CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING

Evaluator Handbook

Please Note:

These credits apply to certificate and degree programs at UAF. The transfer to other colleges or baccalaureate granting institutions will require review by the accepting institution.

Table of Contents

PROCESS

Student Application.. 3

Pre-Assessment Meeting.. 3

Portfolio Preparation.. 4

The Assessment.. 4

Faculty Reviewer(s) Evaluation... 4

Follow Up.. 5

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES AND TECHNIQUES

Written Test.. 5

Performance Test.. 6

Product Evaluation.. 6

The Interview.. 7

FACULTY REVIEWER(S)

Faculty Reviewer(s) Selection.. 10

Faculty Reviewer(s) Responsibilities................................. 10

Evaluation Report.. 11

Evaluation Report Form... 12

PROCESS

STUDENT APPLICATION

1. Student obtains Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) information and application form. (Copies available from the Academic Advising Center or online at www.uaf.edu/advising/.)

2. Meet with student to discuss the process, credit being requested, and documentation needed.

3. Inform student of alternatives that could be pursued for credit.
   - CLEP Examination (given at UAF)--See Appendices
   - Local Credit by Examination--See Catalog for list of approved examinations, or call Testing Services at 474-5277, or check the website at www.uaf.edu/reg/testing.
   - Further course work in a specific area

4. Provide student with copies of the following if credit is being formally requested:
   - Student Handbook
   - Learning History Worksheet (optional)
   - Degree Checklist
   - Release of Information
   - Course Equivalent and Rationale

5. Check the application form for completeness, indicate if this will be a portfolio or certificate/license assessment, and sign the form if appropriate for student to pursue CPL credit.

6. Have student obtain verification for credit eligibility from Admission Office.

7. Student pays $50 application fee through UAF Business Office.

8. Schedule a pre-assessment meeting with the student to review student's preliminary materials and determine how this meets degree requirements.

9. Notify the Academic Advising Center of the need for faculty review along with recommendations for faculty reviewer(s).

PRE-ASSESSMENT MEETING

1. Review with student the completed Learning History Worksheet if utilized.

2. Complete Degree Checklist to verify how CPL credit will be used.

3. Discuss the portfolio development outlined in the Student Handbook and the documentation that needs to be compiled.

PORTFOLIO PREPARATION

1. Provide assistance and advice to student upon request during portfolio preparation.

2. Review the portfolio for:
    - appropriateness of credit being requested
    - completeness of information included

3. Determine with student if additional assessment is needed beyond the portfolio:
    - observation
    - product assessment
    - oral interview
    - written examination (objective or essay)
    - performance test

4. Identify possible dates for a meeting to be held if appropriate.

5. Contact faculty reviewer(s), if applicable, to agree upon meeting date (Advising Center can assist with this process).

6. Make sure that adequate provisions are made for the required space, time and equipment.

7. Inform student of date for the assessment.

THE ASSESSMENT

1. Introduce the student to the faculty reviewer(s), if applicable.

2. Provide a brief background on the student and the development of the portfolio.

3. Turn the assessment meeting over to the committee chairperson.

FACULTY REVIEWER(S) EVALUATION

1. The chairperson will lead the assessment and evaluation of the student's portfolio.

2. The committee members will complete the evaluation form(s) according to the criteria listed during the assessment process.

3. Discussion and a formal decision regarding the committee's recommendation will be made.

4. Appropriate materials (copy of portfolio, evaluation form(s), completed Evaluation Report and Credit for Prior Learning Award Form) should be forwarded to the school or college where credit is being awarded.

5. The Dean will make the final credit award decision and forward the documentation to the Academic Advising Center.

FOLLOW-UP

1. The Academic Advising Center will notify the student to pick up the Credit for Prior Learning Award form so that the additional $10 per-credit-hour fee for portfolio assessment can be paid.

2. The student will return the award form with payment verification to the Advising Center for forwarding to the Admissions Office for listing on the official transcript.

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES AND TECHNIQUES

In conducting any type of assessment, it is important that careful documentation be made of the entire assessment process. A general evaluation instrument should be used along with any specific tools needed for the particular procedure chosen.

While the portfolio provides written evidence documenting the student's background, knowledge and skills, there are four basic types of assessment procedures that are most commonly used, singularly/or in combination, when carrying out an individual assessment.

- A *written test* - such as a familiar end-of-semester examination.
- A *performance test* - in which the student demonstrates competency directly, as in welding.
- A *product evaluation* - which the student submits previously completed work.
- An *interview* - through a directed conversation you ascertain the extent of the student's knowledge.

The following section will briefly discuss some aspects of these kinds of assessment procedures.

WRITTEN TEST

A written test is the most familiar type of assessment procedure. If you choose this form of assessment, you may be able to utilize an already existing written test that has been used in the past, i.e., an end-of-course examination. More likely, you will want to modify an existing test or create an entirely new one to better capture the unique combination or knowledge and competencies of the student you are assessing. The student should be made aware of the general scope of the test and should agree that this represents the area(s) in which he/she wishes to be assessed.

With any individual assessment, the University requires documentation of the assessment process. With written tests, this is easily accomplished; simply provide a copy of the questions asked, a copy of the student's answers, and a brief evaluation statement by the committee of the student's answers.

PERFORMANCE TEST

Many college-level competencies can best be evaluated by having the student perform or produce something rather than write about doing something. This is especially true in the vocational trades. In such cases a performance test is indicative.

If the area is a "doing" area, then students are routinely given performance tests, although they may not be called such. In using a performance test for individual assessment, the same general considerations apply that apply in using a written test: (1) the test should be adapted or created with the student's unique background in mind; and (2) the University will require documentation of the assessment process. Depending on the subject matter, this may involve such things as audio recording, photographs or xerox copies of art work, or the notes made of the observation of the student's performance, as well as the evaluation summary statement of the student's performance.

There may be an additional consideration in performance testing that sets it apart from written testing: control over the testing situations the student deals with. In written testing this is completely under the control of the evaluator when he or she compiles the set of questions. The evaluator may relinquish some of this control: "Answer five of the following eight questions...."

In some instances of performance testing the evaluator also has complete control ("weld the joint in front of you...") which may be partially relinquished ("make at least three different types of welds on the material before you...").

In other instances, neither the evaluator nor the student is completely in control of the range of situations to be dealt with. For example, one could choose to evaluate a student's competency in drug counseling by attending as an observer at a counseling session of a group which the student regularly leads. The particular session you attend may be taken up completely by the handling of an unusually upsetting experience earlier that day of one of the group members. This may be therapeutically correct, and yet not give you an opportunity to evaluate the student in other aspects of drug counseling that is considered important, such as handling conflict within the group. You may, therefore, choose to attend an additional session, or perhaps use an alternate technique, such as an interview ("How would you handle...") to give you more complete information about the student's competencies.

PRODUCT EVALUATION

In individual assessment, a product evaluation may be called for when the assessor cannot directly observe the student's skills while the product is being created. For example, by its nature the actual "performance" of creative writing cannot be directly observed, but the product can be. In these cases, the “performances” which led to the creation of the product occurred some time in the past and are not recoverable, while the product itself exists and can be evaluated.

An important distinction must be made between <u>product</u> and <u>secondary evidence of availability</u>, such as testimony from external sources. Students frequently present documents, such as letters from employers, newspaper clippings, awards won, etc., as evidence of accomplishment. Almost without exception, these materials do not provide evidence of learning, or if they do, of learning that can be related to specific college courses. The present policy of UAF, therefore, is not to accept such materials by themselves as the basis for an individual assessment. They may, however, be a good starting point from which evaluation by interview can begin.

In fact, many individual assessments involve a combination of product and an interview. It is sometimes not immediately clear that a student has learned a certain skill. An interview can settle the ambiguities. In these cases, a product may reveal only part of the competency for which the student may deserve credit, and a skillful interview will draw out additional information to the benefit of the student. On the other hand, ability to verbalize about the skills involved in creating a product is not the same as ability to create the product; students should not be given credit for the ability to create a product when they merely demonstrate skill in talking about the process.

THE INTERVIEW

The interview is the most commonly used evaluation method in individual assessment. It affords the greatest opportunity for flexibility in evaluating students with non-traditional educational backgrounds. By being responsive to the student's last answer when framing the next question, the assessor can gather information about the student's knowledge and competence that would otherwise be lost in a more rigid evaluation format, such as the written test.

In an interview the assessor determines in advance the areas or topics to be covered but varies the questions, in terms of style, technique and content, to fit the immediate situation. An interview for assessment purposes is also called an “oral examination.”

There are certain steps which need to be taken before an interview begins. First, determine as specifically as possible the purpose of the interview; the overall goal. What needs to be found out? What competencies, knowledge, or skills are to be assessed? Then consider whether an interview is, in fact, the best assessment method available. Could the competency to be assessed be better evaluated by a written test, a performance test, or a product evaluation? What other assessment methods are possibilities?

Interviews are best conducted in privacy, with as few interruptions and distractions as possible. It is a good idea to find a room where voices cannot be overheard and to arrange to have no phone calls or visitors during the course of the assessment.

The first few minutes of any interview are important because they set the tone for all that follows. The student will best be able to demonstrate competency if he or she is at ease, and you can help by creating as relaxed and pleasant an atmosphere as possible. This can be accomplished by greeting the student pleasantly and giving the distinct impression you are an easy person to talk to. Some manuals suggest a few minutes of “small talk” to help reduce the student's anxiety. You can note the needs of the student and the situation and adapt the style of the questioning as necessary.

Another use for the first few minutes of an interview is to establish the pattern of the student doing most of the talking. It is also helpful to the student if you first give an overview of what will be covered and what is expected.

An important aspect of the interview, and one which is often ignored, is how to ask questions so that the student has maximum opportunity to demonstrate knowledge/competency without cues from the interviewer. The following suggestions may prove useful in this regard:

1. Choose positive wording.

2. Make use of the calculated pause: if you don't say anything the student will often elaborate.

3. When possible, use a comment instead of a question. Try to keep the interview from appearing like a cross-examination.

4. Phrase questions carefully so that they are clearly understandable, so that you don't suggest the answer you're looking for, and so that you don't cause the student to lose face.

5. Always have a clear purpose in mind when you ask a question; don't ask unnecessary questions.

You can use questions to remind the student of omitted parts of earlier responses to get further information or probe more deeply, or to clarify the meaning of earlier remarks. It is the responsibility of the chairperson to help the student be as definitive and specific as possible and to clarify ambiguous responses. Checking on answers that are unclear to you is important, but it should be done without the use of leading questions that reveal the desired reply.

Another important element in the interview situation is control. You need to maintain control of the interview in order to utilize time efficiently, economically and to ensure proper balance and adequate coverage of each area. Control can be maintained by:

1. Being systematic, for example, by following an interview schedule carefully

2. Exhausting one area before going on to the next (if you find you have forgotten something, do not go back in the middle of another area)

3. Pacing the interview, allowing enough time, not dawdling

4. Avoiding awkward pauses, although "calculated pauses" can be used judiciously

5. Focusing attention on the issues in question

6. Pushing the student along with a question if he/she goes into too much irrelevant detail and gets off the track. Anticipate the point where you can interrupt, and do it with positive comments.

You can further help the student by being responsive, for example, by really listening; by showing that you are really listening (by nodding, saying "I see," etc.); and by giving frequent supportive comments. Although it may be necessary to tell the student that an answer is wrong, avoid letting the interview degenerate into an argument.

There are two schools of thought as to whether or not notes should be taken during an interview. The argument against note taking is that it increases student anxiety and can lead to loss of rapport. In the case of an assessment interview, however, it seems absolutely essential that notes be taken for the sake of accuracy. The risk of increasing anxiety or losing rapport may be lessened by telling the student in advance that notes will be taken. Tape recording the interview with the knowledge of the student could be substituted for note taking and is another way to document the process.

A good way to close is to summarize your perception of the interview. After the interview is over, you should write down the summary evaluation of the student as soon as possible, and include as documentation for the University a list of topics covered and/or questions asked.

PITFALLS TO AVOID IN INTERVIEWING

Interviews can be affected by the personalities of the people involved. Although there is no way to control completely the subtle effects of interpersonal interaction, you can make more objective decisions by keeping in mind the following pitfalls.

One of the greatest dangers in this type of assessment is that some sort of interviewer bias will creep in and affect the outcome. One such pitfall is called the "halo effect" which refers to letting a single prominent characteristic overshadow all others.

Stereotypes and interviewer expectations are another source of bias. The interviewer must be careful to avoid jumping to conclusions and prejudging a student (either favorable or unfavorable) on the basis of any characteristic. Here are some examples:

Age – The interviewer may be reluctant to give credit to a student who is only 18, or be predisposed to give credit to one who is 40. It is easy, but wrong, to assume that since the latter is more than 20 years older, he or she automatically knows more about a given subject or has reached a higher level of competence at whatever is being assessed.

Sex – Traditional male and female roles should not stand in the way of fair assessment; as when, for example, a man seeks credit in nursing or a woman seeks credit in auto mechanics.

Race – Is another characteristic where sterotypical thinking must be avoided.

Past Experience – If a middle age student claims ten years of experience as a volunteer social worker, his or her competence still needs to be assessed before credit is awarded.

Status – Being president of a large company for ten years does not entitle a person to automatically receive credit for anything. In other words, credit is to be awarded for knowledge or competency attained, not for experiences.

In addition to interviewer bias, other pitfalls to avoid in oral assessment include inaccuracies due to misunderstanding. If you think you may have misunderstood the student, you should check and clarify. Misunderstanding on the part of the student can be minimized by careful and clear wording of questions. Finally, avoid letting a student take over the interview.

FACULTY REVIEW

FACULTY REVIEWER(S) SELECTION

1. When notified by the advisor or faculty member, the Academic Advising Center will assist in appointing individuals to serve as the review committee (minimum of two faculty members and one administrator).

2. A chairperson is designated to provide the direction and coordination of each committee's task(s).

FACULTY REVIEWERS(S) RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Faculty Reviewer:
   a. Reviews materials with advisor or faculty for completeness and adequacy.

   b. Develops criteria for rating sheet(s) and weighting percentage.

   c. Develops questions if the interview procedure is to be used.

   d. Determines need for additional documentation for the identified procedure to be followed.

   e. Prepares materials needed for assessment meeting and arranges for location and needed equipment.

   f. Completes and compiles all documentation for submission to the Dean of the school or college for credit requested.

2. Additional Reviewer(s), if applicable:
   a. Participates in any briefing or pre-evaluation meetings called by the advisor or chairperson.

   b. Assists in the student assessment process.

c. Provides input in documenting the assessment process and completion of the Evaluation Report.

EVALUATION REPORT

All documentation of the assessment process and results will be compiled and submitted to the Dean. This will include:

- All work submitted by the student
- All evaluation forms used
- Copies of any written test(s) if used
- Final Evaluation Report-filled out completely and signed by faculty reviewer(s).

EVALUATION REPORT

EVALUATION OF CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING

Student Name: ________________________________ Student ID #: __________________

Address: __________________________ City:_______________ State/ZIP: _____________

Phone: (day) _____________________ Major: _____________________________________

FACULTY REVIEWER:

____

OTHER REVIEWERS (IF APPLICABLE)

____

____

1. Technique(s) used to evaluate the competencies (interview, situation, observation, production assessment, etc.)

2. Results of evaluation: (describe in detail the scope, level, quality and quantity of the learning).

3. Recommended course titles and credits to be granted:

Course #	Title	Credits
____________	____	__________
____________	____	__________
____________	____	__________
____________	____	__________
____________	____	__________

TOTAL AWARDED ________

4. If the competencies and/or learning are incomplete, what additional learning could be pursued by a learning contract?

5. Faculty Reviewer(s) Recommendation:

Please print and sign the evaluation form and attach it to the CPL packet. Forward CPL to the Academic Advising Center 509 Gruening.

____
(Faculty Reviewer Signature)

____
(Printed Name)

____
(Date)

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