



OPEN UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITI TERBUKA
MALAYSIA

**A GUIDE FOR DEVELOPING
YOUR PORTFOLIO
(POSTGRADUATE)**

Centre for Assessment of Prior Learning

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1.0 Introduction

You know you have the competency in a particular discipline, but how do you prove it? How do you show that you deserve the acknowledgement of your prior learning? Besides taking the examination as an assessment method, the other best approach is by developing an academic portfolio for it. An academic portfolio offers your assessor evidence of your knowledge and skills.

The purpose of this guide is to assist you in compiling a portfolio of evidence for undertaking Assessment of Prior Learning (APL) to gain an entrance into a postgraduate programme. You will be given a step-by-step guide on how to prepare a portfolio solely for that purpose. A Sample of an academic portfolio is also provided for your reference. Before we start-off writing the portfolio, let's find out the meaning of a portfolio and the purpose of writing a portfolio.

1.1 What Is A Portfolio?

A portfolio contains a learner's past experiences and accomplishments. It is a collection of evidences in the form of documents, pictures, etc. put together by an applicant who wish to show his/her knowledge and skills that have been acquired through formal and informal trainings as well as his/her life and work experiences. It can help to translate prior learning of a learner into educational outcomes.

1.2 Why Do I Need To Prepare A Portfolio?

As an open entry candidate for postgraduate programme, you are required to prepare a portfolio as a pre-requisite requirement for the programme. The purpose of the portfolio is to demonstrate your prior learning that you have acquired through skills and knowledge obtained through life and work experience, as well as formal and informal training. Your prior learning will be mapped against the precondition learning required for the particular postgraduate programme you have applied. You are able to show your competency, knowledge and/or skills of that discipline in the portfolio. Thus, it becomes a means for acknowledging the learning that you already have.

2.0 What Do I Put In An Academic Portfolio?

A systematic approach in writing a portfolio will not only ease your work in preparing the portfolio but will also guide the assessor properly. Your portfolio should contain the following eight key components:

- a. Portfolio Cover
- b. Title Page
- c. Table of Content
- d. Introduction
- e. Resume
- f. Career and Academic Goals
- g. Evidence to Support Learning
- h. References/Bibliography (if any).

Do you know what to include in each of the above components?

2.1 Portfolio Cover

Select a hard paper/plastic cover for the portfolio so that it is able to hold the pages in it well as it will be read and handled by a number of people. Secure all pages of your portfolio by either binding or stapling them together.

2.2 Title Page

Write your name, contact number, title of the subject you are requesting for RPL in a title page in the following format:

PORTFOLIO FOR PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT
submitted to

OPEN UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

Programme : Master in Management

by

HARVINDER KAUR
Contact number: 012-3456789

Semester: September 2006

2.3 Table of Content

List down all headings and sub-headings and use a numbering system for it. Number all pages in sequence and show it in the table of content.

2.4 Introduction

In not more than two pages, introduce yourself and the purpose of developing the portfolio (e.g. to apply APL to gain an entrance into the (programme title).

You may also highlight important information that is crucial for the assessment purposes under the introduction.

2.5 Resume

Under this section, the following sections should be incorporated wherever possible and any other relevant personal information that is considered important:

- Educational Background: Year, Level, Grade obtained, School.
- Work Experience : Duration, Position, Job Responsibilities, Employer
- Involvement in Projects/Tasks: Year, Project(s), Responsibilities, Name of Clients(s)

- Workshop(s)/Seminar(s)/Course(s)/Training(s) Attended: Year, Workshop(s)/Seminar(s) /Course(s)/Training(s) Attended, What did I learn?
- Consultancies: Year, Scope, Name of Client(s)
- Publication(s)/E-Publication(s): Year, Journal(s)/Book(s)/Etc., Title of Publication(s)
- Community Service(s): Year, Type of Community Service(s) Rendered
- Extra Curricular Activities: Year, Extra Curricular Activities
- Sport(s)/Recreation(s): Year, Sport(s)/Recreation(s)
- Skills: Type of Skills, Remarks
- Learning Acquired Through Reading
- Reference(s): Professional acquaintances who know you and are willing to talk to the assessors. Ask for permission before including their information here.

You may also refer to other formats of resume in the books and the Internet. Most importantly, you must have evidences to support your claim, failing which you will not be able to justify for what you have profess. Remember to record the number of the evidence under the Appendix column!

2.6 Career and Academic Goals

By stating your career and academic goals, you are showing to the assessor that you are able to plan and know what you want to do for your future. Write the goals in chronological order.

If you do not possess sufficient knowledge or skills in some of the areas of the pre-requisite learning needed for the programme, you may want to inform the assessor on how the lacking gaps will be covered.

2.7 Evidence to Support Learning

There are many types of evidence be it in the form of documents (reports, memos, employment statement, letter from supervisor, job description, job appraisal, manuals, written procedures, project work, etc), pictures, models, charts and etc. that you may submit to prove your learning as mentioned in the resume. The documents must be certified copies and do not submit originals. Without the evidences, the assessor will not be able to assess you accordingly as per your claim. It is not

necessary to provide one item evidence for every item in the Resume, as long as you are able to represent your prior learning with the given evidence. In other words, a particular evidence can represent several claims.

There are times, when you are not able to reveal an evidence which is private and confidential to your organisation, in this case you may want to erase or cover the pertinent information i.e. client names, transaction amount, etc. However, if even that is not possible, do write down in your portfolio that you are willing to be interviewed or contacted on that aspect for further elaboration.

All evidence must be clearly numbered in the Appendix column (of the Resume section) and indicate it again in section '4. Evidence to Support Learning' as illustrated in the example. This will help the assessor to look for it easily.

2.8 Reference(s)/Bibliography(ies)

If you have acquired part of your learning through reading or studying books or journals, or if you have researched and published work in the discipline that you are seeking for assessment, write down the references of these materials in this section. Do not forget to state down what you have learned through these materials under the item (L) "Learning Acquired Through Reading" of the Resume section.

3.0 How to Begin Writing My Portfolio?

Now that you know how the portfolio should look like, you may wonder where to begin with. To start-off, you may want to:

Step 1: Contact the programme coordinator of your postgraduate programme. Find out what is the pre-requisite knowledge or skills needed for the postgraduate programme.

Step 2: Decide which prior learning through life and work experience and/or previous training will support and validate your claim of competence for the pre-requisite knowledge or skills needed for the programme.

Step 3: Identify what evidence that you wish to include in the portfolio to match with the pre-requisite knowledge or skills of the programme. Your evidence must substantiate your claim of competency.

Step 4: Organise your portfolio content and evidence. Gather your evidence and label them accordingly.

Step 5: Be focus in writing the portfolio. You may tend to incorporate too much irrelevant information and at times, there is no link from one section to another. It is quite natural to get carried away in the portfolio writing process. The following tips will be handy:

- (i) Be selective of what you write. Include only relevant information and evidence. Do not add unnecessary stuff.
- (ii) Your portfolio must be neatly typed and organised. Arrange portfolio content especially under the resume section in a proper order and according to chronological events. Create links from one section to another with brief explanations. Allow the assessor to read according to your thinking.
- (iii) Be consistent with the terms used. Do not refer the same thing with different names; for instance, “Learning Experience in Office” in one part of the portfolio and “Work experience” in another.
- (iv) Avoid spelling and grammatical errors.

Remember, your portfolio is a document that exhibits your competency! Therefore, you need to show that your learning experience is worthy for the entry purposes.

4.0 Who Will Assess My Portfolio?

Your portfolio assessor will possess the competence and qualification to assess your prior learning in accordance to the expected learning outcome of the programme. The assessor could be an academic staff of the University or from the industry itself. To ensure maximal fairness, the assessment process of your portfolio will be

conducted by a panel of assessors and not by an individual assessor. In the assessment process, the assessor might call for an interview with you.

5.0 What Is The Criteria For Portfolio Assessment?

The assessor will be assessing your portfolio based on the following four essential criteria:

- (i) **Relevancy of your experience** – Are your learning *experience* applicable or relevant to the discipline?
- (ii) **Validity of your prior learning** – Are your claims of *prior learning* according to what the learning outcomes are of the discipline?
- (iii) **Reliability of your claims** – Can your claims of learning experience be verified against the evidence? Is there sufficient *evidence* to support your statements of prior learning?
- (iv) **Currency of your learning** – Is your prior learning still applicable in the *present context* of the subject?

As such, make sure you have addressed all the four aspects of your prior learning for each of the pre-requisite learning needed for the programme applied. Also, look at the attached sample for more ideas.

BEST OF LUCK IN DEVELOPING YOUR PORTFOLIO!

6.0 References

1. Centre for Psychology Athabasca University. (2004). *An Example of A Course-Based Portfolio in Counselling Psychology*. [Online]. Available: http://psych.athabascau.ca/html/Psych205/FinalPaperModel205_2.pdf#search=%22an%20example%20of%20a%20course-based%20portfolio%20in%20counselling%20psychology%20athabasca%22 [02 October, 2006].
2. Mohawk College. (2000). *Prior Learning Assessment: Guidelines for preparing a portfolio for course credit*.
3. Kuldip, K. (2006). *Assessor Training Workshop*. Open University Malaysia.
4. Smith, E. *Building Your Personal Portfolio*. UNISA.
5. St.Clair College Of Applied Arts & Technology. (n.d). *Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition (PLAR): A guide to portfolio development*. [Online]. Available: http://www.stclaircollege.ca/studservices/Portfolio_Development.pdf#search='recognition%20of%20prior%20learning%20portfolio' [03 October, 2006].

7.0 Sample Of The Portfolio

PORTFOLIO FOR PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT

submitted to

OPEN UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

Programme : Master in Management

by

HARVINDER KAUR
012-123 4567

Semester: September 2006

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

I am the eldest in my family with 2 siblings. I have been working for the past 10 years in a departmental store. Prior to that, I was doing various odd jobs in the clinic, fabric shop and stationary shop. I enjoy working in my present work place. The reason beingThe working environment is challenging as there are many competitors in Kuala Lumpur. My favourite pass time is to read newspapers and magazines and sometimes I do spend time to read books that interest me. I have no plans for marriage as I want to progress in my academics status. One of the most important

The objective of my portfolio is to gain an entrance to the Master's programme through open entry.

I am writing this portfolio to claim I would like to apply for This is because I am confident that my present knowledge and skills gained from the various previous trainings be it formal or informal as well as my work and life experience do qualify me for this programme. I am able to show

2.0 RESUME

Name : Harvinder Kaur
NRIC : 340101-10-8911
Address : No. 222, Jalan Besar, Jalan Tun Ismail, 12345 Kuala Lumpur
Contact No :012-345 6789
Gender : Female

A. *Educational Background:

Year	Level	Grade	School
1989	Sijil Pelajaran Rendah	1	S.R.K. La Salle Peel Road, Kuala Lumpur.
1991	Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia	2	S.M. Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Azizi Shah, Shah Alam, Selangor
1993	Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia	2 principles	S.M. Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Azizi Shah, Shah Alam, Selangor

B. *Working Experience:

Year (Chronological)	Position	Job Responsibilities	What did I learn?	Employer	Appendix
Jan,1994 -	Current position: Supervisor	Managing staff, ...	I have learned that communication skills are crucial for a job to be completed efficiently.	Yaohan Departmental Store	
Jan,1994 – 2000	Sales girl, cashier	Serving customer, ...		Yaohan Departmental Store	
Aug,1993 – Jan, 1994	Clerk			Mohideen Sdn. Bhd.	
Feb,1993 – Aug, 1993	Clerk	Preparing sales invoices, ...		Shah Fabric Sdn. Bhd.	
1992 – Feb, 1993	Clinic Assistance	Filing patient cards, dispensing medicine, ...		Jaya Clinic	

C. *Involvement in Projects/Tasks:

Year (Chronological)	Project(s)	Responsibilities	What did I learn?	Name of Client(s)	Appendix

D. *Workshop(s)/Seminar(s)/Course(s)/Training(s) Attended:

Year (Chronological)	Workshop(s)/Seminar(s)/Course(s)/Training(s) Attended	What did I learn?	Appendix

E. * Workshop(s)/Seminar(s)/Course(s)/Training(s) Conducted:

Year (Chronological)	Workshop(s)/Seminar(s)/Course(s)/Training(s) Conducted	What did I teach?	Appendix

F. *Consultancies:

Year (Chronological)	Scope	Name of Client(s)	Appendix

G. *Publication(s)/E-Publication(s):

Year (Chronological)	Journal(s)/Book(s)/Etc.	Title of Publication(s)	Appendix

H. *Community Service(s):

Year (Chronological)	Type of Community Service(s) Rendered	Appendix

I. *Extra Curricular Activities:

Year (Chronological)	Extra Curricular Activities	Appendix

J. *Sport(s)/Recreation(s):

Year (Chronological)	Sport(s)/Recreation(s)	Appendix

K. *Skills:

Type of Skills	Remarks	Appendix
Supervisory & Leadership	I was a chairperson for a charity project. It was a dinner held for old folks in year 2000.	
Interpersonal	I have good communication and organisational skills, analytical skills, problems solving skills and good teamwork spirit.	
Language	Good oral and written communication skills for both English and Bahasa Malaysia	
Please write down any other relevant skills that you have.		

L. *Learning Acquired Through Reading

Title of the Book	What did I learned?	Reference No. (as listed in Section 5.0)
Strategic Management : Competitiveness and globalisation		

References:

Name : Ms. Doreen Chua Ling Xii	Name : En. Fuad Ramli Bin Yousof Zarin
Address :	Address :
Telephone No. :	Telephone No. :
E-mail :	E-mail :
Relationship to you : e.g., supervisor, family friend, teacher, etc	Relationship to you :

(Note : * Please provide evidence(s) for the above.)

3.0 CAREER AND ACADEMIC GOALS

I have been working with Yaohan Departmental Store for the past ten years. During this time, I had various job scope and responsibilities in many departments. I worked as a sales girl, cashier, lead cashier and presently as a floor supervisor. I always wanted to be a HR manager. I like the idea of developing people in their career. I have seen some advancement in my own career. However, I feel I should have done better. Now that I know what could have been improved in an employee's career, I am motivated to be in the position that will help not only myself but also motivate others in developing themselves.

I have been a supervisor for the past 3 years and have learned most of the skills needed in basic management. My experience in being a supervisor, has given me the opportunity to handle issues related to staff and the stock in the departments. Among the key things that I have done in my job is : planning man power needs in 3 different departments, inventory control, accounts, and occasionally managed discipline problems. I was also given several in-house training and exposure in the functions of the several other supporting departments.

I wish to pursue a Master in Business Administration at Open University Malaysia. I would like to improve my knowledge in business matters as I would like to venture into small business.

4.0 EVIDENCES TO SUPPORT LEARNING

APPENDIX	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE EVIDENCE
1.1	Employment letter
1.2	Job description
1.3	Appraisal for year 2005
1.4	Staff work schedule
1.5	Inventory control sheet
1.6	Chapter Review

(Please attach all documents under this section)

5.0 REFERENCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY(IES)

1. Hitt, M.A. (2005). Strategic Management : Competitiveness and globalisation. U.S.A:Thomson South Western
2.
3.
4.

(Please write the learning acquired from the books/journals you have read in item (L) of Resume section)