



ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY #30-03 EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING POLICY

Policy Title: Experiential Learning Policy

Policy Type: Administrative

Policy Number: 30-03

Approval Date: 9/24/2026

Responsible Office: Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Responsible Executive: Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Applies to: University Community

POLICY STATEMENT

Norfolk State University (NSU) adheres to the philosophy that education is a process of lifelong learning. The University recognizes that (1) college-level learning can be gained outside of a traditional college classroom or university setting through various activities such as work experience, volunteerism, travel, self-study, or training, and (2) experiential learning merits credit when it is properly demonstrated and validated. This policy is related to specific policies for military students: BOV Policy # 08 (2014) Award of Academic Credit for Military Education, Training and Experience and Administrative Policy #31-502 (2014) Award of Credit for Military Education and Experiential Learning.

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DEFINITIONS

- A. Experiential Learning:** Refers to learning that is acquired outside of a traditional classroom. This can be a co-curricular activity linked to a traditional classroom or professional standards in a particular field of study such as practica, internships, student teaching, service learning, or cooperative education.
- B. Prior Learning:** Learning that is equal to college-level learning and has been gained outside of a traditional classroom prior to a student's enrollment in a university degree program (e.g., work or military experience, self-study, volunteerism, training, travel, etc.).
- C. Prior Learning Assessment:** A method of evaluating and recognizing learning that is equal to college-level learning that has been gained outside of a traditional classroom prior to a student's enrollment in a university degree program.
- D. Portfolio:** An organized collection of material that documents prior learning achievements and relates them to learning outcomes of college courses. Usually, the portfolio is developed to capture several fields of study for which there are no specific examinations.

CONTACTS

The Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs officially interprets this policy. The Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs is responsible for obtaining approval for any revisions as required by BOV Policy #01 (2014) Creating and Maintaining Policies throughout the appropriate governance structures. Questions regarding this policy should be directed to the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

STAKEHOLDERS

The University campus community (undergraduate students, graduate students, transfer students; academic advisors; faculty; Registrar; Enrollment Management).

PROCEDURES

I. Criteria for Consideration

- A. To earn credit for experiential learning, a student must be enrolled as a degree-seeking student at Norfolk State University.
- B. Experiential Learning Credit Options (Undergraduate Level)
 - 1. Credit for Training: Military and professional training that is evaluated and recommended for college credit by the American Council on Education (ACE) and training that is within an articulated agreement with Norfolk State University and is approved for credit.*
 - 2. Departmental Examinations: Upon approval of the student's major by the department head and dean of the college/school in which the course is housed, a student may take a comprehensive exam in an academic course in which he or she can demonstrate proficiency and, upon passing the examination, receive credit for that course. A course may be challenged only once.
 - 3. External Examinations: Upon approval of the student's major by the department head and dean, a student may submit satisfactory scores on external professional examinations. This includes Advanced Placement (AP), the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES), International Baccalaureate (IB), and other



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professional certifications or examinations evaluated by the American Council of Education (ACE) for college-level credit.*

4. Portfolio Development: Upon approval by the department head and dean of the student's major and the course(s) involved, a student may develop a portfolio for course(s) offered by Norfolk State University. This portfolio will be reviewed by a faculty member appointed by the head of the appropriate department and college/school involved.

II. Guidelines and Considerations

- A. Credit is awarded for learning that can be demonstrated, not for experience.
- B. Credit is awarded for learning which is college level and meets the standards of NSU; that is, it is relevant to actual course competencies.
- C. Assessment of experiential learning is completed by faculty experts in the relevant subject area.
- D. Credit earned through an assessment of experiential learning cannot be duplicated through other mechanisms for earning credit.
- E. Experiential learning credit will be granted upon the written recommendation of the department head having jurisdiction over the courses involved with the dean's approval.
- F. The applicability of experiential learning credit toward a *specific* degree program is subject to departmental approval.
- G. A student may not fail a course at Norfolk State University and later receive credit for the same course through an experiential learning option.
- H. The satisfactory scores for knowledge-based or professional examinations are determined by the appropriate department and the dean of the college/school involved.
- I. No letter grade will be entered on the student's transcript for experiential learning credit. Experiential learning credit will be treated in the same way as transfer credit. A "P" will be assigned and it will not count toward the student's grade point average.
- J. A student may earn a maximum of 60 semester hours at the undergraduate level through experiential learning credit. However, each department determines the maximum credit that can be awarded for a particular degree and will establish its own process for evaluating and awarding credit. The student must meet all University and departmental residency requirements.
- K. The opportunity to seek experiential learning credit is open to full and part-time degree-seeking students.

*These mechanisms are being used currently at NSU.

III. Portfolio Development

- A. Portfolio development is a process for creating an organized collection of essays and documentation, demonstrating learning skills through work and life experiences. The portfolio, specifically, must articulate knowledge equivalent to what is taught in a college course.
- B. There are several steps and processes involved in Portfolio Development. Enrollment in a course or workshop is a pre-requisite for portfolio development and is considered essential for preparation, successful completion, and approval for credit. Students must complete the preparation for portfolio development by enrolling in one of the following:
 1. A traditional portfolio development course
 2. A non-traditional portfolio development course
 3. A traditional or non-traditional workshop either for credit or non-credit.



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- C. The department determines the courses that may be completed by portfolio development and provides the specifications. Not all courses will be considered for portfolio development.
- D. The portfolio can include knowledge and skills gained from a wide variety of sources, but these are some of the more common ones used for Portfolio Assessment:
 - 1. Full or part-time jobs
 - 2. Independent reading and study
 - 3. Training programs or in-service courses
 - 4. Volunteer work
 - 5. Cultural and artistic pursuits
 - 6. Military service
 - 7. Travel study.
- E. An Advanced Standing Committee will be formed and will be assigned the task of reviewing the portfolio and making decisions using uniform guidelines as established by the University.
- F. The Advanced Standing Committee will assess the following:
 - 1. Is the knowledge sufficient?
 - 2. Has the student demonstrated application of this knowledge?
 - 3. Has the student shown the relationship between the knowledge and the evidence?
- G. The Advanced Standing Committee will determine whether or not knowledge of the subject is equal to a college-level grade of “C” or better:
 - 1. If so, then credit will be recommended.
 - 2. If the knowledge is judged to be insufficient, the Advanced Standing Committee will recommend that credit be denied. **
 - 3. If the Advanced Standing Committee decides that more information is needed in order to make a determination, the student may be asked to submit additional evidence, take an examination, and/or be interviewed. **

*****The latter practices are often used in cases where students have acquired knowledge of a subject that cannot be documented.***
- H. The Advanced Standing Committee shall consist of the student’s department head, faculty advisor, representative of the department from which the course originates, and workshop/course instructor.

IV. Experiential Learning Policy Committee

- A. The committee will be appointed annually.
- B. Each college/school dean will appoint one representative.

EDUCATION AND COMPLIANCE

The dean of the sponsoring college/school shall be responsible for training the members of the Advanced Standing Committee who will be reviewing the portfolio and making decisions using uniform guidelines as established by the University whenever such committee is formed. Records of training will be maintained by the sponsoring college/school, and a copy will be forwarded to the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

To ensure conformity to the requirements of this policy, the dean of the sponsoring college/school and the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs will monitor for compliance with this policy. Violations of this policy will be reported to the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs as necessary. Noncompliance with this policy may conflict with the Southern Association for Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges’ policy on awarding credits toward a degree.



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PUBLICATION

The Experiential Learning Policy will be published and disseminated to the University community. The Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs will make every effort to

- Communicate the policy in writing, electronically or otherwise, to the University community within 14 days of approval;
- Submit the Experiential Learning Policy for inclusion in the online Policy Library within 14 days of approval;
- Post the Experiential Learning Policy on the Academic Affairs website; and
- Educate and train all stakeholders and appropriate audiences on the policy contents, as necessary.

Failure to satisfy procedural requirements does not invalidate this policy.

EVALUATION

An evaluation study is recommended at the undergraduate and graduate levels after one year, but not later than two years after the Experiential Learning Policy has been implemented. The successes and failures of the Experiential Learning Policy should be determined, and any recommendations for strengthening the initiative should be forwarded to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

REVIEW SCHEDULE

- Next Scheduled Review: 03/01/2029
- Approved by: President's Cabinet
- Approval Date: 01/13/2015; 09/24/2026
- Revision History: April 16, 2018; April 27, 2021; September 24, 2026
- Supersedes: NSU Policy # 30:005 Experiential Learning Policy

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- [BOV Policy # 08 \(2014\) Award of Academic Credit for Military Education, Training and Experience](#)
- [Administrative Policy #31-15 \(2014\) Award of Credit for Military Education and Experiential Learning](#)

FORMS

There are no forms associated with this policy and procedures.