

St. Petersburg College
Experiential Learning Program
Portfolio Preparation

PORTFOLIO PREPARATION

The following pages have been designed to illustrate steps in preparing a portfolio for the ELP process. Your folder must consist of informative narration in three categories:

- Section I: Rationale statement and SPC unofficial transcript
- Section II: Validation of prior learning statement
- Section III: Supporting Documentation

SECTION I

RATIONALE STATEMENT AND SPC UNOFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT

- 1) Insert your rationale statement, which describes your learning and how it relates to the major learning outcomes of the course.
- 2) Insert a copy of your SPC unofficial transcript, which you can obtain via MySPC.

SECTION II

VALIDATION OF PRIOR LEARNING FORM

Section II must reflect the information contained in the "Major Learning Outcomes" in the course outline.

COLUMN I – DESCRIPTION OF EXPERIENCES

Describe the learning experience.

Keep the description of the experience **separate** from the learning acquired.

Please indicate the following:

1. Where the learning took place
2. When and for how long the experience lasted
3. Job title
4. Job responsibilities
5. The number of people supervised, if any

6. Any seminars and workshops attended
7. Titles and authors of books and articles read
8. Any description that will help the assessor to better understand the circumstances of the learning

COLUMN II - LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

Your learning should be specified, defined and expressed as clearly as possible. It must specifically relate to the course content for which you are being assessed.

To relate prior learning to a specific course, refer to the course catalog description and particular learning objectives and outcomes. These may be obtained from the academic department for the course(s) you are pursuing. If necessary, a review of the particular text and syllabus used in the class may be necessary.

Remember that the primary criterion for award of credit is the demonstration that the prior learning is comparable to the learning outcomes of the course.

Since theoretical learning is often not at required levels despite impressive practical learning and since learning from experience is seldom identical to what is expected in a classroom, you may find you are strong in most of the major course outcomes, but weak in one or two others.

In this case, you should attempt to do some individualized study to develop learning in the weak areas. Any additional readings, essays, or projects you do should be described in the narrative, placing the products of your individualized study activity (i.e., annotation of chapters of a text you've read; essays; projects; etc.) in the documentation section.

The following are suggested "learning terms" you might utilize in the "learning from experience" section, to help differentiate your experience from your learning. (It may be helpful if you personalize your experience by using the word "I".)

COLUMN II (Continued)

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

I gained the insight

I developed the skill of

I was instrumental in my learning

I became aware of

I was required to learn

I was trained

I became acquainted with

I learned

I acquired knowledge

For example:

- * I learned to teach sign language to pre-school children.
- * I learned to organize a conference and use community resources as well as outside consultants.
- * I developed a sales marketing plan for XYZ Company that improved sales by 15%.
- * I learned the accounting system of a large department within ABC Company.
- * I became aware of the importance of non-judgmental acceptance in a counseling situation.
- * I was trained to build Web pages in Dreamweaver.

Remember to focus only on the course objectives of the class you are challenging and how they match your own learning.

Please refer to the sample "Validation of Prior Learning Statement" form which provides an overview of information for Columns I & II.

COLUMN III – DOCUMENTATION

Documentation is an extremely important component of your validation packet. This verifies the description of your learning. It should be referenced in the third column of the learning statement and it may be supplied in many forms, such as:

third-party validation letters	audio recordings
certificates	slides
commendations	videos, DVDs, etc.
newspaper articles	programs of performances
job descriptions	mementos
course outlines or syllabi	work samples
products	exhibits
computer programs	writing samples
photographs	awards
artwork	honors
speeches	licenses:
publications	pilot
journals and ledgers	broker
designs, etc.	real estate
examination reports	cosmetology
bills of sale	daycare, etc.
military records	
audiovisual presentations	

Of all the kinds of documentation just listed, the one used most often are letters written by people who can verify the student's learning. (These letters are usually stronger forms of documentation when presented in conjunction with other forms of documentation.) The key word is verification - not to be confused with recommendations!

Sample Rationale Statement

Since graduating from Emmans High School, Emmans, PA in June 1981, I have had considerable training and experience in clerical, administrative and sales positions. In the 20+ years that I have been in the work force, I have gained much knowledge with regard to business communications. Every job I have held has involved business communication of one form or another. Between 1986 and 1988, I attended many classes and seminars concerning salesmanship and sales techniques, all of which involved effective oral and written communication.

I have learned not only the importance of good grammar and sentence structure, but also the importance of brief, concise and appropriately worded communication. In other words, I have learned that although a memo, letter, etc. may be accurate, it does not necessarily represent good communication. Communication is the process of assessing the reader and the situation and composing the communication accordingly.

Having reviewed the curriculum outline for Business Communications, I feel confident that through my academic, business and personal life, I have learned more than the 80% minimum, which is required to satisfy this course. I believe that taking this course would prove to be repetition of much of the skills and knowledge that I have already attained. Therefore, based on my previous learning experience, I hope that you will see fit to grant credit to me for this course.

Name _____

Student # _____

Course # & Title _____

VALIDATION OF PRIOR LEARNING STATEMENT

COLUMN I

COLUMN II

COLUMN III

MLO*	Description of Experience What You Did	Learning from Experience What You Learned From What You Did	Documentation <u>Proof</u> You Did It
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Keep the description of the experience separate from the learning acquired * Indicate the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where the learning took place When and for how long the experience lasted Job title Job responsibilities Number of people supervised, if any Any seminars and workshops attended Titles and authors of books and articles read Any description that will help the assessor to better understand the circumstances of your learning 	<p style="text-align: center;">(Relationship of Your Prior Learning to Course Curriculum)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * To relate prior learning to a specific course, refer to the course catalog description and the particular learning objectives and outcomes. * The primary criteria for award of credit is the demonstration that the prior learning is comparable to the learning outcomes of the course. * It is suggested that "learning terms" be utilized in learning from experience section <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "I learned" "I acquired knowledge" "I developed the skill" * Focus only on the course objectives of the class being challenged and how these objectives match the student's learning. 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>DOCUMENTATION</u> VERIFIES THE LEARNING</p> <p>Types:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Third party letters of validation * Certificates * Newspaper articles * Commendations * Job descriptions * Products * Licenses <p style="text-align: center;">Documentation must be Authenticated.</p>

***MLO - Major Learning Outcomes**

VALIDATION OF PRIOR LEARNING STATEMENT

*MLO	COLUMN I Description of Experience	COLUMN II Learning from Experience	COLUMN III Documentation
1	<p>During the period of time between 1977 and 1979, I was a sales distributor for Community World Products. I attended many classes and seminars that dealt with salesmanship.</p>	<p>These classes and seminars were an excellent means of learning business communication. I learned not only about the different types of selling, but also about reading people. This gave me the ability to assess a person or persons and the business environment I was dealing with, so I would know what type of approach to take when communicating with individuals. Through the use of this knowledge I was able to improve my verbal and written communication skills, thus increasing my sales considerably.</p>	
2	<p>Hospital Central Services, Corp., Biomedical Division (This company serviced the electronic equipment in hospitals). As Administrative Assistant for this company, I was responsible for much of the communication with our client hospitals. I went to the hospitals, gathered necessary information and constructed the bid proposals and contracts for submission to the clients. I also acted as liaison between the manager of my office and hospital personnel.</p>	<p>In this position, I learned the importance of accuracy in written communication because many thousands of dollars were represented in the bids and contracts that I prepared; it was of the utmost importance that they be prepared in a clear and accurate manner. In addition, I learned how to write formal, persuasive letters. Since this was a competitive business, it was very important to "sell" the company and its services in the cover letter that accompanied the bid proposals.</p>	
1&2	<p>Cook Paint and Varnish Co. -- distributor of gel coat products -- At this company I placed written orders for supplies, communicated reports to the home office through teletypes, and dealt with salespersons and transportation companies through verbal and written communication. I was also in charge of billing and delinquent account notification.</p>	<p>In this job, I learned how to prepare written orders for supplies. I also learned how to assemble sales reports and graphs, which reflected the economic standing of our branch of the company. I gained even more insight into the different styles of communication that are necessary in dealing with different people. For example, my reports to the home office were formal and professional, while my dealings with the salespeople and transportation companies required a more friendly and informal tone. Delinquent account notification, on the other hand, required a combination of formal yet friendly communication.</p>	

***MLO - Major Learning Outcomes**

	COLUMN I	COLUMN II	COLUMN III
*MLO	Description of Experience	Learning from Experience	Documentation
2	Druid Hills Skilled Nursing Facility. Before becoming the bookkeeper for Druid Hills, I was the Admissions Coordinator.	This position taught me a great deal about effective business communication. Because of the sensitive and often difficult nature of my dealings with people through this position, I realized that compassion and understanding were the only feasible elements of communication at the time of admission. Much of the business information I was to convey was not being communicated effectively. I learned how to communicate effectively through the use of informative and instructional papers that I developed. This gave the resident and/or family members the chance to read and understand important information at a time when they were mentally and emotionally prepared to receive it.	
2	Upon being promoted to the position of Bookkeeper/Office Manager, it became my responsibility to interview and hire other office employees. I also assisted the Administrator with employee performance evaluations.	I learned how to develop and place effective employment advertisements in the classified ads, and to develop questionnaires that were appropriate for the advertised positions. The administrator also taught me how to conduct effective performance evaluations. I became aware of the importance of stressing employees' strengths, and conveying weaknesses and their possible solutions constructively.	
2	J. A. Sterner Painting, Inc. - As Secretary/Treasurer of my husband's painting company, I am always using my business communication skills in dealing with customers, suppliers, and government agencies.	Through the start-up of my husband's company, I learned the importance of complete, concise and persistent communication when dealing with government agencies. Through my own error, we had a situation that needed to be straightened out with the IRS. After many phone conversations and some brief notes, document "A" finally achieved the desired results. I also learned more about the importance of effective communication in advertising. When my husband was attempting to expand his client base, I wrote introductory letters and sent them to local interior decorators. This was quite successful.	A
2	Marie Powell Real Estate School - 60 hour licensing course for real estate sales.	Through the 60 hour real estate sales course and subsequent classes and seminars, I learned about effective presentation in advertising. I learned about key words and their placement in order to attract the readers' attention. I was also educated about effective written communication for making contact with individuals, businesses and the general public.	B C D
			E

*MLO - Major Learning Outcomes

	COLUMN I	COLUMN II	COLUMN III
*MLO	Description of Experience	Learning from Experience	Documentation
1	<p>St. Petersburg College -- Admissions, Records and Registration -- In this position, I had constant contact with students, faculty and staff. I developed forms for disseminating important information to the appropriate departments and personnel. I handled many customer service situations through written communication to the customers. This involved answering inquiries, communicating requested information, and handling problem situations.</p> <p>I was also in charge of International Student admissions, which required much long-distance written communication.</p>	<p>Through my dealings with individuals and governments in other countries, I learned a great deal about overcoming language barriers. I realized that, when communicating with a party who had a limited understanding of the English language, it was very important to keep correspondence short and simple. I also became aware of the need to use only standard vocabulary words. Phrases that made inferences through nuance created misunderstandings. Because these people were coming to live in a different country for an extended period of time, it was imperative that information was conveyed in a manner that was complete, accurate, and easy to understand.</p>	F
1	<p>Total Quality Management (TQM) Workshop -- While employed at SPC, I attended a 30 hour TQM workshop.</p>	<p>In this workshop, I learned even more about business communication. And, although this workshop contained 10 separate units (one of them was Communications), business communication played a key roll in most of the subject areas.</p>	G

***MLO - Major Learning Outcomes**

THIRD PARTY LETTER INFORMATION:

A. General guidelines:

As you acquire verification letters, keep in mind the following guidelines:

1. The person preparing the statement should have observed you directly.
2. One person may verify more than one of your experiences. The statement should, however, comment directly and clearly on each experience.
3. The letter should describe the learning experience and identify the college-level competencies acquired. The letter should also address the quality as well as the quantity of the competencies.
4. The person writing the letter of verification should identify his or her relationship to you (supervisor, peer, subordinate) as well as his or her qualifications for commenting on your experience.
5. The letter should be written on the official letterhead of the company, organization, or institution with which the author is associated.
6. The letter must be signed, and notarized, if possible.

The writer who adheres to such an outline should produce an acceptable letter for your portfolio.

Since most people have never written the special kind of letter you want as your documentation, **you must explain your needs very carefully**. The letter and background information on the following pages are designed as a guide, which you may wish to use as you contact the people knowledgeable about your learning.

The **examples on the following page** illustrate a letter requesting verification, a useful verification letter, and an unacceptable letter of recommendation which tells the evaluator nothing about your level of knowledge.

SAMPLE LETTER STUDENT WRITES REQUESTING A LETTER:

Dear _____:

As a St. Petersburg College student majoring in _____, I am writing to request that you write a verifying letter of my experience with your organization.

As you may know, St. Petersburg College has a stringent process for evaluating and then granting degree credit for prior learning gained through a variety of experiences. To receive credit, I am asked to describe my learning and provide verification that such learning has taken place. Evaluation is ultimately the task of faculty persons who are experts in my area(s) of competency.

The letter which I would like you to write is more than a traditional letter of recommendation. This letter should:

1. specify the period of time I worked under your supervision;
2. describe the particular duties that I was required to perform;
3. describe the learning involved in performing these tasks;
4. evaluate my general level of performance.

This letter is a difficult one to write and, accordingly, I am enclosing background information about my work for you and certain other information which may be helpful to you in writing it. Since the letter may be considered in my evaluation for academic credit, the contents will be carefully scrutinized.

If you have any questions about this letter or would like any further information, please call me at _____. I would greatly appreciate it if you would send this to me by _____. It should be directed to St. Petersburg College, To Whom It May Concern, although it should be mailed directly to me. I wish to express my thanks for your support and assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

Darren Chapman

SAMPLE VERIFICATION LETTER

April 20, 2002

St. Petersburg College
6605 Fifth Avenue N.
St. Petersburg, Florida 33710

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is to verify that _____ was employed by the XYZ Company, St. Petersburg, Florida, from February 1996 through March 1998.

While employed at the St. Petersburg, Florida, plant, _____ held positions of Programmer, Programmer Analyst, and Project Coordinator. As a programmer, _____'s duties were to maintain existing programs, to write Visual Basic programs of an elementary nature, and eventually to work in the application programming area, where he developed sufficient skill in Visual Basic language to analyze, develop, code, and document major systems.

As a programmer analyst, _____ was required to work directly with department heads and members of the user departments to design and develop new programming systems. This led to his appointment as project coordinator for several major projects, two of which were vital to the company. _____, within a minimum length of time and with minimal supervision, became a key employee in our MIS department.

Finally, let me add my personal assessment. _____ has addressed all tasks and assignments with intelligence and confidence, and has kept the goals and objectives in the proper perspective. His skills have demonstrated that he has the knowledge and ability to accomplish any task associated with a major data processing facility.

Regards,

M. E. Stewart
Data Processing Manager

MES/sh

cc: _____, XYZ Company
St. Petersburg, Florida

EXAMPLE
"RECOMMENDATION LETTER" - NOT ACCEPTABLE AS DOCUMENTATION

February 18, 2009

St. Petersburg College
2465 Drew Street
Clearwater, Fl 34625

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to write a letter on behalf of Mrs. Susan Cranford, a woman whom I have known for many years as a trusted and efficient employee.

Susan has always been active, alert, and eager to perform the required tasks of her job. Moreover, she has repeatedly taken on extra responsibilities and handled this extra pressure with ease.

To summarize, Susan has been an invaluable aid to this company. It is her kind of consistent, dedication and effort that makes our free enterprise system a success.

Sincerely,

Betty Lawson, Manager
Data Processing Division

BL/bbw

This is a letter of recommendation addressing Susan's job attitude, character and outstanding efficiency. It **does not verify** Susan's specific knowledge or expertise.

GENERAL REMINDERS

PLEASE:

- A. Type your material.
- B. Keep a copy of all documentation submitted for ELP. Unless otherwise specified, submit your documentation to the academic department in a three ring folder with front and back pockets.
- C. Use **title pages** to separate the three sections:

Section I:

- * Rationale Statement and Academic Record

Section II:

- * Validation of Prior Learning Statement

Section III:

- * Documentation - Bring in your **ORIGINALS** when you submit your portfolio(s), and the academic department will certify their authenticity and return them to you. Letters must be on company stationary.

REMEMBER:

- * Some courses may not be available for assessment during summer terms.
- * Program directors in the Associate in Science and Certificate programs **may** limit credit earned through experiential learning to one-half (50%) of the core courses and/or courses within the major.
- * "**Last Minute**" assessments are **NOT** possible so plan your work accordingly.

Appreciation is extended to Brenda Krueger and Carolyn Mann from Sinclair Community College, Dayton, Ohio, for permission to utilize their materials.

St. Petersburg College is dedicated to the concept of equal opportunity. The college will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, or against any qualified individual with disabilities, in its employment practices or in the admission and treatment of students. Recognizing that sexual harassment constitutes discrimination on the basis of sex and violates this rule, the college will not tolerate such conduct. Should you experience such behavior, please contact the director of EA/EO at 727-341-3261; by mail at P.O. Box 13489, St. Petersburg, FL33733-3489; or by e-mail at eaao_director@spcollege.edu.