Parameters of Evaluation

1. The student’s presentation should stand alone. The evaluator should not have to infer that learning “possibly” took place because a student was in proximity to or engaged in activities that could have produced learning.

2. The learning should be at least on the undergraduate level, as understood in the evaluator’s field of study. The learning should have characteristics of comparability and transferability that extend beyond the specific job or setting in which it was gained.

3. The learning should appropriately demonstrate a conceptual as well as a practical grasp of the subject matter. Most older students demonstrate an understanding of basic theories applicable to undergraduate courses of the general nature of the experiences being presented.

4. The learning should be related to an academic field (although it need not be confined to an existing course content).
   
   • For most students presenting prior learning, the normal progression of resident courses is somewhat reversed. A student’s out-of-class learning experiences may be at the specialized level of junior or senior “special topics” or “internship” type courses, not at the more general level of introductory first- and second-year courses.
   
   • Your precision in connecting your evaluation to specific courses is helpful to us in insuring that students do not receive duplicate credit.

   • On the other hand, we recognize that the way in which students have combined college-level prior learning experiences may not easily coincide with existing courses at this university or others. Sometimes, for example, a student’s life experience puts him or her in interdisciplinary areas to which academic institutions have not yet reacted in developing needed courses.

5. As mentioned above, checking for duplication is part of our task in evaluating prior learning.

   • Included with the student’s presentation is a copy of his or her Curriculum Worksheet, showing how the student’s existing credit applies to External Degree graduation requirements.

   • If you note possible duplications with credit you are recommending from your evaluation, please call them to our attention. Please do not omit a portion of your recommendation because you feel it duplicates previous credit. Our registrar routinely checks prior learning credit recommendations and course equivalents (with other institutions if necessary) to avoid duplication of credit.
6. An important aspect of prior learning in the undergraduate curriculum is that credit for prior learning contributes to definite degree plans of which both the student and The University of Alabama can be proud.

- If you feel that a student deserves credit for a presentation emphasizing applied experiences, but would benefit from additional work in the foundations of the subject area, please so recommend.
- If you feel that a student should expand his or her conceptual understandings by additional reading(s) or other work to supplement the presentation, please so recommend.

Such recommendations are particularly helpful in using prior learning to meet general education requirements and to develop depth study competencies.

7. Evaluations of prior learning are made on a pass basis since evaluators do not directly supervise the quality of the experiences being presented.

Student Responsibilities

When a student wants to present a portfolio for Prior Learning evaluation, he or she must submit an Application to Submit Evidence of Prior Learning (hereinafter referred to as an ASK) to the External Degree staff. After the staff has reviewed and approved the ASK, the student has six months in which to prepare the portfolio for submission. During that six-month period the student can request instruction and advice about portfolio preparation. Prior to making this presentation, the student should have studied the Prior Learning Student Guide. This "guide" instructs the student to organize the presentation with the following components:

- **A Letter of Transmittal** to his or her External Degree academic advisor. This is a cover letter.

- **A Title Sheet** in the form of an Application to Submit Evidence of Prior Learning (see page 8 of this manual). This form provides some basic information about the student. It includes telephone numbers if the evaluator wishes to query the student directly about the presentation. It also indicates the subject area title of the presentation and the area of the student's Degree Plan to which he or she desires to apply any credit earned.

- **A Table of Contents**, which should be organized with accurate headings and page numbers to help the evaluator understand the presentation.