PRIOR LEARNING
STUDENT GUIDE

COLLEGE OF HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES
The University of Alabama

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The University of Alabama College of Human Environmental Sciences (CHES) offers students with appropriate experience an opportunity to petition for an assessment of prior learning as one of several undergraduate degree completion options available. In view of the CHES mission of serving adult learners with significant professional experience, the academic recognition of prior learning is a fundamental component in the educational plan of many of its students. The concept is based on accepted principles of adult learning, which emphasize a participative, self-directed, problem-solving orientation to learning. The recognition of experiential learning is designed to assist professional adult learners attain their academic and career goals by validating the professional competence they have acquired outside the classroom.

The integral place of prior learning assessment within the mission and purpose of the CHES lies in its compatibility with the needs of the working adult student population served by the University. Based on the proven assumption that adults will bring a variety of diverse and often specialized skills to the classroom, experiential learning tends to emphasize the application of this knowledge; it challenges students to apply their theoretical and practical skills to the problems and needs of their community and workplace. By its very nature, experiential learning validates the richness and diversity of environments in which individuals can pursue meaningful learning.

The standards and criteria developed by the College of Human Environmental Sciences at The University of Alabama for assessing prior learning was modeled after the External Degree Program in the College of Continuing Studies. The External Degree Program has achieved a position of distinction in its field and has served as a model for new and older universities that have chosen to add the assessment of prior learning to their programs. The External Degree Program has worked closely with the American Council on Education (ACE) and the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL). CAEL is a nationally recognized organization whose mission is to foster academically sound and consistently administered assessment of experiential learning.
Basic Questions about Prior Learning

A student can gain college-level learning from life experiences. Academic credit may be awarded for that learning. However, credit is not awarded for the student's merely having had the experiences; it is based on the ability to reflect on and articulate to faculty evaluators the college-level learnings from those experiences. Experiences that may be the source of college-level learning include employment, volunteer activities, hobbies, private study, military service and in-service training. The College of Human Environmental Sciences awards credit for learning from prior experience toward several B.S. degrees conferred by the college. Prior Learning Credit is awarded only for undergraduate courses offered through the college of HES and there is no assurance that these credit hours will be accepted by other programs at UA or other universities.

1. How does learning from experience relate to traditional classroom learning?

Most classroom learning begins with theories or ideas, not applications; that is, it is deductive learning moving from the general to the particular. This approach to learning is generally formal. It involves set periods of time, various exercises (such as writing papers) and periodic examinations.

Learning from experience is generally informal. It occurs in the midst of work or family situations that rarely have set time periods, structured exercises or periodic exams. Learning from experience usually consists of hands-on activities. It tends to be inductive; that is, it begins with particulars from which general principles can be derived.

Distinctions between classroom learning and learning from experience are not always consistent. Classroom learning may involve laboratories or other forms of testing ideas in practice. Learning from experience may also be accompanied by reading or other forms of study, such as personal choice, or employer direction. The chief difference is that classroom learning is structured so that credit hours can be awarded, usually with grades, based on known measures of content. Learning from experience is not organized in this fashion.

The student must extract from their experiences the guiding principles used in the academic fields that best relate to the experiences involved. These guiding principles must be illustrated and articulated to those who teach in the fields involved. This presentation or portfolio provides faculty with a basis for fairly assessing learning from experiences. That assessment then can be equated in credit units (semester hours) to what would have been earned in similar classroom courses.
2. What is a portfolio?

Educational inputs (seat time in a traditional class, hours on the job, life experiences, etc.) do not guarantee learning outcomes, and if credit for learning is to be granted it is essential that the evaluator have something upon which to base an evaluation. Classroom instructors use exams, papers, class participation, etc., as indicators that learning has taken place. The evaluator of experiential learning uses the portfolio, a formal written, oral or electronic communication, to assess learning.

A prior learning portfolio is a document in which learning from various life experiences is organized into a manageable form for academic assessment. It is a way to express what is known by the student in a clear and concise manner and permits accurate and efficient faculty assessment. In the portfolio the following questions should be asked:

✓ What are the life experiences, and what is the learning?
✓ How is the learning equivalent to college-level learning?
✓ How can the college-level learning be documented?
✓ What documentation indicates college level learning?

3. What kind of life and work experiences would be worth college-level credit?

Many adults have had a variety of experiences from which they have acquired college-level knowledge and skills. Business people often know sales techniques, business law, human resource management, bookkeeping, supervision, inventory control and/or marketing. A good many managers might know consumer economics. Many people have public speaking abilities. Work with volunteer and human service organizations could lead to credit for management and counseling. It is possible that college credit could be awarded for such experience through portfolio evaluation.

4. What are the characteristics of learning that might receive prior learning credit?

It is learning that:
✓ was acquired after high school
✓ may have been required for professional competence
✓ is reasonably current (some learning is time sensitive)
✓ is comparable to courses offered in colleges or universities
✓ implies a conceptual (theoretical) and practical understanding
✓ shows a relationship to the student’s degree goals
✓ does not duplicate learning for which college credit has already been awarded.
5. How much time can be taken to prepare the portfolio?

Once a Prior Learning Application (PLA) has been filed with the CHES Prior Learning Coordinator, the evaluation fee has been paid and the PLA has been approved, the student will have six months from the date of the letter of approval in which to prepare and submit the portfolio. If the student fails to submit the portfolio in that six-month period, the student will forfeit the evaluation fee and will be required to resubmit a PLA to begin the process again, should credit still be sought.

6. Is there help for students preparing a portfolio?

Students wishing to gain prior learning credit are advised to use this manual as a guide. A helpful text is *Earn College Credit For What You Know* by Lois Lamdin (3rd Edition, ISBN 0-7872-3573-3 through Kendall Hunt Publishing). The Prior Learning Coordinator will provide guidance and bibliographic information on other texts about portfolio development, and can provide critiques of the drafts of the various portfolio elements. However, the Prior Learning Coordinator will not serve as the portfolio assessor.

7. How long does the portfolio assessment take?

The amount of time needed to complete the portfolio assessment varies, but it should be completed within six weeks after the portfolio has been submitted to the faculty assessor. The length of time may increase if the portfolio is submitted just prior to scheduled campus vacations such as Christmas or Spring Break. Every effort is made to get a timely evaluation.

8. How many semester hours will be awarded per portfolio submission?

If the student has invested time and care in the portfolio preparation, it should elicit credit. Because experience itself is not creditable, there is no way of knowing exactly how much credit a portfolio will render. The evaluator will recommend the number of credit hours to be awarded and that recommendation will be weighed against any credit duplication, professional hours earned and prior learning credit limits. Prior learning credit can be placed in the major area of study or as elective credit. Portfolio credit may not be applied to the Senior Project or Executive Seminar portion of the ExRHM Program. There is a limit of thirty (30) undergraduate credit hours (1/4 of degree) of prior learning portfolio credit that any one student can earn. There is also a forty-five (45) hour cumulative credit limit for all types of prior learning credit which includes ACE credit, PEP/CLEP, AP credit, Dantes credit and portfolio evaluation.
9. How do credits earned for prior learning appear on The University of Alabama transcript?

Prior learning credit is listed on The University of Alabama transcript using course equivalent titles where applicable. Portfolio credit is usually recorded on the official transcript with a grade of P (or “Pass”). In a classroom course a faculty member has established specific criteria for the awarding of grades A, B, C or D. Such criteria are not usually available for a portfolio and the learning rarely exactly duplicates a course.

10. Can credits earned for prior learning be transferred to other colleges or universities?

If a CHES student wishes to use University of Alabama prior learning credit in other UA degree programs outside of the CHES or at other universities or colleges, there is no assurance or guarantee that these credits will be transferable. Students should ask this question of colleges or universities they plan to attend.

The University of Alabama College of Human Environmental Sciences will make transfer determinations on a case-by-case basis for acceptance of transcribed prior learning credit awarded by other regionally accredited colleges and universities.

11. Is there a charge for credit earned in prior learning assessment?

There is an evaluation fee of $500.00 for the regular PLA. If the student is submitting a Modified PLA (see p. 19) for standardized ACE (American Council on Education) credit, then a fee of $150.00 will be charged. These fees are for the evaluation and are subject to change.

12. What if the portfolio does not earn the credit that the student expected?

A carefully prepared portfolio generally earns academic credit. However, sometimes students have unrealistic goals and are disappointed if they do not receive as much credit as they had hoped. The evaluation may show that the student needs to learn additional concepts or take additional courses in order to develop more fully the competencies in any field of study. If the student is unsatisfied with the evaluation, a request for another evaluation may be filed in the form of a letter requesting a second evaluation. If the request is granted an additional evaluation fee of $150.00 will be charged.

13. Is currency of knowledge important?

Currency is important in most academic areas. Age of experience accepted is dependent upon course of study related, but in no case will experiences over 10 years be acceptable. Campus courses are updated on a regular basis, and experiential learning must be reasonably comparable.
Prior Learning Case Studies

Adult students enter the College of Human Environmental Sciences programs with a vast array of knowledge gained through experiences in business, government, the community and social organizations. Because of the institutionalization of prior learning credit, these students are allowed to demonstrate the intersection of practical application and theory and receive college-level credit applicable to their degree. Prior learning credit is given for the “learning” and not the “experience”. This practice not only enhances the degree program of the CHES student but also enriches the academic community by bringing an element of self-reflection to the typical course-based education. An additional effect is to bring together students and faculty of different “…social institutions, populations, life experiences, and fields of inquiry, all of which require new types of understandings and skills” (Mandell 6*).

The CHES portfolio assessment program permits students to apply for assessment in several academic fields of study provided within the College of HES. The portfolio evaluators are University of Alabama faculty and staff whose academic training represents expertise in such areas as the nutrition, hospitality management, consumer sciences, child & family studies, health sciences and human environmental sciences. In order for the prior learning credit to be considered UA auspices, the evaluator must be affiliated with The University of Alabama as a member of the faculty, staff or administration.

While each student brings to the degree plan an entirely different set of life experiences, there are some similarities in the way each student is advised about the preparation of a prior learning portfolio. The following case studies offer examples of different areas of portfolio development. These examples demonstrate the questions asked and advice given in all initial discussions about prior learning. Whether students submit prior learning or not, it is vital to examine what has been gained from past experience so that there will be a better understanding of where to go with a degree.

BILL is 29. Immediately upon graduation from high school he joined the Air Force. While in the service, he assisted in running a NCO Club, and feels he learned a considerable amount about bookkeeping, inventory control, personnel management, and customer service. He was stationed in Germany for two years.

Three years ago, Bill opened a small food service contract company that he still operates. He feels he has learned marketing, managerial accounting, human resources management, and quantity food production and service through his experiences and through reading and taking noncredit seminars.

Bill is also an accomplished chef. Bill now wishes to pursue a Bachelor’s degree at The University. He feels that his experiences should be recognized in meeting the requirements for his degree.

SHARON is 43. At the age of 18 she entered the local community college and pursued a general liberal arts program with no clear career objective. She received her AA degree at 20 and married. Since then, she has been a homemaker for herself, two children (now ages 17 and 15) and a husband. Throughout her child-rearing years, she read numerous books and articles and discussed them with her pediatrician. The pediatrician had recommended much of Sharon’s reading.

Sharon has also read extensively in the food and nutrition field and applied much of her reading in raising her family. She is a skilled, gourmet cook.

Sharon participates in a number of civic organizations. She was president of the PTA and vice-president of the local chapter of the League of Women Voters. She completed a Dale Carnegie course in Public Speaking. In her spare time, she enjoys playing tennis.

Sharon’s children are growing up and she finds herself less content with homemaking. She is not sure what career, if any, she would like to pursue. She feels enrolling in a B.S. degree program will help her find an area of interest. She hopes her years of experience will count toward the degree.
TED is 46. He has worked for seven years as a Rooms Department Manager for a mid-sized hotel management company. He also worked his way through a self-instructional textbook in customer service and employee supervision. He has participated in three on-the-job workshops totaling 30 contact hours and has completed the AHLA Certified Hospitality Supervisor Program (CHS).

Ted is a member of Toastmasters International and has given a number of speeches to service clubs. He is president of the local chapter of the Junior Chamber of Commerce and has served as president of the local chapter of the Lion’s Club. He also serves as an elected member of the City Council.

Ted now wants to move up into a General Manager position within his present contract management firm. Company policy requires that he have a bachelor’s degree in order to hold a General Manager position. Ted wants to enter the local college to pursue a degree, and feels that his past experience should count toward his degree.

BECKY is 30. Following high school graduation, she began a career in banking and started working on an associate degree that she received from a community college. She began her career as a teller, was promoted to head teller and then after three years on the teller line, was promoted to a new accounts representative position.

Looking for career advancement, Becky left banking after seven years and went to work for an insurance agent. During this time, she obtained a license to sell life and health insurance products and worked assisting customers with insurance quotes, information about their policies, and other service related issues. When she realized that her career opportunities were greater in banking, she returned to the bank in a new account position and received two promotions in three years. Becky now serves as the Retail Sales Officer and manages the sales program at her bank as well as many other administrative duties. She also interviews, selects, and directs the activities of interns from the University of Alabama, providing them with substantive work experiences.

Becky has taken leadership development courses, a workshop on presentation skills, and financial service courses. She has served as a leader in volunteer organizations, and is active with the local Chamber of Commerce.

Becky wants to enroll in a bachelors degree program and feels that her work experience in two industries as well as her volunteer experiences should count toward a degree.
Advising Process for Bill, Sharon, Ted & Becky

QUESTIONS ACADEMIC ADVISOR WILL CONSIDER: How many hours of credit are listed on the Degree Worksheet? What is student’s degree plan? Would a portfolio be appropriate in light of needed credit hours and time invested?

The CHES Prior Learning Coordinator will:

a. Refer to the CHES Degree Worksheet will indicate what course requirements need to be filled. In addition, the Coordinator will check for student grade point average. Students must have at least a 2.0 overall GPA in order to apply for Prior Learning credit.

b. Talk to the student about life experience. If it appears that there is the possibility of credit, The Prior Learning Coordinator will:

✓ Ask the student to re-examine the Significant Learnings Outline that catalogs experiences and learning along with identifying documentation,

✓ Have the student look at college or university catalogs to determine what is currently being taught in the fields where the student has experience and click on syllabus to obtain courses offered. Go to: (www.ches.ua.edu/courses/index.htm)

✓ Ask the student to look at textbooks and journal articles in areas of strength or greatest knowledge, and talk to professionals who teach or work in those same areas to establish the guiding principles and theories that are currently accepted in that field.

For example, referring to the previous case studies, the Prior Learning Coordinator may suggest that:

c. **Bill** consider a portfolio in Restaurant & Hospitality Management.

   **Sharon** consider a portfolio in Human Development.

   **Ted** consider a portfolio in Restaurant & Hospitality Management.

   **Becky** consider a portfolio in Consumer Science.

All of these students should choose their strongest areas of competence and complete one portfolio at a time.

d. Once the student has established his/her strengths, a PLA should be submitted in the area or areas in which learning can be demonstrated. Once an PLA is approved, the student will have six months in which to prepare the portfolio. (The preparation of a modified PLA for ACE or Military credit is somewhat different and directions are included on page 19 and 20 of this handbook.)

NOTE: Prior to submitting a Prior Learning application students must be admitted to a CHES program of study and must have completed at least one course successfully at The University of Alabama.
IDENTIFYING SIGNIFICANT LEARNING EXPERIENCES

One of the most important steps in degree planning and the preparation of a prior learning portfolio (PLA) is to identify those life experiences which provided learning. CHES students must to prepare a Significant Learning Outline (see pages 12-13 of this manual) even if they never intend to submit prior learning. Students should identify learning gained through personal experiences such as those listed in the following examples:

1. Experiences that were particularly significant and from which a great deal of knowledge was gained or important lessons were learned.

2. Experiences in which a great deal of time, or effort was spent.

3. Experiences that gained recognition from others.

   While preparing the Significant Learning Outline students should ask themselves the following questions.

   a. Does my experience meet college-level course objectives?
   b. Did I experience growth?
   c. Can I answer who, what, when, where and how questions?
   d. What problems did I have to solve and how did I develop solutions?
   e. What books or resources did I use?
   f. What sort of documentation can I produce as evidence of the experience (letters from supervisors, brochures, advertising, contracts, etc.)?

4. A Significant Learning outline should be prepared for each course objective for which prior learning is sought.
COMPLETING THE SIGNIFICANT LEARNING OUTLINE

Section 1: Subject Matter for which credit is sought.

Determine the courses taught in the College of Human Environmental Sciences for which you desire prior learning by going to the college web site: www.ches.ua.edu and selecting the icon named “course listing/syllabi”.

All courses may not be listed on this web site so you are encouraged to examine the entire course listing for programs within the College of Human Environmental Sciences in the University of Alabama Undergraduate Catalog. (Contact Prior Learning coordinator for assistance.)

Once you have determined the course or courses for which you desire prior learning credit, you must complete a Significant Learning Outline (see page 12) for each course and each course objective. List the course name, course number and the curriculum in which this course is found, i.e., Consumer Sciences, Restaurant and Hospitality Management, Nutrition, etc.

Section 2: Course Objectives met through prior learning.

List the course objectives for which prior learning is being requested. ONLY list those objectives for which you have significant prior learning experience and documentation.

Section 3: Course Objectives NOT met through prior learning.

List course objectives for the course for which you do not have prior learning experience or proper documentation.

Section 4: Description of learning outcomes and competences reached.

In this section, describe your learning outcomes, or what you know and can do. Identify experiences from which the greatest knowledge has been gained. Explain how you applied what was learned to meet the course objective listed in Section 2. This narrative is most important to the overall evaluation of your prior learning request.

Section 5: Documentation

Documentation is a form of evidence, of backing up or verifying statements made in this analysis of learning. In trying to obtain credit for learning from experience, the student bears the burden of proof that there is college-level learning in the experience. It must be demonstrated to the evaluator what was learned as well as how well it was learned. The type of documentation submitted will vary with the types of experience and from one student to the next. An effective analysis of the learning is more important than excessive documentation.

Be as specific as possible listing conferences attended, classes attended, certificates received, military schooling, CEU’s awarded, work experiences, etc. Examples of documentation include letters from employers, licenses, resumes, products of your work (books, patents, etc), proposals, job descriptions, performance evaluations, etc. Prior learning experiences must be accomplished within the past five-ten years (depending on area of study) to be considered for prior learning credit).
SIGNIFICANT LEARNING OUTLINE

Name: _____________________________   Date: _________

The purpose of the Significant Learning Outline is to help students organize experiences and reflect on responsibilities that might denote college level learning. It is a first step in portfolio development. Complete a Significant Learning Outline for each course objective for which you are seeking prior learning. Be sure to list course objective MET in Section 2, and in Section 3 list course objectives NOT MET through prior learning. In Section 4, explain how your prior learning met the course objective. In Section 5 document how the objective was met.

Section 1: Subject Matter for which credit is sought.

List the course name and number for which prior learning credit is being requested. Course must be offered in the College of Human Environmental Sciences. See www.ches.ua.edu course listing/ syllabi.

UA Course Number: __________
UA Course Name: ___________________________________________
Major into which prior learning credit falls: _____________________

Section 2: Course Objectives met through prior learning.

(List course objectives for which prior learning is being requested. Objectives may be obtained from course syllabi.)
NOTE: A Significant Learning outline should be prepared for each course objective for which Prior Learning is requested.
Section 3: Course Objectives NOT met through prior learning.
(List course objectives for which prior learning is not being requested. Objectives may be obtained from course syllabi.)

Section 4: Description of learning outcomes and competencies reached:
(Identify the theories, guidelines, or principles learned from past experiences that meet the stated objective. Explain how you applied what was learned to meet course objectives. This narrative is most important to the overall evaluation of your prior learning request.)

Section 5: Documentation:
(Document how objective was met from prior learning experiences. Be as specific as possible, listing conferences attended, classes attended, certificates received, military schooling, CEU's awarded, work experiences, etc. Examples of documentation include letters from employers, licenses, resumes, products of your work (books, patents, etc.), proposals, job descriptions, performance evaluations, etc. Prior learning experiences should be accomplished within the past five years.) (Depending on area of study)
PORTFOLIO SUBMISSION PROCESS

The College of Human Environmental Sciences has specific procedures for submitting evidence of Prior Learning. All portfolio submissions must be preceded by the submission of a Regular Prior Learning Application (See page 18). The following is a step-by-step explanation of this process.

1. The student should:
   a. Discuss the submission of a Regular PLA or Modified PLA with advisor (specific questions should be directed to the Prior Learning Coordinator).
   b. Fill out PLA check-list (Page 24).
   c. Fill out the PLA and return it with all attachments to the Prior Learning Coordinator: Mr. Jason Blumenthal, College of Human Environmental Sciences, P. O. Box 870158, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0158.
   d. Have been admitted to a CHES program of study and have completed at least one undergraduate course with a GPA of 2.0.

2. Once the PLA is received by the CHES Prior Learning Coordinator, the following procedure is followed:
   a. The PLA is logged in.
   b. The PLA and attachments are examined by the Prior Learning Coordinator. The PLA may be returned for clarification, corrections or additional information.
   c. If the PLA is viable, the PLA is returned to the student indicating approval and the student may begin the process of portfolio preparation. The student is given six months from receipt of the letter to prepare the portfolio. You will register for Prior Learning and the University Registrar will bill you for the appropriate fees.

3. The student will receive a 5th-month letter as a reminder that there is one month left in which to prepare the portfolio.

4. If the student fails to submit the portfolio within the six-month period, the evaluation fee is forfeited. If the student wishes to submit the portfolio after the six months another PLA and additional fee will be required.

5. When the portfolio is received by the Prior Learning Coordinator, it is logged in:
   a. A permission form is sent to the head of the evaluator's department for approval of service.
   b. Once the permission form is approved and returned, the evaluator is contacted and the portfolio is delivered to the evaluator.
   c. The evaluator may take up to four weeks to evaluate and return the portfolio. During that time the evaluator may contact the Prior Learning Coordinator, the student’s advisor, colleagues or the student.

6. When the portfolio is returned with the evaluation to CHES it is logged by the Prior Learning Coordinator who will check for credit duplication, credit title and credit amounts. The PLA coordinator then has the evaluation form signed by the student’s advisor, the CHES Registrar and the Department Chair. The CHES Registrar will notify the University Records office of awarded credit.

7. The student will then be notified by the CHES Prior Learning Coordinator about the awarding of credit.

8. The portfolio will be retained in the CHES office as a record of the credit attempt until the student graduates.
ORGANIZING THE PORTFOLIO FOR PRIOR LEARNING

Each portfolio is creatively different, but each portfolio will contain the following elements:

1. **Cover Letter or Transmittal Letter:** This letter is a short introduction to the evaluator outlining the area or areas that are covered in the portfolio. The student should list contact information, such as telephone numbers, e-mail address and regular mailing address in case the evaluator needs to make further contact to verify or clarify something with regard to the portfolio.

2. **Title Sheet (PLA):** This is a copy of the approved PLA which includes personal data, subject area title, area of degree plan, type of presentation, date and signature of student.

3. **Table of Contents:** The table of contents should list all major sections, subtopics in each section, and all additional topics or items included in the portfolio. Each entry must have an accurate page number.

4. **Resume:** This is a brief description of personal information, employment, military and educational background. The resume serves as an introduction to the assessor. The resume must be typed and the maximum length should be three pages.

5. **Detailed Autobiographical Description of Experience:** In the narrative, the student provides a written self portrait. The student will tell something about themselves, highlighting experiences both personal and professional that exhibit growth, goals and the reasons for seeking credit for prior learning. The student should incorporate significant events from the Significant Learnings Outline. This statement should be a minimum of three typewritten double-spaced pages. The following should be included:
   a. An introduction of the student, including educational and career goals, and any plans for further education after earning the undergraduate degree.
   b. A description of how educational goals relate to family, work and community life.
   c. A description of the motivations for earning the undergraduate degree.
   d. A conclusion that sums up the student’s intention for earning credit through the assessment of prior learning.

6. **Discussion of How This Area of Prior Learning Relates to the Degree Plan:** The student will want the narrative in this area to include:
   a. The subject matter for which credit is being sought.
   b. The academic course, area and/or department that seems to correspond to the subject matter of the prior learning.
   c. Course titles (and descriptions, if necessary).
   d. The area of the curriculum into which any prior learning credit will fit.

   The student should be as specific as possible about that part of the degree and/or the course requirement the prior learning credit will fulfill. Experiential learning will rarely exactly parallel specific courses; however, the student must identify on-campus courses that sound similar to the student’s past experiences. Refer to CHES course syllabus website for specific course objectives. (www.ches.ua.edu.) The following example from an adult student’s portfolio may be helpful.

   "My prior learning in management is directly related to my Restaurant & Hospitality (RHM) major. I chose Restaurant & Hospitality Management because of its relevance to my career in hospitality management and my long-range educational goals of obtaining a master’s degree in Business Management. The learning I acquired during my twenty years as a manager and in the service industry is directly related to the knowledge and skills required for a degree in RHM. The courses listed below are both reflective of my prior learning and an appropriate curriculum for my depth study or major.

   The degree plan I prepared when I entered this program listed my prior learning in the
area of Restaurant & Hospitality Management. As a General Manager with a major restaurant company, I have prior learning experience at several levels of management. Integrated into my practical application or hands-on learning has been an excellent formal training program. This formal classroom training has ranged from in-house courses on basic management to executive programs at Cornell University, and Pennsylvania State University. My organization has a strong commitment to management education and has provided me with over three hundred hours of formal training, much of which has taken place in the past ten years.

I certainly would not argue that my prior learning relates exactly to the courses listed below; however, from examining course descriptions and texts I believe my learnings fall in the general areas of these courses. On the other hand, this list may not be all-inclusive. The courses listed below are all relevant to my major and I believe the documentation provided in this portfolio supports that relevance."

RHM 251  Hospitality Employee Supervision and Management
RHM 303  Managing For Quality in the Hospitality Industry
RHM 356  Human Resources Management
RHM 474  Managerial Accounting
RHM 420  Hospitality Marketing

7. Detailed Analysis of What I Learned from the Experience: Some institutions and evaluators refer to this part of the portfolio as the “analysis of learning” or the “life-learning” essay. In this essay, the student will identify the theories, guidelines or principles learned from past experiences. Answers to the questions for each part of the essay should be at least two to five paragraphs. This narrative is the most important part, or heart, of the portfolio. In the narrative the following questions should be answered:
   a. What course objectives were achieved from the experience?
   b. How did the student apply what was learned to the job or personal life?
   c. How can this knowledge be applied to other areas of life or to other jobs?
   d. What difference does it make in the student’s life to have this knowledge?
   e. Can the theories, rules, laws, guidelines or principles that have been learned from the experience be identified?

NOTE: Include copies of the Significant Learning Outline for each course and each course objective for which Prior Learning is sought.

More than factual knowledge must be demonstrated. Assessors will be looking for evidence that the student understands and has thought about what he or she knows. The credit received through the assessment of prior learning is directly related to the complexity of knowledge, regardless of how a particular subject was learned (adapted from Degree Planning and Prior Learning, Second Edition, by Robert H. McKenzie, Ph.D.).

8. Annotated Bibliography: An annotated bibliography is a list of resources used in the learning process along with the resources used while compiling the portfolio.

9. Documentation: This part of the portfolio provides evidence of the items listed in section 4 of the Significant Learnings Outline. Effective documentation provides evidence and support of what the student knows. It is specifically geared to the area of knowledge in which credit is being sought. Suggested examples of documentation (this list is not exhaustive):
   a. Letter from employers
   b. Licenses
   c. Certificates
   e. Newspaper clippings
   f. Audiotapes and videotapes
   g. Resumes
   h. Photographs
   i. Products of your work (books, patents)
   j. Proposals
   k. Job descriptions/classifications
   l. Official forms or records/performance evaluations

NOTE: The completed portfolio may be prepared in hard copy or prepared in electronic format and sent to the CHES PLA coordinator.
Important Prior Learning Reminders

*(MAKE A COPY OF EVERYTHING BEFORE YOU MAIL YOUR PORTFOLIO.)*

1. Discuss prior learning with your advisor first. This is to avoid credit duplication and deadline problems.

2. Students must have been admitted to a CHES program of study and completed at least one course successfully with a 2.0 GPA at UA prior to prior learning application.

3. Remember the 30-hour rule. This is the maximum number of credits available for evaluated portfolios. The limit for all types of combined prior learning credit is 45 hours (PEP/CLEP, ACE, AP, DANTES).

4. The evaluator will be looking for academic “value” in the portfolio.

5. **Not every experience will be worth “academic” credit** (even if the PLA has been approved), but that does not devalue the experience. There is a difference in “skill-oriented” learning and “theoretical” learning.

6. Prior learning is graded on a “Pass” basis. The reason that most evaluators do not assign a grade is that they do not have ownership of the course material that is covered in a portfolio as they would if the student were taking a prepared on-campus course.

7. Remember, a polished and professional presentation counts. For some of the people who read it, the portfolio will be all they will ever know of the student. If they must struggle with sloppy presentation, poor typing, misspellings and poor grammar, they will most likely not result in a positive response.

8. There are two types of prior learning. A portfolio is evaluated by UA faculty and requires a Regular Prior Learning Application. Any prior learning that involves standardized credit (ACE corporate or military) requires a Modified Prior Learning Application.

9. Remember that Prior Learning Portfolios take time. This includes time to think about, time to compile, time to write and time to evaluate.

10. Prior Learning is awarded for CHES degree programs only and only to CHES courses. There is no assurance that credit for Prior Learning courses can be transferred to other programs of study at The University of Alabama or to other universities.
Regular Prior Learning Application

NOTE: A student must submit this form and separate evaluation fee for each subject area of prior learning he or she wishes to have evaluated. Submission of prior learning evidence does not guarantee credit. The fee paid for each submission of prior learning is an evaluation fee, not a tuition fee. Credit is earned on the basis of whether or not the evidence proves the learning is college-level, is current, does not duplicate credit already learned and makes a positive contribution to the student’s degree plan.

NAME: _____________________________   STUDENT NUMBER: ______________________

ADDRESS: __________________________   AREA OF STUDY: _______________________

____________________________________   EMAIL: __________________________________

TELEPHONE: (home) _________________  (work) ____________________________________

SUBJECT AREA TITLE (FIELD OF STUDY): _______________________________________

(In general, subject area titles correspond to departmental headings in The University of Alabama catalog. Please discuss the appropriate title with your advisor before submitting this application.)

AREA OF DEGREE PLAN: I intend that any credit earned from this evaluation will be applied to the following area(s) of my curriculum worksheet:

___General HES       ___Nutrition/Dietetics   ___Consumer Science

___Restaurant, Hotel & Meetings Management   ___Child and Family Studies

If more than one of the above areas is checked, please explain:

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

TYPE OF PRESENTATION: (Specify portfolio, competency exam, oral/visual presentation, electronic, other.)

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

ATTACHED ARE: __A. Brief Chronological Description of Experience (when)

___B. Brief Description of Learning Applications (how it relates to degree)

___C. Brief Analysis of Learning Outcomes (guiding principles)

___D. Tentative List of Possible Documentation

___E. Tentative List of Applicable U of A courses (UA or other institution)

The actual presentation should be submitted within Six months of the approval of this application.

DATE: __________________ STUDENT SIGNATURE : _____________________________
Modified Portfolios

Occasionally, students pursue credit for learning experiences that have been evaluated and assigned credit recommendations by national groups such as the The American Council on Education. Because preexisting (predetermined) credits are pursued in a slightly different manner, the process for compiling and submitting the portfolio is “modified”.

“Modified” portfolios are used only when students wish to claim credits that have pre-determined recommendations; i.e. Military, “Dale Carnegie” or AT&T courses or for specific examinations such as Novell. Because credit awarded depends on the breadth and depth of the learning and the currency and applicability of the knowledge to the student’s degree plan, credit hours awarded for each certification, license or school may vary.

Because prior learning credits are viewed as more than just a way to accumulate credit, and to insure that students best demonstrate and maximize the learning for fullest possible credit recommendation, submissions for modified portfolio presentations should be handled in the following manner:

1. MODIFIED PLA (see page 20) The title page should indicate the subject matter and a brief statement of where any credit earned should be applied.

2. Brief Chronological Description of Learning Experience. This is important because ACE recommendations are dated and credit recommendations may depend on date of participation. It is also important when using licenses to check for currency.

3. Description of the Learning Experience (no more than two to three pages in length). This helps fill in gaps for needed information that may not always be apparent on certifications. It helps promote a quality presentation and eliminates “piecemealing” items for possible credits.

4. Analysis of the Learning Experience (no more than two to three pages in length). Be sure to include discussion on the currency of the knowledge and explain how the learning applies to your degree plan. Because mere exposure to the learning does not warrant college credit, include in your analysis what you learned and how it should fit into your degree plan.

5. Documentation (certificates, licenses, official school transcripts, DD214 or DD295, etc).

*The student should always discuss the submission of the Modified Portfolio with their advisor and the Prior Learning Coordinator before actual submission to the College of Human Environmental Sciences. The student must register for Prior Learning credit once the PLA or Modified PLA is approved.
MODIFIED
PLA LEARNING APPLICATION

NOTE: A student must submit this form and separate evaluation fee for each subject area of prior learning he or she wishes to have evaluated. Submission of prior learning evidence does not guarantee credit. The fee paid for each submission of prior learning is an evaluation fee, not a tuition fee. Credit is earned on the basis of whether or not the evidence proves the learning is college-level, is current, does not duplicate credit already learned and makes a positive contribution to the student’s degree plan.

NAME: _____________________________ STUDENT NUMBER: ________________

ADDRESS: _________________________ DEPTH STUDY: ________________________

EMAIL: ___________________________

TELEPHONE: (home) _______________ (work) _________________________________

SUBJECT AREA TITLE: ____________________________

(In general, subject area titles correspond to departmental headings in the University of Alabama catalog. Please discuss the appropriate title with your advisor before submitting this application.)

AREA OF DEGREE PLAN: I intend that any credit earned from this evaluation will be applied to the following area(s) of my curriculum worksheet:

___General HES  ___Nutrition/Dietetics  ___Consumer Science
___Restaurant, Hotel & Meetings Management  ___Child and Family Studies

If more than one of the above areas is checked, please explain:
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

TYPE OF PRESENTATION: (Specify ACE, military, examination, license, other)
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

ATTACHED ARE: __A. Brief Chronological Description of Experience (when)  
___B. Brief Description of Learning Applications (how does it relate to degree sought)  
___C. Brief Analysis of Learning Outcomes (guiding principles)  
___D. Documentation (photo-copied)

The actual presentation should be submitted with this application.

DATE: ___________ STUDENT SIGNATURE ____________________
EVALUATION OF PRIOR LEARNING

In examining a portfolio for the purpose of recommending credit for what has been learned from experience, you may wish to consider the following criteria:

1. The learning gained from the experience must have been demonstrated by the student.
2. The learning should be at least on the undergraduate level.
3. The student should have demonstrated a conceptual as well as practical grasp of the subject matter.
4. The learning should be applicable outside of the specific job or setting in which it was gained.
5. The learning should be related to an academic field and specific courses taught in this discipline.

Your recommendation will be the basis for awarding credit by The College of Human Environmental Sciences. Please forward your recommendation to the CHES Coordinator of Prior Learning, Box 870158, Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35487-0158.

PLEASE RATE EACH OF THE FOLLOWING AS: GOOD    AVERAGE    NEEDS WORK

GENERAL COMMENTS:
1. How the student addressed the area of requested credit. ______  _____  _____
2. Organization of portfolio. ______  _____  _____

NARRATIVE:
1. Explanation of how the learning was acquired. ______  _____  _____
2. The student’s general understanding of the field. ______  _____  _____
3. The mixture of theory and practice appropriate to the subject. ______  _____  _____
4. The student’s college-level writing skills. ______  _____  _____
5. Organization of narrative. ______  _____  _____

EVIDENCE:
1. The nature and quality of the evidence. ______  _____  _____
2. The authenticity of the evidence. ______  _____  _____

POSSIBILITY OF ADDITIONAL CREDIT:
(Please elaborate on conditions or requirements for possible additional credit.)

MESSAGE TO STUDENT:
RECOMMENDATION: Upon examination of the material submitted by _______________________________, the following recommendation is made (check at least one of the three categories):

1. Semester hours to be awarded: _____________ (Pass/Fail) _________________
   Credit to be recorded as ________________________________________________________
   Equivalent UA courses, if applicable (please provide course number, titles and semester hours)
   ______________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________

2. ______ The learning demonstrated duplicates that for which the student has already received credit.

3. ______ The learning demonstrated does not appear to be college-level and no credit can be awarded.

IF YOU ARE NOT RECOMMENDING A CREDIT AWARD, PLEASE CHECK ALL OF THE FOLLOWING THAT APPLY:
   ______ evidence is inadequate
   ______ narrative is too brief
   ______ evidence does not support knowledge of topics in area of requested credit
   ______ it is not clear how the knowledge was acquired
   ______ knowledge demonstrated is not at the college level
   ______ student’s knowledge lacks the breadth of the subject area
   ______ other: ____________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________

If more work is required, what information should be provided?
   ______ additional evidence; i.e.: ____________________________________________________
   ______ required narrative: ________________________________________________________
   ______ a written exam is required: _________________________________________________
   ______ an oral interview is required (include topic): _________________________________
   ✔️.................................................................................................................................

FACULTY MEMBER’S NAME (please type or print)___________________________________________
FACULTY MEMBER’S SIGNATURE_________________________ DEPT._________________________

CHES APPROVAL:

Faculty Advisor ___________________________ Date ___________ Dept. Chair/Director ___________ Date ___________

Registrar ________________________________ Date ______________
APPENDIX A
Prior Learning Application Check-List

Nothing is more frustrating than to begin a project with high hopes and then hit a snag well into the project. This check-list is designed to assist you in discovering your readiness to begin a Prior Learning project.

☐ Have you been admitted to a CHES Program of Study?
☐ Have you completed at least one CHES course with a 2.0 GPA?
☐ Have you reached the 30-hour prior learning portfolio limit? If so, you will not be allowed to accumulate more portfolio credit, but you may seek ACE credit (up to 45 hours cumulative).
☐ Have you discussed your intentions to seek prior learning credit with your advisor or the CHES Prior Learning Coordinator?
☐ If you are seeking ACE credit for Military service, have you obtained a DD295 or DD214? If the answer is no, you should contact the CHES Prior Learning Coordinator for appropriate forms.
☐ Have you examined college or university catalogs to determine whether your experiential learning would translate to college credit?
☐ Have you reviewed textbooks and/or course syllabi from the fields of study from which you will seek credit? This will help you establish a list of guiding principles.
☐ Do you have the writing skills to articulate your learning without serious errors in grammar and spelling? You must be able to write sentences and paragraphs free of major errors and be able to correct your own errors with minimal help.
☐ Do you have the time to carefully compile a lengthy essay supported by documentation following a specific portfolio format?
☐ Do you have documentation that will support your experiential learning?

Completing this check-list should direct you to any major deficiencies in your quest for prior learning credit.
Appendix B
Portfolio Check-List

Before mailing or sending electronically your Prior Learning portfolio to Mr. Jason Blumenthal, Prior Learning Coordinator, College of Human Environmental Sciences, at The University of Alabama, Box 870158, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0158, you will want to check to see if you have included all pertinent information.

- Have you previously filed the formal Prior Learning Application (PLA)?
- After approval of the Prior Learning Application, did you register for Prior Learning?
- Have you carefully researched the field of study for which you are seeking credit to establish guiding principles?
- Does the portfolio have a cover letter/transmittal letter as a short introduction?
- Have you included current telephone and email addresses?
- Do you have a Title Sheet (a copy of the approved PLA)?
- Have you numbered all pages in the portfolio, including attachments?
- Is your Table of Contents clear and concise, and do the page numbers correctly correspond with the subject areas?
- Have you included an updated resume?
- Is your Detailed Autobiographical Description clear? Does it detail in chronological order your experience?
- Have you clearly divided the “analysis” portion of your portfolio either into areas of study or chapters that correspond to particular classes?
- Have you included completed copies of the Significant Learning Outline for each course/course objective for which PL is sought?
- Have you given examples of instances within the experience where the accepted theory did not apply to the experience and how you negotiated its outcome?
- Is your annotated bibliography in alphabetical order?
- Is your documentation reasonable? In other words, have you chosen wisely and not included repetitive documentation as filler?
- Have you made a copy of everything before you sent it in?
- Do you understand that it may take up to six weeks to receive word on your evaluation? You will be notified as soon as an evaluation is returned to the CHES Prior Learning office.
- Do you understand that once your portfolio is evaluated, it remains in the EXD offices until your graduation as a record?
APPENDIX C

Prior Learning Contact Information

College of Human Environmental Sciences

Prior Learning Coordinator
Jason Blumenthal
College of Human Environmental Sciences
The University of Alabama
P.O. Box 870158
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487
Phone: 205-348-2283
Email: jblument@ches.ua.edu
Fax: 205-348-3789

How to register for Prior Learning Credit:

Contact the Prior Learning Coordinator who will instruct you on the process to register for Prior Learning.

Web site for College of Human Environmental Sciences

www.ches.ua.edu