

INTRODUCTION

Experiential learning is a term used to define learning from work and life experience. The philosophy of the EXCEL program at Elizabethtown College is that college level learning may be acquired through experiential learning; and that when properly documented and assessed, such learning may be applied toward partial fulfillment of your degree requirements. For work and/or life experience to be evaluated for academic credit in the EXCEL program, you must assemble course equivalency proposals in which your learning is equated to academic courses offered at Elizabethtown College. Faculty experts then evaluate the course equivalencies to determine whether your learning is comparable in quality and quantity to the corresponding credit courses(s) offered on the campus.

This is not an easy way to obtain college credit, and no assurance about the number of credits that will be granted can be given in advance of the faculty's formal evaluation of the course equivalency proposals you submit.

There is a limit on the amount of academic credit that can be earned on the basis of experiential learning; a maximum of 39-40 credits in the major concentration. Course equivalency proposals may not be submitted in math - use of challenge exams or subject level CLEP exams is encouraged in this area.

Credit earned through experiential learning may be applied to course requirements in the major, core, or general elective hours. In all cases, the learning must be judged by faculty experts to meet the following criteria:

1. The learning must be post-secondary in nature.
2. The learning must include understanding of theories and concepts relevant to the field of study, in addition to practical application.
3. For claims in applied areas, the knowledge and skills described must be generalizable to settings other than the one in which the expertise has been developed.
4. The course equivalency proposals must be equated to credit courses offered at Elizabethtown College or another approved accredited institution.
5. The learning must be organized in the manner prescribed by the guidelines below.

Your faculty advisor serves as the advisor for your course equivalency proposals within the major, and faculty members from the designated discipline review proposals outside the major areas of study. When the proposals have been received, the decision of the faculty evaluators concerning the number of credits awarded and course designations are final.

HOW TO PREPARE COURSE EQUIVALENCY PROPOSALS

The steps in preparing course equivalency proposals are the same whether the claim is within or outside the major area of concentration. Each course equivalency proposal is a self-contained package of material that is the sole basis for the evaluator's judgment on whether the granting of credit is warranted. The five parts of a course equivalency proposal are listed and described as follows:

1. Identification of Course Equivalency
2. Identification of Experiences from Which Learning Was Gained
3. Competency Statements
4. Narrative Statement (5 page essay)
5. Documentation

PART I: IDENTIFICATION OF COURSE EQUIVALENCY

Refer to the form found on page 6 of this guidebook and follow these directions:

Begin by filling out the department prefix, course number, and title of the course that you are using as the equivalent to a specific portion of your work or life experience. Indicate the number of credits you are requesting for the course equivalency. Type the course description as it appears in the college catalog. Generally, your credit request should not exceed the number of credits for which the equivalent college course is offered.

Try to be realistic about the amount of credit to request. The evaluators will tend to be conservative on the amount of credit they grant. The Carnegie formula used in higher education has equated one semester hour of course credit with one hour of class per week for about 15 weeks, plus two hours preparation time for each hour in class. Consequently, in a traditional course one semester hour of credit represents 45 hours of involvement with an organized course of study. Time spent in an activity admittedly is a very indirect measure of the amount of learning that has been achieved, and your proposals will emphasize the *outcome* of your experience. Even so, it may be useful to think about time spent in a learning activity as a partial indicator of the credit you should ask for.

PART II: IDENTIFICATION OF EXPERIENCE FROM WHICH LEARNING WAS GAINED

Refer to the A, B, and C forms on pages 7 - 9 of this guidebook and follow these directions:

Select and complete the appropriate combination of A, B, and C forms to list the experiences that apply specifically to your course equivalency proposal. The A form is used to list learning obtained through continuing education workshops, seminars, and related instructional activities. The B form is used to list learning obtained on the job. The C form is used to list learning that took place neither in a class nor on the job (e.g., reading, travel, volunteer work, community service, church activities, hobbies).

Most course equivalency proposals will require the completion of a number and/or combination of A, B, and C forms.

Example: Suppose you are preparing a proposal for credit in Principles of Management on the basis of attendance at three weeklong workshops and for management responsibilities that you had in two different jobs over the years. In this case you would need to complete three A forms and two B forms. (If you also volunteered your management expertise to a community organization, a C form would need to be added.)

On each A, B, or C form needed for your course equivalency proposal, fill out the information requested. The portion of the forms that asks for a summary of the experience does not require more than a couple of sentences of explanation. You will have an opportunity to discuss the learning obtained from the experience in some detail in part four of the proposal. In all likelihood, you will be citing some of the same sources of experience for more than one course equivalency. If you have worked at one job for a number of years, for example, you may have learned more than one skill for which there is course equivalency potential.

PART III: COMPETENCY STATEMENTS

On a separate sheet, list as explicitly as you can the outcomes of your learning in support of the course equivalency proposal. This analysis must be in the form of a number of competency statements identifying your relevant knowledge, abilities, and/or skills. Competency statements should be specific and detailed. A competency statement that says, “I can supervise people” is not specific enough. A complex competency such as supervision needs to be broken down into more detailed elements. (Refer to sample course equivalency proposal for guidance.)

Good competency statements will support your claim for academic credit by providing evidence that you have analyzed and identified specific outcomes of your learning. Competency statements also create an expectation on the part of the evaluators concerning the key points you will emphasize in the narrative statement (essay) in the next section of your proposal. As a general rule, you should have four to six competency statements for each course equivalency proposal. Be sure that your competency statements are compatible with the Elizabethtown College course description that you cited in part one of your proposal.

There is no printed form provided in this guidebook for listing the competency statements.

PART IV: NARRATIVE STATEMENT (ESSAY)

This part of the proposal is your opportunity to describe in some detail (five pages, double-spaced) the relationship between your experiences and the learning outcomes identified. Remember that you are writing for an academic audience that looks for evidence of your knowledge base and ability to speak the “language” of the discipline or field of study under consideration. Before writing the essay, it is useful to review a textbook on the subject to gain familiarity with the terminology you would be exposed to in the college equivalent course. A textbook or course syllabus also will show you the range of the subject matter typically covered in class. Always write the essay in a manner that gives substance to the competencies you enumerated in part three of the proposal.

Often the relationship between your experience and the learning achieved can be highlighted, in part, by the discussion of significant critical incidents. In doing so, two points are worth keeping in mind. First, the emphasis needs to be on the *learning* gained through the experiences—not merely on having survived, endured, or enjoyed the experiences. Second, in applied areas, the learning described must be generalizable to other contexts than the one in which the experience occurred. Knowledge of personnel procedures in a specific organization, for example, is not by itself sufficiently generalizable for the award of course equivalency credit in Personnel Management. Filtering your experience through the knowledge about personnel management found in books, journals, and other professional sources (and documenting those sources in the essay itself) are an important component of establishing the generalizability of your experience-based learning.

No forms are provided in this guidebook for writing the narrative essay. The essay should be typed and double-spaced. For citations, use the Keys for Writers Handbook.

PART V: DOCUMENTATION

On a separate sheet of paper, list the items you have appended as documentation and provide a brief explanation of their significance in relation to your course proposal.

The purpose of the documentation section is to provide the best evidence you can to support the knowledge, abilities, and/or skills claimed in your course equivalency proposal. Documentation may include professional licenses, test scores, certificates of attendance at workshops; items you have produced; letters of reference from persons who have observed/evaluated your work; annotated bibliographies to substantiate your reading on a subject; or other items you judge pertinent to your claim.

No one piece of documentation will be definitive evidence of your learning. It is the weight of the documentation in relation to the other parts of the course equivalency proposal that is important. “Weight” should not be taken literally with respect to documentation. A few good pieces of documentation are more convincing than masses of paper that the evaluators have to sift through to discern their possible relevance. On the other hand, if you cannot obtain *any* documentation to substantiate your proposal, then you should not submit the proposal.

EVALUATION AND AWARD OF CREDIT FOR YOUR COURSE EQUIVALENCY PROPOSALS

You are permitted to submit a draft of your first proposal in order to receive feedback from your advisor on how you are progressing. When the final version is submitted, your advisor will evaluate it for academic credit. It is possible that the faculty will grant full credit, no credit, or partial credit. It is important to remember that an award of partial credit of a course equivalency proposal may not be sufficient to meet a requirement listed on your degree plan.

The credit awarded for experiential learning is listed on your transcript as specific course entries with the department prefix and number, course title, number of credits awarded, and a grade of “Pass.” Letter grades are not given.

Your Name _____

Part I: IDENTIFICATION OF COURSE EQUIVALENCY PROPOSAL

Department	Course #	Course Title	Credits Requested
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Elizabethtown College course description (from the catalog):

Faculty Comments:

Faculty Evaluator: Please indicate outcome of your assessment.

Faculty Signature: _____ Date: _____
Credit(s) Awarded: _____

PART II: IDENTIFICATION OF EXPERIENCE FROM WHICH LEARNING WAS GAINED

FORM A: Formal or Semi-formal Educational Experience

Title of Workshop/Seminar: _____

Sponsoring Agency: _____

Instructor(s): _____

Location of Workshop: _____

Date(s) of Experience: _____

Approximate Number of Clock Hours of Experience: _____

Brief Summary of Experience:

PART II: IDENTIFICATION OF EXPERIENCE FROM WHICH LEARNING WAS GAINED

FORM B: Work Experience

Organization: _____

Address: _____

Dates of Employment: From _____ To _____

Title of Position: _____

Supervisor: _____

Briefly summarize the aspects of this work that apply to the course equivalency listed above:

PART II: IDENTIFICATION OF EXPERIENCE FROM WHICH LEARNING WAS GAINED

FORM C: Other Experience (Non-work; non-workshop)

Identify Experience:

Dates of Experience: From _____ To _____

Briefly describe summary of experience:

APPLICATION FOR CREDIT FOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Name of Applicant _____

Address _____

Telephone Number (H) _____ (W) _____

Email _____

Major Concentration _____

Date of Application _____

I hereby acknowledge that the information submitted in support of this application is true and correct. I understand that fraudulent or inaccurate information will be considered grounds for cancellation of credit awarded and/or disciplinary action.

Signature _____