

## **Main Street Credits**

### Earning College Credit for What You Know

During their life time adults often acquire learning that may be of college level quality and may be able to receive college credit for their prior learning. Sources of college-level learning include on-the-job training, employer and workforce training, volunteer experiences, independent study, and military service. Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) refers to the methods used to evaluate whether prior learning meets college-level standards. Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) means the actual recognition and award of credit to students for their prior learning. There are various ways a student can prove they have college level learning that is worthy of college credit at Nashua Community College including College Level Examination Program (CLEP), Credit By Exam and Credit by Portfolio. These alternative methods of earning college credit are explained below:

#### Academic Policy Regarding CLEP Exams:

Students may choose to earn credits by taking a nationally standardized exam known as CLEP (College Level Examination Program). Nashua Community College is an approved testing site for CLEP. The college awards credits for courses in the areas of Composition and Literature, Foreign Languages, Social Sciences, Science and Mathematics. A complete list of the CLEP exams accepted for credit by NCC is available on our website as well as in the Admissions Office and the Academic Advising Center. The cost of each exam is published on the College Board website [www.collegeboard.com/clep](http://www.collegeboard.com/clep). NCC charges an administrative fee of \$25 per exam. For further information and to schedule an appointment, contact the Academic Advising Center at (603) 578-8900 ext. 1474. Passing scores for CLEP are 50 and above. Successful completion of a CLEP exam is treated as a transfer credit. Matriculated students will need to request that a copy of their scores be sent to NCC for review. This request is made to the College Board and can be done during or after the exam.

#### Academic Policy Regarding Credit by Examination (CBE):

Credit by Examination may be earned by matriculated students who, by study, training, or experience outside the College, have acquired skill or knowledge equivalent to that acquired by students enrolled in a course at the College. Such skill, knowledge, or experience shall be in the area of the course concerned and determined to be relevant by the Vice President of Academic Affairs or other authorized personnel. Students may challenge a course by requesting and

completing an examination or evaluation that covers the instructional material of the course. If successful, the appropriate credits earned are applied to the students' programs. Students requesting a CBE shall pay a fee of \$25 per credit to the cashier. This fee is non-refundable. Credit will not be given for grades below C. Students receiving a grade below C are ineligible for another CBE in that course. Students may not CBE a course in which they are enrolled if they have earned a grade within the CCSNH, or if they have been administratively withdrawn, or if they dropped the course after the two-week drop/add period.

Candidates wishing to review the material for which they shall be held responsible in a CBE may apply to the chairperson of the department concerned for a list of areas of the subject matter covered upon which the exam will be based. The CBE will cover the content of the course being challenged. Students must apply for and take the CBE by the end of the Add/Drop period.

#### Academic Policy Regarding Assessment of Portfolio:

Credit for prior learning offers students the opportunity to demonstrate the knowledge they have gained through life experiences and apply this knowledge towards credit in some degree/certificate programs. To prepare for this option, students will develop a portfolio to be assessed by appropriate college personnel. A student must be matriculated at NCC to be eligible to apply for prior learning assessment credit. Not all programs provide this option; students should consult with their respective college advisor and/or program coordinator for more information and the process used for application. 31 Students may be awarded a maximum of 24 credits for experiential learning. Students will be assessed a fee based on 50% of the current tuition rate on the total credits awarded (e.g. for 12 credits awarded:  $0.50 \times \text{current tuition rate} \times 12 \text{ credits}$ ). Financial Aid does not cover courses for which a student earns credit through portfolio.

#### Receiving credit for Precision Manufacturing and Mechanical Design Technology Core Courses:

For the core courses within the Precision Manufacturing and the Mechanical Design Technology academic programs, there are two methods available for students to earn college credit for their prior learning: credit by exam and credit by portfolio. Credit by exam is similar to a final exam and is designed to determine if a student possesses the knowledge equivalent to what is learned by participating in that particular course. The portfolio method is the process of examining, identifying,

describing, demonstrating and documenting learning for college-level competencies and skills.

Receiving credit for prior learning:

- a student must be matriculated at NCC to be eligible to apply for prior learning assessment credit.
- credit is awarded only for learning, and not for experience.
- the student must demonstrate that the learning acquired is at the college level
- Financial Aid is not available for credit by exam or portfolio

## **Prior Learning Assessment – Developing your Portfolio**

### How Do You Learn Best?

People process information and learn in many different ways. For example:

- Time of Day: Do you learn best in the morning, afternoon, or evening?
- Involvement: Do you prefer a hands-on, experiential approach, or a reflective, observational approach?
- Structure: Do you prefer to learn in an orderly, structured setting, or in a more relaxed, loosely organized setting?
- Direction: Do you prefer to have your learning directed by experts, or do you prefer to direct your own learning?
- Sociability: Do you prefer to learn working in a group setting or working by yourself?
- Theory/Practice: Do you learn best by carefully reading a manual, or do you learn best using a hands-on approach and by making mistakes?

There is no one best way for everyone to learn, but each person tends to have a preferred learning style. A good reason to be aware of your preferred learning style is that using it can make the assessment process easier. While some students start by writing learning components in neat orderly lists, others start by verbalizing their learning. Others start by drawing diagrams of areas of study because it helps them picture their learning. You may want to experiment with different ways of approaching the task of organizing your learning components into areas of study to find a way that fits your learning style.

It is important to note that a preferred learning style is not the only way a person can learn, but it is the way that feels easiest and most natural. As you go through the portfolio

As you go through the portfolio development process and articulate what you know, take some time to also assess how you learned what you know and how you prefer to learn. Writing the portfolio itself might be difficult for some students whose learning style does not relate well to a very specific, prescribed way of doing things. While content and writing styles vary with each student, the portfolio must be completed in the directed format and layout.

### Levels of Learning:

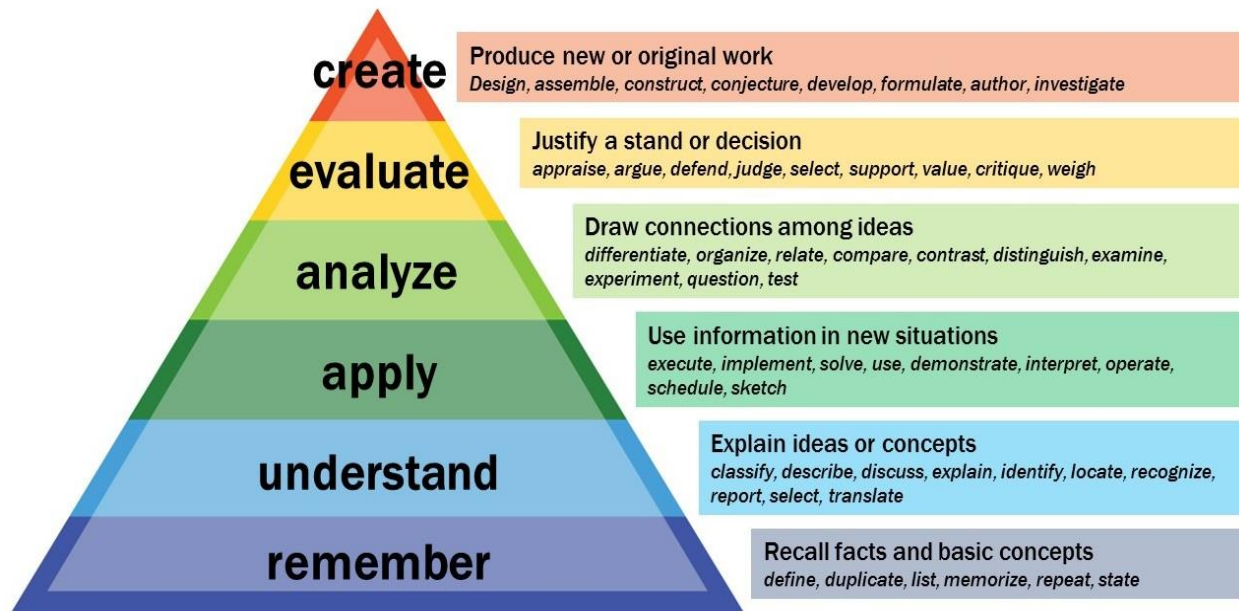
College-level learning not only occurs in specific, unique areas, but also at different levels of complexity within each of these areas. As a general rule, the credit awarded to you in a given area is related to the complexity—depth and breadth— of your learning within that area. As you move from knowledge of simple facts and names to more complicated skills like analysis, evaluation, and comparison, you will generally increase your potential credit award.

Your learning should relate to the academic area taught at NCC for which you are pursuing credit. Your learning should include both theory and practical applications. You should be able to demonstrate why and how you do something.

### Describing Learning:

The educator Benjamin Bloom edited a book that cataloged the various levels of learning. These levels were published in a taxonomy of educational objectives. Verbs commonly used to express an individual's depth of understanding appear for each level. In describing your learning, be certain to consider the full range of areas represented in the taxonomy, as you will find this information very useful as you work on your learning components. You will find a diagram of Blooms Taxonomy below and more comprehensive lists can be found on the internet.

# Bloom's Taxonomy



## Learning Components:

The description of your learning derived from your experience is the basis for developing your learning components. Learning components are concise phrases or groups of words which describe your learning in a particular area. They communicate information about the content of your learning as well as your approach to organizing that content. In one sense they are not unlike the ingredients in a recipe. If you are going to bake a chocolate cake, you need to know more than just what the ingredients are. You need to know how much of each ingredient to add and in what order. Your learning components communicate similar information about your knowledge. They tell the faculty who assesses your portfolio what you know, how much you know, and why that knowledge is important. By the way you organize your components, you also give the committee information on how this learning relates to your general understanding of a subject area.

## Writing Your Learning Components:

Your learning components will have three sections:

1. A description of your skills using verbs such as explain, calculate, create, etc.
2. A "learning statement" that describes what it is that you can explain or calculate.
3. The "condition," which is used in most but not all learning components.

While the verb portion of the learning component expresses or describes your level of knowledge, and the learning statement portion describes content, the condition addresses why this knowledge is important. It is helpful to ask yourself the question, "Why would anyone want or need to know this?" Your answer to the question can then be rephrased to become the condition portion of the learning component. It is here where you begin by articulating your experience and learning as "set up an automated inventory system." This is an important accomplishment and may well have led to or been dependent upon some sophisticated knowledge, but the phrase itself only implies your knowledge by describing an action or experience. Effective, useful learning components describe and demonstrate the knowledge itself. By using the taxonomy list for your highest and most appropriate level of knowledge and understanding in an area of learning, you can more easily and accurately convey the depth and breadth of your learning. For instance, from the experience of setting up the inventory system, you may have acquired a significant depth of understanding yet find it difficult to actually convey it. When you look over the verb list, however, you can determine your specific level of understanding of inventory control as well as the computer knowledge you had to have in order to set up the automated system. In this case, perhaps, the experience required that you recognized the need for such a system, that you evaluated the effectiveness of various inventory software, and that you designed an appropriate system for use in a small retail operation, or inventory control. When developing your portfolio, be sure to provide specific information about your knowledge and describe it at the highest level of your learning.

### What is a Portfolio?

A portfolio is a formal communication prepared and presented by you to the college as part of a petition requesting credit for learning outside of a college classroom. A faculty assessor(s) will be appointed to review your portfolio for college credit.

### Documenting Your Prior Learning:

Accurately identifying, documenting and verifying your learning is crucial to receiving college credit for what you know. There are a number of components to a portfolio and numerous ways in which you can document your learning within your portfolio.

The first document in the portfolio is typically an essay in which you articulate what you know, how you learned it, and resulting accomplishments.

The documentation you provide also must be verifiable. Verification usually comes in the form of a letter from a supervisor or manager that contains the following information:

1. An introduction of themselves which includes his/her credentials, experience and the capacity in which they know you.
2. The length of time you worked together
3. Description of your responsibilities during that time
4. The learning you acquired on that job, how you demonstrated that learning (projects, accomplishments, etc.) and the results of your work – how it improved the work environment. (processes, quality, safety, communication, etc.)

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