nscc

Recognizing Prior Learning (RPL)

Challenge Portfolio Resource Information

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DEFINITIONS OF RPL TERMS

Challenge for credit is the process in which learners match their individual learning to the learning acquired in NSCC programs and/or courses. The challenge process allows them to demonstrate how they've met the program/course outcomes. Learners may use workplace learning, learning from life, international credentials or a combination of these to demonstrate their learning. This process is where the individual meets the institution. Each time a learner challenges for credit the learning must be matched to NSCC program and course outcomes as each case is unique.

Credit transfer is the process in which learner's match program/course learning completed at other recognized educational institutions to learning outcomes for NSCC programs and courses. Credit transfer is where two institutional program/courses are compared to grant equivalency. Once a course has been assessed for equivalency by an NSCC subject matter expert it can go into a data bank so that the next time someone asks for a credit transfer for that specific course, it can be granted without further assessment. This assessment is valid as long as the two courses compared remain unchanged. If either course changes content, then the NSCC subject matter expert will need to do another assessment to ensure equivalency.

Learning from life can happen anywhere at any time. This learning comes form things learned in volunteer work, travel, hobbies, and family and leisure activities. Learning form life can be either intentional or unintentional on the part of the learner.

Workplace learning happens at work. Sometimes this learning is intentional on the part of the learners and structured. They take courses offered to gain new knowledge or skills or to upgrade what they already know and can do. Sometimes workplace learning is unintentional on the part of the learners and isn't structured. It is a by product of the work they do.

International credentials include certifications, diploma, degrees, and professional designations learners have completed in other countries.

Formal learning includes the learning described above in *credit transfer* and *international credentials*. This is the learning that takes place in recognized educational institutions which leads to a credential.

Non formal learning includes workplace learning and learning from life that is structured and intentional. This is learning from workplace training, non credit courses and workshops which by itself doesn't lead to credit or certification

Informal learning includes learning from life and workplace learning that is not structured and not intentional. Typically it doesn't lead to certification by itself. In formal learning is also called experiential learning

RPL

> **Learners come to the Centre for Student Success**
> **They think they have Prior Learning**

> *Challenge for Credit*
>
> **For learners with equivalent <u>informal</u> content/level learning**
>
> **<u>Steps</u>**
> - Learner contacts Centre for Student Success for RPL information
> - Learner contacts Academic Chair's office for chosen program
> - Learner obtains supporting documentation for equivalent learning to NSCC course(s)
> - Learner completes RPL Application and clearly articulates equivalent learning for each course learning outcome
> - Learner submits RPL Application and supporting documentation
> - Learner will receive written notification on whether the credit(s) are/are not given after the request has been reviewed by the appropriate academic chair and faculty
>
>
> - Academic chair connects learner with faculty content expert
> - Faculty content expert does initial oral interview to screen
> - If there is a reasonable chance of success, faculty expert informs learner of assessment methodology/ies and expectations for learner

If you are challenging for credit using the portfolio method the following information should assist you to prepare properly.

WHAT IS A CHALLENGE PORTFOLIO?

A challenge portfolio is one method for learners to prove that they have attained course learning before coming to NSCC. It is a very thorough document which identifies and documents learning from work and/or life that proves course specific learning has occurred. For a successful challenge the portfolio must meet the learning outcomes for the NSCC course or courses the learner is challenging.

WHAT DOES A CHALLENGE PORTFOLIO LOOK LIKE?

A challenge portfolio is usually a three ring binder which contains the learner's articulation of identified relevant learning and sufficient supporting documentation in an organized and easily readable format.

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE PORTFOLIO PROCESS?

STEP ONE
IDENTIFYING THE LEARNING
The learner needs to identify the learning achieved through paid and unpaid work, life experiences, and leisure activities which matches the learning outcomes for NSCC courses challenged.

STEP TWO
ARTICULATING THE LEARNING
The learner needs to clearly state the learning. The emphasis here is not on the experience but rather on what was learned. The learner needs to articulate the learning and show how it connects to the NSCC course learning outcomes. The learning statements are contained in a narrative which is called a learning narrative. The learning narrative articulates what the learner knows and can do and how this learning matches that of the NSCC course challenged.

STEP THREE
DOCUMENTING THE LEARNING
The learner needs to produce authentic, sufficient, and relevant proof that the learning has occurred. The documentation supports the learning articulated in the learning narrative.

STEP FOUR
MEASURING THE LEARNING
The subject matter expert (**assessor**) needs to determine if the learning has the breadth and depth which matches the learning present in the NSCC course. The learning needs to be at the same level as the learning achieved in the classroom setting.
That is, the learner needs to have the amount and depth of learning in the subject area as those who take the course.

STEP FIVE
EVALUATING THE LEARNING
The subject matter expert needs to judge whether the articulated and documented learning meets the course learning outcomes and matches the breadth and depth of that learning. The subject matter expert determines whether the learning is equivalent and credit is granted or a learning contract is developed to address an identified gap.

STEP SIX
TRANSCRIBING THE LEARNING
The NSCC registrar records the successful portfolio course challenge with a 'P'.

WHAT ARE SOME BENEFITS OF THE CHALLENGE PORTFOLIO PROCESS?

- The learner doesn't have to repeat learning.

- The learner is at the centre and drives the challenge process.

- The learner gets respect and credit for what's been learned.

- The learner gets experience in reflecting on learning and self assessing learning; these are great skills for life long learning.

- The learner gets experience in taking learning from a variety of places and experiences, and creating a focused and clear narrative of specific learning.

- The learner grows in confidence and self-esteem.

- The learner can identify learning gaps and make goals for meeting them.

- The learner gets experience in educational planning.

WHAT ARE THE COMPONENTS OF A CHALLENGE PORTFOLIO?

- Title page

- Table of contents

- Chronological record

- Learner introduction

- Resume

- Learning narratives

- Documentation

PROCESSES IN CREATING A PORTFOLIO	PORTFOLIO PRODUCT
1. Learner introduction	Career and educational goals/plan.
2. Articulate educational and career achievements	Resume
3. Identify knowledge, skills and attitudes gained from work and life	Learning statements
4. Match your learning to NSCC course outcomes	Learning narratives.
5. Compile evidence to prove learning and ability to perform	Documentation.

HOW DO I ARTICULATE MY LEARNING?

Remember that the narrative of your learning is the spine of your challenge portfolio. This is where you take the course outcomes and identify how you have met each of them. The subject matter expert will use your narrative and the supporting documentation to decide whether or not you'll get credit for the course(s). So, your learning narrative needs to be clearly written and well organized. You'll need to make sure that your learning is evident and sufficient, well documented and reflects the learning outcomes. Your narrative can then become evidence of good communication skills, organizational skills, and reflective learning skills!

First you need to introduce the course and learning you want to challenge. This is a paragraph that sets up the learning challenge.

Then for each of the course outcomes you need to
- state your learning and relate it to the course outcome
- describe how broad and deep your learning is (the level of the learning)
- identify where you learned it and/or applied it
- mention the variety of settings in which you used it

To end your narrative on each outcome, you'll need to summarize your learning and how it matches the NSCC course learning outcomes.

For most people the average narrative per course outcome is from 3 to 5 pages. This is a guideline only and shouldn't be taken as a rule. Remember that the narrative needs to be only as long as it takes to adequately describe your learning achievements.

WHAT IS DOCUMENTATION?

Documentation supports the learning that you've claimed in your challenge portfolio. It is not enough for us to say what we know and can do; we also have to prove it. And that is the purpose of including documentation in your portfolio. It will show that you not only have met the learning outcomes for the course, but also the breadth and depth of your learning-your level of achievement.

It's important to ensure that the documentation you choose gives clear, complete and sufficient evidence of your learning statements so that you are confident that you have enough proof to get you credit for your learning.

Documentation usually falls into two categories: Direct & Indirect Documentation

DIRECT DOCUMENTATION

The documentation which you the learner have created or produced is direct documentation. It is also called primary documentation.

EXAMPLES OF DIRECT DOCUMENTATION

- ✓ Reports, memos, brochures, presentations, briefs
- ✓ Projects, assignments, budget materials, marketing plans
- ✓ Articles, proposals, papers, training materials
- ✓ Media copies of speeches, training demonstrations or performances
- ✓ Computer programs and products (data base, web pages, covers, desktop documents, etc.)
- ✓ Curriculum or lesson plans, assessment tools, learning activities
- ✓ Workshops, lectures, training designed/developed by the learner
- ✓ Poems, plays, video products
- ✓ Blueprints, surveys, charts, slides, applications
- ✓ Drawing, sculptures, paintings and other art products
- ✓ Other course specific materials

INDIRECT DOCUMENTATION

Indirect or secondary evidence is what others say about you. This evidence is from those who worked with you or experienced your work first hand. They might be employers, facilitators, co-workers or volunteers, clients and others. They will need to speak directly to the learning that you are claiming to have achieved, rather than giving you a general reference.

EXAMPLES OF INDIRECT DOCUMENTATION

- ✓ Letters from employers, clients, co-workers, professional bodies, volunteer organizations, training programs etc.
- ✓ Employer evaluations and reviews, formal appraisals, evidence of promotion and/or contribution and accomplishment
- ✓ Awards, official recommendations,
- ✓ Licenses, memberships in professional or trades organizations and unions
- ✓ Diplomas, degrees, certificates, course/program transcripts, completion certificates
- ✓ Military service records and awards
- ✓ Newspaper or magazine articles about learner's accomplishments
- ✓ Course outlines from post-secondary education, union training, on the job training, workshops/seminars, descriptions for work, community, volunteer work
- ✓ Self-directed learning from books read, online resources which result in an annotated bibliography or narrative on an area of study
- ✓ Scores on licensing examinations

Some kinds of indirect evidence are not sufficient and shouldn't be included in your challenge portfolio. Any letters or references that speak about you generally will not support your specific learning. Nor will documents that do not mention you by name, or family and/or friend character references. So check carefully to ensure that each piece of evidence you choose speaks clearly and directly to the learning you articulated which meets the course learning outcomes of the course.

VERIFICATION OF LEARNING LETTERS

Verification letters can be a strong proof of your learning. However you need to make sure that the people you ask to support your learning narrative have seen your work first hand. You will need to clearly state what learning you want them to verify. Be sure to send them
- A clear statement on who you are and why you're contacting them
- Information on the learning components you want the documenter to speak to
- A request that they speak to each area of learning separately
- A request that they use official company/organization letterhead which is dated and signed

They will need to identify their position in the organization, their qualifications and their relationship with you; before they speak to the learning you've requested them to validate. The following sample may assist you in creating your letter.

FORMAT FOR LETTER REQUESTING VERIFICATION OF LEARNING

Current Address
Postal Code

Date

Documenter's Name, Title
Company/Organization Name
Current Address
Postal Code

Dear Full Name (Avoid Sir, Madame):

Introduce yourself. Remind person of the nature of what you did (title)) where (location within company/organization) and when (dates).

Explain why you need a letter and how it will help you. Ask him/her to follow the enclosed guidelines when writing the documenting letter.

Provide a list of clearly written learning outcomes (i.e. learning identified) for each area that you believe the documenter can attest to.

Thank him/her for assisting you.

Ask that the letter be sent to you in the self-addressed, stamped envelope (which you will need to include with your letter).

Sincerely,

(sign your letter)

Type your full name.

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING VERIFICATION LETTERS

It would be helpful if your reply could follow these guidelines:

1. Please send your written evaluation on letterhead stationary if possible.

2. Please describe your present position and pertinent past experiences as they relate to the field.

3. Identify our working relationship (i.e. co-worker, supervisor, etc.).

4. State specifically what learning (i.e. competencies, skills, knowledge) you are able to verify. Describe when and where you observed this learning.

5. Describe my specific knowledge and competencies in your own words. Please comment on the skill level performed.

6. Please evaluate how effectively I've demonstrated the learning by using statements such as average, above average, exceptional, etc. Provide examples if possible.

7. Please send your verification letter back to me in the self-addressed, stamped envelope included and keep a copy for your records.

I realize that this is an imposing task and thank you in advance for your cooperation in assisting me. Your accurate evaluation will be most helpful in verifying my learning.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Your name:
Phone:
Fax:

HOW DO I ASSEMBLE MY PORTFOLIO?

- **Title page**

This gives your contact information (name address etc.), student number if applicable, course(s) you are challenging, and the date of submission. See sample title page.

- **Table of contents**

This lists the major sections of your challenge portfolio and the pages where each can be found in the document. See sample table of contents.

- **Chronological record**

This lists the major learning and achievements you have accomplished over the years. Some learners and assessors want to see the chronological record included in the challenge portfolio. Others use as only as a tool in preparing the portfolio.

- **Learner Introduction**

This gives a brief introduction of you as a learner, your background and accomplishments and your intention to challenge specific course(s) at NSCC. It should state your educational goals.

- **Resume**

This gives an account of your knowledge, skills, and abilities including where you got them in terms of education and work experience.

- **Learning narrative**

This is the spine of your portfolio. The learning narratives clearly articulate how you have achieved the learning outcomes for the course(s) you are challenging. In this section you show how your learning matches that of learners in the classroom setting.

- **Documentation**

This proves that you know and can do what you've said in your learning statements. Documentation validates your learning narrative. See guidelines for writing verification letters.

Please note: Always make a photocopy of your complete portfolio before sending to be assessed.

Sample Title Page

Portfolio for Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition

Submitted to:

Program: Human Resource Management Certificate

Nova Scotia Community College

Submitted by:

Name: Jane Doe_____

Student #:_1234_____

Address: _123 Anywhere Street_____

　　　　　　_Halifax, NS, B3M 3P3_____

Phone Numbers:_(902) 443-1234 (home)_____

　　　　　　　　_(902) 491-9876 (work)_____

Fax:_(902) 486-4321_____　　**E-mail:**_XXX@XXX.com_____

I declare that all of the information in this package is accurate and true.

Date:_____

Signature:_____

Sample Table of Contents

Table of Contents

PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

_____ **Does my title page give my contact information, and list the course(s) and program I am challenging?**

_____ **Have I included all sections of my portfolio in the table of contents?**

_____ **Does my learner introduction cite my knowledge skills and abilities and connect them with the NSCC course I'm challenging?**

_____ **Is my resume current, comprehensive and well presented?**

_____ **Have I addressed each learning outcome of the course I am challenging?**

_____ **Does my learning narrative detail all the learning I have as it relates to the challenge? Have I left out something?**

_____ **Have I clearly described the places and spaces in which my learning occurred?**

_____ **Have I clearly connected my documentation to the learning I've articulated?**

_____ **Do I have a balance of direct and indirect documentation to support my learning statements?**