PORTFOLIO HANDBOOK

Student Guide for Preparing a Portfolio of Prior Learning

ACL301 Perspectives on Prior Learning

Credit for Prior Learning at National Louis University
850 Warrenville Road, Lisle, IL 60532-1356
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As a National Louis University student, you commit to NLU’s Policy on Academic Honesty. The Policy can be found in the Student Guidebook and in the NLU Catalog.


In addition, writing resources are available on the NLU Learning Support website at https://libguides.nl.edu/apastyle.
Overview

The American Council on Education (ACE) has acknowledged, “That many adult learners can demonstrate college-level knowledge and competencies. Such learning—gained from experiences outside postsecondary education—often merits academic credit. Credit by Prior Learning (CPL) provides a range of options from recognition of military and workforce training to national examinations and portfolio development. With more options comes the increased likelihood for greater numbers of learners to complete credentials.”

(http://www.acenet.edu/higher-education/topics/Pages/Prior-Learning-Assessments.aspx).

CAEL – the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning has determined that, “When people receive college credit for what they know from life and work experience, they learn the value of their experience, which gives them confidence to complete their degrees.”

http://www.cael.org

The credit for prior learning process at NLU assists in fulfilling the ACE and CAEL exhortation for postsecondary institutions to "assess experiential learning* as part of their credentialing function." ¹

In the ACL301 course, students' learning derived from academic, personal and professional experiences since high school is assessed through the development of an electronic portfolio of prior learning. Students will complete in class the following:

1: Analytical Résumé
2: Autobiography
3: Academic Credit – Experiential Essays and Licenses/Certifications

The completed portfolio will first be reviewed by the portfolio instructor and then submitted to the Prior Learning office for assessment. A passing grade for the course is required in order for the portfolio to be assessed. Students will be notified of credit recommendations when the essay assessments are completed. The steps that are listed on pages 8-10 detail the assessment procedures. In special cases where the portfolio
components are not completed, the student will be notified by the Prior Learning Assessment office about what needs to be corrected and/or completed.

Students should be aware that the extensive work involved in portfolio assessment can require an extended period of time. Average essay evaluation time is 1-2 weeks.

*See Appendix A-Definition of Terms for a further explanation of prior and experiential learning.
Application for Portfolio Assessment

An Application for Portfolio Assessment for the current academic year must be completed and signed by the student and forwarded to the instructor prior to the end of class. Electronic signatures are preferred but a typed signature is also accepted. The portfolio development course instructor must also sign the application after reviewing the portfolio and assigning a grade for the course. All portfolios must meet the minimum course requirements prior to submission to the Prior Learning Assessment Center. Portfolios without completed and signed applications will not be assessed for academic credit.

The signed Application for Portfolio Assessment indicates agreement to abide by all provisions of the Portfolio Handbook.

A total of 180 quarter hours of academic credit are required for graduation from National Louis University. Students may earn a maximum of 60 quarter hours of credit through the prior learning assessment process (i.e., portfolio).

If the total number of credits from course work and portfolio does not equal at least 180 quarter hours, additional credits will need to be earned. This may be done through credit by examination (i.e., DANTES and/or CLEP) or by taking further coursework.

***For students in the State of Florida:

The Florida State Board of Independent Colleges and Universities has established a maximum limit on portfolio credit that may be counted toward a bachelor=s degree in that state. This limit is 25 percent of the total credit hours required for graduation. Therefore, no more than 45 quarter hours of credit earned by portfolio may be applied toward the degree. This limit on portfolio credit applies only to Florida students.
Portfolio Assessment Fees

**Learning Experience Essay Evaluation Fee** – All students are required to write **TWO** experiential essays in order to pass the class. Once the final essays have been submitted and class has ended, the essays will be forwarded to faculty content experts for review. The first essay is reviewed at no cost to the student. The second essay reviewed is billed at **$400.** Students who have completed the ACL301 class have one full year to write and submit additional essays for academic review. Each additional essay a student submits will also be billed at **$400.** Essays that are reviewed, but not awarded credit will be given the opportunity to write **ONE** revision. **All revisions must be updated and submitted for review within 90 days after being notified of the request for a revision. Revisions not submitted within the 90 days will not be reviewed.**

**Billing of Fees** - Students will be billed monthly for any essay fees accrued. Payment is due upon receipt of billing.

- These fees are applicable until the assigned portfolio completion date for the student's class group. After this completion date, the current assessment fees will apply.

**Portfolio – continuation of essay writing**

Students may continue to write new additional essays up to one year after they have completed their ACL301 course. All additional essays submitted following class will be billed **$400.**

Other options for earning additional credit include course work, Credit by Examination (CLEP, DANTES and NYU Language Proficiency Exams), and Credit by Licenses/Certifications.
The Evaluation Process

The following overview provides an understanding of the steps involved in the essay evaluation process.

1. **Portfolio final sections submitted electronically to the instructor**

   The instructor reviews the portfolio requirements for quality and completeness. This review is completely separate from the evaluation of content for credit. If one or more portfolio requirements are not acceptable, the instructor will not assign a passing grade. A passing grade is required prior to Step 2.

2. **Portfolio essays submitted electronically to Prior Learning Assessment**

   Essays, documentation/validation and petition sheets are saved in the course assignment boxes, then sent for academic review to faculty content experts, along with the course rubric. Reviews are returned within 2 weeks. If credit is not awarded, students may be able to revise the essay ONCE per the evaluator’s recommendation. All revisions must be completed within 90 days of receiving the recommendation for a revision.

3. **Approved Licenses/Certifications**

   Approved Licenses/Certifications are evaluated in Prior Learning Assessment. The student will be notified by an Assessment Counselor of any credit recommendations.

4. **Learning Experience Essays**

   Assessment Counselors read the learning experience essays. The petition sheets are checked for course selection and essay title, and the overview paragraph is reviewed. **Learning experience essays must be on appropriate topics, eligible for college credit, typed and double-spaced with one-inch margins.** Assessment
Counselors also check appropriateness of documentation, along with essay format and length; in some cases, students may be asked to expand essays.

All Learning Experiential essays must demonstrate that learning outcomes have been acquired, equivalent to college-level courses. Competencies learned and acquired must be considered proficient in order to receive credit.

5. **Faculty evaluation of learning experience essays**

Learning experience essays that meet the class standards are electronically transmitted to the appropriate faculty evaluators. An evaluator reviews the essays and may award the credit requested, or deny credit and request a revision. Essays that describe only what the student has done or those that discuss only concepts do not meet the criteria for college credit. In order to receive credit, the essays must integrate experiences and concepts. If credit is not awarded, the evaluators explain the additional work requested or the basis for the denial of credit. Essays may be rewritten and resubmitted for evaluation one time.

6. **Notification to student of credit recommendations for learning experience essays**

The average essay evaluation time is 1-2 weeks.

Once learning experience essays are reviewed and returned electronically to Prior Learning Assessment any awarded credit is immediately applied to the student’s transcript. Students can go into the NLU portal and check their unofficial transcripts for any awarded credit. If an essay is not awarded credit, then an email is sent to the student with comments and suggestions from the evaluators with reference to what is necessary to revise the essay. The email notification is the sent within 24 hours of the PLA office receiving the faculty evaluations.
7. **Rewrites or additions to the portfolio**

All additional (new) essays must be submitted by the end of the assigned portfolio year. All revised essays must be submitted within 90 days of receiving the recommendation to revise.

If additional credit is needed, all students may develop new essays or submit licenses or certification gained that are on the approved list. If an essay is submitted for a revision, a new petition sheet must be included and revisions should follow the specific instructions of the evaluators. It is helpful to check with an Assessment Counselor to verify credits and to discuss additional submissions. Rewrites should be sent electronically to Prior Learning Assessment for processing.

8. **College Level Writing**

Essays that meet the “proficient” score to receive credit yet they do not necessarily qualify as “college-level writing”, may be subject to corrections made before credit is awarded to the transcript. To avoid such a situation, please make sure all work is proofread and error-free prior to submitting.

9. **Review process**

Portfolio credit recommendations may be reviewed by the Prior Learning Assessment Advisory Committee by request of Prior Learning Assessment or a student (see Appendix E - Appeals Procedures.)
RÉSUMÉ

The résumé is an outline of personal, educational, military and employment background. It serves as an introduction to the rest of the portfolio and is used as an overview of the student's professional background including the knowledge, skills, competencies, and training gained.

The résumé must be two pages’ maximum in length and prepared in an analytical format (see description below).

Résumé Writing

There is no "correct" format for a résumé. The three most common types are the chronological résumé, the functional résumé, and the analytical résumé. In the chronological résumé information is listed in reverse-chronological order, starting with your most recent experiences and working backwards. The functional résumé presents the most significant experiences first, regardless of chronological sequence. The analytical résumé emphasizes skills and accomplishments, rather than actual job titles. Since the ability to identify and describe skills and accomplishments is crucial to writing learning experience essays, use an analytical format for your résumé.

➢ While an analytical résumé will help identify the skills and competencies needed for preparing a portfolio, it might not be the best type for a prospective employer. Contact Career Services at National Louis University for résumé assistance when it comes to preparing a resume for a job search.

Your analytical résumé should contain the following components:

1. **Identifying Information.** A résumé must always list your name, address, and telephone number so a prospective employer knows who you are and where to reach you.

2. **Objective.** This should be a brief statement of the skills and abilities you can bring to the organization (e.g., presentation skills) and give a specific example of a position in which they could be applied (e.g., Training and Development).
3. **Summary.** By highlighting major accomplishments or skills, the summary supports your ability to achieve your stated objective. This acts like the lead paragraph in a newspaper article, peaking interest to read the entire document.

4. **Skills/Qualifications.** In this section, experience and accomplishments are grouped according to the skill they demonstrate. For example, in *Bridging the Gap: A Learner's Guide to Transferable Skills*, Paul Breen and Urban Whitaker outline nine categories of individual skills. They are:

   a. Communication Skills  
   b. Research and Investigative Skills  
   c. Critical Thinking Skills  
   d. Personal and Career Development Skills  
   e. Information Management Skills  
   f. Human Relations and Interpersonal Skills  
   g. Design and Planning Skills  
   h. Management and Administration Skills  
   i. Valuing Skills

   The preceding categories are intended as examples only. Use categories that are appropriate to your own situation.

5. **Education and Work Experience.** A résumé should also contain your education and work experience. As a general rule, you need not go back more than ten years for work experience. If you are pursuing or have a college degree, you do not need to list your high school education.

6. **Other Information.** Other topics you may wish to list on your résumé are involvement in professional organizations, committee work, community activities, publications, presentations, etc. Stay away from personal areas such as health, marital status, and age. The purpose of the résumé is to convince a prospective employer that you have the necessary qualifications for achieving your career objective.

7. **References.** Conclude your résumé with the statement that "References are available upon request."

PLA/2019-2020
Sample Analytical Résumé

Jane Q. Student  
123 Academic Lane, University, IL 60532  
630-123-5555 – jstudent@nl.edu

OBJECTIVE: To obtain a position in management utilizing my extensive work experience and educational background.

SUMMARY:
- Over ten years of experience in corporate management.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills.
- Leadership certification training.
- Created in-house training seminar for managers.
- Published leadership and training/development articles.

SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS:

Leadership/Management:
* Conduct training sessions.
* Supervise staff of eight.
* Mentor and coach staff regarding customer service issues.
* Provide on-going feedback regarding job performance.
* Coordinated staff orientation and training workshops.

Communication:
* Conveys a professional rapport with employees and customers.
* Assist with on-going company reports and presentations.
* Excellent customer service skills.
* Co-edited internal monthly newsletter.
* Facilitated numerous orientation workshops.

Problem Solving:
* Serve as a liaison between departments.
* Effective in resolving customer issues in a timely manner.
* Developed staff handbook regarding customer issues and resolution of problems.
* Created new billing program with end result saving year-end funds.
Organizational:
* Excellent time management skills.
* Ability to prioritize and juggle numerous tasks simultaneously.
* Accurately processed over 100 monthly invoices in the absence of billing coordinator.

EXPERIENCE:

Assistant Manager – Division of Corporate Sales
Dayton Corporation 2014-Present
Chicago, IL

Associate Supervisor – Office of Payroll
Grainger 2009-2014
Woodstock, IL

Customer Service/Team Lead
Mid-America Research 2002-2009
Palatine, IL

EDUCATION:

National Louis University, Lisle, IL
Bachelor’s of Science in Management, December, 2020

College of Du Page, Glen Ellyn, IL
Associate of Arts with Honors, June 2015

ADDITIONAL TRAINING:

Proficient in Word, PowerPoint, Excel and Internet applications.
Certified in Leadership and Employee Motivation training.
Certified in PHR (Professional in Human Resources).
CPR and First Aid certified, American Heart Association.

SMALL BUSINESS OWENDERSHIP:
Co-owner of several antiques shops in downtown Naperville.

References upon request
TRANSCRIPTS AND TRANSFER CREDIT

An unofficial (or student copy) NLU transcript should be reviewed by students prior to choosing essay topics in order to avoid credit duplication. The university transcript/Banner transcript can be accessed by logging onto NLU’s portal, and going to the Student Section. **You do not need to provide a copy of your transcript for the purpose of the Portfolio but rather you are asked to review it to help you avoid credit duplication when writing essays.** It details credit awarded for:

- Transcripts/course work from colleges and universities previously attended
- ACE military and professional courses completed
- CLEP, DSST and NYU Language exams passed
- NLU course work completed to date

National-Louis University operates on a quarter system. The Registrar’s Office converts all semester hours into quarter hours (SH x 1.5 = QH). For example, 3 semester hours equals 4.5 quarter hours of credit.

The transcript highlights a student’s academic history and helps guard against overlap or duplication of credit. This applies to all means by which students may earn credit: course work, ACE courses, exams and learning experience essays. Since **credit can be awarded only once for any given subject**, the transcript serves as a reminder for students and as a counseling tool for instructors and assessment counselors.

**Transcripts**

The transcripts are one of the major sources of credit. Credit from transcripts is based on the transferability of each course completed. The Registrar of the university is the final judge of the transferability of a given course and bases the decision on the information contained in the catalogue of the transferring institution and on National Louis University's established criteria.

Courses that received a grade of D, W, or F will generally not be accepted for transfer. If an entire transcript shows grades of D, W, or F, the transcript should still be submitted. Courses that received a grade of P (pass) or S (satisfactory) are accepted only if the institution which awarded the grade will verify it is only awarded for work equivalent to at least a C grade.
An **official transcript** from each college or university attended should have already been sent to National Louis University (Admissions) for transfer credit evaluation. An official transcript is one that is sealed and sent by one educational institution to another. Transcripts are obtained through the Office of the Registrar or the Records Office at most colleges and universities. A nominal fee is usually charged for transcript copies.

**If additional course work is taken at another college or university while attending NLU, official transcripts must be sent to the NLU Registrar’s so credits can be updated.**

**ACE Military and Professional Courses**

National Louis University recognizes that members of the United States Armed Services may have had significant college-level learning experiences during the course of military service. In addition, associations, business, government, industry and unions sponsor formal instruction that sometimes correlates to academic credit.

The following military and/or professional course evaluation programs can also be considered for possible transfer credit:

- American Council on Education’s Military Evaluation Program (ACE Military Guide)

- American Council on Education’s Program on Noncollegiate Sponsored Instruction (ACE/PONSI Guide)

**Appropriate military, ACE documents should be submitted directly to the Registrar’s Office for evaluation. Contact the Registrar’s Office for specifics on required forms of documentation.**
DSST Subject Standardized Tests (DANTES)

To learn more about DSST exams, please go to the DSST website at; www.getcollegecredit.com. Once on the website, go on “Testing Preparation”, then “Exam Fact Sheet” then the test title you are interested in.

To register for an exam, complete the registration form included in the DSST packet (www.nl.edu/pla) and send the registration form to the PLA office. Once received, you will receive an email confirmation regarding test date and time. Payment of $87 for the test will be made the day of the exam when you come to take the exam. Following the exam, an administrative fee of $25 is billed to the student.

CLEP EXAM (College Level Examination Program)

To register for a CLEP exam, you must go to the CLEP website to create an account: http://clep.collegeboard.org/register/exam

Once you have created an account and paid the $89 fee for your exam through the CLEP website, you will receive a confirmation ticket/email from CLEP. Upon receiving your CLEP ticket, you will need to register for a testing date/time at one of NLU’s testing locations. For more information, please go to the PLA website (below) to access the CLEP schedules. Complete the registration form and return it to the PLA office. Once received, you will be notified via an email, confirming your test time/date and next steps. www.nl.edu/pla Following the exam, an administrative fee of $25 is billed to the student.

New York University Proficiency Language exams

NLU awards credit by examination to students who have achieved acceptable scores on NYU Language Proficiency Exams.

For more information on NYU Language Proficiency Exams please contact the PLA office directly at 630-874-4319, or go to the PLA website to access the NYU information packet: www.nl.edu/pla Following the exam, an administrative fee of $25 is billed to the student.

Always check with your academic adviser/coach to have test topics approved prior to registration. They must be in your required area(s) of study and not duplicate previous transfer credit awarded.
CAPP – How to View Your NLU Credit Evaluation

Go to the NLU Portal and enter your log-in and password. If you have difficulties with this, contact the Help Desk at 866-813-1177 or helpdesk@nl.edu.

- Go to My Services
- Click on NLU Self Service
- Click on Student
- Click on Student Records
- Click on Degree Evaluation

Requirements that have NO next to them are requirements you still need to complete. If YES is next to the requirement, the requirement has been met by a course you have completed or are registered for. Undergraduate students must earn a minimum of 180 QH’s and complete all degree requirements to graduate.

How to View Your Registration Status

Go to the NLU Portal and enter your log-in and password. If you have difficulties with, contact the Help Desk at 866-813-1177 or helpdesk@nl.edu

- Go to My Services
- Click on NLU Self Service
- Click on Student
- Click on Registration
- Click on Student Detail Schedule
- Select a Term and Submit
AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The autobiography is a student-written account detailing significant postsecondary school experiences in the student's life. At this point in the portfolio, the students have the opportunity to highlight those events or occurrences which contributed to their professional and personal growth and development. The purpose of the autobiography is to introduce the student and help identify possible topics for the learning experience essays.

The autobiography must be at least six typed double-spaced pages. It must be written in narrative form, following proper grammatical rules and expository format. A timeline alone is not acceptable, although it is highly advisable to construct a timeline to help in writing the autobiography.

The autobiography should reflect the growth and development of the student's adult life. Generally, the narrative is in chronological order beginning with high school graduation and progressing to the present. However, if significant occurrences in childhood affected the student's behavior, personality, or attitude in adult life, these can be mentioned briefly in this section. **Childhood experiences may NOT, however, serve as the basis for learning experience essays.**

Credit is not granted for this section. However, the autobiography is vitally important to the portfolio since it should be the foundation for the learning experience essays in Section 4, the section which usually generates needed credit.

**Suggested Approaches**

1. Identify at least ten significant events in your life from high school graduation until the present. Describe these events and incorporate them into a narrative about your life.

2. Categorize the areas of your life that you feel are most important, such as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional</th>
<th>Personal Growth</th>
<th>Military</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Other important events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>Hobbies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PLA/2019-2020
3. View the autobiography as a way of introducing yourself. In other words: This is my life, or this is what has happened to me, or this is why I am the person I am. Students will often mention how writing the autobiography is a great motivator and helps them make sense of their accomplishments, which in turn provides them direction for writing the essays.

A sample beginning of an autobiography also follows. It highlights potential topics for learning experience essays, such as:

► Medical Clinic Organization/Development
► Culture Comparison
► Marriage
► Small Business Ownership
► Instructional Methods
► Public Speaking

Reprinted from Jones, Brian (2009). Ezine Articles, The essentials of writing an autobiography, EzineArticles.com
PLA/2019-2020
The Essentials of Writing an Autobiography

By Brian Jones Jr.

Writing one's autobiography is perhaps one of the most challenging writing projects one can ever hope to accomplish. After all, it is hard to put into words one's own life - the ups and downs, highs and lows, triumphs and losses. While we might find our lives a little bit interesting, others may not have the same opinion unless we write about it in a most fascinating way.

There are several steps on How to Write an Autobiography that we need to understand first before we can write an autobiography worthy of readers' attention. These steps are actually quite simple. The hard part is making the words come to life, but we can learn about this as well from experts' guides on How to Write an Autobiography.

STARTING AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

When learning How to Write an Autobiography, one of the things that we must do is to look at our lives and where we are at the moment. A deep introspection is necessary to truly understand our goals and dreams and how far we have come in accomplishing them.

Looking at the things, people and events that have so far thus made us happy or unhappy will help us get a better perspective of how we have lived our lives through all these years.

Self-examination is the first key step in learning How to Write an Autobiography. As we delve into the deepest recesses of our beings, we should write down every thought, feeling and reaction that were a result of our introspection. It is likewise of vital importance that we write down both the good and the bad, the ugly and the beautiful that have happened in our lives.

WRITE AND RE-WRITE

Finally, when we have gathered all information, let's start writing! Remember that it doesn't have to be perfect the first time around. This is only our rough draft and we can revise as necessary.
Sample Beginning for Autobiography

Shortly after graduating from high school, I packed my bags to begin the next chapter in my life as a college student. As a small town girl living on a college campus with 9000 plus students, I would find myself wondering if I could handle the new challenges and responsibilities presented to me.

After a few months of acclimating to my new-found freedom, I began to settle in and enjoy my life as a college student. Throughout my four years in college, I made a number of decisions that would impact my future, both personally and professionally.

As a student, I was involved in a number of organizations that provided me with leadership, organizational, project management and sales skills/competencies. As an active member and chair of the student activities board, I realized at some point that I wanted to continue working in a college/university environment so the semester before graduation, I began to inquire about graduate programs. Two weeks after my graduation, I packed my bags again and moved to a new town and new university to begin two rigorous years of graduate school.

During graduate school, I worked as a grad assistant and supervised student groups including the student Activities Board and the student Graphics Art team. Working as a para-professional and supervising students who were only a few years younger than me was at times very challenging. Trying to find the balance between being a supervisor and wanting to be a peer taught me many valuable lessons including life lessons in leadership. Those two years flew by and during that time I was introduced to my future husband. We were introduced by mutual friends, and the attraction was immediate for the both of us.
We dated long-distance for one year (he lived in Chicago and I lived in eastern Michigan) and upon my graduation I began my job search eventually landing a job near Chicago. Within a year of moving to Illinois, we were married and living the life. I was twenty-six and he was twenty-five; we were poor but happy! He was self-employed at the time requiring many long hours, so I soon found myself bored and wanting a new challenge to pass the time in the evenings when he was busy working.

I had always enjoyed exercising. Even as a little kid I preferred riding my bike, roller skating and playing neighborhood kick-ball to staying inside and doing solitary things. In college I learned to play a mean game of racquetball, and I tried out and made the university dance squad. While in graduate school I took up power-walking and aerobics as a means to help counteract the stress of graduate school. Fast-forward, I continued to take aerobics classes when I moved to Illinois and when I found myself looking for something to do, I decided to get my certification so I could teach classes myself! Becoming certified was a win-win for me! I was doing something I enjoyed and getting paid for it!

During this time, I worked for two private institutions. At one institution, I counseled traditional age students who were on academic probation. This position included weekly group and one-on-one check-ins as well as instructing classes on time management and study skills. After a few years and no place to grow within the institution, I applied for a supervisory position at another private institution in their Career Development office and PLA/2019-2020
was offered the job. This position required working with students of all ages as well as area employers who were seeking interns and employees (full-time and part-time). Life was good but I began to feel as if something was missing in my life.

We purchased a small townhouse that year that needed a ton of renovations. We couldn’t afford much so we settled for a house that needed a lot of TLC. Over time we were able to renovate and update a number of things throughout the house. We learned a lot in the process from working with contractors to purchasing appliances, choosing warranties, etc. Between our jobs, our home and our families, several years flew by. And yet, that “something” was still missing. I was 30 years old and realized I wanted to have children. Yes, we had a cat and a dog and my furry babies were and continue to mean the world to me, but I wanted a human baby to smother with love!

A year later, we welcomed a healthy, pretty little girl. Although she was born one month earlier than her due date, she was healthy and whole without any issues or concerns. Returning to work eight weeks later was the most difficult thing I had ever done. Childcare was also an issue as we hadn’t found any place we were truly comfortable with, so after much thought and deliberation, I chose to leave my job at the university and overnight became a full-time mom. Financially this was a huge risk for us, so I found part-time work consulting corporate workers who found themselves unemployed and needing assistance with resume writing and job search skills. This part-time job would eventually lead to other part-time jobs, one of which took me back into the world of higher education. For me, these jobs were simply fillers to make a little money. However, when my husband walked out of our marriage a few years later it was the
contacts I made through these “little” jobs that landed me full-time employment when I needed it the most.

Here I was 40 years old, and suddenly single without warning and raising a child by myself without financial or emotional support. To say I was blindsided is the understatement of the century! And what do you tell your 8-year old that the daddy she adored had a breakdown and needed to leave in order to find himself? It was by far one of the most challenging times of my life, trying to pick up the pieces and keep a happy and stable home for my daughter, but I survived . . . . . .
ACADEMIC CREDIT

Approved Licenses/Certifications

A photocopy of approved licenses and certifications (front and back, if applicable) should be sent to your instructor via the class. A listing of these licenses and certifications with accompanying credit recommendations is included in Appendix F.

Learning Experience Essays

Students are asked to present learning gained from life or work experiences in a minimum of two learning experience essays. Learning experience essays are evaluated by faculty. Credit is not awarded for experience alone, nor can the evaluators assume what the student knows based on a given experience. The evaluators can evaluate only the learning outcomes that are presented in the essay.

Evaluators will be examining learning experience essays for examples of involvement, learning outcomes and competencies, reflections and applications, and written presentation.

Experience provides a frame of reference for learning, but an essay must go beyond examples of involvement. There must be an obvious relationship in the essay between the learning acquired and specific experiences described in an essay. For example, it is not acceptable to write about an experience as a supervisor, followed by a research paper on theories of supervision. There would be no obvious connection between the student's experience as a supervisor and the theories of supervision described.

Evaluators also look for a student's ability to reflect upon and apply the acquired learning to new situations. Evaluators cannot award credit for learning that was limited to a given experience, such as knowing a company's policies and procedures for disciplining employees. Evaluators expect evidence of a student's ability to generalize from specific examples of the concepts or relating to the concepts which would apply to or hold true in other settings.

Finally, the essays are reviewed for written presentation. While evaluators are concerned primarily with learning outcomes, essays must be clearly presented, typed (double-spaced) and proofread prior to submission. Poor presentation can delay credit awarded being applied to the transcript.
Choosing a Course Topic for Your Essay

Several approaches can be used to identify topics. Start with skills, competencies, or experiences. The autobiography should have identified particular skills and competencies or significant learning experiences. Sometimes a body of knowledge will be associated with a single learning experience, and thinking about that experience will help to identify the knowledge area; e.g., knowledge of Mexican culture from living in Mexico. There may be other instances, however, where a given experience may be associated with several knowledge areas. For example, a financial manager could have acquired knowledge in supervision, budgeting and technical writing. It might be helpful to think of individual jobs or accomplishments and identify the skills and knowledge required for each.

Knowledge in some subject areas might have been acquired from many experiences over a period of time rather than being associated with a single experience. Identify some knowledge areas first, and then think about the experiences associated with them.

Another approach is to make a list of competencies. Begin each statement with "I know . . ." or "I can. . ." This approach is useful in further identifying knowledge and skills within a given course area, e.g., "Regarding supervision, I know . . ." or "I can. . ." Then discuss each knowledge area or skill in more detail.

Do not limit topic exploration to work-related learning when identifying knowledge areas. Much college-equivalent learning can be gained from experience that is not related to work, such as hobbies (art, music, drama), travel (foreign cultures), reading (literature, history, psychology), and community work (youth leadership, government, volunteerism). These are just a few examples.

Duplication of Credit

In choosing topics for learning experience essays, avoid areas that duplicate credit already earned through previous college course work or credit by examination. Recheck the list of prior college courses found on your transcript before choosing the topics to petition for credit (essays). Do not choose a topic that duplicates a course you will take in your program.

PLA/2019-2020
College Equivalent Knowledge

Evaluators are looking for college equivalent knowledge and competencies gained that includes generalizations and concepts as well as specific experiences from which it was gained and specific applications of that knowledge. National Louis University recognizes that there are many useful and valuable areas of knowledge that are not taught within the college system, such as certain industrial or commercial processes that are taught only within industry, or highly personal learning related to life experience. The purpose of evaluation is not so grandiose as to attempt to credit all learning, but only the subject areas normally studied within a college or university setting.

Learning Experience Essay Components

A learning experience essay has three parts: The Petition for Academic Credit, the essay body, and documentation.

Petition for Academic Credit

Each essay must be accompanied by a Petition for Academic Credit sheet. The petition accompanies the essay it supports and should be sent electronically in a word document along with the essay.

Please use the standard petition sheets provided by Prior Learning Assessment and fill out the form completely. Incomplete or incorrect petition sheets will be returned, thereby delaying the evaluation of the portfolio. If students are not able to sign their petition sheets with an electronic signature, a typed signature is acceptable.

The top portion of the "Petition for Academic Credit" should be completed as described below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original or Revised Submission</th>
<th>Please note whether this is an original or revised submission. Include a new petition for each revision.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student ID#</td>
<td>Please list your NLU student ID#.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLA Enrollment Period</td>
<td>Includes the year, campus location or online, and the term of fall, winter, spring or summer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Course Number and Department
Choose the course number and department most appropriate for this topic. Use the Suggested Subject Areas List or consult the Prior Learning Assessment staff if you need assistance.

Title
Provide a title for the essay. This should be generic, five words or less, and similar to a college catalogue title. Consult the Suggested Subject Areas List for recommendations.

Credit Requested
A college course usually earns one to five quarter hours. Five quarter hours is the maximum amount which can be requested through a learning experience essay. If the learning outcomes cover more than one college course, it is more appropriate to develop two essays with separate petitions.

Learning Statement
This statement tells why credit should be considered for learning acquired from life or work experiences. Use one sentence to describe the specific experience(s) and four or five sentences to summarize the learning outcomes discussed in the essay.

A well-written petition sheet will call the evaluator's attention to areas that are strong points in each essay. The petition sheet could be compared to the dust jacket on a book in that it tells what to look for in the text. It can also be considered a summary of the essay. Be careful to highlight all areas discussed. If writing this description is difficult, reevaluate the essay. It might not be clearly focused.

Petition sheets should be written in a straightforward style, using complete sentences. A copy of the petition sheet will be kept in your portfolio file after the evaluation of learning experience essay.
The Format of the Essay

Introduction

Begin with a topic paragraph. This is a very important organizing tool that will assist the reader. It can also serve as the Learning Statement on the petition sheet. The first paragraph should be a guide for the rest of the essay. Use it to introduce the body of the essay. Include a sentence or two about the concrete experience and then summarize the general concepts or learning outcomes to be discussed in the remainder of the essay. For example, a student petitioning for credit in Small Business Ownership might begin the essay like this:

"I have been the owner-manager of the XYZ Tool Company since 1987. As owner-manager I have been responsible for all aspects of running a small business. I have learned a great deal about advertising, supervision of personnel, inventory, pricing, and the legal aspects of business. I have also learned how to assess the local market and to purchase raw materials at reasonable prices."

Body

In the body of the essay, discuss in detail each of the general concepts outlined in the introduction. Demonstrate competence and intellectual skills in the subject areas. Demonstrate comprehension and the ability to generalize and conceptualize. Include specific experiences and their relation to general concepts. In particular, demonstrate observations, applications, and how the knowledge was acquired. Both general concepts and specific experiences must be included, but of the two areas, general concepts should be emphasized since the extent of knowledge will directly affect the amount of credit awarded. Experience will be a thread throughout the essay; include it to explain a source of concepts, an application of theory, or to illustrate a principle, e.g., giving examples from experience.

To get an idea of the interplay between all these factors, consider the following example, which is just part of several paragraphs on advertising principles and procedures:

"I learned in an American Management Association course that the best advertisement is the one which costs the least and has the greatest coverage. However, it pays to be sure that the coverage is the best. For example, one of the newspapers offered a good deal on additional coverage in the entire Northern Area for a small extra charge. I thought this was advantageous until I began..."
getting mail orders from 500 miles away and was spending my profits on postage."

In this excerpt, the student's experience is clear. In the experience are two principles of advertising: advertising should cover manageable territory, and advertisers should use the lowest cost advertising that gives the greatest coverage. The student clearly shows that part of the acquired knowledge about advertising came from work experience and part from a course taken from the American Management Association. The essayist refers to an application of the principle of greatest coverage for lowest cost and gives an observation from that experience: too much profit was being spent for postage.

This student would develop the body of the essay by writing one or more paragraphs on each of the areas mentioned in the topic paragraph; i.e., one or more paragraphs each on advertising, supervision, and inventory. A discussion of the knowledge, principles, sources, applications, and other examples derived from personal experience related to each area would then follow.

Each general concept discussed in the essay must be illustrated with one or more specific personal experiences. Likewise, each specific experience related must demonstrate a general concept learned. For examples, see Appendix C: Specific Experience/General Concept Matching Exercise.

**Conclusion**

The conclusion should review the major learning outcomes discussed in the essay. Any global applications or conclusions are also appropriate in this section.

*Essays must be 8-10 FULL pages in length, not including the "Petition for Academic Credit" and documentation. Essays that do not meet the minimum length requirement will NOT be evaluated.*
Appropriate Documentation

The final element evaluators require is supporting documentation of personal involvement in learning experiences. All essays MUST include documentation or otherwise referred to as artifacts. Documentation or artifacts are the verification of specific learning experiences as well as the documentation helps the college meet accreditation standards by demonstrating that the learning was credible. Documentation must accompany the essay it supports and should follow at the end of the essay. Documentation may be sent via a word doc, or PDF. The following guidelines give suggestions for appropriate documentation:

1. **Documenting Professional Experience:** employment records; awards; letters of commendation; letters of corroboration from supervisors, peers, clients; congratulations on high performance; promotion evaluations; evidence of promotion; evidence of suggestions adopted; samples of work produced; membership in professional or trade organizations; scores on licensing exams; bills of sale; rating forms; and work samples.

   NOT acceptable as documentation alone, but useful in clarification: explanation of ranking, rating, or a classification system in a company or organization; performance standards; membership requirements; and job descriptions.

2. **Documenting Community Service Activities:** commendations; awards; newspaper and magazine clippings; letters of corroboration from co-volunteers, clients served or supervisors.

3. **Documenting Special Accomplishments:** books published; pictures painted; music written or performed; patents obtained; mementos from countries lived in and traveled to; machines designed; speeches given; programs from performances; writing samples; presentations made; proposals written.

*Works of art should be submitted via a scanned photograph if possible. In addition, scanned photographs must be accompanied by additional documentation.*
4. **Using Letters as Documentation:** letters can be used for verifying many learning outcomes. When students ask someone to write a letter of verification, the person from whom the letter is requested should be given explicit instructions as to what it must contain.

Use the following guidelines in requesting letters of verification:

a. The individual writing the letter must know the student and have first-hand knowledge of the experiential activity which the student has cited in the portfolio.

b. The author of the letter should clearly state the nature of the relationship with the student.

c. The letter should be written on the official letterhead stationery of the company or organization with which the author is associated.

d. The content of the letter should focus on the duties, responsibilities, tasks or activities which were inherent in the experience under consideration. In addition, the letter should tell the context of the experience - who, what, when, where, why, and for how long.

e. A special accomplishment resulting in a product requires documentation in the form of one or more letters of verification authored by persons who observed the student while the product was being developed.

f. The student should make it clear to the author that the letter is one of verification, not recommendation.
Resources/References Used:

APA Style Formatting

It is acceptable and desirable to include in the learning experience essay any books read, consultations with experts, and/or other references used in the past which have added to understanding.

The Standard APA-style format should be followed when using any information from outside resources which include books, articles, websites, pamphlets, PowerPoints, interviews, videos, etc. In-text citations must accompany any material directly quoted, paraphrased, or summarized from another author's work. A references page is always necessary as part of the documentation for an essay; it is REQUIRED for any essay in the area of Health Science. A reference page must also be accompanied by additional documentation of a more personal nature.

Examples of In-text citations:

Narrative citation
Lewis (2017) found that "50% of adult students completed their degree within a three-year period. (pg. 18).

Parenthetical citation
“50% of all adult students completed their degree within a three-year period” (Lewis, 2017, pg. 18).

*Words taken directly from an author’s work must be enclosed in quotation marks.

Paraphrase:
Lewis (2017) stresses that students who use CLEP and DSST exams while in college can save a significant amount of money.

Examples of Reference List Entries:

Books:

Periodicals:

Internet:
Learning Support Tutoring – Writing Assistance

As an NLU student, you have access to NLU’s Learning Support department resources which include face-to-face tutoring on campus and online, drop-off essay review, and tutorial guides. Students who need extra assistance with writing above and beyond what is offered in class should consider checking out these services.

**Face-to-Face Tutoring** can be arranged by calling 312-261-3374 or emailing Learn@nl.edu. We have writing tutors available on the Chicago campus and online through Zoom, NLU’s video conferencing system. Days and times may be limited, so it is always best to call or email for an appointment.

**Online Tutoring** can also be accessed through your NLU Portal under the Student Services tab in the Library and Learning Support section as well as through D2L. Online tutoring at NLU is provided by tutor.com and includes an option for submitting your writing for review with feedback given within 24 hours, drop-in tutoring with a live tutor, and submitting off-line questions with responses received with 24 hours.

**Help Guides** are comprehensive tutorial guides that provide students with resources (handouts, videos, website links, etc.) on writing, APA Style, and research techniques. These can be accessed through the Library website and the Learning Support website under Student Resources.
Students: Please note that each essay submission must include a Petition for Academic Credit.

NATIONAL-LOUIS UNIVERSITY
ACADEMIC AND LIFELONG LEARNING
PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT
850 Warrenville Road
Lisle, IL 60532-1356

PETITION FOR ACADEMIC CREDIT FOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

☐ Original Submission    ☐ Revised Submission

Student NLU ID#: ____________________________________________

Course # ____________________________ Dept. ____________________________

Topic Title: ____________________________ Group/Term: ____________________________

PLA Enrollment Period:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Online/On-Campus</th>
<th>Summer/Fall/Winter/Spring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Credit Requested: _________QHRs

Briefly describe what you have learned from your experience(s) in the space below.

Student ID# and Date ____________________________________________

PLA/2019-2020
VOLUNTEERISM

Intro Excerpt from Sample Essay

I have been a volunteer for the past fifteen years. I have volunteered in the Head Start program for eight years, Parent Teacher Association for eight years, Girl Scouts for seven years and Boy Scouts for four years. I have also served on the Board of Directors for a neighborhood organization for two years. I have found that volunteering provides leadership and organizational skills, prestige, and special preference to benefits and programs. My experience as a volunteer for the past fifteen years has benefited both me and my family through the contribution I have been able to make to the community in which we live.

I have developed leadership and organizational skills through community work which have helped me in my professional life. As president of the parent body at Head Start, I have learned to plan for meetings and to be knowledgeable about topics being discussed at the meetings. For example, shortly after I was elected and accepted the position of president for the first time in this organization, I was told I was expected to chair the first parent meeting. After inquiring as to what duties this consisted of, I was told of the topics that would appear on the agenda and that I was required only to name what was on the agenda. Also, I was told I would learn the format of the meetings as we went along.
During the meeting, after I read each item of business on the agenda, there was a discussion on each item. I realized I was not fully prepared as questions came up and were directed to me. I then realized that I was expected to know answers to these questions or some part of them. From that point on, I insisted that a brief meeting between the coordinator of the program and I be held with the coordinator informing, updating and explaining to me items on the agenda. I learned to be informed by taking notes and compiling information on each agenda item before the meeting. I then began to use this approach in my professional life, and I could see the difference this approach made in department and informational meetings. I have found that it has made me feel more informed on issues and in a better position to respond. After one meeting I was told by my boss, "Nice job, I could tell you have done your homework."

Volunteering has given me the opportunity to obtain skills such as planning events, delegating and working with groups. In working with the Head Start program, I became familiar with leadership skills as I became more experienced in the program. I learned to acknowledge a job well done whenever possible and to delegate when possible. For example, after holding several lower positions in the Head Start program, I noticed there were some presidents of the parent body that seldom acknowledged a job well done by parents. I made a priority of recognizing special efforts by the parent volunteers because people need to know that their efforts are appreciated.

I have also become aware of the relationships that presidents built with other parents. I became very friendly with some presidents and very distant with others. I noticed I became very involved and was asked to help out when I became friendly with the
president, and I was not as involved or seldom was asked to help out when I was not familiar with the president. I learned to use past presidents' leadership styles to motivate parents. I applied a few leadership styles such as acknowledgment of a job well done, building relationships by getting to know other parents, and delegating and showing involvement myself as much as possible. Gradually, I noticed a great respect for me by many parents. I also noticed the willingness to help out by other parents and found this made delegation easier.

I also began to recognize who was best qualified for a job and who was not, or who would not stick with the job until finished. I learned not to discourage parents from participation when they would not stick with a job. For example, I found one parent always volunteered to be on a committee or to be in charge of a project, but she never was around to complete the project. I always had to complete the project myself at the last minute or find someone else to complete it. When a very important project came up at a parent meeting and she volunteered for it, I hesitated. The Director of the program knew why I hesitated and immediately stepped in and gave her approval for the parent to assume the responsibility. I could not understand why she did this until she then asked for one other person to work with the parent. Another parent volunteered to help with the project. After the meeting the Director explained to me that it is better not to discourage parents' participation because the program is supposed to be run by parents. She also explained to
me in cases of a job that required only one person, she would often assign two people to ensure that the job would get done.

From this experience I learned to find a supplement for weaknesses and saw that it worked. I used this technique at work in a case where I had to delegate an important project. I had always overlooked one secretary when delegating because of her inability to complete a project before the expected due date. After discovering the technique of supplementing for weaknesses, I found if I divided the project in parts and delegated a small portion to her, she met her deadline. Each time she met her deadline, I praised her. Once when I had no one else to whom I could delegate half of a project, I had to depend on her to complete the whole project. She completed the project, and on time.

I have found that volunteering has aided me to become more aware of community and school issues that may or may not affect my family. There are many issues presented to the Parent Teacher Association. These include asking for their support for the selection of school board members, bills that are voted on that may affect the educational system, tax related bills, and community issues. For example, the rezoning and demolition of many family dwellings for the building of a research center in Evanston was presented to the Parent Teacher Association. Many of the families had lived in some of those buildings all their lives, and others lived there because they could not afford any place else. Another factor in this case was that the City of Evanston did not offer the appraised value for these homes. Then there was the matter of the type of research that would be conducted. Issues such as the type of chemicals the center would be using and the disposal of waste were presented. There was the probability of nuclear materials being tested. The issue was
presented to the Parent Teacher Association in an effort to get its support and to build strength in uniting together against the building of this center in Evanston. Had I not been involved in the Parent Teacher Association, I would not have been as familiar with the issue. I have learned that volunteering with certain organizations keeps one informed on issues.

In working with the Girl Scouts, I have learned to work with the children to create and maintain a positive atmosphere for growth, adventure and fun. In teaching the Girl Scouts' promise, law, motto and slogan and explaining what each means, I have developed a concern and awareness for the well-being of my community and society. For example, after the completion of learning the Girl Scout law, the assignment for everyone for the next week was to list any Girl Scout laws that we could identify that were or were not abided by. We came up with numerous things: Turning off the light switches after one uses them was referred to as "the law to use resources wisely." Not littering was referred to as "the law to protect and improve the world around me." And helping someone to feel better or to be happy was referred to as "the law to be cheerful." Many others were also discussed. I learned that if I lived by the motto, slogan, and laws, I could contribute to my community and society and improve my values and my own well-being.

At weekly meetings we set aside times for girls to share their concerns, ideas, and any feelings without fear. No matter how bizarre an idea may have been, I learned from The Girl Scout Leaders Manual never to discourage an idea. By not discouraging ideas, we
built a relationship with the girls in which they could express themselves without fear or rejection. I remember one girl suggested that our Brownie Troop go to Disney World in Florida. Even though I felt we would not be able to earn enough money to do this that year and there was a very good chance our troop would not be together next year because of the age range of the girls, I appeared very enthusiastic about the idea while explaining to the girls that it would take a long time for us to save that amount of money.

I learned to be creative and to encourage and support self-help. For example, during a meeting of the Boy Scouts while the boys worked on a project, I noticed one child having difficulties with his project. As I helped him, several other children requested my assistance. After attempting to help with each child's project, I realized that more and more children requested my assistance. I found myself completing the project that was intended for the boys to complete. I also realized that it was not a matter of their needing assistance, but rather their request for my attention. At the next meeting we continued to work on the project, but whenever a child asked for my help, I called for all the boys' attention and demonstrated on a sample project that I had made for myself. Periodically, I praised the good work of each child, letting them know they were doing a good job. I learned that when I gave good instructions with examples when help was needed, it not only taught the individual a new skill, but it relieved me of actually doing the job myself. I found this to be a valuable tool in working with the Boy Scouts and on a job in a supervisory role. For instance, I found when an employee does not understand a job I gave simple illustrations on a sample, explaining the work as I went along. Then I asked the employee to complete one with me, explaining what he was doing as he went along.
reinforce the procedure I had just explained to him. I have found that this has given me more time to work on projects that require my attention.

By following the Girl Scout and Boy Scout mottos and slogans and living by their laws, I have learned how to improve myself as a human being. I have become aware of community issues, school issues and how to plan programs through working with the Parent Teacher Association and Evanston Neighbors at Work. I have learned organizational and leadership skills in working with the Head Start program. All of these experiences have been helpful in making me a better human being.

Documentation for this essay included:

1. A PTA membership card.
2. A letter from the administrative director of the neighborhood organization.
3. A certificate of accomplishment and certificate of training from the YMCA.
4. Two certificates of accomplishment from the Head Start program.
Working with Special Needs Children

Intro Excerpt – Sample Essay

Working with Special Needs children can be equally as rewarding as it is challenging. Special needs that are namely on the Autism Spectrum can be especially hard to define as these types of individuals can fall into a grey area because of how high-functioning they can be (1, Wood, Mahdavi, Ryan). Autism spectrum disorders (ASDs), which also includes Asperger’s syndrome (AS) are defined “by the presence of a “triad” of impairments: 1) social deficits, 2) repetitive/stereotypical behaviors and interests and 3) communication difficulties.” My introduction to working with special needs children was during the 3 years I spent working as a nanny for the Gibbons family. The Gibbons family was a family of four- Mom and Dad, and a son and daughter, Joey & Grace respectively. Both parents were extremely successful, driven individuals, whom had flourishing personal businesses and held high-level positions in large international companies.

At the beginning on my tenure as their caregiver Joey was 4 years old and Grace was 1. I would begin my day at the Gibbons home at 6:45am before the kids awoke, and my day would finish between 5pm and 9pm every night. When I first
began with this family I had no background working with special needs children and had never been exposed to the behavior of kids on the Autism spectrum. As Joey was four it was time to start introducing him to the world of organized education. He was in pre-school and was not having an easy time of it. I began watching him about halfway through his first year of school. His condition was detected when he rebelled against anything that was structured, such as waiting in line and speaking in turn. Joey was also unable to form relationships with other students that were not combative and the idea of sharing a toy or crayon drove him to a fit. For some time, his behavior was brushed aside as he was simply adjusting to school life and that he might possibly have a behavioral issue. I quickly learned from Joey’s parents that the school decided it was time for Joey to get some special testing to see if he might have needs that deviate from the norm of typical four and five year olds. One morning I was playing with Joey at the kitchen table with play-doh. We were sitting next to each other and talking about the cars that we were building out of the soft dough. He would go on and on telling me elaborate stories about the cars, his imagination being more vivid than anything I could dream up. I looked at him and said to him, “Joey, where did you learn so much about cars that makes you love them?” He continued to play and talk and play and talk, and I kept looking at him next to me, waiting for him to answer me. Again, I asked “Joey? Can you hear me, I asked
you a question?” It was bothering me that he was not responding to me, and I moved my face closer to him to see if he would turn to me. Eventually, in a monotone voice, Joey said, “I like talking about cars and I love the Cars movie” and then he quickly moved on to the next car story. The situation was an awkward one for me, as that was the moment that I realized that he was refusing to look at me in my eyes when I spoke with him. I later learned that one of the most telltale signs of an individual on the spectrum would avoid eye contact. (Wood, Mahdavi, Ryan)

Joey’s parents finally took him to his pediatrician and then to a specialist to see about getting a diagnosis of his condition. At that time, he was too young to be given a full on diagnosis of ASDs or AS. Initially he was given the diagnosis of autistic-like tendencies and all we could do was work with him to try and correct his behavioral problems. I continued to do the best that I could, bringing him to school every day and trying to report my observations back to his parents. At first his parents seemed dismayed that their child had a problem. They were often gone and at work while I was at home trying to manage their sons behavioral issues and take care of a 1yr little girl who was often lost in the shuffle. I wrote in a journal daily listing big milestones, meals, naps and things of that nature, as well as issues that would pop up with Joey. One experience that really opened my eyes to the nature of the problem was putting Joey on the bus to his special school. I would wait outside with him until the bus came and would have to go on the bus and strap him in the seat so that he could not get up and move. I said to him, "Joey, come on let’s go the bus is here,” and
he began kicking and screaming “I want to play on my computer today, I’m not going to school!” As we walked towards the bus, I was practically carrying him at this point while he struggled and tried to hit me. Once we got on the bus he proceeded to slap and punch every kid we walked past. I learned that day that not only did Joey have a problem that we needed to deal with, but that his parents were in denial about the situation. I realized that loving your child so much could often not let you see the truth sometimes.

The mental and emotional effects that Joey’s downward-spiraling behavior had on his family were highly emotional. His parents vacillated between feeling like they had failed as parents and pretending like it was no big deal, just another obstacle to overcome. I realized that Joey’s parents might not always see what is real when it comes to evaluating their son’s diagnosis, but it did not mean that they did not love and care for him. Joey’s sister Grace seemed to suffer the brunt of the effects of Joey’s hardships. I made it a goal to always include her, make her also feel special and to spend my time equally between the two children. Once I walked in on a scene with Joey and his mother arguing over whether or not he was going to eat dinner. Grace was eating peacefully in her chair and she was learning how to feed herself with utensils. I looked at her full in the face and said “Grace, you’re doing such a great job
eating your supper today” and smiled at her. She instantly was beaming and I realized how much a child needs to hear encouraging words to continue to grow in a healthy way. The effects that Joey’s AS had on me were often overwhelming at times. I would call my mom often to vent about how I felt like I was battling Joey’s syndrome on my own, and that I felt like stand-in parents, as they were too busy to take care of him. I felt alone and I felt unprepared to care for a special needs child. Mentally and emotionally I was exhausted from spending 10-14hrs a day curtailing a child who was unable to correct or control his own behavior.

When Joey’s parents finally came to the realization that he needed extra help; they were very composed and practical. I realized that oftentimes-difficult things in life could take us unprepared. In my experience, once we can wrap our minds around the problem we can often face the problem better that we did initially. Getting help was their first step. They enlisted the aides at school to communicate with me daily when picking Joey up from school. They helped me better understand certain tactics such as remaining calm when Joey got upset even if it was really hard, and how to use time out as the best form of discipline. Stopping an AS child from playing with their beloved ‘hobbies’ can be more devastating to them than taking anything away, or even refusing to discuss the hobby can be quite effective in behavioral training (Wood, Mahdavi, Ryan). We also learned that trying to see the world through Joey’s eyes could be quite helpful to predict times when a meltdown could occur. We
regularly went to the playground to get socialization and for both the children to enjoy normal healthy social interactions and exercise. Once a situation arose when we’re swinging on the swing: a boy asked if he could push Joey on the swing and then if Joey would push him when he was done. I immediately knew that due to Joey’s AS, this was not going to work out well. Joey’s immediate response was to say yes and I knew he would take advantage of the free pushes, and that once it was his turn he would not be willing to do his part. I quickly jogged over and told Joey and the boy that in order for this to work he was going to have to do the pushing first, and then it could be his turn second. After some initial protest my experiment worked, I felt victorious that day, and Joey learned a valuable lesson. I learned that day that being thoughtful about what could potentially go wrong could help us avoid what can sometimes be extreme behavioral problems while also still giving both children the opportunity to be a part of typical childhood experiences.

AS is a trifecta of socialization problems, repetitive behaviors and fascinations, and difficulties communicating. Often kids with AS are so high functioning that they often are not considered eligible for disability services although they definitely need extra help that is given to those in special education (Wood, Mahdavi, Ryan). Wood, Mahdavi & Ryan state “individuals with AS may have conventional vocabularies but they typically have problems with social communication, particularly conversation,
non-verbal cues and reciprocal interaction." Joey's inability to "put himself in other people's shoes" made it very difficult for him to cultivate the feelings of empathy that most children learn from a young age. He could not understand that it was impossible for his thoughts to be shared by his peers and his family and it often made life very frustrating for him. Those with AS will often chose to talk more at you than with you and that makes many one-way conversations (Wood, Mahdavi & Ryan). I would routinely sit in the basement with Joey while he played with Hot Wheels, which was one of his "obsessions." One time while we were downstairs playing and I began to interact with Joey so that I could also be a part of the fun as most other children I had interacted with usually enjoyed having someone role-play or interact with them. Joey angrily swiped the car from my hand, and without missing a beat continued on telling a very lengthy and loud story about the day that the "car world" was having. I understood that day that Joey really was suffering from a handicap and that in order to interact with him I was going to have to choose a different time to bond with him.

Understanding the problem that we were dealing with was not only a relief to those who cared for Joey on a day-to-day basis, but it was a relief to him too. Eventually most children can finally reach a stage where they are old enough to understand their handicap, and this understanding can give them the tools they need
to make sense of why they act the way they do (McLaughlin & Rafferty). I would take Joey to therapy in the beginning only once a week; by the end of my tenure there I was taking him 3-4 days a week and he getting ready to attend a school designed to help those on the autism spectrum. Whenever I would find out something new or an interesting approach to Joey’s AS, I would share this information with his parents and teachers and vice versa. I really understood how involved a caregiver has to be in the life of a child when difficulties were a part of their life.

McLaughlin & Rafferty say “A desire to be treated like the rest of their peers, perhaps as a way to minimize the perceived impact of ‘it’ on their lives.” In the enlightening age of Joey’s disorder, I was challenged to utilize this tool with Joey and his social skills. We were talking a walk through the neighborhood and a group of kids was playing. He immediately ran over to join them without even asking and I called back to him, “Joey, come back here and ask for permission first!” He refused to come back so I marched over, frustrated from a long day and said “Joey, ask the other boys here if they are allowed to run off from their moms or nannies without permission?” When he asked the other boys, they all said they had to ask their parents first before they left the company of their parents. He looked at me, and even
though he was angry and begrudging, I could tell he enjoyed having to do the same routine as the other boys; he finally felt like one of them. I learned that day that sometimes the best way to work with Joey was to let him discover for himself what made it really worth it to obey.

During my time as a nanny I delved into research and was daily looking at new ways to be a part of this family’s growing pains and joys. There are countless blogs written by parents of AS kids. I discovered even more articles about autism and a growing number of books that are helpful to those experiencing AS. The autism spectrum has been around for some time and has been studied, but AS is a newer form of autism. As a result of how high functioning the individual can be it is regularly a disorder that goes unnoticed. As one mommy-blogger said, “When he turned two, he could not speak, socialize, or engage like other kids. It was as if someone just turned the light inside of him OFF. He preferred trains, planes, cars and everything with transportation. His toys became an obsession and interaction with people became almost nonexistent. We thought he was shy. We thought he would grow out of it, but he did not.” (http://aspergermommy.blogspot.com) Doing this type of research and reading about other’s experiences with AS not only helped me understand what Joey’s disorder was all about, but I also learned other ways of coping through the awareness of others dealing with AS.
**Documentation:** Employment verification letter; workshops attended and training verification

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**Death and Dying**

**Intro Excerpt from Sample Essay**

In my lifetime, I have experienced the death of many extended family members: all of my grandparents, a still-born nephew, many uncles, and many aunts. However, the most profound deaths were those of my mother and my father. Their deaths were the ones to affect my entire life from that moment forward. This essay is the story of how they...
died, and the learning outcomes I have applied by the experience. I never considered death a course of learning before, but upon reflection, realize it was the most poignant course of my life. The lessons started with the death of my mother.

My mother and I were a lot alike. We were not close like best-friends, but Mom was always there when I needed her. She and I shared creative similarities, loving the art of quilting and sewing together. My mother was the biggest influence on me growing up. She was the person I have always tried to become – strong, smart, classy, and a loving mother. Her death came at the time in my life when I was drawing even closer to her. I was eight weeks away from having my first child, an event we had all waited eleven years for. Mom and I were so excited about the new baby coming, and had made plans for her to fly out and stay with us in Texas immediately after the baby was born. I went home for lunch one day, and there was a message on the answering machine to call my brother. I could hear the strain in his voice on the message, and he said it was regarding Mom. I called him back and he struggled to say the words, “Mom died last night.” I heard my own voice scream “No! Not Mom!” as if anyone else’s death would have been better. My legs collapsed beneath me, and I sat on the floor, rocking my unborn baby hearing the details of her death. It happened quietly, peacefully, and eternally. Mom had died in her sleep of heart failure. We buried her four days later on her sixty-ninth birthday.

Dad’s death came five years later, but under very different circumstances. Mom and Dad had just celebrated 50 years of marriage together prior to Mom’s passing. Needless to say, Dad did not recover well from her death. I truly believe he died inside that night, because it was at that moment that he seemingly stopped caring about anyone.
or anything that he was close to. He simply shut down. He drank himself numb every day. He stopped paying bills, and the bank foreclosed on the house. He moved into a small trailer on a piece of property in the middle of the desert, without a phone or physical address. He stopped communicating with all of us children and the few friends that he had. He refused help, and we were shut out of his life.

On New Year’s Day in 20XX, I received a call from my brother that Dad had inoperable pancreatic cancer and was given less than a month to live. That phone call was an entirely different emotional experience than when I found out about Mom’s passing. I only had the chance to speak to Dad once during a moment of lucidity over the next couple weeks. Dad said he loved me, he asked about the girls, and we had a peaceful, final conversation. I accepted the fact that he was ready to die, and welcomed it. That call was my closure with Dad. Upon reflection of those losses, and the many lessons I have learned from the experiences, I have discovered the psychological concepts of grieving as experienced in the five stages first introduced by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross (1969) in her book, On Death and Dying.

Learning Excerpt from within the Body of the Sample Essay

Kubler-Ross (1969) walks us through the five stages a terminally ill patient experiences in facing death, which are then compared as similar for the grieving process. These five stages are denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. In reflecting
back, the denial stage was different for me between Mom’s and Dad’s deaths. I have learned this is because of the events preceding each death. When Mom died, it was a time when I was growing close to her. I was about to become a Mom myself, and needed my Mom in a way I had not needed her before. Her death was sudden and unexpected. She was gone. I had no time for closure with her. No good-byes. No final words. No hug or touch. Nothing. She was gone. When Dad died, I had already lost him emotionally and mentally. He had already died in my life, and there was a very short denial process in my grieving. In fact, knowing his suffering would soon end, I welcomed his death.

My experience with the second stage, anger, was different between the two deaths as well. In reflecting back on those emotions, I realize that the anger was just as intense with each death, but was directed at a different object. With Mom’s death, I was mostly angry with God. I could not understand why He could not have let Mom be around a few years more in order to know her grandchildren by me. I have learned to accept that this is one of those areas about God that I will never understand. My anger with Dad, however, was directed at him. I was angry for all that he had done since Mom’s death, and was hurt by being shut out. I was grateful that God took him quickly, only suffering for two weeks. From reflecting on this experience however, I realize that Dad had actually been suffering for five long years. His behavior was grief unbridled. His personality would not allow anyone to help him with that grieving process, and it took over his life. He may have actually been suffering with this cancer for many years, and we never knew it. We only had to suffer with the knowledge for two weeks, once a doctor was finally involved. This reflection has actually helped me deal with my anger towards Dad. I realize now the
intense suffering he went through, alone.

The next stage of grieving in Kubler-Ross’s book is bargaining (Kubler-Ross, 1969). This stage, even after a lot of reflection, really did not occur for me in my experiences. In her book, Kubler-Ross (1969) describes this more for the dying process, than being able to apply it towards grieving someone already dead. It is the process of offering something in exchange for the affliction. She writes, “If we have been unable to face the sad facts in the first period and have been angry at people and God in the second phase, maybe we can succeed in entering into some sort of an agreement which may postpone the inevitable happening…” (Kubler-Ross, 1969, p. 93). I do not recall any bargaining in my own experience. For me, the only opportunity to bargain with God or life would have been during my Dad’s illness. However, for his sake, I welcome death sooner rather than later. He was ready to go.

The fourth stage I definitely experienced, and that is depression. Again, my experiences were different between the two deaths. After Mom died, I found myself unwilling to really break down until after the funeral was over. During the time preceding, I was busy being strong for my Dad, and other family members. I was also busy taking care of business around the house, going through her belongings and things. In learning the grieving process, I realize that was also my denial phase. I was denying to myself that Mom was really gone. After the funeral was over, it hit me hard. I cried and slept for several days. It did not help that I was entering my eighth month of pregnancy, PLA/2019-2020
and emotions and weariness were already upon me. I find that I still have times of depression over Mom’s death. I miss her so much and will be hit with sadness now and then. I am learning to deal with the depression though. It comes in waves, and I have learned from Dad’s example that it is not healthy to keep it inside. I will cry in the moment, even if it means spending a little time in the bathroom at work. I let the moment come, allow myself to be sad, and then get through it and move forward. I talk about it to others, and keep the depression in balance. It is interesting how I do not get those waves of depression about Dad. He comes to mind, but I do not have the depressive moments attached to his death. In reflection, I believe this is for two reasons. One is that I was never emotionally close to my Dad, so, there is less of a bond that was broken when he died. Second, at the time of his death I welcomed it. It was better that he dies, to stop his suffering. When I think of my Dad, it is with more acceptance than when I think of Mom. Kubler-Ross (1969) writes, “When anger resentment and guilt can be worked through, the family will then go through a phase of preparatory grief, just as the dying person does. The more this grief can be expressed before death, the less unbearable it becomes afterward.” (Kubler-Ross, 1969, p.176). I have learned this is exactly what I went through with my Dad, and did not have the opportunity to go through with my Mom.

This brings me to the fifth stage, acceptance. According to Kubler-Ross (1969), this phase should not be mistaken for a happy stage. It is the stage when a dying patient has come to terms with his or her “fate”, having worked through the previous four stages. Translating that to my experiences with the deaths of my parents, my acceptance phase was much more successful with my Dad than my Mom. As previously expressed, I feel...
this is due to welcoming my Dad’s death as a relief to his suffering, whereas with Mom, she was taken away without any time to let her go. I have learned to accept her death as time goes on, however. It has made it easier knowing she is in a better place, according to my religious belief. It also makes it easier by carrying on her love to my children. I keep pictures of my parents out, so the children know who their grandparents were. I also teach them things that my Mom taught me, such as quilting. My girls are still young, but they have their grandmother’s gift of creativity. I use these opportunities to keep my parents’ memory alive to my children, which has helped me to move on with accepting their deaths.

With time, the emotions are dealt with easier, and with less force than at first. Immediately after their deaths, my emotions were raw and uncontrolled. I remember the first time my emotions burst out at work, right after Mom died. I locked myself in my office, and cried. It had hit me suddenly, and I could not stop the tears. My husband worked close by, and came to see me and hold me. I learned that this was important to me, not crying alone. I applied that to when my Dad died. The raw emotions immediately after his death would come strong and unexpectedly as well. I was better prepared though, and would reach out to someone I was close to in order to support my grief. The emotions lessen as time goes by. During the later months and years, I seem to feel the sadness coming on, instead of being broadsided by it. I have a smoother wave in processing it. I realize the emotional pain of losing someone will never cease. I know now it is something
about my life that I have to work through each time. It is no longer a strange feeling, but a natural one that I accept as part of my life experience.

Besides the grieving process, dealing with death has taught me many additional things. From experiencing each grieving stage, I am better prepared for the sting that will be experienced as more of my loved ones inevitably pass on during my life time. I also bring an understanding to those around me who will experience grieving from the death of someone close. For example, I have already had the opportunity to be there when a coworker’s father passed away. She and I had many discussions together, through many tears, sharing our experiences and feelings. It helped her, I believe, to have someone to talk to who could identify with her loss. I know how talking helps me to process my emotions, and applied that to her experience.

Another learning I applied was the pain I experienced by my Dad’s dying in financial ruin. I have created a will, expressing exactly my desires for where everything should go upon my death. I have also set up a financial plan to have my house paid for as soon as possible. I learned how important it is to not be indebted to creditors, especially after your passing. My Dad would have been able to keep the house in the family, had he owned it straight out. My Mom and Dad had no will, no savings, and only their pension and social security when they died.

**Conclusion Excerpt from the Sample Essay**

For me, the experience of death and dying has affected my past, present, and future. It helped me to define what means most to me. I now apply that understanding to my decisions today, and to developing my future. I want to be able to face my own death.
with the peace of knowing I did the best with the days and relationships God gave me. I also want my children to face my death with as little unnecessary difficulty as possible, which is why I have put together the documentation and accounts to assist them during that process. Finally, I am able to help others through my experience. One example is my friend at work who lost her father. I will not hesitate to be there for others, knowing firsthand the pain of their loss. Having now also learned the stages of grieving, I will be able to add the understanding of the grieving process, along with my own personal experiences to share. If my loss can be someone else’s gain, it helps me to be a better person too.

**Documentation for this Sample Essay included:**

1. Bibliography.
2. Copies of death certificates

**Appendixes**

**Appendix A: Definition of Terms**

**Accreditation**

The recognition of educational quality serving as the basic indicator that an institution meets the standards set by a recognized accrediting body.
ACE

The American Council on Education association representing all accredited postsecondary institutions as well as national and regional higher education associations. ACE has published a *Guide to Educational Programs in Non-Collegiate Organizations* which helps educational institutions correlate a specific number of academic credits for courses given by non-collegiate organizations, such as major industries that provide "in-house" classes for employees. ACE also publishes *The Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experience in the Armed Services*.

APPROVED LICENSE/CERTIFICATION

A professional license or certification with national credentialing standards that has been reviewed by NLU faculty, deemed equivalent to college-level learning, and recommended a standard credit award through portfolio.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

A student-written account detailing significant postsecondary school experiences which is included in the portfolio of prior learning. The narrative highlights events contributing to professional and personal growth and development and identifies possible learning experience essay topics.

CAEL

The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning - a national association of collegiate institutions and colleagues dedicated to fostering quality experiential learning and the valid, reliable assessment of its outcomes.

CEU

Continuing Education Unit - nonacademic credit carried by some continuing education courses designed to meet requirements of specific professional organizations. Since CEU's are awarded on the basis of attendance rather than learning acquired, most schools, including NLU, do not equate them with college credit*.

CLEP

College Level Examination Program-a standardized exam program offering the opportunity to earn college credit in many common academic areas. CLEP exams are offered at NLU on the Lisle, Wheeling and Chicago locations. For test information/schedules go to www.nl.edu/pla or call 630-874-4316.
### Credit Unit

Official certification of a course completed satisfactorily, statement of competence, and other increments of verified educational accomplishment (theses, oral and written examinations, internships, etc.) accepted toward completion of requirements for certificates or degrees. Credit units are most often assigned semester or quarter hour values. * *

### DANTES/DSST

Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Educational Support—a standard credit by exam program offering the opportunity to earn college credit in many common academic and technical areas. DANTES exams are offered at NLU at the Lisle location. For test information/schedules go to [www.nl.edu/pla](http://www.nl.edu/pla) or call 630-874-4316.

### Documentation/Artifacts

Required materials gathered to verify prior experiential collegiate learning and personal involvement in specific learning experiences.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duplication of Credit</td>
<td>A situation where two similar college courses, learning experience essays and/or credit by exam topics, overlap to such an extent that credit cannot be awarded for both.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>The process by which college or university faculty determine the credit equivalency of specific learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential Learning</td>
<td>Experiential learning involves direct participation in, or observation of an event. Learning occurs when participants gain something, such as an understanding, appreciation, ability or skill. Thus, experiential learning involves direct participation or observation plus the acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra-institutional Learning</td>
<td>Learning that is attained outside of the sponsorship of legally authorized and accredited postsecondary educational institutions. The term applies to learning acquired from work and life experiences, independent reading and study, the mass media, and participation in formal courses sponsored by associations, business, government, industry, the military, and unions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Experience Essays</td>
<td>The student essays describing college-level knowledge, concepts, applications and reflections gained from life and work experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td>A collection of materials written and documented in support of one's request for college credit for prior extra-collegiate learning. It is submitted to the college for faculty assessment, translation to academic credit and transcription on a college transcript.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postsecondary</td>
<td>Education or experiences occurring after high school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prior Learning Assessment

The procedure used by college faculty and others to recommend that credit be awarded through the portfolio process. Academic credit is awarded for proven college-level competencies acquired through life experience, work experience, or self-directed non-collegiate learning.

Resume

Typically, a summary of work experiences. The portfolio resume can be tailored to include knowledge, skills, competencies, and training gained in areas being petitioned for credit.

Transcript, Banner

An unofficial NLU document that lists college courses taken and credits earned. Includes previous courses accepted in transfer, NLU courses, CLEP, DANTES, and ACE credit.

** Source: American Council on Education publications.
Appendix B: Analyzing Learning

It is probably fair to say that more time will go into exploring and identifying what you have learned about a topic than into the physical writing of an essay. In fact, after reviewing what you have learned in a given area, it is easier to write about it. There is an old saying: "If you don't know where you are going, you will very likely wind up somewhere else." The information in this appendix has been included to stimulate thinking about learning, to help identify learning, and to provide instruction in how to describe learning effectively in a written format.

A common error in essays is an inability to distinguish between specific experiences and general concepts. Another is an inability to generalize a concept from a specific experience to other related experiences. A third error is merely stating facts without demonstrating comprehension of them through discussion. Any of these problems can result in no credit being awarded on an essay.

Remember, one of the factors the evaluators will be looking for is evidence of mental or intellectual processing. The credit awarded is directly related to the extent of conceptual understanding and learning outcomes presented in an essay.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEARNING AND EXPERIENCE

In his book *Experiential Learning* (1984), David Kolb presents a model of experiential learning containing the four concepts described below. These concepts comprise the core of the Learning Style Inventory (LSI), which is designed to identify individual learning strengths and increase learning effectiveness.

The first stage of Kolb's cycle starts with the individual's **CONCRETE EXPERIENCE**. Some event occurs that triggers the learning cycle. While this is usually a specific experience, it can also include reading, consulting with others or personal research. In the second stage, **OBSERVATIONS AND REFLECTIONS**, the individual "steps back" from the experience, observes and reflects upon it. This might involve noticing similarities or differences, patterns or results of certain actions. Based on these observations and reflections, the individual begins the **FORMATION OF ABSTRACT CONCEPTS AND GENERALIZATIONS**, the third stage in the cycle. Applying these newly
discovered principles is the fourth stage of the cycle, **TESTING IMPLICATIONS OF CONCEPTS IN NEW SITUATIONS**. This leads to another concrete experience. The individual makes new observations and reflections and, based upon them, formulates or refines the principle and again applies it to see if it still holds true. Therefore, Kolb's Cycle might be better pictured as a spiral since the cycle repeats itself, becoming more refined and sophisticated with each "turn."

**DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EXPERIENTIAL AND CLASSROOM LEARNING**

James S. Coleman (1976) has outlined several differences between experiential and classroom learning.

Coleman refers to classroom or "traditional" learning as **INFORMATION ASSIMILATION**. This mode of learning involves four steps: receiving information, understanding the general principles, identifying potential applications of the general principles, and taking action in specific experiences. This approach to learning is deductive, arriving at a practical application from the general principle.

In describing **EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**, Coleman uses similar steps in the learning process, but in a different sequence. The four steps in this process involve taking action in specific experiences, analyzing the consequences of actions, understanding the general principle, and applying the general principle in new situations. This approach to learning is inductive, developing a general concept from specific experiences.

There are significant differences in how people learn in the traditional, information-assimilation mode and how they learn via experiences. One of the differences concerns the individual's grasp of the knowledge base of the field. The traditionally educated have a greater breadth of the knowledge base and are familiar with many concepts/theories of the area; however, their depth of application of these concepts in "real life" is relatively shallow. The experientially educated, on the other hand, have a deep understanding of how a particular concept is applied, but rarely do they have a grasp on the other concepts of the field (see Illustration A).
Ideally, an individual should have a balance between breadth of theory (general concepts) and depth of application of that theory in specific experiences (see Illustration B).
ILLUSTRATION A

Traditionally Educated:

```
BREADTH OF THEORY

DEPTH
```

Experientially Educated:

```
BREADTH

DEPTH

DEPTH
```

PLA/2019-2020
ILLUSTRATION B

Balance of Theory and Application

BREADTH OF THEORY

D
E
P
T
H
INTEGRATING CONCEPTS AND EXPERIENCES

Two major items need to be covered in a learning experience essay:

1. GENERAL CONCEPTS of the field.

2. SPECIFIC EXPERIENCES of the individual.

Credit is awarded for an individual's grasp of general concepts, NOT for specific experiences. Experiences are used in a learning experience essay, however, to illustrate how the individual learned and has applied the general concepts. These practical applications of general concepts are crucial in demonstrating a thorough understanding of how concepts apply to new situations. The ideal learning experience essay should provide a balance between breadth of theory (general concepts) and depth of practical application (specific experiences) as shown above in Illustration B.

When developing a learning experience essay, it is helpful to begin by identifying the general concepts of the field with which you are familiar. You could start by listing the key concepts or learning outcomes in outline form. Another way might be to develop a "cluster" of concepts. By writing the topic in the center of a sheet of paper, circling it, and listing the general concepts in circles around the topic, a cluster of concepts is formed (see Gabriel Lusser Rico's Writing the Natural Way for a more detailed discussion of "clustering" in writing). These general concepts form the elements of the essay's thesis statement, providing the skeleton for the body of the essay.

After the concepts have been identified, reflect upon what specific experiences aided you in learning these concepts. This could include personal and professional experiences as well as the more traditional reading and research. If you can describe the original experience where the concept was learned and a new application of that concept in a new situation, you demonstrate a balance between breadth of theory and depth of practical application.
THE WRITING PROCESS

A. D. Van Nostrand (1982, p. 73), in Process of Writing: Discovery and Control, proposed three terms that emphasized the process of discovery through writing: prevision, vision, and revision.

PREVISION. This term encompasses everything that precedes the first draft-receptive experience, such as awareness (conscious and unconscious), observation, remembering; and exploratory experience, such as research, reading, interviewing, and note-taking. Prevision involves . . . the underestimated skills of title and lead writing, which help the student identify a subject, limit it, develop a point of view towards it, and begin to find the voice to explore the subject.

VISION. In the second stage of the writing process, the first draft-what I call a discovery draft—is completed. This stage takes the shortest time for the writer-in many cases it is written at one sitting—but it is the fulcrum of the writing process. Before this first draft, which Peter Drucker calls `the zero draft,' everything seems possible. By completing this vision of what may be said, the writer stakes out a territory to explore.

REVISION. This is what the writer does after a draft is completed to understand and communicate what has begun to appear on the page. The writer reads to see what has been suggested, then confirms, alters, or develops it, usually through many drafts. Eventually a meaning is developed which can be communicated to a reader.

Revision should be seen as a necessary part of developing a learning experience essay, not an inconvenience. In fact, drafts of essays are built into the schedule of the portfolio development course. During this course, you will receive feedback from your instructor (and Assessment Counselors) to assist in developing your learning experience essays.

In conclusion, writing a learning experience essay involves identifying general concepts and specific experiences, organizing your ideas before writing, developing a draft of the essay, and revising your essay so that it clearly and concisely states what you have learned and how you have learned it. By striking a balance between breadth of theory (general concepts) and depth of practical application (specific experiences), you achieve the greatest potential for “earning credit for what you know.”
REFERENCES


Appendix C: Specific Experience/General Concept Matching Exercise

Choose the number of each general concept and match it to the appropriate specific experience.

VOLUNTEERISM

General Concepts (Learning Outcomes)

1. I learned when I gave good instructions with examples when needed, it not only taught the individual a new skill but relieved me of actually doing the job myself.

2. By not discouraging ideas, I learned how to develop a relationship with the girls in my troop so that they would feel free to express themselves without fear or rejection.

3. Volunteering has helped me to become more aware of community and school issues that may affect my family.

4. I learned not to discourage parents from participation, but to supplement for weaknesses.

Specific Experiences

_____ One parent always volunteered, but never completed her assigned project. I couldn’t understand why the program director approved her for another project, until she then asked for one other person to work with this parent.

_____ I was a member of the PTA when a plan was being considered for the building of a research center in my town. The project would require the rezoning and tearing down of many family dwellings.

_____ A Scout Troop member approached me with the idea of raising money so that our troop could take a trip to Walt Disney World. Although I felt it was improbable that we could do it that year, I was enthusiastic about the idea while explaining the problems involved.
I found that when one of my Boy Scouts did not understand a task, I gave simple illustrations on a sample, explaining the work as I went along. Then I asked the boy to complete one with me and explain what he was doing as he went along. This would reinforce the procedure I had just explained to him.

Choose the number of each specific experience and match it to the appropriate general concept.

**PARENTING**

**Specific Experiences**

1. When my children reached high school age I took on a full time job. I found my children were successfully able to handle their household chores, pack school lunches, ready themselves for school, etc. without my constant supervision.

2. I expressed some doubts about the character and influence of one of my son’s friends. My son told me not to worry, that I should think of the positive influence he and his brother could have on the friend.

3. Our son was sent home after drinking at a school dance. The school banned him from further dances, and rather than confront him immediately we had him perform his regular household duties, despite his hangover. After several hours our son approached us, explaining that it was more agonizing for us not to yell at him for what he’d done.

4. I spent 20 minutes angrily shouting at my son for tracking mud into the house, even after he was out of hearing range. My spouse’s approach was more effective; he/she talked calmly to my son and convinced him to do an extra chore for me.

5. Our children demonstrated unselfish enthusiasm in their willingness to open our home to several foster children. They fully participated in the decisions and treated these children like brothers and sisters.
General Concepts (Learning Outcomes)

I have discovered that yelling and shouting expletives are not nearly as effective as a calm but stern reprimand and subsequent punishment.

It was apparent that my children were compassionate and caring individuals despite their young age.

I came to the conclusion that my children have a sense of independence and responsibility and do not need their parents constantly take care of their every need.

I learned from experience that sometimes silence is more effective as a punishment than words or actions.

Through this incident, I learned to trust my children and their judgment. I realized that my children have fine character and that they exhibit this in their lifestyles.
Appendix D: Completion Checklist

As an aid to completion of the portfolio requirements, use the following checklist:

( ) Completed and signed (e-signature*) portfolio application.

( ) Completed plagiarism tutorial.

( ) Student has saved a copy of all portfolio items, including resume, autobiography, essays, petition sheets and documentation.

( ) Final copy of resume.

( ) Final copy of autobiography.

( ) Final copies of both essays along with copies of petition sheets completed and signed (e-signature*).

( ) Appropriate documentation scanned to support each essay.

*E-Signature simply means you can type in your name followed by your NLU ID #.
Appendix E: Appeals Procedures for Learning Experience Essay Evaluations

If a student contacts Prior Learning Assessment with a complaint about an evaluation of a learning experience essay, Prior Learning Assessment will follow the procedure outlined below.

1. Listen to the student's concerns and attempt to interpret or explain any comments from the evaluators. Under no circumstances will the PLA office resubmit the essay to other evaluators for an evaluation at this point.

2. Should a grievance still exist, the PLA office will contact the faculty evaluator and request the evaluator speak to or meet with the student within two weeks. Usually this is accomplished through a telephone conversation. (This completes Step I of the Academic Appeals Policy—see Student Handbook.)

3. Should the grievance not be resolved after the evaluator and the student have discussed the evaluation, the student may submit in writing to the PLA Assistant Director a statement of the reasons for the grievance. *A clean copy of the petition sheet and essay in question must accompany the appeal letter.* The essay will then be submitted to a second evaluator for review. The second evaluator’s decision will be the final decision, regardless if the decision is the same as that of the first evaluator. (This completes Step II of the Academic Appeals Policy.)

4. Any further action will follow the formal review procedures outlined in Steps III and IV of the Academic Appeals Policy.

*This statement must be received by Prior Learning Assessment within one year of the original essay submission date.*
Appendix F: Approved Licenses/Certifications

- Where duplication exists in certification program content or transcript course work, credit can be awarded only once. All Licenses and Certifications fulfill elective credits only.

**BUSINESS GENERAL**

- Food Protection Manager Certification (ANSI)  
  1 QH
- Food Sanitation Handler (ANSI)  
  0.5 QH
- Human Resources
  - Certified Professional in Human Resources (PHR)  
    4 QH
  - Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR)  
    9 QH
  
  *Maximum Total Credit for HR*
  
  9 QH
- Loan Originator  
  1.5 QH
- Project Management Professional (PMP) issued by the Project Management Institute  
  5 QH

**HEALTH/MEDICAL/PHYSICAL EDUC.**

- Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)  
  5 QH
- CPR/BLS (American Heart Association or equivalent)
  - Basic Adult Training  
    0.5 QH
  - Basic Child/Infant Training  
    0.5
  - Instructor Training  
    1.5 QH
  
  *Maximum Total Credit for CPR*
  
  2.5 QH
- First Aid (American Heart Association or equivalent)
  - Basic Adult Training  
    0.5 QH
  - Basic Child/Infant Training  
    0.5 QH
  - Instructor Training  
    1.5 QH
  
  *Maximum Total Credit for First Aid*
  
  2.5 QH
- Personal Trainer, Certified  
  2 QH
- A complete copy of the approved license or certification must be submitted in the appropriate class drop box (front and back side of license/certification if applicable).
- Where duplication exists in license/certification program content or transcript course work, credit can only be awarded once.
- All licenses/certifications fulfill elective credit only.
Appendix G: American Council on Education Certifications and Designations

ACE CREDIT Transcripts

ACE provides an official transcript to participants who successfully complete a course, examination, or certification with an ACE recommendation as listed in the National Guide. ACE does not evaluate prior learning, experience, or transfer credit from other higher education transcripts.

Some examples of credit that can be obtained through ACE include:

- AMA – American Management Association
- BOMI International
- Dale Carnegie & Associates Inc.
- Microsoft
- PADI International
- Starbucks Coffee Company
- Wal-Mart Store Inc.
- Walgreens
- Walt Disney Co.

To see a full list of work trainings on the ACE approved list, please go to the website below.

http://www2.acenet.edu/credit/?page=transcripts