Prior Learning Portfolio Development

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A Guide to Presenting Experiential Learning for Academic Credit

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BOISE, IDAHO

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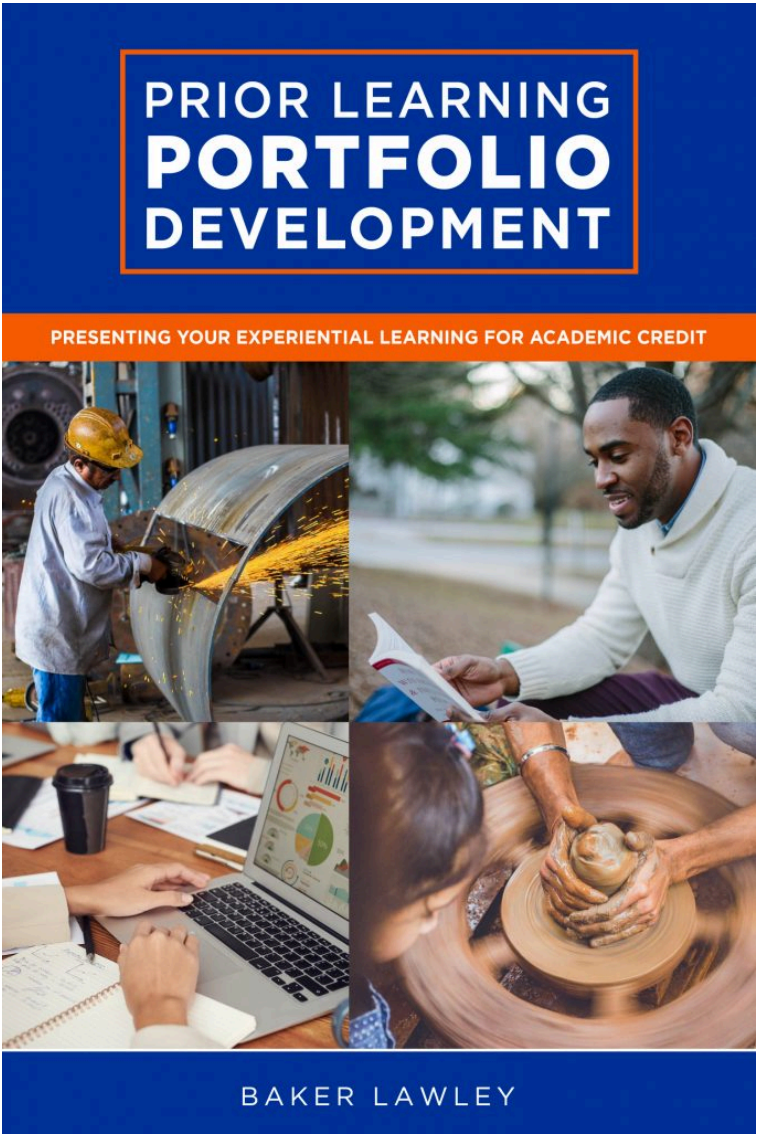

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Introduction

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Fast and well-traveled roads may make for a quicker trip, but they also miss the nuance and beauty of the scenic route. For some, the long way around is just worth it. The adventures, mishaps, connections, and coincidences that happen along the way are a teacher like no other.

If this sounds familiar to you when you think about your journey in education, then this textbook is for you. Let's take another look at those years of experiential learning along the scenic route: your work, travel, volunteering, community involvement, entrepreneurship, and whatever else you've explored while not in the traditional classroom setting.

Let's reconsider that experience as **Prior Learning**, and dig in to see what you've learned on the way.

Let's translate that learning into academic terms, and work towards applying for credit where credit is due.

This textbook will lead students with significant experiential backgrounds through the process of exploring, defining, and expressing their prior learning in settings outside of a traditional classroom. Students will study knowledge acquisition theory and apply it to their own experiences, and then will journey through the process of explaining their learning in an academic context in order to petition for credit for specific university courses.

What to Expect

Boise State University's Bachelor's of Applied Science and Interdisciplinary Professional Studies Program offers four upper-division courses that can be challenged for credit through a portfolio and a demonstration of learning.

The courses that can be challenged are:

- **BAS 425: Creating a Culture of Safety**
    - Study of safety as a vital element of human behavior in society, business, and industry. Examines the safety responsibilities of leaders, managers, and supervisors, focuses on developing skills in planning, implementation, awareness, monitoring, and risk management, and covers governmental influence, hazard awareness and control, operational considerations in the workplace, accidents, and planning.
- **IPS 410: Case Studies in Leadership**
    - This course introduces and analyzes effective leadership styles. Additionally, leadership practices and models are applied to case studies. Through various forms of reading, writing, presentations, video and/or multi-media, students will apply theories to assess their own leadership style and identify styles of popular companies/people.
- **IPS 430: Ethics**
    - This course examines universal ethical principles and standards practiced across various disciplines. Exploration of personal and professional conduct and social responsibility in the light of existing ethical, moral, and social values across disciplines will also be discussed. This course is designed to enable students to form individual positions on ethical conduct and social responsibility, and

both identifies and applies ethical principles to real-world situations.

- **IPS 440: Project Management and Design**

- The course develops a foundation of concepts that support the project management process groups required for successful implementation and completion of a project. Principles and applied techniques of effective planning, communication, risk, schedule, and cost management are major themes discussed in this course.

- **IPS 450: Creativity and Collaboration**
    - This course identifies the creative people, processes, and conditions necessary for fostering innovation and models of innovation, including creative problem-solving with teams. Students show their understanding through demonstration of competency in identifying, describing, fostering, demonstrating, and assessing programs that foster creativity and innovation in a team environment.

Prior Learning Portfolio Overview

To be awarded credit for prior learning in the BAS/IPS Program at Boise State for IPS 410, 430, 440, 450, or BAS 425, you must be able to demonstrate the Learning Objectives from the course. This is done by creating an online portfolio and, if requested by your portfolio reviewers, participating in a demonstration of learning interview.

To frame your learning as you dig in to the textbook, this is a short overview of the components of your online portfolio. The textbook will look into each of the courses and will go over all of these components in much greater detail in later chapters.

Components of the Prior Learning Portfolio

The prior learning portfolio is composed of an assortment of documents and artifacts demonstrating previous college-level learning. The portfolio contains three required components that each validates the mastery of course objectives. Those components are:

- **The Resumes**

- There will be two different resumes included: a traditional resume and the PLA resume.
    - The PLA resume is organized by your skills and expertise, rather than a chronological record of your employment
    - The traditional resume—you know what that is!
- Through your resumes, you will highlight more detail about your responsibilities and accomplishments that have supported learning.
- The resumes provide the reviewing committee with a timeline and demonstrate the progression of learning.
- You will include both your PLA skills-based resume as well as your traditional/professional resume in the portfolio.

- **The Educational Narrative (a unique Narrative for each course you're challenging)**, which is a document that does the following:
    - Examines your personal motivations and educational goals in the context of learning and how you will achieve them.
    - Responds to questions which lead to examination and discussion of past instances that led to learning.
        - This Narrative is designed with carefully crafted questions which, if answered thoroughly, should address each course Learning Objective found on the course syllabus, and demonstrate that you have mastered the objectives to the same extent as students who have completed the course.
        - NOTE: You must write a separate, unique Narrative for each course you're challenging. For example, if you are challenging three courses, you'll have to write three distinct and different Educational Narratives, one for each course.

- **Supporting Documentation**

- You will need to supply documentation to support the Narrative.
- Documentation is as individual as the learner, and it may include items such as sample work products, training certificates, workplace evaluations, letters of recommendation, and/or photographs.

The Demonstration of Learning Interview

If reviewers find your Portfolio makes a strong-enough case on its own, they may award credit automatically.

However, in many cases, reviewers will request to talk with you about your Portfolio and experiential learning in order to get a more full picture of your knowledge. In these cases, we'll hold a Demonstration of Learning interview. This Demonstration of Learning will be scheduled after the end of the 7-week semester, and you will be given materials to help you prepare for the interview.

A Note About Workload

This textbook accompanies Boise State's IPS 301: Prior Learning Portfolio Development course. IPS 301 is a 1-credit course, which may make it seem like this is an easy side project, just a credit add-on to your normal coursework.

It's not.

We've put the course at 1 credit in order to save students tuition, because it makes no sense to pay for a 3-credit course in order to challenge a different course for 3 credits. It'd be less work to just take that 3-credit course directly.

And if you challenge just one course, then IPS 301 is a lighter workload, perhaps equal to 1 or 2 credits. However, most of our students challenge multiple courses, and the more courses you challenge, the heavier the workload is. Each challenge requires a lot of thought, a lot of documentation, and a lot of writing and revising to make your case with your portfolio. The more courses you challenge, the more the workload of IPS 301 grows exponentially.

Further, there is an emotional element to IPS 301. You'll be dredging up your past, digging deep into experiences and really challenging your memory to find and reframe things you've lived through as learning. Former students have been surprised by the emotional weight of IPS 301.

So even though IPS 301 is 1 credit, it can easily be 3 credits worth of work if you're challenging multiple courses, plus a lot of baggage to drag around for the term.

That said, you can take IPS 301 and then wait to put forth your challenges. You have up to one year after you take IPS 301 to put in your course challenges. If you choose to wait to challenge, though, you won't get the same amount of feedback or direct interaction with the course instructors, as we'll be busy teaching our next courses. We'll help as best we can, but can't guarantee the same

thorough or timely feedback. Many students who wait to challenge end up not putting in the challenges at all, because they lose the momentum and focus they had on the Prior Learning Portfolio. We encourage you to put in your challenges during the course, if possible.

PART I

CHAPTER ONE: THEORY AND STYLES OF LEARNING

Photo by Andrea Piacquadio from Pexels

According to Credit for Prior Learning criteria at Boise State University, students get credit for the *learning* they've achieved through experience, not just for the experience itself.

In order to demonstrate the learning you've done, it's key to understand how we as humans learn. In this chapter, we'll look at several important theories for experiential learning, and begin to understand what you learned by how you learned it.

This chapter will cover Kolb's Learning Theory, Bloom's Taxonomy, Multiple Intelligences, and Emotional Intelligence. We

will also take a close look at what makes experiential learning equivalent to college-level learning.

Learning Objectives

- Comprehend Kolb's theory of experiential learning.
- Synthesize experiential concepts and tie them to your past experiences.
- Analyze Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning and how it can be applied to prior learning.
- Expand cognitive funtion into multiple intelligences.
- Define college-level learning as acquired through experience.

1. Realizing What You Already Know

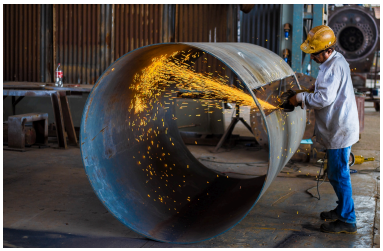

Photo by Ahsanization ツ on Unsplash

Think of someone you know—perhaps yourself—who knows their job so well they can anticipate problems, work on instinct, and make difficult decisions based on a wealth of experience. Or perhaps you know someone who has an ability to play a musical instrument so well that they can express their emotions with it and get into a creative flow state. Maybe there's someone who you think of as a "walking encyclopedia" about their field, someone who has an amazing amount of professional knowledge, who you wish could be a professor on their subject or work in a museum to share what they know all day.

To know something deeply and thoroughly, you have to earn it. And usually, that kind of knowledge is earned the hard way, through thousands of hours and many mistakes. It takes lots of reflection and self-analysis, and learning from honest feedback. It takes guts and grit. And by the time you get to that state of deep knowledge, you know it so well that it's a part of you. It's hard to explain that knowledge to others sometimes, because it seems so easy after all these years of practice.

But explaining that knowledge and how you attained it is our challenge in Prior Learning. Students in this course often don't realize how much they actually know, because they know it so well that it seems like common knowledge. Or maybe they never thought it "counted," because it didn't happen in a traditional classroom.

Prior Learning is about disrupting these notions.

Your learning counts, no matter where it happened.

Prior Learning isn't a shortcut, either. All the years of effort and mistakes and introspection were important for your learning. (If anything, the traditional classroom is actually the shortcut!)

You will have to prove your learning through your portfolio and interview, but this book and the course will help you make your best case. You are part of a program and a university that honors experiential learning, and we want to help you work towards the credit that Prior Learning offers.

This chapter will help you to start thinking about what you already know, whether you have realized it fully or not. We will look at different ways we learn as humans, and contextualize those learning theories specifically for learning through experience.

2. Metacognition and Stages of Learning

Photo by Daria Sannikova from Pexels

Metacognition

Metacognition is one of the distinctive characteristics of the human mind that enables us to reflect on our own mental states. It is defined as "cognition about cognitive phenomena," or "thinking about thinking."[1] Metacognition is reflected in many day-to-day activities, such as when you realize that one strategy is better than another for solving a particular type of problem, or when you are able to recognize how your own experiences and perspectives may impact how you understand, react to, or judge certain situations.[2]

Metacognition includes two clusters of activities: knowledge

1. Flavell, J. H. (1979). Metacognition and cognitive monitoring: A new area of cognitive-developmental inquiry. American Psychologist, 34(10), 10906-911.
2. Hussain, D. (2015). Meta-Cognition in Mindfulness: A Conceptual Analysis. Psychological Thought, 8(2), 132-141. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.5964/psyct.v8i2.139

about cognition and regulation of cognition.[3] *Metacognitive knowledge* refers to a person's knowledge or understanding of cognitive processes. In other words, it is the ability to think about what you know and how you know it. This includes knowledge about your own strengths and limitations, as well as factors that may interact to help or hinder your learning. *Metacognitive regulation* builds on this knowledge and refers to a person's ability to regulate cognitive processes during problem-solving. You use metacognitive knowledge to make decisions about how to approach new problems or how to effectively learn new information and skills. This involves using various self-regulatory mechanisms like planning ahead, monitoring your progress, and evaluating your own efficiency and effectiveness in learning a task.[4]

To give a concrete example of these metacognitive activities, let's

3. Cross, D. R., & Paris, S. G. (1988). Developmental and instructional analyses of children's metacognition and reading comprehension. Journal of Educational Psychology, 80(2), 2131-142. Flavell, J. H. (1979). Metacognition and cognitive monitoring: A new area of cognitive-developmental inquiry. American Psychologist, 34(10), 10906-911.
4. Cross, D. R., & Paris, S. G. (1988). Developmental and instructional analyses of children's metacognition and reading comprehension. Journal of Educational Psychology, 80(2), 2131-142. Schraw, G., Crippen, K. J., & Hartley, K. (2006). Promoting self-regulation in science education: Metacognition as part of a broader perspective on learning. Research in Science Education, 36(1-2), 1-2111-139.

apply them to how you study for an exam. Knowing that your cell phone's notifications tend to distract you from studying is an example of metacognitive knowledge: you are aware of your phone's potential to hinder your learning. Metacognitive regulation requires you to take *action* based on this knowledge and would involve you making the conscious decision to put your cell phone where you cannot see or hear it or to turn it off completely, while you study. In doing so, you regulate your use of your phone to help yourself be more successful in preparing for your exam.

Stages of the Learning Process

We said earlier that metacognitive knowledge involves thinking about the cognitive process, about what you know and how you know it. An important first step in developing metacognitive knowledge about yourself as a learner is to develop an awareness of how we learn new things. Consider experiences you've had with learning something new, such as learning to tie your shoes or drive a car. You probably began by showing interest in the process, and after some struggling, it became second nature. These experiences were all part of the learning process, which can be described in four stages:

1. **Unconscious incompetence**: This will likely be the easiest learning stage—you don't know what you don't know yet. During this stage, a learner mainly shows interest in something or prepares for learning. For example, if you wanted to learn how to dance, you might watch a video, talk to an instructor, or sign up for a future class. Stage 1 might not take long.
2. **Conscious incompetence**: This stage can be the most difficult for learners because you begin to register how much you need to learn—*you know what you don't know*. This is metacognition at work! Think about the saying "It's easier said than done." In

stage 1 the learner only has to discuss or show interest in a new experience, but in stage 2, he or she begins to apply new skills that contribute to reaching the learning goal. In the dance example above, you would now be learning basic dance steps. Successful completion of this stage relies on practice.

3. **Conscious competence**: You are beginning to master some parts of the learning goal and are feeling some confidence about what you do know. For example, you might now be able to complete basic dance steps with few mistakes and without your instructor reminding you how to do them. Stage 3 requires skill repetition, and metacognition helps you identify where to focus your efforts.
4. **Unconscious competence**: This is the final stage in which learners have successfully practiced and repeated the process they learned so many times that they can do it almost without thinking. At this point in your dancing, you might be able to apply your dance skills to a freestyle dance routine that you create yourself. However, to feel you are a "master" of a particular skill by the time you reach stage 4, you still need to practice constantly and reevaluate which stage you are in so you can keep learning. For example, if you now felt confident in basic dance skills and could perform your own dance routine, perhaps you'd want to explore other kinds of dance, such as tango or swing. That would return you to stage 1 or 2, but you might progress through the stages more quickly this time since you have already acquired some basic dance skills.[5]

Take a moment to watch the following video by Kristos called *The*

5. Mansaray, David. "The Four Stages of Learning: The Path to Becoming an Expert." DavidMansaray.com. 2011. Web. 10 Feb 2016.

Process of Learning. As you watch, consider how painful it can be—literally!—to learn something new, but also how much joy can be experienced after it's learned. *Note that the video has no audio.*

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://boisestate.pressbooks.pub/priorlearningportfolio/?p=40#oembed-1

You can see that the skater, through repeated practice, must identify where he is going wrong, what he is doing that prevents him from landing the skill. Over time, he is able to isolate the problems and gradually correct them, until he is ultimately successful in mastering the new trick.

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3. Kolb's Learning Model

In this chapter you will be exploring who you are as a learner. That is, you'll be learning about your own learning style and performing metacognition. This is important for Prior Learning because the better you can understand how you learned the areas of expertise, the better you can explain that expertise to your portfolio reviewers.

It's worth the effort to practice metacognition–to think about your own thinking–so that your portfolio expresses your learning in a clear way. In fact, you will use the learning cycle outlined below as a framework for describing your learning when you write your Educational Narrative.

Experiential Learning

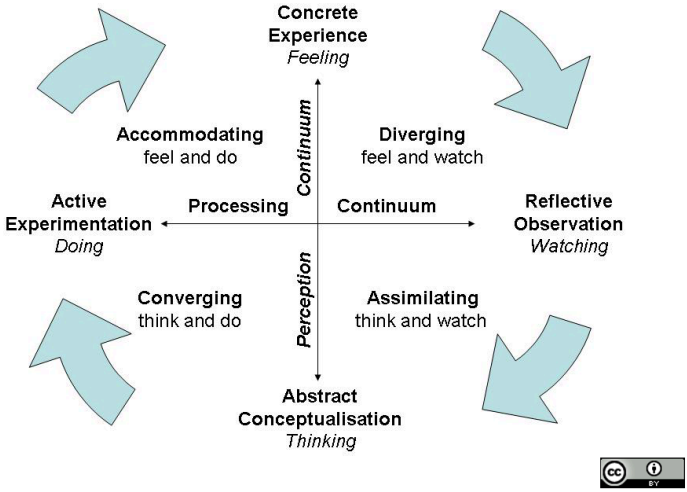
Some say that all learning is experiential, which means learning by doing or learning from direct experience. Humans have been doing this type of learning from the beginning of time. Think about how you learned to walk, ride a bicycle, or play a sport. You start with small steps, then gradually improve, and eventually you don't even have to think about what you do.

Sometimes experiential learning is contrasted with academic (or didactic) learning, learning from a book or a lecture. Going to the zoo and learning about animals through observation and interaction is experiential learning; reading about animals in a book is academic learning. There is a place for each kind of learning, but in this course we are focusing on the experiential type.

PLA transforms your experiential learning by allowing you to articulate what you have learned from your experiences.

Kolb's Learning Model

David Kolb has been a pioneer in the field of experiential learning, visualizing his theory in his Learning Model (1984). His model depicts a cycle. The following is a visualization of his model:



This illustration shows the four learning styles. According to Kolb, a person usually has a preference for at least one learning style but can also develop facility in others with exposure. The four styles, simply put are:

- **Diverger**: Enjoys seeing things from many viewpoints, is imaginative and enjoys working with people
- **Assimilator**: Likes the world of ideas and abstract concepts; does not necessarily need to relate them to real-world

situations
- **Converger**: Enjoys working to solve abstract problems using logic and analysis, but enjoys applying solutions to real-world situations.
- **Accommodator**: Likes solving problems in a hands-on fashion and enjoys taking action

This illustration also displays Kolb's learning cycle. The cycle symbolizes the journey of a person when learning occurs. According to this theory, to learn a person needs to go beyond the concrete experience through a process of reflection, analysis (conceptualization) and testing (experimentation)—basically a scientific process.

Kolb described learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience." (Kolb, 1984, p.38). Kolb states that learning is a process that requires the learner to move around the wheel.

Starting Anywhere In Kolb's Cycle

A person can start anywhere on the wheel, depending which is the individual's preferred learning style. We don't have to start at the top with Concrete Experience–sometimes we think about something first, or read about it and research first, or play around with knowledge first.

This is key: when you think about your experiential learning, remember which style of learner you are, and *perhaps* start at that point in Kolb's Cycle. But also remember that circumstances can affect that learning style, and you may start in different places in the cycle depending on what you're learning.

Here's a simplified version of Kolb's cycle we'll use to discuss this further:

Image: *The Experiential Learning Cycle* (McLeod, 2013)

For the purposes of understanding the different starting places within this cycle, we'll use a simple example of someone building a birdhouse.

Remember that, according to Kolb's theory, one concrete experience isn't enough to cause learning. Someone must have a concrete experience, then go through a process of reflection, analysis (conceptualization) and testing (experimentation), to have learned something.

Here are a few scenarios of how someone might start at different points in Kolb's cycle:

Starting Point: Active Experimentation. This person, an Accommodator, might decide one day, "You know, birds are kind of awesome. I really want more birds around the house." So they plan a way to make that happen. They go out to their workshop and hammer some small boards together, without looking too closely

at other birdhouses; no instructions, no YouTube videos. They just jump in and try out what they've observed.

When they put out the birdhouse, perhaps no birds use it. This is the Concrete Experience component: they've made something and are experiencing failure. So, they have to move into Reflective Observation: why aren't the birds using the birdhouse? After coming up with some ideas, they move into Abstract Conceptualization, where they come up with new and better birdhouse designs, and then they move back into Active Experimentation: building version two of their birdhouse.

Starting Point: Abstract Conceptualization. This learner begins with questions and deep thinking: "Bird houses are fascinating. I wonder what makes for the best birdhouse? How can I build a better one?" So they head out to the workshop, and enter the Active Experimentation phase. They build some prototypes, and when finished, set them up in the yard. This is the Concrete Experience phase, where they see how well their designs and ideas work.

Perhaps in this case, much smaller birds than expected started using the birdhouses. So our builder starts wondering "Why?" This is the Reflective Observation phase. They watch the birds for some time–how they use the birdhouse, when they arrive and leave, and so forth. Based on what they see, they begin to think further: "I wonder how I could build a different birdhouse, for perhaps different types of birds?" Based on what they've learned through the cycle, they are now back at the Abstract Conceptualization phase, drawing up ideas and blueprints for the next version of their birdhouse design, using the knowledge they've gained through Kolb's learning cycle.

Starting Point: Concrete Experience. This person is perhaps standing in a friend's backyard and notices how many birds are flying around and becomes fascinated with the way they are carrying bits of material inside a birdhouse to build a nest. Being the curious type, they walk over and examine the birdhouse up close. They note what it's made of, how it's constructed, how it's holdling up and keeping the elements out, and so forth.

They go home and enter Reflective Observation–they keep thinking about that birdhouse and how it was designed, and why that worked well. But of course, they want to build one of their own to learn more about birdhouses and birds, so they start taking what they noticed by looking at their friend's birdhouse, and adding to it or changing it a bit to make their own design. This is Abstract Conceptualization. Then they enter Active Experimentation and head out to the workshop and make their own birdhouse prototype. They set it up in their own backyard to enter the next version of the Concrete Experience phase of the cycle.

Starting Point: Reflective Observation. This person begins by thinking about what a great time they had watching birds–say, on a visit to a zoo. At the zoo, they were just enjoying the moment, but only later when they got home did they start thinking further: What made the birds hang around? What do birds need to feel safe? How is a bird habitat like a human's? Using these questions, they enter the Abstract Conceptualization phase. They start thinking about what a little house for a bird might look like, as if they'd never seen one before. They sketch up some designs that try to answer their first questions.

Heading out to the workshop, they enter Active Experimentation and build their first prototype of a birdhouse, which theoretically should make birds hang around and feel safe. They set it up in their yard, and then sit back and enjoy the Concrete Experience of their learning cycle–were they right about their Abstract Conceptualization? Did the Active Experimentation of their birdhouse prototype work? Do the birds show up? That's the Concrete Experience of this cycle, and based on what happens, more questions arrive for the next iteration of Reflective Observation.

Attributions:

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References:

Kolb D. (1984). *Experiential learning: experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

4. Bloom's Taxonomy

Kolb's model is really insightful partly because it is so universal. It applies to every kind of learning, from say, a baby taking her first steps to Einstein discovering his theory of relativity.

If the new terminology of "Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle" is confusing or intimidating, don't let it be. You know this learning cycle in your bones, because you've done it thousands of times. Don't let the names of the cycle confuse you–think through your own experience of learning something and the cycle will make sense.

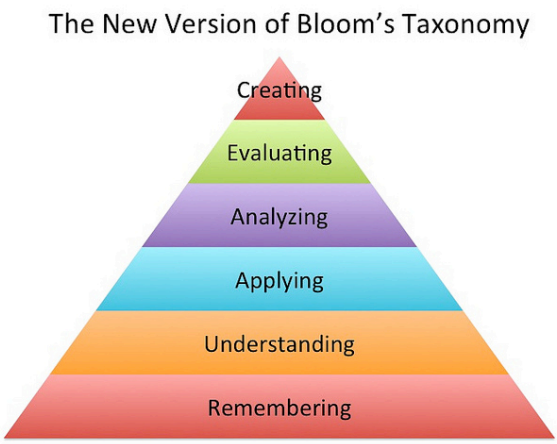
Another important way to think about the learning process is to differentiate between lower and higher levels of cognitive development. This is a very important consideration for your Prior Learning portfolio, because your task is to demonstrate *college-level* learning.

One helpful way to approach your Prior Learning Portfolio is to think about what makes something a higher level of learning. Using that framework, you can talk about your experience in a college-level context, to make your best case that you've achieved the course's Learning Outcomes. The best-known way to differentiate this is by using **Bloom's Taxonomy**.

In 1956, Dr. Benjamin Bloom, an American educational psychologist who was particularly interested how people learn, chaired a committee of educators that developed and classified a set of learning objectives, which came to be known as Bloom's taxonomy. This classification system has been updated a little since it was first developed, but it remains important for both students and teachers in helping to understand the skills and structures involved in learning.

Bloom's taxonomy divides the cognitive domain of learning into

six main learning-skill levels, or learning-skill stages, which are arranged hierarchically—moving from the simplest of functions like remembering and understanding, to more complex learning skills, like applying and analyzing, to the most complex skills—evaluating and creating. The lower levels are more straightforward and fundamental, and the higher levels are more sophisticated.[1]



The updated Bloom's Taxonomy, with lower-level thinking at the bottom, and higher-level cognitive function (like college-level learning) in the upper levels.

In order to demonstrate college-level learning, you will need to focus on the top four levels of Bloom's Taxonomy: Creating, Evaluating, Analyzing, and Applying. Your portfolio will need to make clear that you have reached one or more of these skill levels in the courses you are challenging.

The following table describes the six main skill sets within the cognitive domain and gives you information on the level of learning expected for each. Read each description closely for details of what

1. Wilson, Leslie Owen. "Anderson and Krathwohl - Bloom's Taxonomy Revised." The Second Principle. 2013. Web. 10 Feb 2016. ↲

college-level work looks like in each domain. Note that the table begins with the lowest level of the taxonomy, Remembering, and works its way towards higher levels of thinking. For our portfolio, you should focus on the college-level learning cognitive domains below: Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating, and Creating.

MAIN SKILL LEVELS WITHIN THE COGNITIVE DOMAIN	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES OF RELATED LEARNING SKILLS (specific actions related to the skill set)
Remembering	When you are skilled in remembering, you can recognize or recall knowledge you've already gained, and you can use it to produce or retrieve definitions, facts, and lists. *Remembering may be how you studied in grade school or high school, but college will require you to do more with the information.*	identify · relate · list · define · recall · memorize · repeat · record · name
Understanding	Understanding is the ability to grasp or construct meaning from oral, written, and graphic messages. *Each college course will introduce you to new concepts, terms, processes, and functions. Once you gain a firm understanding of new information, you'll find it easier to comprehend how or why something works.*	restate · locate · report · recognize · explain · express · identify · discuss · describe · review · infer · illustrate · interpret · draw · represent · differentiate · conclude
Applying	When you apply, you use or implement learned material in new and concrete situations. *In college you will be tested or assessed on what you've learned in the previous levels. You will be asked to solve problems in new situations by applying knowledge and skills in new ways. You may need to relate abstract ideas to practical situations.*	apply · relate · develop · translate · use · operate · organize · employ · restructure · interpret · demonstrate · illustrate · practice · calculate · show · exhibit · dramatize

MAIN SKILL LEVELS WITHIN THE COGNITIVE DOMAIN	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES OF RELATED LEARNING SKILLS (specific actions related to the skill set)
Analyzing	When you analyze, you have the ability to break down or distinguish the parts of material into its components, so that its organizational structure may be better understood. *At this level, you will have a clearer sense that you comprehend the content well. You will be able to answer questions such as what if, or why, or how something would work.*	analyze · compare · probe · inquire · examine · contrast · categorize · differentiate · contrast · investigate · detect · survey · classify · deduce · experiment · scrutinize · discover · inspect · dissect · discriminate · separate
Evaluating	With skills in evaluating, you are able to judge, check, and even critique the value of material for a given purpose. *At this level in college you will be able to think critically, Your understanding of a concept or discipline will be profound. You may need to present and defend opinions.*	judge · assess · compare · evaluate · conclude · measure · deduce · argue · decide · choose · rate · select · estimate · validate · consider · appraise · value · criticize · infer
Creating	With skills in creating, you are able to put parts together to form a coherent or unique new whole. You can reorganize elements into a new pattern or structure through generating, planning, or producing. *Creating requires originality and inventiveness. It brings together all levels of learning to theorize, design, and test new products, concepts, or functions.*	compose · produce · design · assemble · create · prepare · predict · modify · plan · invent · formulate · collect · generalize · document combine · relate · propose · develop · arrange · construct · organize · originate · derive · write

Reading and interpreting learning objectives is a metacognitive act, as the information can help you determine the level of learning expected of you and give you clues as to how you can prepare for assessment.

For example, if your objective is to identify the parts of an atom,

you should first recognize that being able to "identify" information falls within the domain of "remembering"; you will need to memorize the parts and be able to correctly label them. Flash cards, labeling a diagram, or drawing one yourself should be sufficient ways to prepare for your test.

If, however, your objective is to calculate atomic mass, you will need to know not only the *parts* of the atom but also how to account for those parts to come up with the atomic mass; "calculate" falls within the domain of "applying," which requires you to take information and use it to solve a problem in a new context.

You can explore these cognitive domains further in the two videos, below. The first is from the Center for Learning Success at the Louisiana State University. It discusses Bloom's taxonomy learning levels with regard to student success in college.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://boisestate.pressbooks.pub/priorlearningportfolio/?p=207#oembed-1

This next video, *Bloom's Taxonomy Featuring Harry Potter Movies*, is a culturally-based way of understanding and applying Bloom's taxonomy.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://boisestate.pressbooks.pub/priorlearningportfolio/?p=207#oembed-2

Familiarity with Bloom's Taxonomy is important in PLA, because to earn credit you will need to demonstrate that you have achieved college-level learning. You will be relating your learning to existing BAS and IPS courses, all of which are numbered at the 400-level, meaning the highest level of undergraduate study and therefore having more of the upper level skills. Bloom's terminology will help you to express your learning in terms the subject-matter expert can recognize as college-level learning.

Attributions:

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5. Review of Kolb and Bloom

Understanding Kolb and Bloom is extremely important for Credit for Prior Learning, because Credit for Prior Learning awards credits for the learning you've done (not just for the experience by itself). In other words, you have to show your faculty reviewers both what you learned (your expertise in the course subjects) and *how you learned it*.

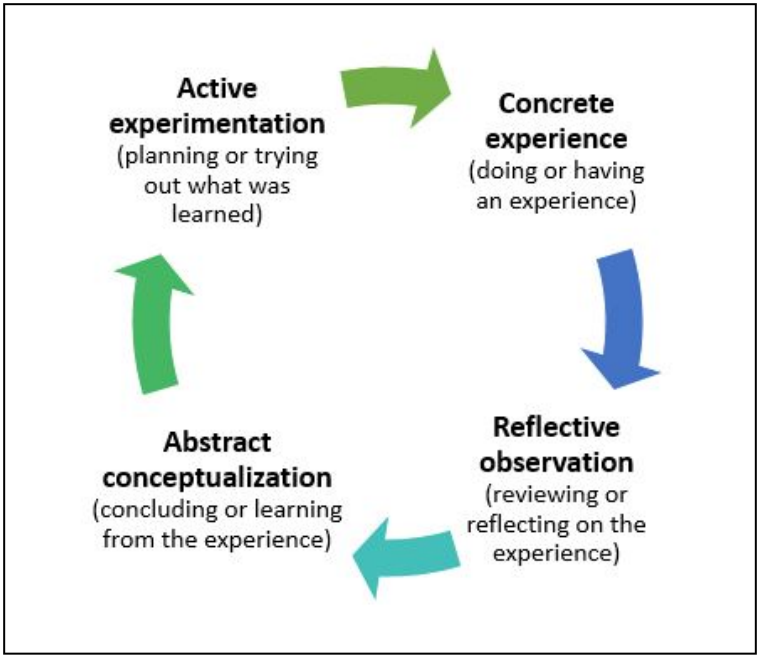
And we use Kolb and Bloom to show how you learned things.

So let's take a moment to help you get a grasp on how you learned what you already know. If this introduction to Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle and Bloom's Taxonomy feels intimidating to you, step back and believe in yourself!

Here's the key: **you know this stuff already!**

You might not know the terminology, like taxonomies, learning cycles, etc., or the names of Kolb and Bloom, but you know these concepts intuitively. (And here's a good place to point out the difference between tuition, which is the cost of education, and intuition, which is education earned through work until it's ingrained. You've earned the knowledge of both Kolb and Bloom through your prior learning experiences.

So if this feels intimidating, slow down and think through both Kolb and Bloom.


Active experimentation
(planning or trying out what was learned)
Concrete experience
(doing or having an experience)
Reflective observation
(reviewing or reflecting on the experience)
Abstract conceptualization
(concluding or learning from the experience)

For **Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle**, think through how you got really good at something, anything, and you'll start to see the steps in the Experiential Learning cycle that Kolb outlined.

For this short exercise, don't think about the courses you're challenging for college credit; think about something you do in your everyday life: cooking, playing a sport, artwork, singing or playing an instrument, building or fixing things, that kind of stuff.

- Where did you start? Remember that you can start at any of the 4 parts, anywhere on the cycle. AND, you start at different places in the cycle depending on what you're learning.
    - Did you think about it or imagine what it'd be like first? (Abstract Conceptualization)
    - Did you go in and just start doing stuff with no experience? (Concrete Experience)
    - Did you watch somebody? (Reflective Observation)
    - Did you try to do something a little differently or better? (Active Experimentation)

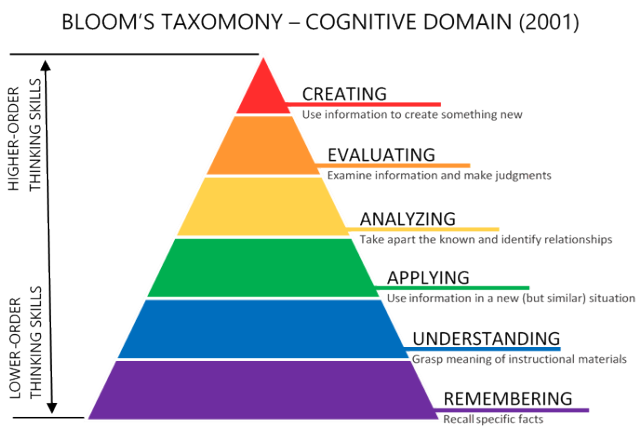
Once you figure out where you started, go around the circle and think about what you did next. For this, let's try translating the terminology:

1. Concrete Experience: Just Do It
2. Reflective Observation: What happened? How'd they do that?
3. Abscract Conceptualization: Why did that happen? How did that happen?
4. Active Experimentation: What next? How can I make something different happen?

And even if you change the starting place, the cycle still works. For example:

1. Abscract Conceptualization: Why did that happen? How did that happen?
2. Active Experimentation: What next? How can I make something different happen?
3. Concrete Experience: Just Do It
4. Reflective Observation: What happened?

Your job with Credit for Prior Learning is showing your faculty reviewers that you understand how you learned the course material through real-world experiential learning. So you'll use Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle to outline your experience and show your faculty reviewer how you learned the material and got to be an expert in the subject matter of the course that you're challenging.



For **Bloom's Taxonomy**, you can ignore Remembering and Understanding, the bottom two levels, because our job is to show college-level learning. Remembering and Understanding are what we did on tests we took in high school, where we memorized historical dates or math equations in order to pass a test, and then immediately forgot them. That's not higher-order thinking!

To get to those levels of higher-order thinking in Bloom's Taxonomy, choose something you know really well and can have very geeky, highly-technical conversations about.

Something that you can almost speak in secret code language about to someone else who knows it well.

Something that you know deeply that you might have a hard time explaining to someone who's new at it.

Now, how do you think about that topic?

- Do you use that knowledge as a viewpoint to see projects or fix problems with?
  - You're applying!
- Do you use this expertise to compare or figure out how it can work with other things?
  - This is analyzing!
- Do you decide how good or bad a product or situations is, using this expertise?
  - You're evaluating
- Do you make new stuff with it?
  - Creating!

If you do any of these things with something you're good at, then you're doing those upper levels of Bloom's Taxonomy!

Your job with Credit for Prior Learning is showing your faculty reviewers that you know how to think in these upper levels of Bloom's Taxonomy about the subject matter of the course material.

So, pat yourself on the back! You know this intuitively!

6. Multiple Intelligences

Now that we've begun to understand the higher cognitive domains you need to work within to demonstrate college-level learning, let's think about all of the different kinds of intelligence you can use to make this demonstration of learning. Just like a university campus has many buildings housing fields as different as dance, astrophysics, education, art history, psychology, and more, the human brain has many different areas which each require a different kind of intelligence.

While a college student may spend more time in one particular building, like for their major classes, that doesn't mean that they aren't also capable of or interested in things going on in other buildings. Our brains do the same thing: we may spend most of our time thinking about one major preoccupation, such as our job, but we have many other intelligences that we use as well.

All of these intelligences are important for demonstrating your prior learning. Let's take a few moments to examine multiple intelligences and how you can incorporate them into your prior learning portfolio.

Classifying Intelligence

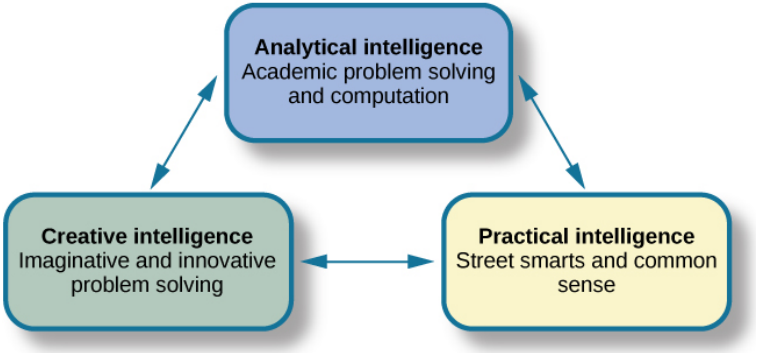
Photo by Tamarcus Brown on Unsplash

What exactly is intelligence? The way that researchers have defined the concept of intelligence has been modified many times since the birth of psychology. British psychologist Charles Spearman believed intelligence consisted of one general factor, called *g*, which could be measured and compared among individuals. Spearman focused on the commonalities among various intellectual abilities and demphasized what made each unique. Long before modern psychology developed, however, ancient philosophers, such as Aristotle, held a similar view (Cianciolo & Sternberg, 2004).

Others psychologists believe that instead of a single factor, intelligence is a collection of distinct abilities. In the 1940s, Raymond Cattell proposed a theory of intelligence that divided general intelligence into two components: crystallized intelligence and fluid intelligence (Cattell, 1963). **Crystallized intelligence** is characterized as acquired knowledge and the ability to retrieve it. When you learn, remember, and recall information, you are using crystallized intelligence. You use crystallized intelligence all the time in your coursework by demonstrating that you have mastered the information covered in the course. **Fluid intelligence** encompasses the ability to see complex relationships and solve problems. Navigating your way home after being detoured onto an unfamiliar route because of road construction would draw upon your fluid intelligence. Fluid intelligence helps you tackle complex, abstract challenges in your daily life, whereas crystallized intelligence helps you overcome concrete, straightforward problems (Cattell, 1963).

Other theorists and psychologists believe that intelligence should be defined in more practical terms. For example, what types of behaviors help you get ahead in life? Which skills promote success? Think about this for a moment. Being able to recite all 44 presidents of the United States in order is an excellent party trick, but will knowing this make you a better person?

Robert Sternberg developed another theory of intelligence, which he titled the triarchic theory of intelligence because it sees intelligence as comprised of three parts (Sternberg, 1988): practical, creative, and analytical intelligence.



Sternberg's theory identifies three types of intelligence: practical, creative, and analytical.

Practical intelligence, as proposed by Sternberg, is sometimes compared to "street smarts." Being practical means you find solutions that work in your everyday life by applying knowledge based on your experiences. This type of intelligence appears to be separate from traditional understanding of IQ; individuals who score high in practical intelligence may or may not have comparable scores in creative and analytical intelligence (Sternberg, 1988).

Analytical intelligence is closely aligned with academic problem solving and computations. Sternberg says that analytical intelligence is demonstrated by an ability to analyze, evaluate, judge, compare, and contrast. When reading a classic novel for literature class, for example, it is usually necessary to compare the motives

of the main characters of the book or analyze the historical context of the story. In a science course such as anatomy, you must study the processes by which the body uses various minerals in different human systems. In developing an understanding of this topic, you are using analytical intelligence. When solving a challenging math problem, you would apply analytical intelligence to analyze different aspects of the problem and then solve it section by section.

Creative intelligence is marked by inventing or imagining a solution to a problem or situation. Creativity in this realm can include finding a novel solution to an unexpected problem or producing a beautiful work of art or a well-developed short story. Imagine for a moment that you are camping in the woods with some friends and realize that you've forgotten your camp coffee pot. The person in your group who figures out a way to successfully brew coffee for everyone would be credited as having higher creative intelligence.

Multiple Intelligences Theory was developed by Howard Gardner, a Harvard psychologist and former student of Erik Erikson. Gardner's theory, which has been refined for more than 30 years, is a more recent development among theories of intelligence. In Gardner's theory, each person possesses at least eight intelligences. Among these eight intelligences, a person typically excels in some and falters in others (Gardner, 1983). Table describes each type of intelligence.

Multiple Intelligences

Intelligence Type	Characteristics	Representative Career
Linguistic intelligence	Perceives different functions of language, different sounds and meanings of words, may easily learn multiple languages	Journalist, novelist, poet, teacher
Logical-mathematical intelligence	Capable of seeing numerical patterns, strong ability to use reason and logic	Scientist, mathematician
Musical intelligence	Understands and appreciates rhythm, pitch, and tone; may play multiple instruments or perform as a vocalist	Composer, performer
Bodily kinesthetic intelligence	High ability to control the movements of the body and use the body to perform various physical tasks	Dancer, athlete, athletic coach, yoga instructor
Spatial intelligence	Ability to perceive the relationship between objects and how they move in space	Choreographer, sculptor, architect, aviator, sailor
Interpersonal intelligence	Ability to understand and be sensitive to the various emotional states of others	Counselor, social worker, salesperson
Intrapersonal intelligence	Ability to access personal feelings and motivations, and use them to direct behavior and reach personal goals	Key component of personal success over time
Naturalist intelligence	High capacity to appreciate the natural world and interact with the species within it	Biologist, ecologist, environmentalist

Gardner's theory is relatively new and needs additional research to better establish empirical support. At the same time, his ideas challenge the traditional idea of intelligence to include a wider variety of abilities, although it has been suggested that Gardner simply relabeled what other theorists called "cognitive styles" as "intelligences" (Morgan, 1996). Furthermore, developing traditional measures of Gardner's intelligences is extremely difficult (Furnham, 2009; Gardner & Moran, 2006; Klein, 1997).

Emotional Intelligence

Gardner's inter- and intrapersonal intelligences are often combined into a single type: emotional intelligence. **Emotional intelligence** encompasses the ability to understand the emotions of yourself and others, show empathy, understand social relationships and cues, and regulate your own emotions and respond in culturally appropriate ways (Parker, Saklofske, & Stough, 2009). People with high emotional intelligence typically have well-developed social skills. Some researchers, including Daniel Goleman, the author of *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More than IQ*, argue that emotional intelligence is a better predictor of success than traditional intelligence (Goleman, 1995). However, emotional intelligence has been widely debated, with researchers pointing out inconsistencies in how it is defined and described, as well as questioning results of studies on a subject that is difficulty to measure and study emperically (Locke, 2005; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004)

Intelligence can also have different meanings and values in different cultures. If you live on a small island, where most people get their food by fishing from boats, it would be important to know how to fish and how to repair a boat. If you were an exceptional angler, your peers would probably consider you intelligent. If you were also skilled at repairing boats, your intelligence might be known across the whole island. Think about your own family's culture. What values are important for Latino families? Italian families? In Irish families, hospitality and telling an entertaining story are marks of the culture. If you are a skilled storyteller, other members of Irish culture are likely to consider you intelligent.

Some cultures place a high value on working together as a collective. In these cultures, the importance of the group supersedes the importance of individual achievement. When you visit such a culture, how well you relate to the values of that culture

exemplifies your cultural intelligence, sometimes referred to as cultural competence.

Creativity

Creativity is the ability to generate, create, or discover new ideas, solutions, and possibilities. Very creative people often have intense knowledge about something, work on it for years, look at novel solutions, seek out the advice and help of other experts, and take risks. Although creativity is often associated with the arts, it is actually a vital form of intelligence that drives people in many disciplines to discover something new. Creativity can be found in every area of life, from the way you decorate your residence to a new way of understanding how a cell works.

Creativity is often assessed as a function of one's ability to engage in divergent thinking. Divergent thinking can be described as thinking "outside the box;" it allows an individual to arrive at unique, multiple solutions to a given problem. In contrast, convergent thinking describes the ability to provide a correct or well-established answer or solution to a problem (Cropley, 2006; Gilford, 1967)

Summary

Intelligence is a complex characteristic of cognition. Many theories have been developed to explain what intelligence is and how it works. Sternberg generated his triarchic theory of intelligence, whereas Gardner posits that intelligence is comprised of many factors. Still others focus on the importance of emotional intelligence. Finally, creativity seems to be a facet of intelligence, but it is extremely difficult to measure objectively.

Attribution:

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7. Defining College-Level Learning

Tips for Defining College-Level Learning from Experience

Use the following tips in creating your portfolio to display learning at the 400-level.

1. Refer to Kolb's Learning Cycle often as you write and compile your portfolio. Analyze not only what you have learned, but also how you learned it, through this cycle.
2. Refer also to the upper four levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. Exhibit your learning in terms of these higher-level cognitive domains, and use the terminology of these levels as you describe your learning. The words in the third column of the table in Part 4 may come in handy as verbs to use when describing your learning.
3. Identify the intermediate stages involved each step of the process. This will give a fuller picture of the process as well as your understanding of it.
4. Personalize your knowledge and experiences. For example, if you are talking about your knowledge of the criminal justice system, also tell about the people you interacted with everyday. What issues did they introduce, and how were these issues solved?
5. Critique your experience. List and describe characteristics of well-run/poorly-run programs; good/ineffective leaders, and so on. Use real-life examples. Illustrate your learning with your experience.

6. Discuss patterns you observe in working with people. What commonalities and differences have you observed or experienced with your particular population: customers, students, employees, parents, and so on? How do you use your learning to predict needs and solutions?
7. Explain how to predict success or failure in your area of expertise. Discuss risk management and how to problem-solve with real situations from your experience.
8. Describe your competition. Describe your work culture and that of your competitors. How do you move through the communication pathways?
9. Explain how you run your own business or how you observe the company you work for being managed.
10. Describe your decision making process.
11. Demonstrate your critical-thinking and analytical skills. Provide analysis of the critical aspects in the narrative. Remember that PLA is about reflecting on and analyzing learning, not merely recounting details.
12. Provide a knowledge base. What body of knowledge do you work from every day? Has the level of knowledge changed over time? What theoretical concepts underlie your experience?

Adaptations

8. Key Takeaways: Theory and Styles of Learning

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Metacognition is thinking about thinking. It involves metacognitive knowledge (what do you know and how do you know it?) as well as metacognitive regulation (how do you use what you know to approach different types of problems?).

In the stages of the learning process, you move from unconscious incompetence to unconscious competence; metacognition helps you advance through the 4 stages.

Learning objectives state what you should know or be able to do as the result of a course.

Interpreting learning objectives can help you understand the extent to which you are expected to learn and be able to use the material.

Successful intelligence involves a combination of analytical, creative, and practical thinking.

According to Kolb's Learning Theory, learning is a cyclical process that includes 4 stages: Diverging, Assimilating, Converging, and Accommodating.

A learner can start at any stage in Kolb's cycle, depending on their preferred learning style.

Bloom's Taxonomy outlines six main learning-skill levels,

arranged in the following order from simplest to most complex: Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating, Creating.

The higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, sometimes including Applying and always including Analyzing, Evaluating, and Creating, denote college-level learning at the 400-level.

Multiple intelligences must be taken into account when considering Bloom's Taxonomy and Kolb's Learning Theory.

Emotional Intelligence and Creativity are harder to quantify but are often considered essential for higher-level thinking.

Creative thinking helps you look at problems from fresh, new perspectives. Everyone has creative thinking skills, even those who don't think of themselves as "creative."

PART II

CHAPTER TWO: COURSES YOU CAN CHALLENGE

Photo by Marten Bjork on Unsplash

The Interdisciplinary Professional Studies program offers five

upper-division courses that can be challenged for credit through a portfolio and a demonstration of learning. The courses that can be challenged are:

- **BAS 425: Creating a Culture of Safety**
    - Study of safety as a vital element of human behavior in society, business, and industry. Examines the safety responsibilities of leaders, managers, and supervisors, focuses on developing skills in planning, implementation, awareness, monitoring, and risk management, and covers governmental influence, hazard awareness and control, operational considerations in the workplace, accidents, and planning.
- **IPS 410: Case Studies in Leadership**
    - This course introduces and analyzes effective leadership styles. Additionally, leadership practices and models are applied to case studies. Through various forms of reading, writing, presentations, video and/or multi-media, students will apply theories to assess their own leadership style and identify styles of popular companies/people.
- **IPS 430: Ethics**
    - This course examines universal ethical principles and standards practiced across various disciplines. Exploration of personal and professional conduct and social responsibility in the light of existing ethical, moral, and social values across disciplines will also be discussed. This course is designed to enable students to form individual positions on ethical conduct and social responsibility, and both identifies and applies ethical principles to real-world situations.
- **IPS 440: Project Management and Design**

- The course develops a foundation of concepts that support the project management process groups required for successful implementation and completion of a project. Principles and applied techniques of effective planning, communication, risk, schedule, and cost management are major themes discussed in this course.

- **IPS 450: Creativity and Collaboration**
    - Explore and apply the elements of a creative and collaborative mindset to generate original and adaptive solutions to challenging problems. Review and practice the stages of the creative process, from risk to revision, and set individual goals to develop more deliberate and productive creative collaborations.

This section will cover the specific courses students can petition for credit in Boise State's BAS/IPS Program, and lead them through exercises on interpreting the learning objectives of each course and expressing the ways their experiential learning addresses them.

Learning Objectives

- Explore and evaluate credit for prior learning options by reading the university's credit for prior learning policy.
- Evaluate the courses you can challenge within the IPS program through reviewing the course descriptions and participating in the journal assignment.

9. Credit for Prior Learning Policy

Now that we have explored learning theories and you've started re-engineering how you learned the things you know well, we will begin the process of building your Prior Learning portfolio, which you'll use to officially challenge courses for credit.

As a reminder from the Introduction to this textbook, the Prior Learning Portfolio consists of three sections:

- **The Resumes**
    - There will be two different resumes included: a traditional resume and the PLA resume.
        - The PLA resume is orgainzed by your skills and expertise, rather than a chronological record of your employment
        - The traditional resume—you know what that is!
    - Through your resumes, you will highlight more detail about your responsibilities and accomplishments that have supported learning.
    - The resumes provide the reviewing committee with a timeline and demonstrates the progression of learning.
    - You will include both your PLA skills-based resume as well as your traditional/professional resume in the portfolio.

- **The Educational Narrative (a unique Narrative for each course you're challenging)**, which is a document that does the following:
    - Examines your personal motivations and educational goals in the context of learning and how you will achieve them.
    - Examines and discusses past instances that led to learning.

        - This portion should address each course objective found on the course syllabus, and demonstrate that you have mastered the objectives to the same extent as students who have completed the course.
        - NOTE: You must write a separate, unique Narrative for each course you're challenging. For example, if you are challenging three courses, you'll have to write three distinct and different Educational Narratives, one for each course.

- **Supporting Documentation**
    - You will need to supply documentation to support the narrative.
    - Documentation is as individual as the learner, and it may include items such as sample work products, training certificates, workplace evaluations, letters of recommendation, and/or photographs.

Credit for Prior Learning at Boise State University

As a student in the BAS/ IPS Program at Boise State, you are part of a program and a university that highly values Prior Learning. Prior Learning is an important academic policy which many students use to get academic credit for their study outside of the college classroom.

While we are focusing on portfolio credit in this textbook and accompanying course, there are many other forms of prior learning available for credit. The official Boise State policy on Prior Learning can be found at this link:

Office of the Registrar: Credit for Prior Learning

If you feel you may have other avenues for further credit, please speak with your advisor or instructor to inquire about how that might fit in with your Degree Plan.

10. Aligning Experiential Learning with Academic Learning Objectives

As we read earlier, a foundational principle of Prior Learning Assessment is that the credit awarded to you is for the *learning* you've done, not just for the experience itself. And PLA awards academic credit for specific classes already in the BSU Academic Catalog, so the way you demonstrate your knowledge has to address a specific course's material. For example, if you were challenging a course on Interpersonal Communication, you'd need to give evidence of what you've learned about that specific topic, rather than simply listing your years of customer service work.

In other words, PLA is a way to confirm that you've already learned all the things a class would've taught you. You just learned them outside of a classroom. For many students, they know the material so well that not only should they not have to take the class, but that they could actually *teach the class*.

When you're preparing to challenge a course, how do you know what the course covers, to see if you've already learned the material through experience? The answer is the same one as so many questions students ask their professors: *it's in the syllabus*.

In every syllabus there should be a section titled Course Objectives. It may also be called Learning Outcomes or Learning Objectives or some similar phrasing. The course objectives are a list of things students in the course should know, understand, or be able to do after passing the class.

But for PLA, the course objectives are like a key or a treasure map.

If you find course objectives and feel like your background aligns with them, then you can use those course objectives to guide your portfolio! If you are confident that you know and can do what the objectives are asking of you, then you should be successful with your prior learning assessment. Through your Learning Narrative, Supporting Documentation, and PLA Resume, you can address the learning outcomes directly and clearly demonstrate to your reviewers that you are comfortable and facile with the course material and have met the course objectives through your on-the-ground experiences.

Sometimes, the course objectives will reveal a gap in your knowledge, but that can be addressed or overcome. For example, there might be specific terminology the objectives refer to, which you might not know even though you've been doing those things for years. With a solid background and experience, those gaps can usually be filled with a little research to be able to reframe your experience and write about it from an academic perspective.

NOTE: For each course you want to challenge, you'll have to craft a separate Educational Narrative addressing those course outcomes (though, of course, there will be overlaps and ways to reuse parts of your work across separate courses). In Chapter 5, we'll take a very close look at the Educational Narrative.

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11. IPS 410: Case Studies in Leadership

Students challenging IPS 410 come from a variety of experiential backgrounds, including HR, law enforcement, industry, military, education, and nonprofit administration, to name just a few. It's a versatile course that embraces a lot of different leadership styles, so many experiential learning backgrounds apply.

Typically, students have success in this challenge when they've been in leadership roles for a number of years, have had people report to them for a long time (and been through difficult moments with that), and especially when they have put in self-study and professional development to develop their leadership style and have become good leaders.

Note that the course title is "Case Studies in Leadership." That indicates that the course is about studying different examples of leadership. Student portfolios will have to apply, analyze, and evaluate the leadership of others as well as their own personal leadership practice.

The textbook for IPS 410: Case Studies in Leadership is *The Leadership Challenge*, 6th Edition – 2017

- ISBN: 9781119278962
  Authors: Kouzes and Posner

What this course is (and is not) about

Case Studies in Leadership leads students through an in-depth study of different types of leadership. It uses case studies of well-known leaders to illustrate and illuminate leadership styles and put those styles in context with each other. It leads students through theoretical understandings of leadership, and it asks students to reflect on their own leadership style based on the case studies and readings in leadership theory. In other words, the course combines

academic theory and real-world examples to help students understand their leadership style so they can grow as leaders after the class.

This course uses one of the most influential textbooks on leadership: *The Leadership Challenge*, by James Kouzes and Barry Posner. Successful challenges will use terminology from the book, including the book's names of the Five Practices of Leadership, and be able to interpret and apply those styles to their own experiences with leaders and leadership.

The course is not a step-by-step guide to becoming a leader for someone with little to no experience in managerial or leadership positions. It's not just a self-reflection on your leadership experiences. It's not purely a study of famous leaders.

This course also has a pretty specific definition of leadership. It covers leadership in the public and professional world (companies, organizations, volunteer groups, politics, schools, and many other settings) and addresses ways of successfully leading a team of peers towards a goal. This leadership involves working with others who are usually outside your personal/family unit. With this definition, things like Teaching and Parenting aren't under the purview of this course challenge. (I know these are two of the hardest, most important roles one can have; they just aren't covered by this specific course.)

To do well in this challenge, students weave academic terminology and theory from the textbook and other resources into their own stories about leadership experiences. They also link their artifacts in the Supporting Documentation to the Course Outcomes very clearly.

Students who do well with this challenge have had to use multiple different leadership styles, and have often been in several leadership positions, either in different companies or organizations, or through moving up the ranks at one company. They can talk about their early leadership failures and growth experiences, what they learned and how they became better leaders through that learning. They're also

able to reflect on leaders they have worked under, and how they've used that knowledge to shape their own leadership style.

While the above is intended to help guide you through thinking about the course and how to frame your experience to challenge it, what follows below is the official language from the IPS 410 syllabus. You need to address the following course outcomes, and if the reviewers request an interview, be ready with answers to the questions below.

Use these Course Objectives to shape your Learning Narrative and help you in selecting and requesting Supporting Documentation. You may also think of sections to add to your PLA resume by using these Outcomes as a guide.

Course Description

Case Studies in Leadership introduces and analyzes effective leadership styles. Leadership practices and models are applied to case studies. Through various forms of reading, writing, presentations, video and/or multi-media, students will apply theories to assess their own leadership style and identify styles of popular companies/people. Completion of LEAD 325 is recommended. PREREQ: Admitted to IPS or BAS program or declared a leadership certificate with upper-division standing or PERM/INST.

Course Objectives

- Assess the current status of your personal leadership practice inventory and identify areas to improve using application in real-world situations.

- Utilize research perspectives on leadership to analyze traits, behaviors, and relationships that leaders possess.
- Learn how leaders shape organizational culture and values and how a leader facilitates change.
- Utilize the language of leadership as described by Kouzes and Posner. This shared language will support your analysis.

- Utilize journaling as a writing tool to impact your leadership practice.

- Understand and communicate what it means to be a leader.
- Use your own experiences to articulate the validity of current and past leadership research.
- Evaluate and implement effective and respectful communication strategies using written, verbal, electronic, and other appropriate technologies.
- Gather academically substantive information to support analysis of leadership practices in the language of Kouzes and Posner.

- Understand and communicate what it means to be an exemplary leader.

- Evaluate and implement effective and respectful communication strategies using verbal, electronic, and other appropriate technologies.
- Demonstrate effective oral communication skills.
- Demonstrate critical thinking by applying what you've learned to personal experience and your leadership goals.

12. IPS 430: Ethics

Though this course is simply titled "Ethics," we think of it more accurately as "Ethics of the Profession." In other words, it is a study of how ethics are applied in both professional and personal ways in businesses, workplaces, organizations, or other professional environments. We purposefully say "Ethics of the Profession" so that there isn't a specific profession named–because BAS/IPS students work in so many different professions, and we want to accommodate all of them.

In the course, students delineate how their profession of choice or future vocation interact with ethical systems and social responsibility, and they develop a decision-making framework for ethical dilemmas they face in their workplace now or in the future.

Students who do well challenging IPS 430: Ethics often work in positions in organizations in which they are tasked with making difficult decisions in which they must examine the ethical implications of their choice and the resulting outcomes, both personally and professionally. They must weigh all the facets of a workplace ethical decision, such as ethical theories, legal responsibilities, the prioritization of stakeholders, and corporate/organizational social responsibility. This experience with deep ethical consideration gives students a background in understanding their own professional and personal ethics, as well as the ethics of others.

Usually, students who challenge this course successfully have ongoing professional development in ethics and have studied ethical systems through workplace trainings and/or other study. Successful challenges have a deep understanding of organizational ethical systems and stances as well as their own personal ethics. They can articulate how different ethical systems interact and conflict.

The course has students outline their own Ethical Framework for

making ethical decisions in the workplace; successful challenges can clearly demonstrate a similar ethical decision-making framework that the student has developed over their career or through training. The portfolio for this course requires students to detail the pathway they have taken to think through, research, consider, and arrive at a decision with large ethical implications. The challenge also asks students to demonstrate an understanding of how various ethical systems and frameworks are constructed even if they differ from the student's own personal ethical system.

Textbook

The textbook for IPS 430: Ethics is *Business Ethics*, Byars and Stanberry et. al.

It is freely available as an open access ebook at the link provided; at that link you can access different versions including online, PDF, print, and Kindle.

What this course is (and is not) about

IPS 430: Ethics is a study of Ethics that goes beyond a student's personal views. It looks at ethics from a professional sense, oriented toward workplace environments and applying universal ethical standards and principles to the student's work experience. Students in the course understand what makes up ethical stances and systems, beyond just a personal sense of "right and wrong." Students should know and feel comfortable discussing different ethical stances and systems as models and frameworks.

In other words, the course is not about "being a good person" or "doing the right thing." The definition of these varies widely between individuals. One can be a helpful neighbor, a dedicated parent, a good samaritan, or many other worthwhile things, but that doesn't automatically equate to having college-level learning about Ethics from a wide perspective, nor how to apply those ethics at work. The course goes beyond personal attachments and viewpoints and discusses Ethics on a system-wide, society-wide level that includes an organization's social responsibility, legal issues, stakeholder valuation, and more. It goes in-depth on the terminology and

vocabulary of Ethics, and students work through many definitions and categories of Ethical Systems.

To challenge this course successfully, students need to know many different Ethical systems well, beyond just their own general sense of right and wrong. Students should be able to easily discuss different Ethical Systems, knowing their definitions and characteristics well. Students should have a good understanding of the theoretical frameworks that make up a human being's ethics, and be able to apply those frameworks in a professional environment to both themselves and to others whose frameworks are vastly different.

To do well in this challenge, students need to demonstrate the ability to apply, analyze, and evaluate concepts of Ethics at a level equal to college coursework. They need to know the specific names and definitions of ethical systems, and be able to give examples of how those systems are applied in the real world. Students should feel comfortable using empathy to explore an ethical system that is different from their own. They should be able to discuss Ethics both in terms of current events and personal experience, in hypothetical situations, and at a more holistic level. Finally, they should be able to create or recreate an ethical decision-making framework for professional situations that takes the many contextual factors into consideration.

Course Overview

IPS 430 Ethics examines universal ethical principles and standards practiced across various disciplines. We will discuss personal and professional conduct and social responsibility in light of existing ethical, moral, and social values. This course is designed to teach you how to construct and defend rational positions on ethical behavior and social responsibility. To this end, you will apply moral positions to real-life situations and cases.

This class is an incredible learning journey with the potential to change your life. Every single word we share in this online environment has an impact on each person taking this class. This includes you, as well as those with whom you are sharing this learning experience. Respect, Listening, Learning, and Encouraging are four values this course deems vitally important to creating a healthy learning environment. Putting in the effort to complete all of the learning activities on time and being diligent in generating high-quality work will lead you to great success in this course.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course you should be able to:

1. Assess various ethical perspectives and their efficacy in solving significant personal and professional dilemmas.
2. Describe and critically evaluate ethical systems with a view to application in real-world situations.
3. Apply various ethical concepts and perspectives to personal and professional decisions by recognizing legal and ethical issues, reasoning through the consequences of different courses of action, and promoting social responsibility.
4. Gather academically substantial information to support a specific point of view on a relevant ethical topic or issue (relating to your profession of choice).
5. Emphasize connections between topics such as ethical theories, legal responsibilities, the prioritization of stakeholders, and corporate social responsibility.
6. Produce evidence of increased awareness of ethical responsibilities which promote high ethical standards.
7. Develop an original framework for ethical decision-making which integrates personal values, past experience, select ethical theories, and current and/or future vocations.

13. IPS 440: Project Management and Design

In order to challenge IPS 440: Project Management and Design, students must have real-world experience in a professional position designated as Project Manager or with project management duties in their responsibility.

If a student already has their CAPM certification, that qualifies as a course equivalency for IPS 440, and that student can receive credit for the course without completing the portfolio.

To challenge, students must write short essays describing their project management experience in line with fundamental Project Management definitions, terminology, and stages.

This requires students to have both certification and experience specifically in Project Management, working under the title of Project Manager or with similar duties. If you have questions about your qualifications or would like to talk through your experience, please reach out to your Instructor.

The textbooks for IPS 440: Project Management and Design are:

- *Project Management, 2nd Edition* (2014), open source text created by Adrienne Watt, published as an open educational resource by British Columbia "BCcampus Open Education" program.
- *Project Management Book of Knowledge* (PMBOK) 7th Edition (2021), available through the Boise State Albertsons library for digital check out.
- Optional: PMP Study Guide, 9th Edition. Kim Heldman (Amazon)

What this course is (and is not) about

We understand that many jobs and duties in life require people to wear many hats, juggle many things, keep many plates spinning. A

lot of us are just default managers of projects in our lives. However, this course is not about improvised project management done by the seat of our pants. There is a technical expertise and skillset for Project Management done in the professional and organizational field, and that is what this course is about. This challenge will require this specific real-world public experience, and asks students to demonstrate college-level learning on the techniques and elements of project management in the organizational sphere.

This course leads students through the necessary knowledge and fundamental frameworks to both understand and apply the principles of highly effective Project Management, and allows students to analyze and evaluate their own project plans as well as the plans of others. As such, challenges to this course should have deep knowledge and experience with the Project Lifecycle and Ten Knowledge Management Areas of Project Management from the PMBOK, as well as experience and examples to discuss these areas thoroughly. Challenges will also need to document their work process as well as evaluate and analyze their project management practice for areas to grow.

Course Description

IPS 440: PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND DESIGN

This course is designed as a practical overview and exploration of the tools that Fortune 100 and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) use to effectively manage their investments of attention, time, and resources. Whether you choose to become a professional project manager, play the role of a project sponsor in your work, or contribute as a member to project (or volunteer) teams, this course will introduce you to a general framework that you will understand, can adapt, and can leverage in your daily work, and perhaps day-to-day life.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Explain the context in which projects are vital, and the typical lifecycle that a project follows from initiation to close out
- Identify the strategic categories in which most projects occur, and how organizations manage and oversee project delivery
- Interpret the inter-related roles that project stakeholders play, and understand how unique interests can be categorized
- Communicate how project requirements can be captured, delivered, and validated. Explain how risks and uncertainty can be tracked and addressed.
- Demonstrate how uncertainty can be estimated, and explain the importance of estimation in moving projects forward.
- Evidence your application of the project management tools and concepts project managers use to effectively monitor and control project activities, generating a complete project plan.
- Paraphrase the impact of emerging trends in the workplace, and how they are impacting project management and delivery.
- Evaluate the application of course concepts in the peer review process, looking at the final Personal Projects of others and offering feedback and suggestions to improve their plans.

14. IPS 450: Creativity and Collaboration

Experience working with others is key to a successful challenge for IPS 450: Creativity and Collaboration. Being part of teams as a team *member* (not the leader but a member on equal footing with others) is important, as is a deep understanding of the way good teams are built through the four stages of team development. Experience working on a team with people who bring different perspectives and expertise is also very helpful in articulating the goals of this course.

Further, the kind of work the teams did is key–it needs to be innovative in some way. Beyond just managing a task or maintaining status quo, successful challenges tell a story of a team thinking strategically and overcoming a problem or creating something new. Having a good understanding of Innovation and articulating how your team came together and engaged in the process of innovation helps make a strong case for these challenges.

The textbook for IPS 450: Teamwork & Innovation is *Group Dynamics for Teams*, 5th Edition – 2017

- ISBN: 9781483378343
  Author: Levi

What this course is (and is not) about

It's important that the portfolio reflect experience working with others in a professional or public setting, even others from very different mindsets, on a common issue. These teams don't have to be in the workplace; they can be neighborhood associations, volunteer groups, mission trips, informal gatherings for a cause, or, yes, they can be teams in work environments: corporate, restaurant, academic, manufacturing, logistics, and many other organizations.

However, this is Teamwork in a professional or public situation. This course does not include family as teamwork because there

are complicated dynamics at play and they are often in a private setting. Successful challenges use Creativity and Collaboration in a professional or public setting like a workplace, a volunteer organization, a neighborhood or interest group, a coalition or nonprofit, or similar settings.

The course is about *both* Creativity and Collaboration; it's not about being on a team that didn't have to do anything new or different, nor is it about innovating by yourself. The best challenges can encompass both elements of the course.

This course is also about Teamwork, not Leadership. There is a big difference between the two! Usually leaders have teamwork experience, but it's important that these challenges be framed as the student being part of a team, not just the leader of the team.

Innovation, as covered in this course, is about working with others to come up with a new and improved solution. These solutions should be arrived at through collaboration and interaction with teammates, not an independent idea you came up with all by yourself. Make sure your examples tell the story of you as part of a team, accomplishing something together that you couldn't have done by yourself.

Course Description

IPS 450: This course identifies the creative people, processes, and conditions necessary for fostering innovation and models of innovation including creative problem solving with teams. Students show understanding through demonstration of competency in identifying, describing, fostering, demonstrating and assessing programs that foster creativity and innovation in a team environment.

Course Objectives

After finishing the course, the successful student will be able to:

Identify components of high performing teams

1. Explain the stages of team development
2. Distinguish team development vs detrimental behaviors
3. Discuss personal team experience
4. Identify current team stage from personal example

Explain the influence of teams on creativity in organizations.

1. Explain how organizations use teams
2. Locate organizational examples of creative teams
3. Review current best practices for driving innovation

Write personal development goals for advancing appropriate behaviors.

1. Identify personal behaviors that diminish team unity
2. Write 3 personal development goals to adjust behavior

Demonstrate Team Problem Solving Techniques.

1. Review current best practices for team problem solving

Apply team innovation tools and techniques to a given situation

1. Identify one tool or technique to apply
2. In a small group, lead a team through the creative process

15. BAS 425: Creating a Culture of Safety

Creating a Culture of Safety is an intentionally-designed course that covers the integration of safety and wellbeing into many different environments and workplaces. It's a holistic view of Safety in the workplace or in a student's profession of choice, looking at the issue from many different perspectives and exploring many solutions.

The textbook for BAS 425: Creating and Culture of Safety is *Accident Prevention Manual for Business and Industry: Engineering & Technology*, 14th Edition – 2015.

- ISBN: 9780879123215
- Author: Hagan

What this course is (and is not) about

This course isn't an OSHA Certification test-prep course, but being OSHA-certified in a few areas makes students very familiar with the material in this course. Many other industry-standard trainings speak well to this course, as well. This is a course about safety in the workplace or other professional settings. It is about a culture of safety, where safety is a collective mindset that is applied by a large group working together.

This course isn't about safety in the home/family or on an individual basis (like wearing a helmet when biking or watching kids closely at a playground). The course isn't about choosing between right and wrong about safety issues.

The course is about understanding safety from a legal and professional perspective as it applies to the workplace or other organizations. It is about integrating safety into the mindset and frameworks of a professional group, so that group can work together to keep all their members safe. It is about making safety an integrated, natural, and crucial part of the workplace environment.

Safety has many different elements, and the best challenges touch on several of these elements. From security to maintenance to protocols to communication to record-keeping…on and on. There are many different ways of creating a culture of safety, and this course challenge should encompass multiple aspects of safety rather than only focusing on one specific aspect.

Certification Equivalencies

Due to the straightforward nature of this course, there are several professional certifications which can automatically equate to credit for BAS 425. The following certifications are eligible for this equivalency:

Approved Certifications

OHST – Occupational Hygiene and Safety Technician – https://www.bcsp.org/ohst

CHST – Construction Health and Safety Technician – https://www.bcsp.org/chst

CSP – Certified Safety Professional – https://www.bcsp.org/CSP

ASP – Associate Safety Professional – https://www.bcsp.org/ASP

GSP – Graduate Safety Professional – https://www.bcsp.org/GSP

CIH – Certified Industrial Hygienist – http://www.abih.org/about-abih/cih-caih

STS – Safety Trained Supervisor – https://www.bcsp.org/STS

STSC – Safety Trained Supervisor Construction – https://www.bcsp.org/STSC

If you have other certifications not listed here and would like to discuss your certifications in the context of course equivalencies, please contact your Course Instructor.

Course Description

A combination of principles and practices designed to provide the student with a basis for understanding the nature of occupational accident prevention and loss reduction. The topics to be examined include legislative aspects, accident causation, and strategies for minimizing injury and losses, and sources of assistance in resolving safety and health problems.

Course Objectives

After finishing the course, the successful student will be able to:

1. Identify and discuss classic and emerging occupational safety and health issues in the context of their historical and social significance
2. Describe the basis for the OSH Act, the OSHA inspection process, standards, and reporting of workers compensation records and statistics
3. Apply the discipline of safety and health to the anticipation, recognition, evaluation, control and prevention of occupational health hazards
4. Understand the impact of management and regulatory strategies on the day to day responsibilities of occupational safety and health professionals
5. Discuss the role of a safety and health professional in a comprehensive safety and health program and understand the complementary roles of allied health professionals
6. Conduct basic hazard identification and assessment techniques, and recommend common/basic methods to mitigate hazards

16. Key Takeaways: Courses You Can Challenge

Key Takeaways

Each course has its own Course Outcomes that should be addressed in your PLA Portfolio.

All of the components (resumes, documentation, and narrative) work together to address the Course Outcomes.

You will need to write a separate Educational Narrative for each course you're challenging. You do not need separate PLA resumes for each course (just one will suffice).

Study the terminology and language used in the Course Outcomes to incorporate that into your Portfolio.

You may need to do a little research to fill in some gaps in your knowledge about terminology or academic philosophy mentioned in the Course Outcomes.

Sometimes reading the course textbooks or reading articles online can bolster your Educational Narrative and/or give you confidence that you know the material as you begin to create your Portfolio.

PART III

REVIEW: THE PRIOR LEARNING PORTFOLIO COMPONENTS AND THEIR ROLES

Quick Review: The Prior Learning Portfolio Components and Their Roles

Each section of your Prior Learning Portfolio has a particular role, like the different positions that make up a professional organization or a sports team all have different responsibilities but work together for a common goal. Here's a quick breakdown:

The PLA Resume gives a clear and precise overview of your skills and expertise. You might think of its role as giving the 10,000-foot view, or a picture of the whole forest.

The Educational Narrative illuminates your experience by telling stories of your learning, using specific examples. It lets you show your expertise and familiarity with the subject matter of the course you're challenging by how well you interact with the topics and

terminology. Its role is an on-the-ground perspective, or giving a picture of the individual trees within the forest.

The Supporting Documentation is a way to validate the expertise you claim with your PLA Resume and Supporting Documentation. They are validating evidence or proof from external sources such as professional certifications, continuing education credits, workplace documents, and many more, that give a recommendation and approval of your expertise. Like a lawyer might show Exhibit A and B to a jury during a trial, these documents are evidence and proof of your learning, and they bolster your case for prior learning in the subject matter of your course.

PART III

CHAPTER 3: THE PLA RESUME

Photo by WOCinTech Chat from Flickr

The Prior Learning Portfolio procedure requires two kinds of resumes. One, the traditional resume, gives a quick overview of your work history. The other is the Prior Learning Assessment (or PLA) Resume.

The **PLA Resume** is a skills-based resume that presents your experiential learning in terms of the expertise you've gained by learning outside the classroom.

This chapter will cover the PLA resume in detail, helping you think about how to brainstorm and list your skills and expertise areas, how to engage in the writing process of this resume, and how to address the portfolio reviewers.

Learning Objectives

- Understand the difference between a traditional chronological resume and a Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) resume organized using skills and experiences
- Understand the context of the PLA resume as a component of the learning portfolio
- Frame your skills based on the learning outcomes of the courses you are challenging
- Prepare your PLA resume using the prompts and guidelines found in the assignment instructions.

17. Traditional Resume vs Skills-based Resume

The **traditional resume** is the one we all know and love. Well, perhaps not *love*.

*Photo by **Lukas** from **Pexels***

In the traditional resume, you have a few standard sections like Education, Work Experience, Skills. You list your jobs on there, most recent first and then work backwards. You give your contact information, maybe some references. You try to make the layout professional and have the proper look for your industry. You try to cram all this into one page!

But if you think about the traditional resume, it displays a lot of biases and assumptions.

It values a straight-as-an-arrow career that makes sense at a glance, such as moving up within a company or field in progressively higher positions. It has a bias towards someone working in the same field or industry the whole time, so there's no new ventures or confusing leaps between job types. It assumes everyone should work continuously, and penalizes you for "having a gap" from taking time away from jobs to do things like raise a family, travel, re-skill at school, or find a new job after getting laid off or furloughed.

Now, to be clear: in spite of these negatives, your PLA portfolio *will include* one of these traditional resumes. There's something interesting in seeing work history in chronological order, and your PLA reviewer won't hold it against you if it's full of jags and zig-zags.

But we'll also be including an accompanying resume specifically

designed for prior learning, the **PLA resume**, which is organized to tell your story a different way.

In short, the PLA resume doesn't care about when you worked where. It cares about what you know.

It's organized in a table that can be (*get this*) several pages long! It has 4 columns: Expertise, Source of Learning, Accomplishment, and Dates. Here's a quick breakdown of each section, with a little insight.

Column 1: Skills, Expertise, or College-level Learning Area, the most prominent column, lists the skills you've learned through your experience. Skills in this column might be big-picture things like Communication, Teamwork, Safety, Problem-Solving, and other terms along these lines. You can actually focus your PLA resume on the specific skills taught in the courses you're challenging. Just organize your PLA resume by skills that speak right to those Course Outcomes. Nifty!

Column 2: Source of Learning, the next column, lists the experience where you learned that Expertise (through a job, travel, stay-at-home parenting, self-study, whatever it is). This is one advantage of the PLA resume, that all experiences count towards learning. It might be considered a gap in your traditional resume, but on the PLA resume it becomes a source of knowledge.

Further, with the PLA resume you can highlight a skill that might not be associated with a particular experience. Say that someone owned a small outdoor expedition company. Many would instantly think they'd have expertise in Survival and Safety, but they'd also know Marketing, Communications, Teamwork, and many other skills that are built in to that experience but not apparent at first glance. Here's your chance to highlight the work you *actually* did in your experiences, rather than what people assume.

Column 3: Learning Experience, Duty, Achievement, or Activity in the next column is a chance for you to tell your reviewer what you did to gain that Expertise in column 1. Rather than a traditional resume where all job duties are lumped together, here you can list specific projects you completed, things you managed, widgets you created or collaborated on, groups you led, and so forth.

Column 4: Dates is where you list the timeframe for the learning of this Expertise with each Source of Learning. PLA resumes don't care about the order of learning–you can have years or decades between learning. This column is there to benefit you by showing how many cumulative years, and how much timespan, you've been learning this Expertise.

As we prepare to write your PLA resume, let's consider an example of how experience might be translated onto the PLA resume:

Perhaps an apprentice plumber worked on a team in constructing a subdivision, then left to be an independent contractor for a decade. After all that experience, she joined a Plumbing Supply company as a manager. So she may list Teamwork as an Expertise, which she learned about as an apprentice and again as a manager, but with a ten-year gap while she worked alone. PLA resumes doesn't care about that gap; it shows she's had two long stints working with others as part of a team, and that's what counts.

18. Showcasing Experiential Learning with the PLA Resume

Just as a traditional resume shows a potential employer what makes you qualified for the job you are trying to obtain, a PLA résumé serves a similar purpose in that it focuses on what qualifies you to earn credit for a particular course.

A PLA résumé will show what you have done but reframe it to focus on *what you have learned* from this "doing." Thus, a PLA résumé will include your work experience as well as information about your community and personal life.

While you will have to write a different Educational Narrative for each course you're challenging, **you will only include one PLA resume** that should cover all courses you want to challenge. The PLA resume should address areas of expertise that are relevant to the courses being challenged first and foremost.

Keep in mind that your life is very familiar to you, but your reviewer will be seeing your experiences for the first time. You will want to be concise, making it clear that the Expertise items work directly as evidence for your course challenges. You will have to decide how best to arrange your PLA resume table to include relevant learning while remaining organized and coherent.

Formatting Your PLA Resume

To start your PLA résumé, make a bulleted list of your accomplishments. If you had to distill your traditional resume down into your best works, what would those be? What would you

highlight reel be, if someone made a montage of your professional and public work so far? List them here, as long as they're relevant to the courses you're challenging.

Your examples can be from your job, volunteer work, community groups, service organizations, independent study, hobbies, or other sources. Be sure, however, that they are significant learning experiences relating to the course outcomes of the courses you're challenging. These will be listed in the "Learning Experience, Duty, Achievement, or Activity" area of your PLA résumé.

For example, let's imagine someone with a long career history in real estate and tech. This person might list some accomplishments like this below. Note the variety of sources from which the Selected Accomplishments are drawn, from professional to volunteering to hobbies:

Selected Accomplishments

- Sold over $10 million in real estate in my first year at Jenkins Real Estate firm.
- Managed my own computer business for 10 years.
- Held a government contracting job as an analyst for 11 years and brought in $5 million in contracts per year on average.
- Started a pet grooming business and managed over 50 pets a month.
- Trained in computer technology in the military and can operate in UNIX, C++, COBOL, Oracle and People-Soft.
- Volunteered with a studio that records books for the blind and dyslexic for 15 years, becoming an experienced reader over time.
- Maintained membership in a Civil War reenactment group for 10 years, gaining detailed knowledge of Civil War history in the process.

Then, underneath your Selected Accomplishments section, you will make a table like the one below to identify and expand on your most knowledgeable areas in the PLA resume. A template for this table will be provided for you in your IPS 301 Course Folder.

In the four columns of your PLA resume, do the following:

- In the "Skill, Expertise, or College-level Learning Area" column, list the general area where you have experience and expertise.
- In the "Source of Learning" column, list what job title, volunteer work, or hobby provided this expertise.
- In the "Learning Experience, Duty, Achievement, or Activity" column, list the actual activity.
- In the "Dates" column, list the date span over which this learning occurred.

Skill, Expertise, or College-level Learning Area	Source of Learning	Learning Experience, Duty, Achievement, or Activity	Dates
Communications	Assistant Editor: Oregon State Office of Personnel	Wrote technical manual for state government	1997-2007
	Volunteer: City of Sandy River, Tennessee	Wrote speeches for mayoral candidate	2000-2001
	Hobby: Writing	Self-published novel; *Ride the Rails*	2003-2004
Management	President: COMPUFIX	Managed a technology business selling computer services to government agencies Hired and supervised 50 employees and contractors	1990-2010
	Troop Leader: Bluebird Girl Scouts, Merrill County, Maine	Managed a Girl Scout Troop	2007-present
Technology	Corporal: U.S. Army: Stationed in Germany	Developed computer LAN systems for the military overseas	2001-2007
Training	Assistant Director: Finance Office, JANTA Corporation	Developed PowerPoint presentations for training sessions Trained executives on budgeting processes	2005-present

	Instructor: YWCA, Mitchellville, Georgia	Taught dance Became certified as an aerobic dance instructor	2010-present

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19. Writing Strategies for the PLA Resume

Since the PLA resume is usually a strange, new kind of document for many students, this section will outline a few ways former students have approached the writing process.

Photo by ***Andrea Piacquadio*** *from* ***Pexels***

The final PLA document has to be a 4-column table such as the example in the previous section, but there are infinite ways each student will get to that final version. Just as all of you bring vastly different prior learning experiences, you also have a wide variety of work processes and thinking patterns. Each student's steps in writing the PLA resume will look different.

Therefore, you should create your PLA resume in a way that works well with your strengths and the flow of your unique, beautiful brain.

Below, there are three writing strategies that may help you write your PLA resume.

Please note: these strategies are meant as guides to help you start thinking about this PLA resume; they are *not* all-inclusive or prescriptive. They're not magic, and they're not required. In fact, there are many more ways to approach this writing activity. You could use a mind-map, pencil and paper sketching, an interview with a long-term partner, a brainstorming session with a coworker, gamified freewriting, etc.

That said, here are four possible ways to frame your thinking and begin writing your PLA resume.

The Accomplishments Strategy

Make a bulleted list of your accomplishments. Your examples can be from your job, volunteer work, community work, side hustles, hobbies, or more. Even better, find a partner who knows your life story well and bring them into the brainstorm, too. Be sure, however, that all the accomplishments you list are significant learning experiences that align with the Course Objectives for your challenges. These accomplishments will be listed in the "Selected Accomplishments" area of your résumé. (Shocking, I know.) For example:

- Sold over $10 million in real estate in my first year at Jenkins Real Estate firm.
- Managed my own computer business for 10 years.
- Held a government contracting job as an analyst for 11 years and brought in $5 million in contracts per year on average.
- Started a pet grooming business and managed over 50 pets a month.
- Trained in computer technology in the military and can operate in UNIX, C++, COBOL, Oracle and People-Soft.
- Volunteered with a studio that records books for the blind and dyslexic for 15 years, becoming an experienced reader over time.
- Maintained membership in a Civil War reenactment group for 10 years, gaining detailed knowledge of Civil War history in the process.

Using this list, group Accomplishments together into what you learned by that achievement. Put those Accomplishments together

into the table under their related Expertise area, and fill out the remaining columns for each Accomplishment.

The Expertise Strategy

Make a list of all the things you think of as your strengths. These might include professional skills like Management, Budgeting, or Customer Service, but they might also include less tangible skills like Tenacity, Communication, Emotional Intelligence, Keeping It Together, and the like. Just make the longest, most self-aggrandizing list you can. Don't be shy–show off your awesome, because this is just for you at this stage.

Then consolidate the list–can you combine items into one larger Expertise area? Can you professionalize the wording or title for your reviewer? Then cut all the strengths that don't apply to the courses you're challenging. You don't want to overwhelm your reviewers.

Now that you have a manageable list of how great you are, look through your traditional resume and find connections between those strengths and your work experience. Link those together, then throw the net wider and think of other places (community work, travel, volunteering, side gigs, social and church settings…think big!) where you practiced and learned those strengths.

Write them all down, then start filling out your PLA resume table. As you do, you may start paring down a little more, keeping things clear and concise for your reviewer as you go.

The Learning Outcomes Strategy

Read through the Course Outcomes for the course or courses you'd like to challenge. Highlight or note the words or terminology that

stand out to you and speak to your experiential learning. See if you can reuse or slightly translate those words and terms into words you can use in the Expertise column. Write them all down in the PLA resume table.

Then, unpack those terms. Why did those terms stand out to you? What part of your experience were you thinking of when you noticed those terms? Try to link your intuition about those terms to your experience, and remember to think big about prior learning: it can be work and jobs, but it can also be hobbies, travel, study abroad, volunteering, community service, apprenticeships, and more.

The Reverse Engineering Strategy

Get your traditional resume and a blank sheet of paper. For each job or experience listed on your resume, write down on the blank sheet what you *really* did at that job. What were you the office expert on? What did people come to you for help with? What decisions did you have responsibility for? Write down the real work you did at that job (which, we know, often isn't what the job title says or what people think we actually do).

Look at that list on the blank sheet. See if you can group things together to make areas of expertise. Try to see if there are any main focus areas or strengths that kept coming up across all your jobs. Don't be tied to what order they're listed in. Move things, group things, tie things together. Make your skills the focus, not what order in time things happened. Put those Areas of Expertise into your PLA Resume table, and then proceed to fill out the rest of the columns.

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20. Key Takeaways: The PLA Resume

Key Takeaways

Your PLA Portfolio will inculde both a traditional resume and a PLA resume.

The traditional resume is based on chronology, with certain inherent assumptions and values. The PLA resume is based on skills, valuing the learning you've done.

Random or haphazard jumps in work history are de-emphasized in the PLA resume in favor of Expertise and Learning.

The PLA Resume has 4 columns:

Skill, Expertise, or College-level Learning Area

Source of Learning

Learning Experience, Duty, Achievement, or Activity

Dates

The format of the PLA resume should be a four-column table with the above headings. All final versions of the PLA

resume will look similar, but each student will have a very different process for brainstorming, drafting, and writing their PLA resume.

While you will write a separate Educational Narrative for each course you're challenging, the single PLA resume and single traditional resume will cover all the courses you're challenging.

PART IV

CHAPTER 4: SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Photo by Patrick Tomasso on Unsplash

The **Supporting Documentation** section of the PLA portfolio showcases documentation of your learning achievements through experience. This chapter will delve into the many acceptable types of documentation, leading students through brainstorming activities for discovering and acquiring documents, best practices for presenting the documents, and ways to give context for the reviewers relating to course learning objectives.

Learning Objectives

- Evaluate supporting documentation in terms of relevance and impact as part of a Prior Learning Portfolio

- Reflect on supporting documentation as a component of the learning portfolio in context with other components
- Frame documentation in relation to course learning outcomes
- Collect supporting documentation for the prior learning portfolio.

21. The Role of Supporting Documentation

Supporting Documentation is included as part of your portfolio in order for you to be able to leverage any official trainings, courses, commendations, publicity, letters of recommendation, or other sources that speak to your experience and demonstrate the learning you've done.

It is, in other words, a "paper trail" of your learning.

This section is the only part of the portfolio that has voices that are not yours in it, since you've written the resumes and Educational Narrative yourself. Supporting Documentation is simply a way to add weight to the stories in your Narrative, by giving verified proof of your expertise The Supporting Documentation allows other voices to vouch for what you wrote.

Cases of Very Little or No Supporting Documentation

For some students, this part of the portfolio is the most stressful. You've had long careers and moved to different living spaces, smalled down, cleaned out the attics, and who knew that certificate from twenty years ago would be important all this time later?? Locating these documents can absolutely be difficult because of these reasons and many more. We understand that, and offer the following advice and perspective.

It's important to remember that all three components of the Portfolio work together. The Educational Narrative, PLA Resume, Traditional Resume, and Supporting Documentation all work in

concert to make your case for challenging a course. Supporting Documentation is not more important than any other part.

So, if you don't have dozens of Professional Certificates, that's okay. If you can't find that report you wrote or that news article about you, don't fret. If you've always been taught informally by your mentors and don't have any documents at all, we can be creative with that. If you sold all your worldly possessions and trashed all your old documents in order to travel the country in an RV while running a business and raising kids, well, that's a story we can't wait to hear.

The bottom line is, if you do have a lot of Supporting Documentation, it can really help to make your case for your course challenge. But if you don't have lots of documents, you can still do very well with your challenges. We understand that the paths students take through experiential learning might make Supporting Documentation difficult to locate. We have mechanisms in place that can help with that situation.

And furthermore, there are ways to generate *new* Supporting Documents that we'll go over in the next section.

22. Types of Documentation and How To Present Them

Your documentation should, of course, relate to the Learning Outcomes and competencies of the courses you're challenging.

When you start thinking of possibilities, keep this key factor in mind: **your portfolio needs to display college-level learning**. When choosing your documents, think about the level of thinking they demonstrate. Refer back to Chapter 1 and Bloom's Taxonomy, and make sure your document shows you working in those higher levels of thinking styles (apply, analyze, evaluate, create).

Asking, "Does this demonstrate college-level learning in some way, either directly or through the end result of a process?" is a good way to determine if you should include a document or not.

That said, the BAS/IPS Program takes a wide view of what counts as documentation, and are open to many kinds of evidence, including:

- Samples of your work
- Documentation of job skills, including evaluations.
- Letters of Recommendation from employers or others who have firsthand knowledge of your abilities or skills
- Descriptions of requirements for obtaining licenses and/or certificates
- Scanned licenses or certificates
- Video clips or streaming video showing a skill, ability, or item produced
- Audio recordings demonstrating an ability or skill
- Thank You notes and emails from clients, students, co-workers, etc.
- Website links
- Certificates of attendance at conferences or trainings

- Pictures of your notes taken in training courses
- PowerPoint or other slides from presentations you've given
- Transcripts from other schools
- An annotated bibliography of books you've read for self-study, with short notes on what you learned in each book
- Proof of membership in professional or trade organizations
- Any other material agreed upon with your PLA seminar instructor that offers proof of your college-level learning
- Newspaper articles featuring you in your profession
- Documents you created for work, like PowerPoint presentations, reports, bids, safety checks, etc.
- YouTube videos produced
- Performance Evaluations from work
- Portfolios of artistic work
- Certificate/Thank you for volunteer work
- Photographs of you doing work related to the course topic
- Business plans
- Marketing materials you produced for work
- Entrepreneurial materials (for example, a student who owned a restaurant submitted her menu as a Supporting Document, explaining how it was created as an act of teamwork and innovation in collaboration with her staff and a focus group of customers)
- Business reports
- Manuals or Policies for the workplace you wrote/contributed to
- Blog posts you wrote for professional reasons or well-written and intellectually-engaging personal blog posts
- A List of personal reading/research/enrichment you've done to better your work (list of books you've read or presented on, participation in book discussion for professional reasons, etc.)
- Pictures of trophies/plaques
- Pictures of you with constituencies you work with/help/volunteer with that pertain to the course topic

Giving Context and Clarification to Supporting Documentations

In your IPS 301 Course Folder, you'll find an interior folder titled "Supporting Documentation." Within that there will be two pre-loaded Google Docs. One is to help you with brainstorming and locating your documents. The other, titled "**Supporting Documentation Table of Contents**," is a very important document that provides context to your Supporting Documentation.

When you add documents to your folder, remember: your reviewer doesn't know anything about your life!

A picture of you holding a clipboard in front of a truck with a construction site behind you might seem to be obviously showing teamwork because of the people collaborating on the worksite, or even safety, with the checklist that's on that clipboard. But your reviewer has no idea about any of that.

So the best way to present your documents is to use the Supporting Documentation Table of Contents in your folder. It's very simple! Just title each Supporting Document you upload to the folder, and then list that same title on the Table of Contents. Then give your faculty reviewer a very short note about the document, to explain why you're including it in your Portfolio. Your short explanation should link to course Learning Objectives or elements of the challenge course you see the document addressing and proving that you know.

To use the earlier example, you could write a descriptive note for that photograph saying, "Routine daily safety check at worksite." Then the reviewer knows what that picture fulfills regarding the course challenge.

Use the Table of Contents for *each and every one* of your Supporting Documentation entries to fill in any gaps and answer any questions for your reviewer before they even have to ask them. Make it very obvious for your reviewer what you think the Documentation is adding to your course challenge.

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23. Generating New Supporting Documentation

As noted earlier, many Prior Learning students don't have reams of Supporting Documentation available, and that is acceptable since this component of the portfolio can be bolstered by the other components.

However, you can also make up for this by generating some Supporting Documentation for your portfolio. Let's explore two ways of generating new Supporting Documents.

Letters of Recommendation

Asking work colleagues for Letters of Recommendation is a great way to get new Supporting Documentation. Letters of Recommendation are a wonderful document, whether you have lots of documents or not. They are a way to add a voice to your portfolio that comes from someone who has seen your work expertise and skills, and can vouch for the examples you give in your Educational Narrative. They are a powerful Supporting Document that can really cement your course challenge.

You can request Letters of Recommendation from a current or former employer, a customer, a co-worker, or some other person who can provide supporting evidence for your expertise in the topic area of the course you're challenging. The letters need not be formalized or on official letterhead, if those are a barrier to you getting them. We've had students use emails as letters of recommendation, and that is fine.

If you will be using Letters of Recommendation, request them as far in advance as you can. Remember, the Credit for Prior Learning

process (and the whole concept of Prior Learning) can be confusing for people, so spend some time briefly explaining what the letter is for when you request it.

Usually you'll need to include the following in your request for a letter:

- A greeting and an explanation of why you are asking this person to write you a letter
- A brief description of your participation in the Prior Learning course, including a brief explanation of what it is
- An outline of what the person's letter should include, such as:
    - A statement about their relationship to you,
    - A statement about the time period of your relationship,
    - A statement about the duties you performed
    - An evaluation of your level of performance
    - Any other comments that will support your claims
- An up-to-date résumé or any updates on your experience

Writing Procedural Documents

Another great method of generating Supporting Documentation is to write your own short documents that display the fine-grain details of your day-to-day expertise as you practice it. There may be parts of your job that are too mundane to use in the Educational Narrative, for example, but would function wonderfully as a concise Supporting Document.

For example, perhaps you helped develop an emergency exit plan for your building in the event of a fire. Not all that exciting to write about in your Narrative, perhaps, but if you wrote up a brief paragraph about this plan you helped devise, and included a photo or diagram of the plan, that would be an excellent Supporting Document for BAS 425, Creating a Culture of Safety.

But this is just one possibility. Any work you've done which you

can describe in detail and show your expertise in the Course Objectives, can become a Supporting Document (if an official certificate or other documentation isn't available).

Some other possibilities for writing your own procedural documents might include the items listed below, but there are many more possibilities. This is only the beginning of what you can generate!

Type up procedures you and your work team follow. These can be brief, even in outline form, but allow them to show the detailed steps you follow in a professional capacity. Procedural documents might include:

- Client intake
- Team brainstorming
- Project Development and Management documents
- Evaluation of products or processes

Workplace Protocols. Are there specific guidelines you adhere to in your work capacity, or have done in the past? Write those steps up and include a brief explanation of which Course Objectives the protocol or guidelines address.

Manuals. Many times the manuals used by a business or organization are written by the people that work there, because there was not a manual and one needed to be written. Did you write up any training documents, manuals, procedures, recruiting and interviewing material, or other types of organizational documents? Include those (or, if you know these by heart but have never recorded them on paper, do it now! Include it in your portfolio and share it at work, too).

Safety Plans or other Planning Documents such as renovations, rearrangements, org charts, business forecasts, marketing development, etc.

Meeting Agendas. Show your leadership and teamwork by including agendas for meetings you've led or participated in as an active member. Include an interpretive paragraph at the top to

explain what Course Objectives you believe this document addresses, as well.

Workplace Photographs of idea boards, team meetings, whiteboard sessions, notes from business planning. These documents can give your reviewers a clear glimpse into your learning in the real world by showing the process of professional work.

Before and After photos of a project or innovation, with an explanation of the steps behind the change.

Write out the process you follow to encourage innovation or team building or other elements of a course you're challenging. This can be brief, like an outline or a lesson plan.

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24. Key Takeaways: Supporting Documentation

Key Takeaways

Many different kinds of documentation are acceptable for your ePortfolio.

The most effective documentation makes clear reference to Course Outcomes.

If you have little or no supporting documentation, that's okay because the ePortfolio components all work in concert.

Letters of Recommendation are very effective documentation, and can be generated if you don't have a lot of other documentation.

Ask for Letters of Recommendation as early as possible.

The best Prior Learning Portfolios link the Educational Narrative with the Supporting Documentation so that the two components are intertwined and strengthen each other.

PART V

CHAPTER 5: THE EDUCATIONAL NARRATIVE

Photo by You X Ventures on Unsplash

The most difficult part of the prior learning portfolio, the **Educational Narrative**, uses the essay form to display your experience in great detail, giving specific examples that demonstrate you have met the course learning objectives. It also demonstrates your knowledge by use of the terminology of the courses you're challenging, as well as your aptitude when discussing the course topics and outcomes.

Note that you are required to write a *separate* Educational Narrative for each course you're challenging. It's more work, yes, but

this component is crucial for communicating to your reviewers that you know the course material well.

Using specific examples, terminology, and Course Outcomes to frame your narrative for each individual course will make this component more convincing for your reviewers. (That said, there may be cases where you can reuse part of one course's Educational Narrative in a Narrative for another class, if the example speaks to Course Outcomes for both courses.)

This chapter will provide a guide through the writing process and revision, highlighting brainstorming activities to find powerful examples and demonstrating best practices to show evidence of learning to the course review committee.

Learning Objectives

- Understand the fundamental elements of a good Educational Narrative
- Frame the Educational Narrative in terms of context and audience
- Explore experiences to find vivid examples linking to course learning outcomes
- Draft and revise examples to provide sufficient detail addressing course outcomes
- Begin developing your educational statement/narrative.

25. The Story of Your Learning

This component has a strategic name. The Educational Narrative is asking for a very specific thing from you so that your reviewers can understand the learning you've done and relate it to the course you're challenging.

What is that thing it's asking for?

A *story*. Several stories, actually.

The word Narrative means "story," of course, so this component is asking you to tell the story of your learning. To tell that story, you'll need to have several examples that clearly demonstrate your expertise with the course's subject matter. And these examples need to be *specific*. Here's why:

In creative writing, teachers often say that the universe is in the specific. The more detailed the description, the better the reader can visualize the characters and scene. Take, for example, this line:

> We got dressed up and went to the concert.

Who are they? What'd they wear? How old were they? What kind of concert was it? Who was playing? None of that is apparent, so every reader sees something different.

But what if that line was written like:

> We teased our hair to the ceilings, doused it in White Rain, snapped on spandex and pleather. We tore out of the suburbs, left a mile-long streak of rubber on our way to go see Twisted Sister at CBGB's.

Now can you see it? From the first description, it could've also easily been a black-tie evening at the Philharmonic, or a 7th Grade Band Concert, or... It's the specifics that make the example come alive.

That's your task in the Educational Narrative.

Though, of course, you'll be writing about professional learning

matters and not an 80s hair band (unless you are drawing on your experiential learning from when you were a member of an 80s hair band…which would be awesome).

Some ways of thinking about the narrative that will help you get started:

- Remember Chapter 1 and all the learning theories we studied (Kolb, Bloom, Emotional Intelligence, Creativity, et. al.). Your answers will use Kolb and Bloom extensively to help frame your examples. More on this in an upcoming section of this chapter.
- Recall what kind of learner you most related to within Kolb's cycle, and think about how that might affect the kind of story you tell about your learning through experience. Use that to your advantage in your storytelling!
- Remember that the task is to exhibit college-level learning. Concentrate on those 4 upper levels of Bloom's Taxonomy and think of examples that exhibit those cognitive domains (apply, analyze, evaluate, create).
- Think about a time when you had to deal with a problem in your work or other experience. How'd you handle it?
- What's something you do every day that seems common to you but would be too complicated to explain to others?
- What's an accomplishment that you're proud of from work or other experience?
- What is one of the hardest parts of your job? What responsibilities do you have because of your expertise?
- Think of a time when others were struggling with some problem but you came up with an easy solution (easy to you, at least). How'd you have that easy solution so readily?

26. Organizing and Planning Your Narrative

The Educational Narrative has an important role to articulate and provide evidence to support the case you are making about your learning. As we just read, using very specific examples from your life will illuminate and fill in details and give your reviewers a clear picture of your experience.

The three sections of your portfolio are separate but very intertwined. The Educational Narrative complements both the PLA Resume and the Supporting Documentation by adding to the overview they create. The Educational Narrative shows you in action, going through the experiential cycle to learn, and applying that learning to gain expertise

In this section we will begin planning and outlining your Narrative, and you will be using the work you've done on the PLA resume and Supporting Documentation to help shape your outline. You will also refer to specific documents in your Narrative as a way to intertwine the two sections.

Examples or Case Studies Covering the Course Objectives

An essential aspect of a successful narrative section is your description of your theoretical knowledge and applied learning. The person who reads your narrative needs explicit proof of the *learning*. Your narrative should provide examples, stories, and plenty of detail.

The best way to give this proof of learning is to focus your Narrative around the Course Objectives of the class or classes you're

challenging. Each grouping of outcomes can act as a topic or area you need to be sure to address in your writing. For each outcome, you will list any of your experiential knowledge, theoretical understanding, or applied learning that is relevant to it.

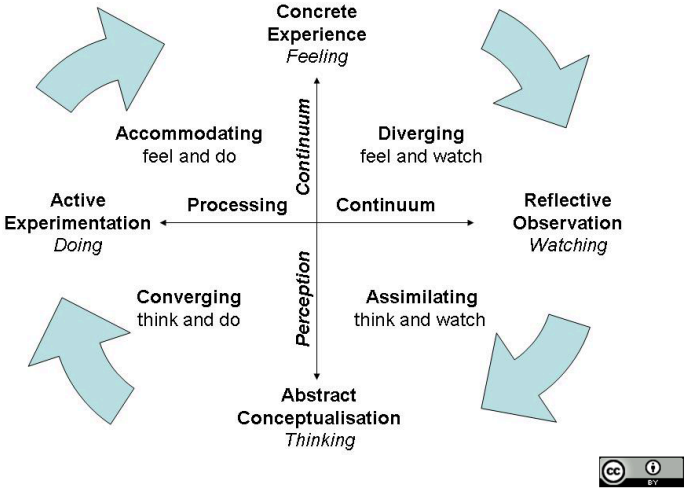
You have started this work already by writing your PLA resume and gathering Supporting Documentation. Use what you have produced already to create a narrative that will support your challenge. Using these other portfolio components as a starting point can be a great way to begin writing your Educational Narrative. Reread those and think of as many examples as you can to substantiate your claims that you've already learned everything the course teaches, and relate your documentation to the examples.

As you work with the examples, you'll need to fill in subtopics, specific stories or situations, and documentation within each major topic. We will look more closely at this in an upcoming section of this textbook, and the course will lead you through a writing exercise on this.

Organization Using Kolb and Bloom

Many Prior Learning Portfolios at other institutions use one long Educational Narrative to respond to all of the Course Objectives. We have used this model in the past, as well.

However, we now ask Prior Learning students to write a series of shorter, more focused Narratives responding to a set of questions that target the Course Objectives. We believe this approach makes for a more effective and thorough presentation of your learning, allowing you to focus on digging into specific examples and applying terminology easily.



"Kolb's Learning Styles" 2017 by Cynthia D'Costa
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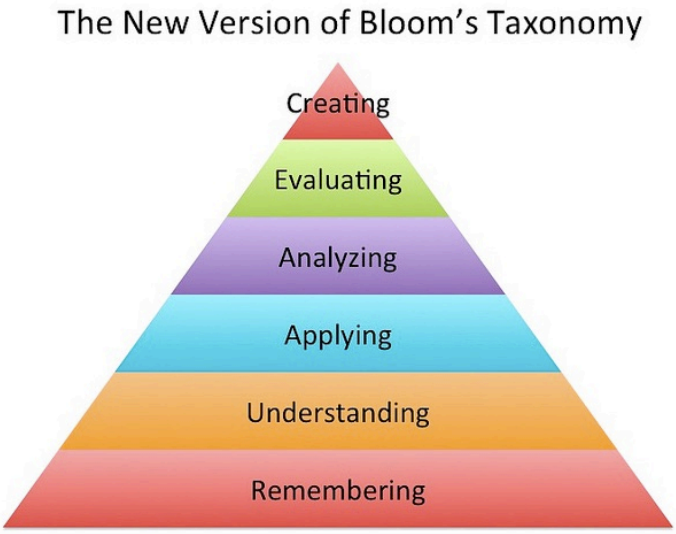
To guide you through writing this series of shorter, focused essays for your Narrative, we will be asking you to respond to a series of questions that correspond to the class's Course Objectives. In some questions you will be asked to frame your learning with **Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle**, leading your reviewer through each of the four stages to show how you achieved your learning and gained your knowledge of the course subject matter.



Your Narrative answers will also need to exhibit college-level learning, so you should keep **Bloom's Taxonomy** in mind and make sure you're using verbs and terminology in those four highest-level cognitive domains: Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating, and Creating.

Refer back to Chapter 1 to reengage with Kolb's Learning Cycle and Bloom's Taxonomy. We will cover this writing approach further in an upcoming chapter.

Educational Narrative Response Length

You might ask: How long should my narrative be? You have a lifetime of experience to somehow cram into a Prior Learning Portfolio. How do you fit it all in?

The best approach is to *not* try to fit it all in. Instead, choose the most powerful, clear examples you can that illuminate your experience and speak to the Course Objectives most clearly. Make

sure your answers are relevant and pertinent to the question. Your job is not to tell your whole life story, nor tell everything you've learned. Instead, focus on telling your reviewer how you already learned in the real world everything the class would've taught you. You don't want to overwhelm your reviewer with too much information.

Therefore we generally aim for answers to each question to within the range of 500-1000 words. So the total word count for all your questions for one course might be 1500-3000 words or more, depending on the number of questions. However, there is no definite number of words or pages required for an effective narrative; the length depends primarily on the subject matter and on the extent of your own learning.

Keep in mind that you are asking to "test" out of a semester-long course, and thus your rationale for doing this and its proof should be substantial. You need to be sure that your narrative addresses all relevant course objectives for each of the courses in your portfolio.

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27. Writing with the Kolb and Bloom Models

As noted earlier, some of the Narrative questions will ask you to use Kolb's Cycle to lead your reviewer through your experiential learning. These questions will be asking you to show metacognition and will lead you to display the learning you've achieved, which is one of the requirements for receiving credit for prior learning.

In addition, Narrative questions will also ask you to use Bloom's Taxonomy to describe your learning. This is designed to ensure that you are displaying college-level learning, which is another requirement for receiving credit for prior learning.

Kolb's Cycle will help you write because it forms a natural outline and leads you directly into the next step that should be covered. When you write with Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, go ahead and be clear you're using it. **Put the terminology right into your answer**, like, "I began learning about leadership in the Abstract Conceptualization phase–I was young and thought leaders should be stern and yell at their workers, and I imagined all the respect they would give me. My first year on the job, I did this every day. For example…"

That said, there are a few key things to keep in mind as you write using the Kolb and Bloom models.

First, carefully choose your entry point into Kolb's Cycle. Remember that you can enter the cycle anywhere. It might be your most natural approach, but context might have made you enter in another area.

Also remember that your example that you're describing in Kolb's cycle could be something that took place in one day, or one month, or over the course of several years. The span of time in Kolb's Learning Cycle can be any length–you can go through the cycle in a day, or take a year or more to go through it. Many times,

with experiential learning like we are covering with our course challenges, Kolb's Cycle covers larger periods of time.

Be thorough and take your time. In Chapter 1, we wrote some examples about building a birdhouse (which weren't college-level learning, either). Those were also too short and cursory. Your writing should be in more detail and greater depth, taking longer and moving meticulously in each stage. One of Kolb's stages could take multiple paragraphs across a whole page to cover, possibly, because your reviewers want to see your expertise in action, and the Narrative is where you get to show that.

As you write each stage, make use of the terminology from the course you're challenging. This will display your natural familiarity with the course topic. Use the Course Objectives, listed in Chapter 2, to find terminology, but feel free to go further.

Also use terminology from your areas of expertise, remembering to explain anything highly technical in layman's terms.

Keep Bloom in mind as you write your way through Kolb's cycle. As you're describing your learning, phrase your learning in terms of the higher levels on his Taxonomy so that you're showing that higher-order thinking your reviewer wants to see, in order to equate your learning with these college-level classes.

After fully describing one Kolb stage and your learning in that stage, you will move to the next stage of the cycle. What did you learn or what question did you develop in order to move to the next level? That's the learning process, which you can show to your reviewer.

Even if it's boring to you, or if it feels like bragging, or like it's too elementary to explain, it probably isn't. Remember, you are intimately familiar with your own life, but your reviewer doesn't know anything about you. You have to present yourself fully and in great detail, so dig deep and give all the details you can.

Your reviewer knows you're writing in order to challenge a course and petition for credit, so while it may feel like bragging or self-promotion, it's not. We know why you're writing this, and we're looking for that in the writing. This is no time to be humble.

28. Methods for Writing Specific Examples

The purpose of the learning narrative is for you to tell the story of your learning by using specific examples, as we covered in the previous section. But let's break that down just a little further.

There are two kinds of specific examples that work well in the Educational Narrative, as well as a way to think about phrasing your examples that links it strongly to the Course Outcomes:

Specific Instances

First, is the "one time" or "one day" example, in which you recall a specific day or incident, and use that to display your ability to implement the Course Outcomes. This is a specific segment of time–the day you had to fire your friend for inethical behavior, or the day you had to pull all your coworkers together in a snowstorm to address and build team unity over a disagreement; or the time you facilitated between a disgrunted client and coworker who had missed a deadline.

Generalized Applied Knowledge

The other example is the "many times" example. In this, the volume of your experience speaks more clearly to the Course Outcomes. In other words, the pattern of your actions exhibits your learning better than a specific moment in time. For example, if you've led your office through three external audits, you might be able to say that each time you divided up preparation responsibilities, reviewed

reports, led coworkers to review receipts, prepared portfolios, etc. This is weeks or months of work, so we don't need the daily play-by-play; the larger overview serves as a specific example by outlining the process and including the details and steps involved.

A strong Educational Narrative will ideally use both kinds of examples

Strategic Use of Terminology

As you write the above kinds of examples, think carefully about the words you're choosing to describe your experiences. Use terminology from the Course Outcomes to clearly link your prior learning to the class. You may want to research or browse the textbooks used in the class to get a feel for a few phrases or ways of presenting ideas, to show that you're able to both talk the talk and walk the walk.

Remember and Utilize Learning Theories

Recall which learning theory you most identified with back in Chapter 1. Review those theories and think about how they might apply to the experiences you brainstorm which match course objectives. How might your understanding of those learning theories help you tell your story and show your learning? Would they be beneficial to show the stages of your learning in your examples/case studies in your Educational Narrative?

29. Defining College-Level Learning

This list, repeated from Chapter 1, is repeated here to help you remember these methods for generating and writing examples that exemplify college-level learning.

Tips for Defining College-Level Learning from Experience

Use the following tips in creating your portfolio to display learning at the 400-level.

1. Refer to Kolb's Learning Cycle often as you write and compile your portfolio. Analyze not only what you have learned, but also how you learned it, through this cycle.
2. Refer also to the upper four levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. Exhibit your learning in terms of these higher-level cognitive domains, and use the terminology of these levels as you describe your learning. The words in the third column may come in handy as verbs to use when describing your learning.
3. Identify the intermediate stages involved each step of the process. This will give a fuller picture of the process as well as your understanding of it.
4. Personalize your knowledge and experiences. For example, if you are talking about your knowledge of the criminal justice system, also tell about the people you interacted with everyday. What issues did they introduce, and how were these issues solved?
5. Critique your experience. List and describe characteristics of

well-run/poorly-run programs; good/ineffective leaders, and so on. Use real-life examples. Illustrate your learning with your experience.

6. Discuss patterns you observe in working with people. What commonalities and differences have you observed or experienced with your particular population: customers, students, employees, parents, and so on? How do you use your learning to predict needs and solutions?
7. Explain how to predict success or failure in your area of expertise. Discuss risk management and how to problem-solve with real situations from your experience.
8. Describe your competition. Describe your work culture and that of your competitors. How do you move through the communication pathways?
9. Explain how you run your own business or how you observe the company you work for being managed.
10. Describe your decision making process.
11. Demonstrate your critical-thinking and analytical skills. Provide analysis of the critical aspects in the narrative. Remember that PLA is about reflecting on and analyzing learning, not merely recounting details.
12. Provide a knowledge base. What body of knowledge do you work from every day? Has the level of knowledge changed over time? What theoretical concepts underlie your experience?

Adaptations

30. Key Takeaways: The Educational Narrative

Key Takeaways

- The Educational Narrative is the most difficult part of the PLA Portfolio to generate. It takes lots of writing, including several drafts while incorporating feedback.
- Specific examples are the most powerful way to display your mastery of the Course Outcomes.
- Using terminology from the course displays expertise in the course material
- The Course Outcomes should guide you in choosing your specific examples. Your examples should reflect your learning of those Course Outcomes.
- Educational Narratives are divided into a series of questions that may each be 500-1000 words, but may be longer depending on your examples.
- Two effective kinds of examples are the Specific Example ("one day" or "one time") and the Generalized Applied Knowledge Example ("many times/each time").