



Presidencia

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**DEAN OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS
ACADEMIC COLLEGE
REGISTRAR**

INSTITUTIONAL POLICY: VALIDATION OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING FOR ACADEMIC CREDITS

Introduction:

Conscious of the diversification of knowledge and integration of work experience as a learning modality that is taught at the university level, Bayamon Central University (BCU) aware of its mission and commitment to the Puerto Rican society establishes a policy of academic credit for work experience. This institutional policy is designed specifically for non-traditional adult students.

Purpose:

The term experiential learning is used to designate a specific way to acquire knowledge outside the higher education institutional context. Experiential learning is acquired through work experience in the labor force, where individuals may develop skills, abilities and competencies related to a particular profession, trade or business. The specific knowledge gained through experiential learning can be equivalent to course work offered at the university level. Indeed, higher education not only provides academic preparation, but also empowers the individual to venture into the work force.

Experiential learning is not limited to the day-to-day practice, but stems from the demands of the labor market for the continuous updating of knowledge and the use and implementation of new electronic equipment and technology. Work experiences constitute a rich scenario and professional setting that prepare and enhance a person's capacity for job performance. This is evidenced as more positions are requiring experience in the field.

BCU considers these learning experiences as equivalent to academic preparation for individuals who aspire to complete an undergraduate degree in a program that may be related to his/her work experience.

Work experience is an important source of knowledge that is gained as the individual is in a continuous and dynamic process within the labor market. In addition, the labor market is not only in demand for a continuous updating of practical and technical knowledge, but also of the theoretical knowledge that contributes to personal and professional growth and development.

The acquisition of knowledge, the application of intellectual and communicative skills, and the demand to perform efficiently are part of the criteria to be taken into account when assessing an individual's capacity to be successful in the attainment of an undergraduate degree.

Justification:

This policy includes procedures to evaluate experiential learning in order to grant credit value as part of the requirements of a program aimed at obtaining a degree at the undergraduate level. The credit value awarded for the labor experience should not consider solely practical skills in the work performance but, above all, the credit value should be granted based on demonstrated learning. The credits granted for work experience guarantees the student possesses the knowledge and at the same time serves to accelerate the path to achieve a college degree.

In line with the Characteristics of Excellence of Middle States Commission on Higher Education (2011) (MSCHE), BCU establishes the institutional policy and procedures on experiential learning to grant courses / credits leading to completion of an academic program.

Procedure for Validation of Experiential Learning for College Credit

1. The candidate interested in obtaining a college degree and the granting of credit value for work experience, must submit evidence to the Program Director that evidences work experience and job performance.
2. The college director will evaluate the evidence taking into account the program curriculum.
3. The Director shall establish fundamental requirements that justify and warrant the granting of college credit through experiential learning, for example:
 - a. Submitting a professional portfolio
 - b. Employer evaluation letter
 - c. Other evidence to substantiate the learning experience
4. The Director shall appoint a professor with expertise in the academic area to evaluate, recommend and rate the quality of the experiential learning.
5. The professor will align the program competencies with student's work experience.
6. The course and its credit value must be equivalent or correspond to the experiential learning.

Strategies for the Validation of the Experiential Learning**Professional Portfolio**

1. To evidence the level of knowledge in a particular trade or profession for the validation of credits or courses at the undergraduate level, the candidate must submit legitimate documents to be included in a professional portfolio which will be evaluated and graded by a knowledgeable person, preferably a professor from the program. The documents are the following:

- a. A document specifying the duties and responsibilities of the work and a description of the nature of the work.
- b. Letter from the employer or the human resources office stating the length of time in the position.
- c. Letter from supervisor including the candidate's performance evaluations. The evaluation

document may take into consideration the following criteria:

- 1) personal skills
 - 2) cognitive skills
 - 3) professional skills
 - 4) professional Skills
 - 5) professional training
- d. Present certificates of participation or attendance to workshops, seminars, forums, continuing education courses and professional training.
 - e. Awards received for outstanding performance of duties (plaques, certificates, letters of appreciation, promotion in rank, etc.).
 - f. Computer literacy certification.
2. The Professional Portfolio is an official document that will serve to identify the acquired knowledge in a work setting. The Professional Portfolio is a collection of data which can be presented in a folder or in digital format. Its main function is to evidence the acquired learning in the workplace. It allows students to evaluate themselves in terms of their knowledge and personal-professional competencies. Candidates should be instructed on the design and content of the professional portfolio through the following courses.

Training Courses and Professional Development:

1. BCU has alternative courses for students seeking to validate experiential learning for college credit. These courses are offered to working students. Moreover, the institution offers another type of course that validates workshops and continuing education courses in which the candidate has participated as part of professional development at the workplace. These courses provide the flexibility to validate work experience and skills developed by the candidate. The following is the title, description and coding of the suggested courses for this particular purpose.

Professional Development Seminar (ESLI 390 - 399) This course offers students the opportunity of submitting evidence of official documents that guarantee the knowledge acquired. This evidence may be by means of various activities through continuing education courses, military service, etc., which are part of the candidate's comprehensive professional preparation. Every 15 hours of professional training is equivalent to one (1) credit. Therefore, the course credit value will depend on the professional hours validated. This course requires the preparation of a professional portfolio.

Professional Development (ESLI 400 - 409) This course provides students the opportunity to present a professional portfolio with concepts, methods and techniques acquired on the job or through training over a period of time and how they relate to the practice of their profession. A minimum of 80 hours of work is equivalent to 1 credit. The student may submit a certified letter by an employer or the office of human resources to evidence the number of years in the position, total hours worked, description of duties or tasks and supervisor's evaluations. Also, promotions in the workplace will be considered. (80 hours - 240 hours, 1 semester, 1 to 3 credits).

Validation Exceptions

Some academic programs restrict or prohibit the granting of university credit for experience gained in the workplace. In some cases, such academic programs are governed by the accreditation standards of a professional accrediting

agency. Programs requiring a professional licensure examination prohibit the validation of work experience for university courses.

A. Social Work Program

The Bachelor of Arts degree in Social Work grants credits for social work courses for previous experience in the working field. This legislation responds to standard 5 *Student Professional Development* of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE).

B. Nursing Program

Students enrolled in the nursing baccalaureate program who work at hospitals and are enrolled in Practicum (ENF 414) are exempt from the practice at the hospital. However, students must meet the requirements and the evaluation criteria established for the course.

Students in the Nursing Program who hold an associate degree or diploma may challenge some courses to demonstrate content mastery. For this, the student must possess a nursing license. The score needed to pass the challenge test is eighty percent (80%). Transfer students with an associate degree in Practical Nursing will be granted validation for NURS100 (Introduction to the Nursing Profession) and NURS102 (Nursing Care Fundamentals).

If the student enrolls in an independent study course, the professor establishes an agreement with the student. Once the student completes the course requirements, a grade is awarded.

In the challenge examining option, the professor discusses the content of the course with the student who is then allowed 30 days to take the challenge test. The challenge test is usually offered to students who have work experience related to the content of the course.

C. Education Program

Teachers with two (2) or more years of experience working in schools authorized by the Puerto Rico Council of Education, receive a Certification of Teaching Practice issued by the Department of Education of Puerto Rico. The university validates this experience for the Practice Teaching Course.

Effective Date

This policy is in effect immediately and repeals any previous guidelines, rules, policies or procedures conflicting with what is provided herein.

Approved:



Lillian Negrón Colón, Ph. D.
President

LVC/djm