

Portfolio Assessment Guidelines

Telos Institute

What is portfolio assessment?

Portfolio assessment is an efficient, flexible way to **earn college credit for what you have learned outside the traditional classroom**. Telos recognizes college-level learning regardless of where it happens, and has devised a system to evaluate a variety of learning experiences that go beyond the boundaries of a regular college course. If your experiences produces learning that meets the proper criteria, you may receive credit toward a Telos degree or certificate.

A portfolio is a formal request for credit, compiled in an approved format, usually in the form of a notebook. Each portfolio you submit will contain explanations and documentation to demonstrate that you have already attained accomplished the objectives of a particular course or courses. Telos staff will evaluate your portfolio and make a decision whether or not to grant credit.

Who can earn credit by portfolio assessment?

The portfolio assessment program is only open to students who have applied and been **accepted** as Telos students, and are **working toward a Telos degree** or certificate. Such credits are often difficult to transfer to other colleges, so you should use them to move more efficiently through a Telos program.

You must be **at least 16** to enter a Telos program, and portfolios are most useful to older students who have more experiences about which to write.

What kinds of experiences can be used to earn credit by portfolio assessment?

You can base portfolios on a wide variety of sources. Some common ones include:

- full or part-time employment
- ministry or service activities, IBLP or other training programs
- community service

church involvement
military service
personal study projects

But not everything in your past will count for credit. Your portfolios will have to meet several criteria:

- You earn credit for **what you have learned, not for the amount of time you spent**. We all know people who have held the same job for years - but stopped learning after Year One!
- You earn credit only for **college-level learning**. Your competence must be at least the equivalent of that normally achieved in a regular college course.
- You earn credit **only once** for each experience.
- You earn credit when you have learned **both the theory** of a subject and **the practical application** of those principles. Mastery of a subject involves knowing what steps to take in a particular situation *and* what principles help you know what to do in different situations.
- You earn credit when you learn skills that can be **applied to a variety of situations**. If you learn a set of procedures that are only used in one company, the experience would not qualify for credit.
- You earn credit when your learning is in an area **that fits into the requirements of the Telos program** you are pursuing. You may have 75 hours worth of experience in political science, but you can only use the number of hours that will fit the pattern of requirements.
- You may earn **up to 25%** of the credit for a degree or certificate through portfolio assessment.

What procedure do you follow to earn portfolio credit?

1. Submit a Telos application and be accepted as a student.

As part of the application process (question 24), you will have an opportunity to declare your intention to pursue a degree or certificate. If you do so, you will be eligible to go on to the next step.

2. Plan your program with the help of an advisor.
 - a. If you intend to earn a degree or certificate from Telos, it is important to **schedule a conference with an advisor** from the Telos staff. This should take place within two months after you begin work toward your goal. This conference may take place in person or by phone, supplemented by e-mail communication.

- b. In preparation for the conference, **complete the Program Planning Worksheet** (attached to this document as an appendix). This will help you consider your goals and possible schedule, as well as provide a pattern for gathering information that you can use to seek credit for past education or experience. Most students will find it helpful to write a summary of past learning experiences, using the guidelines explained in *Experience Makes a Great Teacher*, a Telos manual which explains how to construct a life portfolio. You can do Steps One and Two in that manual to prepare for the conference with your advisor. *Experience Makes a Great Teacher* may be ordered from the Telos office.
 - c. What **objectives** will you try to accomplish in your conference and follow-up conversations with your advisor?
 - Write a clear statement of your goals, including choice of program.
 - Review the requirements for graduation from your program. If you are planning to earn a B.A. from Telos, you will discuss the program entrance process that takes place when you have completed approximately one half of the program.
 - Confirm any credit you may transfer in from other schools.
 - Develop a list of any portfolios you may want to present for assessment, in order to receive credit for past experiences. The advisor will estimate the number of credits which may be earned, and help you decide which portfolios to prepare.
3. Submit a portfolio proposal to your advisor.

Write a brief proposal outlining the area(s) in which you plan to present a portfolio for evaluation, specifying which graduation requirement you are attempting to fulfill. Your advisor will review your plan, and once he approves it (with the concurrence of the Dean), he will arrange a specific timetable for submitting each portfolio, as well as specifying the fees involved.

If you plan to request credit by portfolio for several areas, you will usually write a separate portfolio for each area. Courses that are closely related may sometimes be covered in a single portfolio, but this must be approved by the advisor.

4. Compile the portfolio

Each portfolio should contain the following items:

- a. Cover sheet, including your name, degree program, name of advisor, and date of portfolio submission.
- b. Description of the area (course title) for which you wish to receive credit. What program requirement will this credit fulfill? How many credits do you wish to receive?
- c. Description of the experience(s) for which you to receive credit. This can be a brief description of the activity including dates and responsibilities.

- d. An essay that outlines what you learned, how you learned it, and how it meets the criteria for college-level credit in the selected area. You should also briefly explain the materials you are providing in support of your request. This essay should be from three to ten pages in length.
- e. Documentation to demonstrate the claims made in the essay. The letters, certificates or other items included should show that you actually completed the experiences you have described, and that the breadth and quality of your learning justifies the award of credit. Additional suggestions for documentation may be found in *Experience Makes a Great Teacher*.
- f. Your portfolio should be packaged in a folder or binder.

We believe that the process of constructing a portfolio can be a valuable experience in itself. You can look back over your past to see how God has led you and prepared you for His calling on your life. You will find much to encourage you and to share in testimony with others.

5. Submit your portfolio to your advisor.

The advisor will check your format and presentation to be sure that the portfolio is ready for evaluation. If there are serious deficiencies, he may send it back to you for corrections.

The advisor will then send the portfolio to a tutor who specializes in the content of the area you have chosen. This content specialist will evaluate the portfolio and return it to the advisor with one of the following recommendations:

- a. *Approved* - Your work is of college level in the appropriate area.
 If your credit is approved, the advisor will notify the Telos office so that it can be recorded on your transcript.
 Your transcript will list the name of the course, the number of semester hours granted, and a notation PA to indicate a credit earned through portfolio assessment. The grade will be recorded as pass/fail, rather than as a letter grade.
- b. *Not approved* - Your work is not of college level or not in the correct area of study.
 It is possible to appeal the decision of “Not approved” by sending a written request to the advisor, who will consult with the Dean. If there is reason to believe that a portfolio has been evaluated improperly, it may be submitted to a second evaluator. Decisions beyond that point are final.
- c. *Approved with conditions* - Your work meets some of the criteria for credit, but you need to provide more information or complete additional study projects to qualify for credit.
 If your portfolio is approved with conditions, your advisor will help you set up a schedule and procedure for meeting the conditions. When you have completed the steps required, credit may be awarded.