# Portfolio Development Handbook

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Quinsigamond Community College is committed to a policy of affirmative action, equal opportunity, equal education, non-discrimination and diversity. We are committed to providing a learning and working environment that values the diverse backgrounds of all people.
PART I  What is portfolio assessment?

Portfolio assessment is a method to document that your knowledge equals that taught in a college-level course and is eligible for credit.

This process involves two parts:
- the development of the portfolio, which is the document you create
- the assessment (evaluation) of the portfolio by faculty

The portfolio is a combination of narratives and copies of your official documentation, generally organized in a loose-leaf binder. In addition, if credit earned through portfolio assessment is to be used to replace an existing QCC course, the course description, and/or a current syllabus should also be included.

Portfolio assessment validates prior learning and does not involve instruction on the part of a QCC instructor. QCC is able to award credit if your portfolio addresses important nationally-approved standards:

Credit is awarded for learning, not for experience.
What documentation do you have that demonstrates specific competencies that you have achieved? You’ll need to identify skills, competencies and knowledge. For example, “accounts payable/ accounts receivable, general ledger” competencies based, on job descriptions, performance evaluations and samples of your work.

The learning needs to be academically orientated.
The subject matter should fit within the scope of your academic program. For example, if you want to use work experience to fulfill a business elective, the experience needs to have occurred within a business setting.

The learning needs to be college-level.
This can be determined through a combination of factors. It must have taken substantial time (a three credit course involves 45 hours inside the classroom and assumes an additional 45-90 hours outside of the classroom). It should involve analytical and critical thinking skills. It must include a theoretical foundation, as well as practical applications.

NOTE: it’s helpful to review several course descriptions to get an idea of the scope and nature of a college-level class. You should be able to express what you learned in a manner similar to a course description as part of the application process. The learning should include appropriate “language of the field” or technical terms.
DEFINITIONS:

**Portfolio** - a student-created document that contains evidence of skills, competencies and general knowledge acquired through prior learning

**Portfolio assessment** – the process through which the documentation in the portfolio is evaluated by an instructor and measured against the outcomes of a college-level learning experience

**Narrative** – a reflective essay that clearly identifies skills, competencies and knowledge

**Reflective Writing** – a personalized form of writing that speaks about your previous experiences, how you acquired them and your opinions of how these experiences have shaped your personal development

**Evaluator** – the QCC instructor who is hired to assess the competencies, skills and general knowledge contained in the portfolio. This form is measured against learning outcomes for collegiate courses

**Competencies** – a specific skills set

**Credit** – the educational unit that represents the amount of time spent in the classroom. Each credit is the equivalent of 15 hours of contact time. College courses at QCC are generally 3 credits (45 hours of contact time).

**Prior learning** – the term used to refer to skills, knowledge and/or competencies acquired outside of a collegiate setting
PART II Process for portfolio development

If you are interested in earning credit through a Portfolio Assessment, here are your next steps:

- Discuss developing a portfolio with your advisor to determine how it fits into your program requirements.
- Schedule an initial appointment with a staff member in the Career Placement Services Office, Room 272A, to learn more about portfolio development and to determine if your prior learning is appropriate for portfolio assessment.
- Compile your portfolio, based on QCC portfolio recommended guidelines. Submit a copy of your documentation. BE SURE TO KEEP THE ORIGINAL.
- Schedule a follow-up meeting to finalize the application process.
- You will be asked to pay for your credits before your portfolio is officially reviewed. The non-refundable fee of $65 per credit is required prior to the evaluation of your portfolio.
- Your portfolio will be forwarded to the instructor for formal review or you may request a meeting to present it yourself. The instructor will award the grade of P (pass) for a portfolio that documents appropriate college-level learning. At the completion of this process, if credit is awarded you will receive notification from the Registrar’s Office. If the portfolio does not demonstrate adequate knowledge, no credit is awarded.

Student responsibilities and other information

- You are responsible for providing truthful and accurate information
- You are responsible for presenting your portfolio in a format that is conducive for review.
  - All of your documentation should be arranged in a loose-leaf notebook
  - Your name and course number/title should be clearly labeled on the spine of the notebook
- We recommend that you make one copy of your portfolio to submit for assessment, and retain the original for your records.
- Presentation:
  - Submit the portfolio directly to Career Placement Services Office. We will send it to the instructor for review. After it has been assessed, you will be contacted and asked to pick up the portfolio, or
  - You may schedule an appointment with faculty for individual review, after payment verification has been received.
- Portfolios left for faculty review will be retained for one year and then discarded, if not picked up by student
- You are required to pay $65 per credit, prior to assessment
  - Fees are non-refundable
TO REPLACE AN EXISTING COURSE:
If the portfolio will be used to replace an existing course, the documentation needs to clearly show that the competencies acquired mirror those taught in the QCC course. In order to ensure that the documentation is appropriate we will obtain information about the specific course including a syllabus. When appropriate we will obtain for you additional guidelines from instructor.

Carefully consider how your skills meet college-level objectives prior to construction of the actual portfolio. We recommend using a portfolio assessment worksheet by creating your own template as a Microsoft Word Table there is a (sample on page 13).

- The first column of the worksheet outlines, in concrete terms, specific learning outcomes (objectives). It is understood that these are what you would learn, had you taken the course as a regular class.
- The second column asks you to think about how you acquired the skills to achieve these outcomes. There are many ways this could have been accomplished: work-based training, non-credit courses, direct and indirect instruction on the job, seminars, and/or individual reading.
- The third column requests that you consider the specific documentation to include that indicates that you have achieved the learning objectives. Standard documentation might include:
  - Your resume
  - Your job description/s
  - Your performance evaluations
  - Certificates from training programs
  - Transcripts
  - Employment records
  - Letters of reference/commendation
  - Actual examples of your work, including reports, documents you completed as a result of working (i.e. applications), memos, letters, procedures manuals, etc.

In many instances, there may not be actual documentation, or if it does exist, it may not clearly evidence the learning achieved. In that case, you should be prepared to include narratives, which are essays that explain to the evaluator what you know.

- **Introduction to the portfolio**
  This is a very important part of the portfolio, as it explains to the evaluator why you feel your portfolio should be worthy of credit. The introduction should address the following:
  - **Why you are submitting the portfolio?** If you are using it to replace an existing course, or a CO-OP, this should be clearly articulated in the introduction. You should make reference to the course description, and present a brief synopsis of how and why your prior learning experience matches the catalog description.
  - **How you acquired the skills/competencies.** This should include reference to your resume, work experience, training and other evidence, as appropriate.
  - **What the portfolio includes.** You will want to help the evaluator understand how the documentation reflects your learning.
 Longer narratives. In certain circumstances, standard documentation is not enough to demonstrate your skills. In these cases, longer narratives may be necessary so that the evaluator will know and understand where your competencies lie. These may include:

- Case studies. A detailed description of how you handle a particular case is often an appropriate way for you to document the application of your skills. This is especially relevant for Human Services students, whose work with clients involves the application of certain skills.
- Typical work day. A detailed description of how you go about your daily tasks indicates your time management skills, critical thinking abilities and other specific competencies.
- How you go about accomplishing a task. A step-by-step description of how you go about accomplishing a specific task indicates the application of specific skills.

 Short, explanatory narratives. These are especially useful to explain what you learned in specific instances. For example, you may want to attach a paragraph to each training certificate so that the evaluator understands the skills you learned and how you applied them.

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TO REPLACE CO-OP

For many students, earning their degree comes after acquiring employment in their chosen field. If you are enrolled in a program requiring CO-OP, the development of a portfolio, which documents work experience, may be appropriate to replace the CO-OP.

Please keep the following in mind:

- **CO-OP is generally the capstone experience for any program.** It generally occurs at the end of an academic program and represents the opportunity to put into practice the classroom learning that has comprised most of the student’s academic history. It’s an opportunity to use what has been learned and to gain valuable work-based skills.

- **Credit earned through CO-OP is academic in nature.** That is, credit is earned for the learning acquired on the job, not for the experience of working. Your work-based portfolio needs to represent the same academic foundations as the CO-OP experience.

- You should review the courses required for your program in order to make reference to specific course learning outcomes and show how that knowledge is applied to your work.

- Be sure to reference the “language of your trade” whenever possible.

Standard documentation might include:

- Your resume
- Your job description/s
- Your performance evaluations
- Certificates from training programs
- Transcripts
- Employment records
- Letters of reference/ commendation
- Actual examples of your work, including reports, documents you complete as a result of working (i.e. applications), memos, letters, procedures manuals, etc
NARRATIVES:
In many instances, there may not be actual documentation, or if it does exist, it may not clearly evidence the learning achieved. In that case, you should be prepared to include narratives, which are essays that explain to the evaluator what you know.

- **Introduction to the portfolio.** This is a very important part of the portfolio, as it explains to the evaluator why you feel your portfolio should be worthy of credit. The introduction should address the following:
  - **Why you are submitting the portfolio?** Since you are using it to replace CO-OP, this should be clearly articulated in the introduction. You should make reference to your work history and current job responsibilities, and present a brief synopsis of how and why your prior learning experience is of academic merit.
  - **How you acquired the skills/competencies.** This should include reference to your resume, work experience, training and other evidence, as appropriate.
  - **What the portfolio includes.** You will want to help the evaluator understand how the documentation reflects your learning.

- **Longer narratives.** In certain circumstances, standard documentation is not enough to demonstrate your skills. In these cases, longer narratives may be necessary so that the evaluator will know and understand where your competencies lie.
  - **Case studies.** A detailed description of how you handle a particular case is often an appropriate way for you to document the application of your skills. This is especially relevant for Human Services students, whose work with clients involves the application of certain skills.
  - **Typical work day.** A detailed description of how you go about your daily tasks indicates your time management skills, critical thinking abilities and other specific competencies.
  - **How you go about accomplishing a task.** A step-by-step description of how you go about accomplishing a specific task indicates the application of specific skills.

- **Short, explanatory narratives.** These are especially useful to explain what you learned in specific instances. For example, you may want to attach a paragraph to each training certificate so that the evaluator understands the skills you learned and how you applied them.

**NOTES:**
TO EARN ELECTIVE CREDIT

If you have had substantial experience that reflects a discipline taught at QCC, you may be able to earn elective credit through portfolio assessment.

Please keep the following in mind:

- Credit earned through portfolio assessment is academic in nature. That is, credit is earned for the learning acquired and not for the experience of “doing.” Your portfolio needs to represent the same academic foundations as a standard, college-level experience. It should have taken a substantial amount of time, effort and energy to achieve the knowledge that forms the basis of your portfolio.
- You should review the courses descriptions in the disciplines related to the topic of your portfolio.

For instance, if you have a passion for American painting and spend time in museums, you might want to turn this experience into credit. Viewing paintings isn’t enough. As you can see from the following course description for another art course, the artwork needs to be put into a proper theoretical context. So, in addition to reflecting your understanding of painting, you’ll need to be able to interpret other factors, such as the social, political, environmental and humanistic influences that affected the specifics pieces of work. Consider the following course description from the QCC Catalog. Note that it’s not just what you know, but also how you interpret what you know:

**ART 111 A History Of Art I**

3 credits

This course presents a study of art through the major historical periods in Western civilization. Course topics include pre-historic, ancient, classical, early Christian, and Byzantine artistic expressions including painting, sculpture, architecture, and the minor arts. Students learn the many aspects of the visual arts as they relate to the formal influences by examining the underlying social, political, environmental, and humanistic factors of specific historical periods. Museum trips are required.

Standard documentation might include:

- Your resume, if it relates to the focus of your portfolio
- Your job description, if it relates to the focus of your portfolio
- Certificates from training programs
- Awards
- Newspaper stories or articles
- Letters of reference/ commendation
- Actual examples of your work
NARRATIVES:
In many instances, there may not be actual documentation, or if it does exist, it may not clearly show your skills and competencies. In that case, you should be prepared to include narratives, which are essays that explain to the evaluator what you know.

- **Introduction to the portfolio.** This is a very important part of the portfolio, as it explains to the evaluator why you feel your portfolio should be worthy of credit. The introduction should address the following:
  - **Why you are submitting the portfolio?** You should make reference to your learning experience, and present a brief synopsis of how and why it is of academic merit.
  - **How you acquired the skills/competencies.** This should include reference to your resume, work experience, training and other evidence, as appropriate.
  - **What the portfolio includes.** You will want to help the evaluator understand how the documentation reflects your learning.

- **Longer narratives.** In certain circumstances, standard documentation is not enough to demonstrate your skills. In these cases, longer narratives may be necessary so that the evaluator will know and understand where your competencies lie.
  - **Case studies.** A detailed description of how you handle a particular case is often an appropriate way for you to document the application of your skills. This is especially relevant for Human Services students, whose work with clients involves the application of certain skills.
  - **Typical Work Day.** A detailed description of how you go about your daily tasks indicates your time management skills, critical thinking abilities and other specific competencies.
  - **How You Go About Accomplishing A Task.** A step-by-step description of how you go about accomplishing a specific task, included in your portfolio, indicates the application of specific skills.

- **Short, explanatory narratives.** These are especially useful to explain what you learned in specific instances. For example, you may want to attach a paragraph to each training certificate so that the evaluator understands the skills you learned and how you applied them.

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TO EARN CREDIT BY TAKING A NON-CREDIT COURSE

If you plan to take a course and use it to replace an existing QCC course, or to earn elective credits, please follow these guidelines.

Prior to taking the course, be sure to confirm that the scope and content will be appropriate for the award of credit.

- Complete the course. Be sure to save everything related to it:
  - Published description
  - Course outline or syllabus
  - Reading list
  - Assignments
  - Copies of your work
  - Copies of evaluations
  - Certificate of completion and/or transcript showing successful completion

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PART III. Frequently asked questions

- **How do I present my portfolio?**
  You have two options for presentation of the portfolio. A copy of the completed portfolio may be submitted at the time of application for faculty review. Or, if you prefer, you may indicate that you would like to meet individually with faculty for a face-to-face presentation.

- **Will I need to submit the portfolio before the end of the semester?**
  Portfolio assessment can be conducted at any point during the year, providing there is faculty to review it. It is not bound to the academic schedule.

- **Who evaluates it?**
  A faculty member in the appropriate academic discipline will be hired to assess the portfolio.

- **Will I get it back?**
  Yes. If you do not present it yourself, you will be notified after the assessment and asked to pick up the portfolio.

- **What if I do not pass?**
  It is rare for portfolios not to pass. In most cases, the faculty member will request additional information to document your knowledge. Credit is not awarded until after the portfolio is evaluated, so no failing grade would appear on your transcript.

- **How much does it cost?** $65 per credit

- **Will credit transfer?**
  You should check with the school you plan to transfer to prior to initiating the assessment. The QCC transcript key clearly indicates that a “P” is equivalent to a “C” or better, which is a passing grade.

- **Will an instructor work with me as I develop the portfolio?**
  Since portfolio assessment is considered a prior learning option, there is no faculty instruction. In most cases, you will be provided with guidelines, such as a syllabus or textbook information, to assist you with the development.

- **What if I can’t get all the information I need?**
  In some cases, students are able to document their knowledge through written narratives, if specific documentation is not available.
# Portfolio Development Worksheet

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course objective (taken from syllabus or faculty guidelines)</th>
<th>Your actual experience</th>
<th>Documentation for portfolio (document or narrative)</th>
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<td>Objective #1</td>
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<td>Objective #5</td>
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1 Add additional objective sections, as necessary
**PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT APPLICATION**

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<td>Instructor confirmation:</td>
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<td>Date paid:</td>
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<td>Instructor packet sent:</td>
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<td>File in current semester folder:</td>
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<td>Leave portfolio:</td>
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<td>Meet with faculty to present portfolio:</td>
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<tr>
<th>COURSE#</th>
<th>CREDITS</th>
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| COURSE TITLE | |
|--------------| |
| PREREQUISITES | |

**Part I:**

**STUDENT INFORMATION:**

Have you earned credit through Portfolio Assessment at QCC? __ yes __ no

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<th>Major</th>
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<td>Area Code</td>
<td>(Both) Evening</td>
<td>Day</td>
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<th>Student Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
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I have reviewed the policies/procedures for portfolio assessment

* Restricted to matriculated QCC students only

**Directions:**

1. Bring completed application, payment verification and registration form to Career Placement Services Office, Room 272A
2. CPS will forward credit authorization to Registrar’s office once we receive verification of successful evaluation

**Part II: APPROVALS:**

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<th>Office Staff</th>
<th>Date</th>
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**Part III:**

**GRADE REPORT/EVALUATION**

**FINAL GRADE:**

- “P” if documentation in portfolio meets academic standards of C or better.
- “X” if documentation is not sufficient to award credit.

Please complete reverse of this form before awarding grade/credit

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<th>Faculty Signature</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
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**RETURN THIS FORM WITH FINAL GRADE TO THE CPS OFFICE, Box 49/Room 272A**

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<tr>
<th>Evaluation date</th>
<th>Procedure used for evaluation</th>
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**For Office Use Only:**

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<th>(Month)</th>
<th>(Year)</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Portfolio picked up</th>
<th>Student signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
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</table>
Student Name: ______________________  Date: ______________________

Course: # and Title: ________________________________________________

**Portfolio evaluation guidelines:**

- Course syllabus or related information, attached.
- Portfolio documentation indicates mastery of course or college-level learning outcomes:
  - [ ] Excellent  [ ] Adequate  [ ] Inadequate

COMMENT:
______________________________________________________________________________
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- Reflective narratives indicate understanding of subject material at the college level
  - [ ] Excellent  [ ] Adequate  [ ] Inadequate

COMMENT:
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- Portfolio organized in a clear, logical format:
  - [ ] Excellent  [ ] Adequate  [ ] Inadequate

COMMENT:
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GENERAL COMMENT:
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Faculty Signature: ______________________________________  Date: ______________________