

# Guidelines for Writing Prior Learning Essays

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*Prior-learning essays* are a means of petitioning faculty members at Portland Bible College to receive college credit for learning gained from selected life experiences. Essays must reflect an adult experience and contain enough depth of learning to articulate major themes and concepts. Each essay is approximately eight pages long and, following the Kolb/Fry Model of experiential learning, is divided into four sections. Each of these sections will be explained in detail below.

## **1. Download Petition Sheet and write an Abstract that summarizes the content of your essay.**

When writing this paragraph, follow these guidelines:

1. Single-space the paragraph
2. Present the summarized ideas in the same pattern and order as in your essay.
3. Download Addendum A, Request for Academic Credit for Prior Learning.
4. Copy and paste your abstract in the appropriate space.
5. This petition form must be included with your essay.

## **2. Divide essay into four sections. Specific headings will precede each of the four sections and follow general MLA manuscript guidelines.**

Headings are to be centered and use headline-style capitalization and boldface. **These headings are:**

1. Concrete Experience
2. Observations and Reflections
3. Abstract Concepts and Generalizations
4. Applying Concepts in New Situations

## **3. Under the headings, include the following information**

### ***Concrete Experience***

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This is a narrative of your experience. It will be a straightforward, matter-of-fact accounting of the experience from beginning to end. Include details like who did what, when, where, and with whom. You may add specific details and descriptions as space allows.

*Approximately two pages*

### *Observations and Reflections*

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This is an analysis of your experience that examines or explains why things happened as they did and what they meant to you. Include thoughts, feelings, and observations about the experience while you were going through it. Consider these questions about your experience: What were your reflections at that time? How did you cope? What did you observe about yourself and others? What were you grateful for? What did you question? What frustrated you? What lenses did you use to understand, perceive, and interpret the experience? How was your spiritual life impacted? *Approximately two pages*

### *Abstract Concepts and Generalizations*

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In this section, focus on the concepts you learned. Please state three to five *personal* learning outcomes. Underline these learning outcomes. As you expand this section, you will want to use several of the following to explain the learning outcomes: quoting experts in the field, citing statistics, referencing books or training materials, or alluding to other specific examples that underscore or validate your learning. These should all be documented according to the MLA style. *Approximately two pages*

### *Applying Concepts in New Situations*

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Lessons well-learned translate into other areas of life. In this section, you will outline how you have applied the learning outcomes to *other* areas of your life and/or incorporated the concepts and principles in new situations. Outcomes can be applicable to home, work, community, and/or personal life. Be specific. Short stories work well. Show how the successful application of the learning has enhanced and improved your life and the lives of others. If you have not had the opportunity to apply all of the learning outcomes, you may include a brief discussion of how you anticipate applying your learning to future situations. Be careful to stay focused on the outcomes you listed in the third section (Abstract Concepts and Generalizations), and be sure not to introduce new concepts in this section. *Approximately two pages*

## **4. Double-check the essay to maximize the potential credit award.**

- Make sure each section refers to and builds on the *theme* of your essay.
- Double-check that the essay follows the outline of the Kolb/Fry model and includes the required information in each of the four sections.
- Read your paper aloud. Edit for punctuation and grammar as you read.
- Include the Abstract on Request for Academic Credit for Prior Learning, Addendum A.
- Essays should be in 12-point font, double-spaced, and use MLA-style formatting.

- MLA formatting includes: a running header with last name and page number on each page; in-text citations for referenced material; and a Works Cited page on the last page listing any sources you've used in your essay.

## Submitting a Life-Learning Essay for Credit

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### **1. Prepare the life-learning petition cover sheet.**

A properly prepared, thoroughly completed cover sheet must accompany each essay submitted for evaluation.

Addendum A - a fillable word form can be downloaded from the following webpage:  
<https://portlandbiblecollege.org/academics/prior-ministry-experience/>

### **2. Attach documentation of the experience.**

Documentation of the learning experience must be attached to the essay submission.

Examples of documentation include a copy of a marriage certificate, newspaper clipping, photograph, letter from another person involved in the experience, etc. Please do not send originals.

### **3. Submit \$75 Fee**

A properly prepared, thoroughly completed cover sheet must accompany each essay submitted for evaluation.

### **4. Submit all components of the application (Cover Sheet, Essay, Additional Documentation and Fee)**