

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING HANDBOOK

WILMINGTON COLLEGE

Experiential Portfolio Guidelines

1. The maximum number of semester hours a student can earn through Experiential Learning credit is 15.
2. All Experiential Learning credit will be posted as interdisciplinary free electives (IDS397) and will fulfill no *General Education* or *Major* requirements other than the required number of total hours or upper level hours.
 - a. Students applying for Experiential Learning credit develop a portfolio, which is evaluated by a portfolio assessment committee. The portfolios and recommendations are then reviewed by the Vice President for External Programs for final approval.
3. Students must submit all material to support a request for Experiential Learning credit according to the following deadlines:
 - a. Students who start at Wilmington with fewer than 90 total hours must submit their Experiential Learning portfolio by the last day of the semester in which they have completed 90 hours or by the last day of their third semester at Wilmington, whichever comes later. In practice, the student with no transfer work would most likely use the 90-hour mark as a deadline, whereas the student who transfers in 88 hours would use the three-semester deadline.
 - b. Students who transfer to Wilmington with 90 hours or more must submit their experiential learning portfolio by the last day of their third semester at Wilmington.
 - c. Students may submit only one Experiential Learning portfolio in their Wilmington career.

Extensions:

It is the student's responsibility to complete their Experiential Learning portfolio within the designated time period. If there are extenuating circumstances, students may petition the Academic Standards and Appeals Committee for an extension.

Portfolios should be submitted to the office of the campus where the student is enrolled.

4. Experiential Learning credits do not count toward fulfillment of the thirty (30) minimum hours requirement for graduation, nor do they count for the residence requirement.
5. No grade is given for Experiential Learning credit hours and the credits are recorded on the transcript under the title "Experiential Learning."
6. Decisions made by the evaluation team are considered final. Students who think they were evaluated unfairly may petition, but such a petition should only be filed in extreme circumstances after other avenues of resolution have been attempted.
7. A non-refundable fee equivalent to one semester hour of tuition is charged when the portfolio is submitted. Upon final assessment and acceptance by the student, there will be an additional fee of 50% of the applicable tuition rate for each credit accepted. The initial submission fee of one credit hour will be applied to this total.
8. Students seeking credit for a specific course need to take a proficiency or CLEP examination in accordance with existing policies as stated in the catalog.

Non-traditional Ways to Earn College Credit

Wilmington College recognizes that not all college level learning takes place in the classroom. There are a number of ways you can earn college credit without having to take a class. These include CLEP exams, Proficiency exams, and applying for ACE/PONSI and Experiential Learning credits.

SECTION I: Examinations, Military and Seminar Credits

CLEP Examinations

The College Level Examination Program (CLEP) offers standardized college level general and subject exams. Examinations are available for many different areas including business and general education. Credits are awarded for minimum acceptable scores established by the American Council of Education. Each exam costs \$80.00, which includes a \$15.00 Wilmington College testing fee and a \$65.00 examination fee. For detailed CLEP guidelines and application information, please pick up a CLEP brochure from the Blue Ash or Wilmington College at Cincinnati State offices or visit the CLEP website at www.collegeboard.org.

Proficiency Examinations

Proficiency exams are available for many Wilmington College courses. Specific course credit is granted for successful completion of a proficiency exam. There are several guidelines of which to be aware:

Any regularly enrolled student may apply for permission to take a proficiency exam in a course listed in the catalog, subject to the following restrictions:

- A student may not take a proficiency exam in any course that is a prerequisite to one for which the student has already earned credit
- A student may not audit a class prior to taking a proficiency exam in that course
- No more than 12 credit hours may be acquired by proficiency examinations

Proficiency exams will not count toward fulfillment of the thirty (30) minimum hour requirement for graduation or for the residence requirement.

Students must complete Proficiency Exams according to the following deadlines:

- A. Students who start at Wilmington with fewer than 90 total hours must complete their proficiency examinations by the last day of the semester in which they have completed 90 hours, or by the last day of their third semester at Wilmington, whichever comes later. In practice, the student with no transfer work would most likely use the 90-hour mark as a deadline, whereas the student who transfers in 88 hours would use the three-semester deadline.
- B. Students who transfer to Wilmington with 90 hours or more must complete proficiency examinations by the last day of their third semester at Wilmington.

Applications for proficiency examinations may be obtained from your campus office. Permission to take the proficiency exam is not automatic, but is subject to the approval of the professor, the student's advisor, the Area Coordinator in the area of the subject examination, and the Registrar. A non-refundable fee of \$150.00 is required for the examination.

ACE/PONSI credits

The National Program of Non-collegiate Sponsored Instruction (PONSI) and American Council on Education (ACE) evaluate and make credit recommendations for education programs, seminars and courses from non-collegiate organizations. Non-collegiate organizations are generally large companies such as General Electric. Professional and voluntary organizations, government agencies and the armed forces may also offer these courses. Wilmington College awards credit in accordance with the ACE/PONSI recommendations. There is no cost involved for evaluation and awarding of this credit. Copies of your DD214, seminar, or course certificates should be submitted for evaluation as early as possible. Please speak with your advisor or the Experiential Portfolio Administrator for further information.

SECTION II: Experiential Learning Credits

Earning Credit for What You Know

Each of us has a unique set of background experiences, values, relationships, and goals that are not like anyone else's. Each of us has had different life and work experiences from which we have learned and which have helped us to acquire college-level knowledge. This handbook will help you identify and organize knowledge so you may earn college-level credit.

Your Profile

You will compile documentation for your experiential learning assessment into a portfolio. Your portfolio will help you:

1. Identify what knowledge and skills you have obtained from your work, hobbies, reading, etc.
2. Identify what you **know and have learned**, not just what you have experienced.

Your portfolio must have the following:

1. A cover letter requesting experiential credit hours.
2. A current résumé
3. A narrative which explains your experiences and what you learned
4. Documentation of your experiences (ex.: awards, promotion letters, job evaluations, etc.).
Copies of these items will be sufficient, as your portfolio will not be returned.

The Cover Letter

The purpose of your cover letter is to ask the Evaluation Committee for experiential learning credit. Your letter may be as simple as, "Please evaluate the following portfolio and consider my request for experiential learning credit," or you may elaborate by giving a summary of reasons why you believe you should get a specified number of experiential credits. For example, "Please evaluate the following portfolio which highlights 10 years of work experience in the manufacturing industry..."

A Current Résumé

Immediately following your cover letter, you must include a current copy of your résumé. No particular format is required, but it should be an up-to-date synopsis of your employment history that

clearly shows company name, position, and dates of employment. This résumé should be what you would use to apply for a job today.

The Narrative

The narrative is a description of your life and work experiences detailing what you have learned. It is sometimes called “significant learning.” This is an important part of your portfolio because it tells the committee exactly what you have done and learned. It can range from 1200 words to 2500 words, or about 6-12 typed pages. It should include the jobs you’ve held (both paid and volunteer), your responsibilities, skills, hobbies, and any other experiences you may have had in which significant learning was gained. This is critical. The committee needs to know not just what you’ve done, but what you’ve learned from it.

Documentation

You will need to support what you’ve done by providing documentation in the form of performance evaluations, training course certificates, letters of promotions, copies of awards, pictures, or anything else that documents what you say in your narrative. Be sure to relate your documentation to your actual knowledge. What you say in your narrative must be documented in this section.

Reviewing Your Background and Experience

You must identify the college-level knowledge and skills you possess that could be counted in the experiential learning process at Wilmington College. First you need to look at as many relevant experiences as possible. A sample portfolio worksheet is included in this handbook. It will help you identify and organize what you know. Consider the following suggestions in reviewing your background:

- Develop a chronological list of the jobs you have held since graduation from high school, including part-time work.
- Develop a list of the volunteer jobs and experiences you have held since graduation from high school.
- Write a list of places you have traveled that have educational significance.
- List key events, markers and milestones in your life since graduating from high school that are learning experiences. Include successes and failures.
- Develop a list of non-credit courses you have taken or special training programs at your work, church or other community organizations.

You may wish to begin with a specific set of questions for yourself. Here are some examples:

What is my job?

- What do I have to know to do my job?
- What have I learned that makes me good at my job?
- What would I have to know, say, or do to teach someone else my job?
- What training programs have I attended?

What special skills do I have?

- Have I given public presentations?
- Have I assumed a leadership role in my church or synagogue?
- Do I know CPR or first aid?
- Do I speak a foreign language?
- Do I consider myself an expert in something not related to my job? (Art, music, mechanics, photography, acting, church/school teaching, writing, etc.)
- Have I done volunteer work in such areas as counseling or social services that would be equivalent to college-level learning experience?

- Have I held an office or assumed a leadership role in politics or some other area?
- Have I developed or prepared public relations materials or other kinds of publicity for an organization?

How do I spend my leisure time?

- Do I have an absorbing interest in something which may be taught in college?
- Do I read extensively in a particular field?

Organizing Your Portfolio

There are a number of ways in which you may organize your portfolio, but it should always begin with a cover letter asking for experiential credit. Your portfolio can be organized like a paper, with a table of contents, your resume, narrative and documentation.

You may want to start your narrative chronologically, with your first job for example, or you can start with where you are today and backtrack as to how you got there. You may also decide to arrange your narrative into major areas of your life (job, volunteer, family, church, etc.). There really is no best way to do it—it's up to you. However, be sure it is organized in some way. The more clearly you organize your portfolio, the easier the reviewer's job will be.

Once you have clearly identified what you have learned and gathered your supporting documentation, you will want to type it neatly and without spelling or grammatical errors. Misspellings or punctuation errors will impact the amount of academic credit you receive. The Academic Resource/Writing Center is available to help students in this area if requested. The physical appearance of your portfolio can also influence your success in earning the credit you seek.

SECTION III: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. *Can credit earned through my experiential portfolio apply to any aspect of my degree program or only a selected portion?*

The credits you earn will count as “free electives.” This means that you will not earn specific credit, such as mathematics or English, but will earn general credit that will apply against the total number of free electives you must take to complete your degree program. It will be recorded on your transcript as *IDS397 Experiential Credit*.

2. *When should I begin the assessment process?*
 - A. Students who start at Wilmington with fewer than 90 total hours must submit their experiential learning portfolio by the last day of the semester in which they have completed 90 hours, or by the last day of their third semester at Wilmington, whichever comes later. In practice, the student with no transfer work would most likely use the 90-hour mark as a deadline, whereas the student who transfers in 88 hours would use the three-semester deadline.
 - B. Students who transfer to Wilmington with 90 hours or more must submit their experiential learning portfolio by the last day of their third semester at Wilmington.
 - C. Students may submit only one Experiential Learning portfolio in their Wilmington career.
3. *Is there a fee charged for Experiential Learning?*

The initial fee for evaluation of your Experiential Learning portfolio is equivalent to one credit hour of tuition. This fee is non-refundable and must be paid when you submit a portfolio. Upon final assessment and acceptance by the student, there will be an additional fee of 50% of the applicable tuition rate for each credit accepted. The initial submission fee of one credit hour will be applied to this total.

4. *What personal assistance does Wilmington College provide to aid in the preparation of my Experiential Portfolio?*

Wilmington College offers an Experiential Learning Workshop several times a semester to assist you in assessing and organizing your portfolio. The Writing Center is also available to help you with any grammatical or structural difficulties.

5. *Who will assess my Experiential Learning portfolio once it is submitted?*

Wilmington College has a portfolio assessment committee, which reviews each portfolio and recommends a specific number of credit hours. The portfolios and recommendations are then reviewed by the Vice President for External Programs for final approval. You will be notified upon final approval. Please allow 12 to 15 weeks from the time of submission to notification.

6. *Can I appeal a credit recommendation decision?*

Decisions made by the assessment committee are considered final because of the time and effort involved in reviewing each portfolio. Students who think they were evaluated unfairly may petition, but such a petition should only be filed in extreme circumstances after other avenues of resolution have been attempted.

Detailed Experiential Portfolio Guidelines are included at the beginning of this handbook. If you have additional questions not addressed in this handbook, please feel free to bring your questions to the experiential workshop or your advisor.

Undertaking the assessment process requires a strong commitment of time and effort. You will want to be sure you know as clearly as possible what will be expected of you, so you can put your best effort toward demonstrating the college-level knowledge you possess.

SIGNIFICANT LEARNING OUTLINE

Build a Significant Learning Outline of your life, starting with some point you would call “adult” life and ending with the present. Wherever you start, build an outline that lists, in order, the experiences in which you were involved. List as many experiences as you wish. The idea is to get as many experiences as possible. Be generous with yourself.

	Experience	Description of Duties - What I Did	Skills and Competencies - What I Had to Know	Analysis of Learning - What I Learned	Documentation - How Can This be Verified?
Employment					

	Experience (cont.)	Description of Duties - What I Did (cont.)	Skills and Competencies - What I Had to Know (cont.)	Analysis of Learning - What I Learned (cont.)	Documentation - How Can This be Verified? (cont.)
Education: Non Credit Courses and Seminars					
Volunteer Experience					
Travel Experience					

**SAMPLE WORKSHEET
IDENTIFYING WHAT YOU KNOW**

	Experience	Description of Duties (What I Did)	Skills and Competencies (What I Had to Know)	Analysis of Learning (What I Learned)	Documentation (How Can This be Verified?)
Employment	1987-1990 Held Administrative Assistant position, Union Service Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintained inventory control of publications • Corresponded with clients • Wrote copy for press • Prepared monthly budget • Supervised clerical staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational procedures • Problem solving • How to write business letters and memos • How to prepare news copy • How to set up account books • How to deal with difficult personnel issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to develop inventory control • How to write more effectively • Public relations • How to monitor accts payable / receivable • Personnel policies and procedures 	

	1998 Elected School Board Treasurer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepared budget proposals for Board • Reviewed expenditures of school district • Worked with state auditors • Prepared budget statements for district newsletter • Gave public presentations of Annual budget report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thorough knowledge of state and local budget • How to explain budget and provide necessary information • How to write professionally • How to speak professionally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budgeting on a big scale • Fiscal management • Professional writing procedures • How to be persuasive • Improvement of my public speaking • Public relations 	
Education: Non-Credit Courses and Seminars	Stress Management Workshop GCCCU			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective breathing exercises • How to decrease burnout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate from course • Registration form
Volunteer Experience	2002-2007 GRRAND (Golden Retriever Rescue and Adoption of Needy Dogs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homes visits • Coordinated follow-up calls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to explain policies and procedures clearly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public speaking • How to lead other volunteers effectively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pictures from events • Information given out at home visits
Travel Experience	Volunteer vacation to Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lived on conservation property • Worked throughout property (feeding animals, planting trees, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to live/work with different cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecological concerns in foreign countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptance letter • Pictures • Itinerary