Columbia College
Portfolio Assessment Evaluation

NOTE:	Clarification of Terms
Must; Shall; Will:	These words or phrases indicate actions or activities that are *essential* or *mandatory.*
Should:	This word implies that it is highly desirable to perform certain actions or activities, but not essential or mandatory.
May or Could; Can:	These words imply freedom or liberty to follow an alternative to the action or activity being presented in a document.

1. Purpose

The Portfolio Assessment method of evaluation allows learners who may not have "formal" education or training the opportunity to have their "non-formal learning" evaluated. Once their knowledge and skills have been assessed, these learners may be granted credit towards a certificate or diploma in their chosen educational program plan at Columbia College.

2. Scope

This document addresses both 'who' should use the portfolio assessment method of evaluating prior learning; as well as 'how' to submit a portfolio assessment. Further information on the other methods of evaluation that are available for learners can be found in the **'Prior Learning Assessment and Evaluation'** document. Determining which method best suits your situation can save you time, effort, and money.

3. Definitions and Abbreviations Definitions

Portfolio Assessment	A portfolio assessment is a collection of documentation submitted by the learner that provides evidence of prior learning for the intent of obtaining credit for a specific course at Columbia College.
Assessor	An Assessor is a college academic who is assigned to evaluate a portfolio assessment for an individual course.
Assessment Jury	An Assessment Jury is a team of independent assessors assigned to evaluate a portfolio assessment for an individual course.
Residency	A residency is that proportion of a program's requirements for which the learner must obtain credit through attending courses at Columbia College. Normally, learners must complete 50% of the total program at Columbia College. In special cases, residence requirements may be waived if approved by the Program Manager and the President (or his designate).

4. Responsibilities

Each of the following stakeholders have an important role in the process of a portfolio assessment and evaluation. These roles are clearly listed below:

Stakeholder	*Role*
Student	Students have the following roles: Determine if a portfolio assessment is the correct method of Prior Learning Assessment and Evaluation that they wish to pursue. Ensure that all the requirements for submitting a complete and thorough portfolio assessment have been met 'before' submitting the portfolio assessment.
Assessor or 'Assessment Jury'	The Assessor or 'Assessment Jury' is responsible for evaluating how well the evidence of prior learning supplied in the portfolio assessment for a particular Columbia College course satisfies the learning objectives of that course. The Assessor or 'Assessment Jury' will then supply an evaluation report to the Registrar's Office. The Assessment Jury could include up to 3 assessors. When an Assessment Jury is used, each assessor in the jury does an independent evaluation of the portfolio assessment; the final decision being made is based on an average of each of the Jury members evaluations.
Registrar's Office	The role of the Registrar's Office includes communicating to all stakeholders the procedures required for submitting, evaluating, receiving credit, and appealing the decision of a portfolio assessment. All portfolio assessments are submitted to the Registrar's Office, and all correspondence to the student is made by the Registrar's Office.
Program Manager	The Program Manager is the head of the academic program to which the course(s) in the portfolio assessment belong. The role of the Program Manager is to identify to the Registrar's Office any changes to the list of Assessors for the courses in their program or department, as well as any changes to the individual course outlines.

5. Procedure

Before You Start

Is this the right method of evaluation for me?

Before using Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition through portfolio assessment, we recommend that you review the college document **'Prior Learning Assessment and Evaluation'** to determine what method of evaluation best fits your situation. Reviewing this document may save you time, effort, and money! Portfolio assessments mainly serve to describe non-credit, informal, job-based, or other learning that has not previously been allotted credit from an educational institution or recognized association.

Who can submit a portfolio assessment?

Learners wishing to submit a portfolio assessment for evaluation must be formally admitted and registered into the appropriate program at Columbia College prior to submitting their Portfolio Assessment application. Please refer to the calendar details information on admission to determine how to proceed.

Learners who fail a course are not eligible to submit a portfolio assessment for that same course unless they can demonstrate and provide evidence that new knowledge and skills have been acquired since the time the last course was completed. Normally, learners must wait six months to submit a portfolio assessment for a course in which they had received a failing grade.

Is the course eligible for a portfolio assessment evaluation?

Not all courses are eligible for a portfolio assessment evaluation. Learners should determine whether the course is eligible for an evaluation prior to submitting a portfolio assessment. The following list identifies which courses may not be eligible for a review:

a) Courses for which you have received transfer credit.
b) Courses that are unavailable at the time of registering.
c) Practicum or Work Experience courses or courses that include a Practicum or Work Experience component as part of the final course grade.
d) Courses that would have the learner exceed the allowable number of course credits available in accordance with the college's residency requirements.

Obtain Portfolio Preparation Resources

Assessors will rely upon the evidence provided in your portfolio assessment to determine whether you will receive course credit. To complete a thorough and effective portfolio assessment, you will need detailed information about the course for which you wish to receive credit for.

The following resources will help you prepare your portfolio for learning assessment:

- Course Information - This can be obtained by contacting the Registrar's Office, or the Program Manager of the chosen academic program that the course belongs to.
- Order the book (optional): "Prior Learning Assessment: The Portfolio" by Marthe Sansregret. A copy of this book is in the college library, and can be ordered through the library by calling (403) 235-9311.

Assemble Your Material

Here are some important notes regarding the assembly of your portfolio assessment. Failure to comply with these notes will delay your evaluation.

1. An individual portfolio assessment must be submitted for 'each' course for which the learner wishes to receive credit. Do not submit one portfolio assessment for multiple courses. It is extremely important for individuals to get a copy of the course syllabus for the course(s) for which they wish to get credit. The course syllabus, and text resources that are required for the course, will help the individual determine whether or not they have the range of knowledge and skills covered in the courses; as well as help identify a list of learning objectives for the course as a tool to organize their portfolio assessment. In some cases, the easiest way to organize your portfolio assessment is by matching your learning (and all the documentation that supports your claim) with each chapter of the text book used for the course.

   Course syllabi can be obtained by contacting the Registrar's Office at registrar@columbia.ab.ca .
   The texts can be reviewed at no cost in the Columbia College library, but can not be removed.

   What can I do to bring about a quick and successful portfolio assessment evaluation?
   The following tips will have a high probability of a quick and successful evaluation:

   a.) Portfolio assessments have strong evidence to show that the learner has all the skills outlined in each learning objective for the course and/or each chapter of the textbook used for the course; and

   b.) the information is laid out in a well labeled, clear and organized manner.

2. **We recommend summarizing and condensing your portfolio assessment to about 10 pages or fewer for each course wishing to be assessed.** Videos or cassettes should allow you to decrease this paper volume further. Be selective and disciplined about your choices of evidence. Put material together that could reasonably be read or experienced by an assessor in about an hour or less. The amount may vary, but assessors cannot spend large blocks of time on massive documentation. They will be influenced by tightly organized and concise material, rather than by huge volumes of random paper or other material.

3. Be as explicit and exact as you can about the prior learning you think line up with the learning objectives or line up with chapters of the text book used for the course. Decide the best way to show your material. Is it a file folder, portfolio, or a ring binder with documents? A written document detailing your prior learning with supporting evidence (such as certificates or workshop agendas in appendix form)? A cassette or videotape? Some combination of these? Other things? Name the prior learning and show how your material illustrates the corresponding learning objectives. It is important to convince your assessor or assessment jury 'what' you know, and how it lines up with the requirements for the course.

   Please review the **'Portfolio Assessment'** template form at the end of this document for an outline of how to layout your portfolio.

4. Try to organize the material so that an assessor who does not know you and who is not familiar with you, your work, or learning can follow it and understand it. Try to present the material in plain language and format. Assessors may not be specialists in your area. Avoid or explain jargon, technical terms, and acronyms.

Compile Your Portfolio

We strongly recommend that you use *Prior Learning Assessment: The Portfolio* by Marthe Sansregret to help you assemble your portfolio. Copies of this book are available in the library for review, but may also be ordered from the library. For further information on ordering this book, please call the Columbia College library at (403) 235-9311. The most important objective is to show how your prior learning corresponds to the individual learning objectives for a specific course. **The format column in the book and on disk dealing with "choice of assessment procedure" should be ignored, please use the 'Portfolio Assessment' template found at the end of this document.**

Cover Page

You must use a specific format for the covering page of your portfolio assessment. You must also sign the cover page. Failure to do so will delay your evaluation. See the Appendix for an example of what is required on the cover page of your portfolio assessment.

Portfolio Assessment Requirements

Whether you use the format from the recommended portfolio development book or not, your portfolio may include the following:

- A list outlining specific prior learning events or situations; a breakdown of exactly how the prior learning relates to specific learning objectives of your chosen course; and enough explanation of these situations so that assessors may independently grasp the contents and meaning of the material.
- You should clearly guide assessors to portfolio contents, exhibits, and other items which illustrate your prior learning.
- A compact, personal narrative outlining how the prior learning was gained.
- Carefully chosen exhibits that substantiate claims to learning as specifically as possible without being overly long. Videos or cassettes (copies for each of three assessors) should be very short and to the point, or excerpted for this purpose. We suggest under five minutes per segment.
- Reference letters or documents from employers, trainers, or others you decide to include. Current mailing addresses and phone listings for these reference persons must be listed here. Reference persons may be contacted as part of the assessment. You should inform these persons in advance and request permission to use references in this way.

  Note: In order to be recognized by assessors, these letters must satisfy the following:

  - Submitted on official letterhead stationary for the organization that the author is associated with.
  - The author must have first-hand knowledge of the student and their level of knowledge for the activities which the student has cited within their portfolio assessment.
  - The author should also be made clearly aware of the course, its related syllabus and the contents of the textbook(s) used in the course.

- The author must state clearly their relationship with the student (i.e. boss, supervisor, teacher, etc.).
- The student must explain to the author that the letter will be used for assessment of the knowledge obtained and level of understanding achieved; and not as a letter of recommendation.
- The letter should focus more on the duties, responsibilities, tasks, or activities that relate to the corresponding learning objective from the course being evaluated.
- The author of the letter should describe fully the context of the learning acquired – the *who, what, where, when, why, for how long,* etc.
- The letter must both describe the learning, as well as give his assessment of the learning at the same time.

A letter from the College is provided at the end of this document that outlines the above points, and may be sent to authors of reference letters and other letters of verification of skills.

- Rules of confidentiality for information about other people supplied as part of this portfolio must be followed. Removing names and identifying descriptions, or using fictitious names is one avenue to take. Another solution is to get written permission from those persons who are identified. Permission letter(s) must be enclosed in the portfolio.

Submit Your Portfolio
Submit three copies of your portfolio assessment along with the portfolio assessment fee to:

Columbia College Registrar's Office
802 Manning Road N.E.
Calgary, Alberta T2E7N8
Ph: 1-888-235-9370
Fax: 1-403-272-3805
www.columbia.ab.ca
registrar@columbia.ab.ca

It is very important to keep a fourth copy for yourself. An electronically submitted portfolio requires a single copy. All electronic submissions must be submitted in either an Adobe Reader 'PDF' format; or a Microsoft Word (version 97 or later) format; and are to be emailed to registrar@columbia.ab.ca . We estimate about a two month turnaround time for the evaluation.

What does a portfolio assessment cost?

Please refer to the 'General Fees and Costs' section of Columbia College's Academic Calendar for a list of fees.

How is the portfolio assessment evaluated?
Once a portfolio assessment for a Columbia College course has been received, the Office of the Registrar sends the learner's portfolio assessment to a maximum of three assessors. Assessors will evaluate the portfolio assessment independently and will be looking at the material for documentation and proof that the learner has acquired the knowledge of or can do the things listed as learning goals or competencies for the course. In some cases, assessors may request a meeting with the author of the portfolio assessment to verify the authenticity of information found or skills discussed within the portfolio.

The assessment team will assign a numerical weight to the prior learning provided in the portfolio assessment by using the following evaluation criteria table. The College Criteria table was designed to be used by assessors to determine how the evidence of the learners' prior learning activities demonstrate a working knowledge of the individual learning objective.

0 - 1	No opportunity to observe or shows almost no basic understanding of subject matter
2 - 3	Shows basic understanding of subject matter
4 - 5	Shows understanding & ability to apply the subject matter in hypothetical cases
6 - 7	Can apply subject matter in real situations
8 - 9	Can assess & challenge subject matter
10	Can develop own principles and models of subject matter

Assessors score the material 0 to 10 for each learning objective; a score of 0 means there was very little to no opportunity to assess this particular goal or competency as the learner had not included any material related to it in the portfolio.

The assessors' scores are compared with the learners self-evaluation, as well as the entire learning objectives outlined for the course. The assessors will submit their final results to the Registrar's Office, as well as a recommendation for approval or non-approval.

Once the evaluation is completed, and approved or non-approved credit has been determined, the Office of the Registrar will then send the results to the learner.

The success or failure of the portfolio assessment for an individual course is documented by a pass/fail grade. All portfolio assessment outcomes will be recorded on the learner's academic record and will appear on your official transcript with a comment that identifies that the credit was awarded through a portfolio assessment evaluation.

Student Advising
Advice about the portfolio assessment method is available from the Columbia College student services advisors, and the Office of the Registrar.

Appeals
If you are dissatisfied with portfolio assessment results, you may make an informal appeal to the Registrar's Office in writing. Unresolved disputes follow the Columbia College's official appeals procedure. (Please refer to the Appeals section of the Columbia College Academic Calendar for details)

Acknowledgement
~~Columbia College wishes to acknowledge its reliance on the Prior Learning Assessment and~~ Recognition Overview used at the Athabasca University of Alberta in the preparation of this policy.

Appendix A

I. Portfolio Assessment Title Page

You **must** use the following format for the cover page of your portfolio. You must also sign the cover page. Failure to do so will delay your assessment.

Portfolio for *(your name)*

Name:
Address:
Res. Phone:
Bus. Phone:
City/Town:
Province Postal Code:
Columbia College Student #:
Email Address:

I attest that the enclosed portfolio materials are correct and have been compiled by myself. I attest that I am the person named in this application and the portfolio materials unless otherwise signified.

The personal information collected here will be used for the purposes of credit assessment and protected by the provisions of the Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act as well as the Privacy of Information and Protection Act. If you have any questions about the collection and use of this information, contact: The Registrar's Office, Columbia College, 802 Manning Road N.E., Calgary, AB T2E 3N8 (Tel: 888-235-9370).

Non-refundable Assessment Process and Credits Fee = $250
(Your assessment cannot proceed without this payment.)

O Cheque enclosed, payable to Columbia College

Please charge the Portfolio Assessment fee to:
O VISA O Mastercard

Card # _____ Expiry Date _____

Signature on
hard copy _____

Portfolio Assessment Template

Name of the course wishing to obtain credit for:	

Please review the course outline as well as any text material for the course to identify what the learning outcomes were for that particular course. In some cases, a learning objective list has already been put together, and may be obtained from the Registrar's Office. These lists are extremely helpful in organizing how prior learning 'matches up' with the learning objectives for the course.

For each learning objective, provide the following information:

Year:	year(s) that the learning occurred
Where the learning occurred:	the name and address of the organization; the course/program name and number
Description of the learning acquired:	what I know; what can I do; attitudes and behaviors acquired
Rating:	a self-evaluation given in percent, letter grade (i.e. ABCDF), other
Supporting Documents:	report cards, transcripts, attestations, licenses, letters of verification, finished products, videos

Learning Objective

State Learning Objective here:

Year	Where the learning occurred	Description of the learning acquired	Rating	Supporting Documents

Learning Objective				
State Learning Objective here:				
Year	Where the learning occurred	Description of the learning acquired	Rating	Supporting Documents

Name of the course wishing to obtain credit for:	

Learning Objective				
State Learning Objective here:				
Year	Where the learning occurred	Description of the learning acquired	Rating	Supporting Documents

Learning Objective				
State Learning Objective here:				
Year	Where the learning occurred	Description of the learning acquired	Rating	Supporting Documents

Learning Objective				
State Learning Objective here:				
Year	Where the learning occurred	Description of the learning acquired	Rating	Supporting Documents

Learning Objective				
State Learning Objective here:				
Year	Where the learning occurred	Description of the learning acquired	Rating	Supporting Documents

If needed, photocopy page

Office of the Registrar

Letter of Attestation OR Documentation

Registrar's Office
Columbia College
802 Manning Road N.E.
Calgary, AB T2E 7N8

Columbia College's Prior Learning Assessment and Evaluation provides candidates the opportunity to receive credit for learning they have acquired in settings other than a college or University. Your letter is very important to this process because it provides evidence that the candidate does have the learning he or she claims to have. Please note the following guidelines to help you write this letter of attestation:

1. Send your written evaluation of the candidate's learning on letterhead stationery, if possible. If you do not have letterhead, be sure to include your address, daytime telephone number, and e-mail address. We may contact you with questions or ask for further information.

2. Include a description of your present position, pertinent past experience, and formal education and training.

3. Mention the candidate by name and identify your relationship to the candidate (e.g., co-worker, supervisor, etc.). Explain the situation in which you have observed his or her learning and give the dates of the observation.

4. State specifically which competencies, skills, or knowledge you are evaluating. In most cases, the candidate will inform you of these in advance and provide you with a list of "learning statements" he or she has written.

5. Describe the candidate's specific skills, knowledge, and competencies as you have observed them, in your own words. This is far more helpful than just checking the list of learning statements that may have been provided to you. While you may interview the student to refresh your memory or discuss the learning directly, please do not request that the student compose the letter for you.

6. Evaluate how well the candidate grasps the learning by using statements such as "average", "above average", "exceptional", and so on. Use examples, whenever possible, for the standards you have used to evaluate the candidate, such as "performed at the same level as my other employees who possess a bachelor's degree, or performance exceeded other volunteers under my supervision who have performed similar duties", or whatever statement most accurately represents the situation.
7. Please remember, this letter is one of attestation rather than recommendation. We are more interested in verifying the candidate's learning than in predicting future performance.

8. Sign your letter and send it directly to the address on this letterhead. Be sure to keep a copy for yourself. The candidate should provide you with a stamped, pre-addressed envelope. After receiving your letter, we will send a copy to the student.

Your letter will be most helpful to the candidate and to us if it is an accurate evaluation of the candidate's learning. Thank you for your participation in the program. Please call us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Columbia College Registrar