE FOR CREDIT

Amberton University restricts the awarding of academic credit to undergraduate courses.

COSTS

To have a portfolio evaluated, the applicant must have applied for admission and been accepted. The cost of assessing the portfolio is \$50.00 per course. If granted credit, there is no charge for recording the credits on a Transfer of Credit Report at Amberton University.

DISCIPLINES OFFERED BY AMBERTON UNIVERSITY

(See the *Amberton University Catalog* for details)

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

ACC = Accounting
BUS = Business
ECO = Economics
FIN = Finance
MGT = Management
MIS = Management Information Systems
MKT = Marketing

COM = Communication

ENG = English

HIS = History

HBD = Human Behavior and Development

HUM = Humanities

MAT = Mathematics

PSY = Psychology

REL = Religion

SCI = Science

SUMMARY PAGE EXAMPLE
(Type your copy for the portfolio)

Name: _____ SSN: _____ - _____ - _____
Address: _____ Home Telephone: _____
City, St, Zip: _____ Work Telephone: _____

Definition of Terms: (You may delete "Definition of Terms" in your Summary Page)

Discipline: The three-character field at the beginning of each course at Amberton University. Example: MGT = Management, HBD = Human Behavior & Development, COM = Communication, (see *Amberton University Catalog*).

Course Number: Provide the Amberton University course number for a specific course challenge or place four "XXXX" in the field.

Course Title: If an Amberton University course, give the course title; else, state general area (examples: communication, business, management).

EXAMPLES:	<u>Discipline</u>	<u>Course Number</u>	<u>Course Title</u>
Specific AU Course	BUS	3101	Business Law
Discipline Related	MIS	XXXX	XBase Programming

COURSES TO BE EVALUATED

<u>Discipline</u>	<u>Course Number</u>	<u>Course Title</u>

(You may add lines in your Summary Page)

I certify that the information provided is accurate and truthfully reflects my personal learning experiences.

Signature

Date