

Experiential Learning Portfolio Tutorial

Your work, military, volunteer, education, training, and other life experiences have probably taught you many valuable skills and knowledge along the way. You may be able to receive college credit at Northwood Tech for some of these experiences. An experiential learning portfolio is one way to present the documentation showing how your experiences align with the skills and knowledge requirements of courses at Northwood Tech.

An experiential learning portfolio consists of written explanations that demonstrate mastery of targeted competencies in a subject matter area supported by documentation such as letters, certificates, and work samples that verify learning. Experiential learning portfolios may be completed for multiple courses, but a separate portfolio must be developed and processed for each course.

Creating a portfolio may seem like a lot of work, but it may save you time and money in completing your degree if you already have the skills and knowledge taught in the course. The process of creating a portfolio may also build your confidence by revealing how much you already know and can do. This tutorial will step you through the process of completing a portfolio.

Portfolio Completion Checklist

This checklist is a summary of the steps to completing your portfolio and having it assessed for credit. More information on each step is provided in the tutorial below.

- _____ 1. Review the portfolio template for the course for which you are developing the portfolio.
- _____ 2. Meet with the Academic Dean or instructor who teaches this course. This may be required prior to completing some portfolios, and is highly recommended for all.
- _____ 3. Complete the Student Contact Information.
- _____ 4. Write a brief introduction.
- _____ 5. Complete the “Describe your learning and experience with this competency” for each competency.
- _____ 6. Gather the required artifacts and any suggested artifacts noted for each competency.
- _____ 7. Write a conclusion.
- _____ 8. Complete the “Learning Source Table: identifying the Learning Source, Supervisor, Start-End Date, Total Hours, and Related Competencies.
- _____ 9. Organize the required/suggested artifacts to align with the related competencies and attach them to the end of the portfolio.
- _____ 10. Write a conclusion.
- _____ 11. Proofread the portfolio.
- _____ 12. Submit your portfolio and pay the processing fee. (A \$90 per credit non-refundable processing fee is required at the time you submit your portfolio to begin the review process.)
- _____ 13. Receive notification of the credit awarded.

Review Experiential Learning Portfolio

All courses available for credit for prior learning through portfolio are listed on the Northwood Tech Credit for Prior Learning web site.

Review the content of the template to make sure you have the knowledge and skills required in the course.

Competencies – are the main concepts of the course. Are you familiar with the concepts?

Criteria – describe what the instructor looks for when assessing the competency to determine if mastery has been achieved. Can you demonstrate them?

Learning Objectives – are the subtopics of the competency that describe more detail on what will be taught. Are you familiar with the concepts?

Review the required and suggested artifacts for each competency. Do you have or can you create all of the required artifacts? Do you have or can you create any of the suggested artifacts?

Meet with the Academic Dean or Instructor Who Teaches the Course

If you feel you possess the skills and knowledge and can produce the needed artifacts after reviewing the course portfolio template, make an appointment to meet with the Academic Dean who oversees or Instructor who teaches the course. They will be able to clarify the expectations of the skills, knowledge, and artifacts required for a successful portfolio.

Start your Experiential Learning Portfolio Template

The portfolio template provides the information and structure needed to complete your portfolio. All of your work should be completed in the template in the designated areas, using the template font, font size, and formatting. When completed, you will submit your portfolio electronically.

Add the Student Contact Information on the top of the template.

Write a brief introduction. Briefly introduce yourself to the reviewer summarizing your experiences related to this course and your future goals.

Complete “Describe your learning and experience with this competency”

Consider all of the criteria and learning objectives for the competency. In the “Describe your learning and experience with this competency,” provide specific information about where, when, how much time, and what you did related to the criteria and learning objectives.

Kolb’s Model of Experiential Learning can provide a framework for relating your experience to the competency criteria and learning objectives by answering the following questions:

1. Describe your experience. What did you do? What actions did you take?
(Common verbs: worked, created, prepared, implemented, conducted, produced)
2. What did you notice and observe about the experience?
(Common verbs: observed, watched, noticed, saw, thought, discovered)
3. What did you conclude as a result of your experience?
(Common verbs: concluded, theorized, found, realized, deduced, learned)

4. What happened as a result of your experience and learning? How did you apply your learning to a future situation?
(Common verbs: used, updated, applied, tried, implemented, changed)

Answering the questions using the associated verbs will help you write a thorough narrative describing your learning and application of the learning from your experience.

It is also a best practice to mention any required/suggested artifacts within the “Describe your learning and experience with this competency.” For example, if a competency had “Required Artifact: Letter from Supervisor Documenting Process” and “Suggested Artifact: Photo of Widget” your narrative might include something like this:

While I worked at the XYZ Corporation, I had the opportunity to create the widgets as outlined in this competency. The letter from my supervisor at XYZ Corporation documents my efficiency with the process and the quality of my work. Also included is a picture of one of the widgets I created.

Gather Supporting Documentation

Gather all required and any suggested artifacts noted with each competency on the template to provide evidence of your mastery of the competency. If the artifacts are paper, you will need to scan them or take a digital picture to include them in the template.

You may also include additional artifacts that can help demonstrate your mastery of the competencies:

- Letters of verification from supervisors
- Certificates of completion from training
- Examples of work you have completed
- Photographs of products you have created
- Videos demonstrating your ability to do something

Contact current and past supervisors asking them to send a letter verifying your experience with the course competencies. Ask them to provide specific examples and verify the amount of time spent.

Organize Artifacts and Supporting Documents

Each artifact should be labeled to identify the competency and match the listed required or suggested artifact. For example, if competency 3 listed “Required Artifacts: Letter of Recommendation,” you should label your artifact “Competency 3: Letter of Recommendation.” All paper artifacts should be scanned to an electronic format and links should be provided to any video artifacts. Artifacts should be included at the end of your portfolio in order of the competencies they document.

Write a Conclusion

Briefly summarize how you have met the competencies.

Edit the Portfolio

Presentation is an important part of college-level work. Check your portfolio for the following:

- All words are spelled correctly. Especially note words that sound the same but have different spelling (its/it’s, there/their/they’re, to/too/two, etc.) and typos that are real words that won’t be caught by spell check.

- The writing in “Describe your learning and experience with this competency” includes complete sentences, proper grammar, and correct punctuation.
- The artifact titles match the competencies in which they are referenced.

Ask someone else to proofread it for you. Another set of eyes often catches things we miss ourselves.

Submit your Portfolio

When your portfolio is completed, it should be sent to the Credit for Prior Learning contact at the Northwood Tech campus nearest to you. Contact information is below. A \$90 non-refundable processing fee is required at the time you submit your portfolio to begin the review process.

Ashland: Roxanne Lusua Roxanne.Lusua@Northwoodtech.edu 715-685-3068

New Richmond: Sherry Rehnelt Sherry.Rehnelt@Northwoodtech.edu 715-752-8136

Rice Lake: LuAnn Cummings Luann.Cummings@Northwoodtech.edu 715-788-7137

Superior: Lesa Armstrong Lesarmstrong@Northwoodtech.edu 715-319-7288

Receive Notification of Credit Awarded

Your portfolio will usually be evaluated within two weeks during the academic year; reviews during the summer months may take longer. The dean and faculty will review your portfolio and determine if the learning you have documented meets the expectations of the learning of students who take the course. Students must score 80 percent (a “C” on the Northwood Tech grading scale) to receive credit for a course.

Once the review is complete, you will receive an e-mail notification regarding the outcome of the portfolio review from the academic dean. Submission of a portfolio does not guarantee that credit will be awarded. If credit is not awarded, the reviewers will provide feedback explaining how the documentation in the portfolio does not meet the expectations of mastery.

You have 6 weeks to appeal any academic decision. The Northwood Tech Student Handbook outlines the complete process to appeal.