

Prior Learning Portfolio (PLP) -- Preliminary Steps

If I decide to prepare a prior learning portfolio, what preliminary steps are required?

- To be eligible to submit a prior learning portfolio, you must have been admitted to the B.A. in General Studies (BGS) program and your WARD must have been prepared by the degree program office.
- You must successfully complete the Prior Learning Portfolio tutorial prior to beginning portfolio preparation. If you have never submitted a Prior Learning Portfolio to WIU, you must contact your advisor and provide your ECOM user name to gain access to the tutorial. Access to the PLP tutorial is through WesternOnline. No academic credit will be awarded for successful completion of the tutorial and no tuition will be charged.
- WIU Course Request List - Review the current WIU Undergraduate Catalog course descriptions and prepare a tentative list of courses with which you think you have comparable prior learning and which do not duplicate previous credit. This list should include the department name, course number and title. Note: Only undergraduate courses are suitable for use in the prior learning portfolio - graduate courses (500 level and above) will not be accepted.
- The WIU Undergraduate Catalog should be current. Check with your advisor if your catalog is more than one year old. The current Undergraduate Catalog may be viewed online at:
<http://www.wiu.edu/catalog>
- Submit a list of proposed course requests along with the first draft of your chronological history to your advisor for review. The chronological history is a compilation of the important events or periods of your life as they relate to the prior learning for which you will be requesting credit in your portfolio (see [Chronological History example](#)).
- After the academic advisor reviews your material you will receive written comments and suggestions. Any questions should be discussed with your advisor. You should then prepare sample narratives and lists of documentation. These samples will also be reviewed by your advisor and you will be given additional advice and guidance before writing the complete prior learning portfolio.

Prior Learning Portfolio - Course Narrative

What is a course narrative?

A course narrative is a complete and detailed description of the prior learning supporting your request for credit for a specific WIU course. Each course narrative must be unique and address the specific course content, as well as the theories and principles of the subject.

How long should the narrative be?

The length of a course narrative will depend on the subject matter to be described. A subject in which performance is impossible without the required knowledge does not require a lengthy narrative. However, most courses do not fit into this category. For the great majority of course requests, you will need to provide at least five pages (typewritten, double-spaced) of narrative to support your request. In areas where the knowledge claimed cannot be verified by the observation of some performance (such as a request for Art History or Abnormal Psychology), you will need to provide a lengthy description of your knowledge of the subject. In all cases, you should bear in mind that faculty evaluators will want some substantial evidence before recommending credit for a course that they teach. This will involve describing the depth and breadth of your knowledge from the standpoint of principles and theory, as well as practical application. It is unlikely that this can be done in a few paragraphs (see [Course Narrative example](#)).

What kind of information should be included in a course narrative?

- The narrative should begin with the current *WIU Undergraduate Catalog* description of the course. The catalog year should be included (see [Course Narrative example](#)).
- The setting in which the learning occurred -- work, hobby, volunteer activities, etc.
- How much time you spent acquiring this knowledge.
- Your level of involvement in this activity.
- The qualifications of the people from whom you gained the knowledge you claim.
- Publications you read (include authors, titles, publishers, editions, and brief summaries of contents).
- Examples of specific projects you were involved in or the concrete activities you carried out will be useful to the evaluator.
- The narrative should address all the major course components stated in the course description.
- If your performance during the learning experience was evaluated in some way (a superior performance rating, etc.), this should be mentioned.

NOTE: A course narrative must provide a detailed description of the extent of the knowledge you have gained from a learning experience. It will not be sufficient simply to describe details of the experience; you must be able to present a clear picture of the learning that resulted from the experience. It will be essential to show that you have acquired knowledge concerning the theoretical foundation of your task/role - in addition to depicting your performance of a function, you must be able to explain why you perform as you do.

Documentation

What is course documentation?

Course documentation is authoritative evidence, from an outside source, that you have the knowledge described in your course narrative.

What forms can documentation take?

Documentation can take many forms and will depend to some extent on the type of knowledge for which you are requesting credit. Some of the most common forms of documentation are:

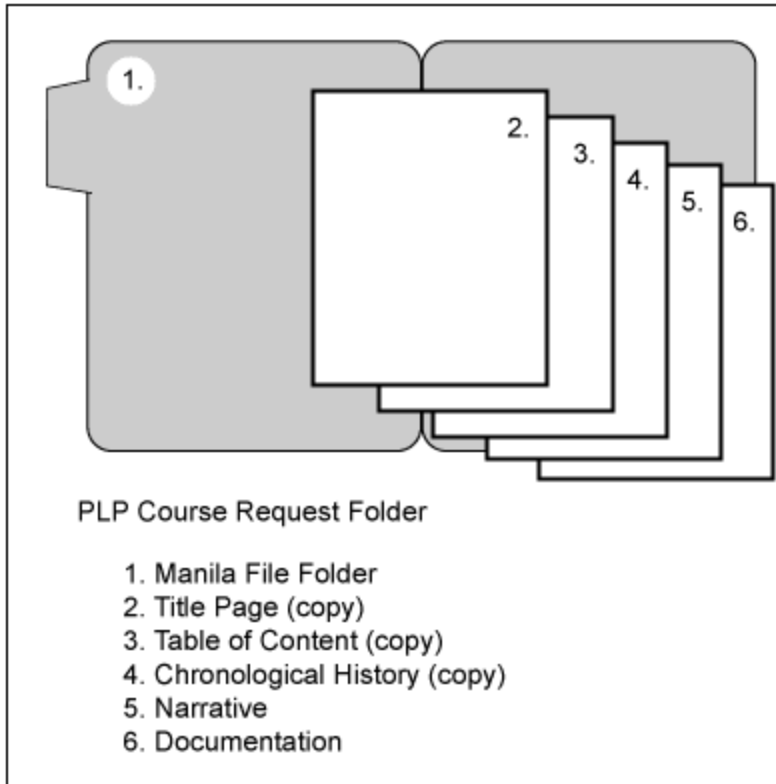
- [letters of verification](#) from supervisors and/or expert witnesses
- job descriptions
- work samples
- licenses
- musical performances (video tapes)
- certificates and awards
- art works (photos)
- newspaper or magazine clippings
- military records
- photographs and slides
- videotapes
- verified sport score cards

Prior Learning Portfolio -- Course Request Folders

Arrangement of the Portfolio

A portfolio may consist of any number of individual course requests.

- Each course request must be submitted in a separate manila file folder (called Course Request Folder or CRF)
- Each course request folder (CRF) should have copies of the pages described below
- The pages should be placed in the CRF in the order indicated.



1. **Title Page:** Each CRF should include a title page indicating that this is a portfolio being submitted for evaluation by you. The title page should also note the submission date of the portfolio (see [Title Page example](#)).
2. **Table of Contents:** The second page in each CRF should be a Table of Contents -- a complete list of course requests contained within the portfolio -- the requests should be listed in alphabetical order by department (see [Table of Contents example](#)).
3. **Chronological History:** The third page in each CRF should be the chronological history (see [Chronological History example](#)).
4. **Unique Narrative & Documentation for EACH CRF:** The main portions of your course request will be devoted to the learning narrative and its accompanying documentation. Each request must have a unique narrative and appropriate documentation. Course requests with identical narratives and/or sets of documentation will not be accepted.
5. **Course Request Folders Unique Tabs:** The CRF tab should list your name, academic department, division/prefix course number and title (see CRF example link). Include the following information on the folder tab label:
 - a. Student name
 - b. Department name
 - c. Division name/prefix
 - d. Course number and title

**Course Request Folder
Tab Format**

Ima Student
Department of Management
MGT
349 Principles of Management

Note placement of required elements;

1. Student name
2. Department name
3. Division name/prefix
4. Course number and title

Prior Learning Portfolio -- Process & Review Steps

What are the steps a prior learning portfolio must go through before credit is granted?

Before you may submit a completed portfolio, you must be formally admitted to the B.A. in General Studies program and your WARD must have been produced by the BGS degree program staff. You must discuss your portfolio with your academic advisor and submit a sample [chronological history](#), proposed course list, several [course narratives](#) and lists of documentation for examination. Once your advisor is satisfied that you have mastered the portfolio process, you should be able to finish the portfolio on your own. Your advisor will still be available for advice on any problem that may arise. When you have the prior learning portfolio completed and in final form, it should be submitted by the deadline to your advisor along with the signed [Portfolio Certification form](#) (PDF). IMPORTANT: Keep a complete copy of the portfolio for your files.

Your advisor will examine the completed portfolio; if there are problems to be corrected, it will be returned to you for revision. If, in the judgment of your advisor, your portfolio meets the criteria for a viable prior learning portfolio, it will be forwarded to the director of the B.A. in General Studies program for review and acceptance. This review will be for presentation, style, and conformity to WIU standards for written work. NOTE: The substance of the portfolio will later be evaluated by faculty - the subject matter experts.

When your portfolio has been fully accepted for evaluation, your student account will be billed \$30.00 for each course request submitted for evaluation.

Prior learning portfolios are submitted to WIU faculty two times each calendar year. These submission times are at the start of the fall and spring semesters. To provide time for your advisor to do a final review and to prepare each course request for submission to the appropriate faculty, the following deadlines to submit a completed portfolio have been established:

Portfolio Submission Deadline

- Fall Semester: July 1
- Spring Semester: November 1
- Summer Session: Portfolios not accepted for evaluation

Please note that you should begin working with your advisor several months before these deadlines.

The Review Process

Each WIU course request will be submitted to an appropriate WIU faculty member (usually an individual who teaches the course that has been submitted) for evaluation. Every effort is made to ensure the entire portfolio will be evaluated during the semester of submission. If you have any questions about the progress of your prior learning portfolio, contact your advisor. DO NOT contact the academic department or faculty member that you think has your course request. Evaluating faculty may at their discretion:

- Ask you to call for a telephone conference.
- Ask you to submit additional documentation of your learning.
- Ask you to demonstrate a skill.
- Ask you to meet with them.

If the faculty evaluator does not request additional information, your course request will be considered complete and will be evaluated accordingly. Once the faculty evaluator has had time to consider your course request, one of the following formal recommendations will be made:

- Full credit for a specific WIU course.
- Partial credit for a specific WIU course.*
- Elective credit in a department with a specific title describing the documented learning.
- Elective credit for specific learning.
- No credit.

*If partial credit is earned and transcribed as elective credit rather than specific course credit, a student may have the option to take the specific university course for additional credit.

Faculty credit recommendations will be reviewed by the Department Chairperson. Recommendations will then be forwarded to the College Dean for final approval. This award of credit will then be entered on your official transcript. Your advisor will notify you of the credit awarded. All credit awarded for prior learning will be listed on your transcript as a specific WIU or other course title. A typical award, as it would appear on the WIU transcript, would be as follows:

Assessment of Prior Learning

- Women in Crime SOC 435 (0.5 sh)
- Entrepreneurship: Intro to Bus IM 125 (3 sh)
- Personal Financial Planning FIN 301 (3 sh)
- Small Business Mgt MGT 474 (2 sh)
- Consumer Health HE 324 (2 sh)
- Total SH: 10.5 sh

Prior Learning Portfolio -- Checklist

Use the following checklist to track your progress:

- PLP Tutorial completed | Date:
- chronological history and list of courses to advisor | Date:
- syllabi requested | Date:
- sample narratives and lists of documentation to advisor | Date:
- additional narrative(s) if requested, to advisor | Date:
- full draft completed | Date:
- final PLP and signed [Portfolio Certification form](#) (PDF) to advisor | Date: