

Feb. 20, 2026

TO: Orana D. Elsegini, WPSII
Faculty Senate/Office of the SVP & Provost

VIA: Dr. James Sellmann, Dean 
Dr. Mary Therese F. Cruz, Associate Dean 

FROM: Dr. Debra T. Cabrera, Chair
CLASS Curriculum Committee 

SUBJECT: College Credit for Lived Experience Policy

The University of Guam College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences (CLASS) College Credit for Lived Experience Policy allows undergraduate students to earn up to 30 credits for verified prior learning gained outside formal higher education, such as professional work, military service, certifications, volunteer work, or informal study. Students must submit a structured learning portfolio that includes a reflective narrative, supporting documentation, and a course equivalency proposal aligned with specific learning outcomes. Faculty evaluate submissions using a detailed rubric assessing relevance, depth, breadth, documentation, reflection, and credit-hour alignment. Approved credits are recorded on transcripts as “Life Experience – [Course],” do not carry letter grades, and do not affect GPA. Final approval is granted by the CLASS Dean, with periodic reviews required to ensure academic rigor and proper alignment with degree requirements.

The policy was reviewed and endorsed by the CLASS ACC, the CLASS Curriculum Committee, and the Dean. The request for policy implementation is for *AY 2026-2027*.

UNIVERSITY OF GUAM
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
COLLEGE CREDIT FOR LIVED EXPERIENCE POLICY

Section 1. Purpose & Scope

This policy outlines procedures for awarding undergraduate credit based on recognized prior learning for students enrolled in College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences (CLASS) degrees.

Section 2. Definitions

“**Prior Learning** refers to verified learning acquired outside formal higher education — including professional experience, military service, training, certifications, volunteer service, or informal study.”

Section 3. Eligibility & Limits

1. Eligible candidates are enrolled in a CLASS undergraduate program.
2. Up to **30 credits** may be awarded toward degree requirements.
3. Credits must directly correspond to specific courses or categories listed in the UOG Catalog.
4. Credits do not replace General Education core requirements unless program approval is granted.

Section 4. Assessment Process

A student submits:

- A *Learning Portfolio* articulating competencies per course. [See Appendix A.]
- Relevant documentation (certificates, transcripts, job evaluations).

Submissions are reviewed by tenured or experienced CLASS faculty in the student’s degree program. Each program predefines acceptable life experience mappings to its foundational courses; equivalencies are determined using a rubric (including matrix: learning outcome, evidence, demonstration, credit recommended). Students should receive a sample portfolio or template to guide their submission.

Section 5. Approval, Appeals & Posting

1. The CLASS Dean makes the final decision.
2. Approved credits are recorded on UOG transcript as “Life Experience – [Course]” with standard credit weight. These credits will not be assigned a letter grade and will not count towards the students’ GPA.
3. Biennial reviews of awarded life credits and equivalency mappings are required to ensure academic rigor.

APPENDIX A. EQUIVALENCY ASSESSMENTS

1. Portfolio Assessment

Students submit a **Prior Learning Portfolio**, which includes:

- A reflective narrative mapping life experiences to learning outcomes.
- Documentation (e.g., job descriptions, military records, certificates, training evaluations, creative work).
- A course or category match proposal (i.e., the student aligns the course(s) learning outcomes with their work-live experience).

2. Standardized Assessments / Exams

Students may opt to take exams (subject to availability) that demonstrate content mastery:

- **CLEP (College-Level Examination Program)**
- **DSST (DANTES Subject Standardized Tests)**
- **Credit by Exams** created by programs

3. Credit Recommendation Services

Institutions use national guides to evaluate formal non-collegiate training:

- **ACE (American Council on Education) Credit Recommendation Service**
- **NCCRS (National College Credit Recommendation Service)**

APPENDIX B. THE LEARNING PORTFOLIO

PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Step	Action
1. Student submits portfolio	Includes narrative + evidence aligned to learning outcomes
2. Faculty evaluates	Using rubrics, matching to existing course outcomes
3. Credit awarded	Based on direct equivalency + credit hour estimation
4. Registrar records	Credits posted as experiential learning
5. Program approval (for major/gen ed)	Required for core and major requirement application [See Appendix C.]

PORTFOLIO EVALUATION TEMPLATE

Student Name: _____
ID Number: _____
Program: _____
Course/Category for Equivalency: _____
Credits Requested: _____

1. Portfolio Checklist

Component	Included	Notes
Reflective Essay/Narrative	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Resume or Professional Summary	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Supporting Documentation	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Course Match Explanation	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Time Log or Work Summary (optional)	☐ Yes ☐ No	

2. Rubric Evaluation

Category	Score (1–3)	Comments
Relevance of Experience		
Depth of Knowledge		
Breadth of Experience		
Documentation		
Reflection and Articulation		
Alignment with Credit Hours		
Total Score: _____ / 18		
Credit Recommendation:		
• ☐ Full credit		
• ☐ Partial credit: _____ credits		
• ☐ No credit		

3. Evaluator Information

Faculty Evaluator Name: _____

Department: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Department Chair Review (if required):

☐ Approved ☐ Not Approved

Comments: _____

PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT (PLA) RUBRIC

Purpose: This tool will be used to evaluate a student's portfolio for awarding academic credit based on life/work experience that aligns with specific course learning outcomes.

Category	Criteria	Exceeds Expectations (3 pts)	Meets Expectations (2 pts)	Below Expectations (1 pt)
1. Relevance of Experience	Experience clearly aligns with course objectives	Strong, specific, relevant alignment with all core course learning outcomes	Moderate alignment with most course outcomes	Weak or unclear alignment; not a strong match
2. Depth of Knowledge	Demonstrates academic-level understanding	Shows strong conceptual grasp, critical thinking, and application	Shows sufficient understanding, some reflective analysis	Primarily descriptive; lacks academic-level insight
3. Breadth of Experience	Range and complexity of experiences	Includes multiple relevant roles, projects, or settings	Includes at least one substantial role or project	Experience is limited or narrowly scoped
4. Documentation	Verifies learning and outcomes	Clear, credible, and relevant documentation (e.g., work samples, letters, certificates)	Acceptable but limited documentation	Minimal or no documentation to support claims
5. Reflection and Articulation	Connects experience to learning	Strong narrative demonstrating insight, learning, and personal development	Adequate reflection; generally connects experience to outcomes	Little to no reflection or analysis present
6. Alignment with Credit Hours Requested	Matches standard credit hours for course	Evidence supports full credit equivalency (e.g., 3-credit course = ~135 hours of learning)	Evidence supports partial credit	Learning does not warrant college-level credit

Scoring Guidelines

- **16–18 points:** Full credit recommendation
- **12–15 points:** Partial credit recommendation
- **Below 12 points:** No credit recommended

CHECKLIST ITEM ALTERNATIVES

Standard Portfolio Item	Alternative Option	Rationale
Reflective Essay/Narrative	Guided interview with faculty or advisor (recorded and transcribed)	Eases writing anxiety; oral reflection captures real insight
	Prompted worksheet (sentence starters for each learning outcome)	Breaks up narrative into manageable chunks
Resume or Professional Summary	Timeline worksheet or infographic-style life map	Easier for visual or linear thinkers
	Short bullet-point list of roles held, with rough dates	Lowers formality while retaining info
Supporting Documentation	Letters from supervisors, colleagues, or clients (signed but informal is okay)	Accounts for informal work experience
	Photos of work (e.g., events coordinated, products made)	Useful for community-based or creative work
	Verification phone calls (with student consent)	For undocumented but verifiable experience
Course Match Explanation	Check-the-box form showing what learning outcomes match their experience	Makes academic alignment feel approachable
	Advisor-supported walkthrough (during intake or advising)	Eases anxiety for first-generation learners
Time Log / Work Summary	Estimated time calculator tool (e.g., 5 years × avg hours per week)	Captures the intensity of long-term learning

For accessibility, programs may consider the following:

- **Multimodal evidence:** audio, video, photos, informal letters
- **Intake advising sessions** to help students map their experience
- **Templates:** life maps, worksheets, checklists
- **Workshops or peer mentors** to demystify the process
- **Rubrics** that honor nontraditional learning paths

RECOMMENDED EVIDENCE AND ARTIFACTS

Workplace/Professional Experience

- Job descriptions or performance reviews
- Letters of recommendation or verification from supervisors
- Certificates of completion (CPR, OSHA, leadership training, etc.)
- Union credentials or apprenticeship records
- Employee handbooks or training manuals created
- Project proposals, reports, or deliverables
- Photos of completed work (construction, design, etc.)
- Promotion records or business cards from past roles
- Schedules managed or event materials coordinated

Military Experience

- DD-214 or JST (Joint Services Transcript)
- Training records or completion certificates
- Letters from commanding officers
- Mission debriefs or role summaries

Community, Volunteer, or Informal Learning

- Letters from community orgs or religious leaders
- Agendas or flyers from events organized
- Curriculum developed for workshops or outreach
- Grants written or managed
- Social media posts or websites managed for orgs
- Personal essays or blogs (relevant to area of study)

Creative or Professional Work

- Photographs of artwork, writing, music, etc.
- Publications (newsletters, websites, articles)
- Performance recordings (acting, public speaking)
- Portfolio of freelance or commissioned work
- Design files or visual mock-ups

Lived Experience / Personal Expertise

- Journals or writings reflecting long-term caretaking, advocacy, or lived expertise
- Testimonies or storytelling used in advocacy or education
- Logs of hours in community-based service (e.g., elder care, cultural preservation)

**Other types of evidence/artifacts may be reviewed and accepted by the program.*

APPENDIX C. DETERMINING CREDITS

1. **Direct Course/Category Equivalency**

If a student's prior learning clearly matches the outcomes of a 3-credit course, they may be awarded 3 credits.

2. **Competency-Based Rubrics**

Faculty evaluators use **rubrics** to assess:

- Depth of learning (theoretical + practical)
- Breadth of experience
- Reflective insight
- Documentation credibility

Each rubric score maps to a credit recommendation (e.g., a score of 90–100 may equal 3 credits).

3. **Credit Hour Guidelines**

- Most institutions follow the **Carnegie Unit**: 1 credit = ~45 hours of learning.
- If a student can show ~135 hours of prior learning (through experience, application, and reflection), they may earn 3 credits.

4. **Credit Tiers or Bundles**

Some programs offer **3–6–9–12 credit bundles** tied to domain-specific achievements rather than exact courses (e.g., “Leadership Experience – 6 credits”).

APPENDIX D. FULFILLING GENERAL EDUCATION OR MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

1. Program Approval

- The relevant academic department (e.g., Sociology, Communication) must **review the portfolio** to determine if it meets **specific learning outcomes** of major/core courses.
- If approved, the registrar applies it toward the major.

2. Pre-Approved Equivalency Tables

- The University can predefine which kinds of learning (e.g., military service, leadership training, TEFL certification) can satisfy certain general education courses.

3. Registrar + Dean Final Approval

- After departmental evaluation, the Dean (or designated academic officer) gives final sign-off before credit is applied to degree progress.

RESOURCES

Articles on lived experience:

<https://hechingerreport.org/to-fill-seats-more-colleges-offer-credit-for-life-experience/>

<https://www.bestcolleges.com/blog/college-credit-for-life-and-work-experience/>

<https://www.coursera.org/articles/college-credit-for-work-experience>

<https://leadershipblog.act.org/2023/01/credit-prior-learning.html>

Examples from our peer institutions:

https://www.lincoln.edu/academics/sace/adult-learner-undergraduate-programs/index.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com

<https://www.nmhu.edu/office-of-the-registrar/information-for-transfer-students/>

Examples from our aspirant institutions:

https://www.winthrop.edu/sgco/bps/prior-learning-assessment.aspx?utm_source=chatgpt.com

<https://behrend.psu.edu/academics/academic-services/adult/current-and-incoming-students/experiential-learning-assessment>

Here are other examples that I looked at:

<https://www.purdueglobal.edu/transfer-students/work-life-experience/>

<https://www.cmich.edu/blog/all-things-higher-ed/9-ways-to-turn-life-experience-into-college-credit>

<https://online.uc.edu/blog/work-experience-for-college-credit/>

<https://online.champlain.edu/blog/college-credit-life-experience>

<https://www.snhu.edu/admission/transferring-credits/work-life-experience#/home>