

Goddard College

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS ASSESSMENT OF PRIOR LEARNING GUIDE

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INTRODUCING APL

What is Assessment of Prior Learning?

The Goddard undergraduate educational philosophy includes the belief that college level learning can take place outside of a formal educational setting.

The Assessment of Prior Learning (APL) process creates an opportunity to document such learning if it has occurred after completing high school or GED and before matriculation into Goddard's undergraduate programs.

What follows is a brief introduction to the principles, process, and policies of APL as practiced at Goddard, a pioneer in experiential learning assessment since 1971.

Eligibility: Who is APL for?

APL is for anyone who:

- has intentionally sought and acquired skills and knowledge from learning that occurred after graduating high school or attaining a GED and before enrolling in Goddard
- has documentation that the prior learning took place
- has attended the *APL Informational Workshop*
- has an in depth discussion with the APL Coordinator to see if APL is a good fit
- has completed one successful semester at Goddard
- has completed no more than four semesters of undergraduate work
- has less than a combined 60 credits earned through Goddard and transfer credit
- has attended a Progress Review Workshop
- has comfort writing about what they know
- has time in their life, work and academic schedule to take on another set of tasks
- has excitement about moving more quickly to degree completion

Overview of the APL Process

There are two phases in the APL process. It is recommended that the first phase be completed one semester and the second phase completed the following semester, if time allows.

1. ***The APL Petition:*** This document is a complete outline of what you propose to include in your APL Portfolio. You provide a brief description of your prior learning area(s); why and how you sought out that learning; the specific skills, theories and knowledge you acquired and your credit request for each learning area. The APL Coordinator provides two required workshops to orient you to APL and the creation of an APL Petition. A six-week on-line Petition Preparation class immediately following the residency and individual appointments s during and after the residency to carefully explore possible credit requests, levels of acceleration, due dates, fee planning, degree requirements, and your path to degree completion are also offered. These events aid

you in all aspects of preparing your APL Petition. Once this process is complete, you will submit the APL Petition with a complete Progress Review Portfolio to a Progress Review Group to consider for endorsement.

2. **The APL Portfolio:** Your Portfolio is the product you create once you receive faculty endorsement of your APL Petition from the Progress Review Group. Your APL Portfolio includes evidence of your prior learning through narrative essay(s) demonstrating and describing your prior learning, annotated bibliographies, letters of expert testimony, and other forms of documentation. The APL Coordinator reviews your Portfolio for completeness and adherence to format requirements. A committee of Goddard faculty members (and, as needed, content experts from other disciplines, within and outside the college) reviews your Portfolio to determine academic credit to be awarded in each learning area.

When Should I Do APL?

Since APL is a process that is in addition to the work with your semester advisors, students are advised to forgo the APL process in their very first semester. If you arrive as an upper-level student, you may not have time to meet all program course requirements and general undergraduate degree requirements and participate in the APL process. It is also strongly recommended that APL participants complete their **APL Petition** in one semester and their **APL Portfolio** in the following semester. Some APL participants choose to work on APL tasks between semesters, others choose to take a leave of absence to assemble their APL Petition and/or APL Portfolio separate from semester work. Timing can be determined in conversation with the APL Coordinator.

For those who have compelling reasons or need to complete their APL Petition and Portfolio in the same semester, approval must be received from the APL Coordinator, Program Director and Semester Advisor. The amount of credit you can request is determined not only by the level, but also by the number of credits or specific coursework you must complete in your program, as well as the general undergraduate Degree Requirements you must address prior to your final semester.

The APL process is directly linked to the PR ([Progress Review](#)) process. Depending on your level, the amount of credit you hope to request and receive, you will submit your APL Petition with a PR I or PR II. Sections of the PR I or PR II will show how you have already met or intend to meet all College and program Degree Requirements for graduation.

Note: There are rare occasions when exceptions are made through the advocacy of the APL Coordinator, Program Director(s), and with the approval of the Academic Dean.

Important Points to Keep in Mind

- All prior learning must meet the criteria for college-level learning (see next section).
- Participation in the APL process requires approval and invitation from the APL Office, via the APL Coordinator, after a careful exploration of the kinds of learning you think might fit the requirements of the APL process and the flow of your academic path to

graduation. In rare circumstances, approval will be required from the Program Director and Semester Advisor as well.

- If invited to participate, the APL process allows you to request and earn credits that will move you more quickly toward meeting your program goals and requirements for graduation.
- APL credit is not awarded for *experience*, only. It is awarded for demonstrated and documented college-level learning *gained through* experience that can be and is clearly demonstrated and documented.
- Taking part in the APL process is not a guarantee that you will receive all the college credit you request. The credit awarded is based on your articulation of the depth, breadth, and duration of your prior learning.
- At present, the APL process is available only to undergraduate students.
- Be sure to read this guide thoroughly.

College-Level Learning

The Goddard APL process accredits the learning, not the experience, and this distinction is a crucial one. In reviewing APL portfolios, the faculty will look for evidence of prior college-level learning characterized by the following:

- **It is describable** – You must be able to communicate the learning in writing.
- **It is generally applicable** – Your prior learning can be applied to a different situation from the one in which the learning occurred
- **It is intentional, not accidental.** Your college-level experiential learning results from a conscious pursuit of information, perspectives, skills or knowledge.
- **It combines theory with practice.** While most traditional undergraduate education tends to be theory-rich and experience-poor, much experiential learning tends to be experience-rich and theory-poor. The APL Portfolio Review Committee will assess your portfolio for college-level learning that consists of ideas, knowledge, skills and theory acquired as well as your ability to reflect on the circumstances of your learning experiences.
- **It is verifiable** - You must be able to verify the learning through documentation in the form of your own and others' written evaluation
- **It is beyond learning that is "common to all."** Your prior learning must be above and beyond the average knowledge needed to accomplish the task or teach others. As an example, you could not ask for college credit for what you learned by giving birth even after taking a childbirth class. However, if you went on to become an instructor of childbirth classes and taught the classes to others preparing to give birth, you could seek APL credit for the additional learning required to become an instructor.
- **It fits within your Goddard program.** Your learning supports appropriate advancement toward the completion of Goddard's BA degree requirements.

APL Payment and Fees

Students who participate in the APL process are charged separately for the two part process. Both the petition and portfolio fees are non-refundable. Current fees for APL are available online; refer to the [Tuition and Fees](http://www.goddard.edu/admissions/tuition-and-fees) (<http://www.goddard.edu/admissions/tuition-and-fees>).

Occasionally, APL fees may be covered by employers, foundations funding students' education, and some forms of Financial Aid. However, each participant's financial situation is unique. Students may pay for APL out-of-pocket, as well.

Note: Payment of APL fees does not guarantee that APL credit will be awarded.

- ***Payment of the Petition fee:*** You must make arrangements with the Student Accounts Office for payment of the Petition fee before leaving campus at the end of your residency. Payment is due within the first month of the semester in which the petition is pursued unless other payment arrangements have been made.

Upon receipt and approval of the completed APL Petition, the APL Coordinator will verify with the Student Accounts Office that payment in full has been received. If payment has not been received, the APL Petition will not be forwarded to the Progress Review Group and the Student Accounts Office will contact the student regarding the outstanding payment. Upon receipt of the outstanding payment the Student Accounts Office will notify the APL Coordinator. At that time the APL Petition will be forwarded to the PRG for review.

- ***Payment of the Portfolio fee:*** Payment of the Portfolio fee is due before submission of the Portfolio. Your Portfolio will not be read by the APL Portfolio Review Committee unless payment has been received.

Upon receipt and approval of the completed APL Portfolio, the APL Coordinator will verify with the Student Accounts Office that payment in full has been received. If payment has not been received, the Portfolio will not be forwarded to the APL Review Committee and the Student Accounts Office will contact the student regarding the outstanding payment. Upon receipt of the outstanding payment the Student Accounts Office will notify the APL Coordinator. At that time the APL Portfolio will be forwarded to the committee.

Payments are to be mailed to:

**Goddard College
Student Accounts Office
123 Pitkin Road
Plainfield, VT 05667-9432**

Required APL Workshops and Online Preparation Course

If, after careful exploration of your prior learning and academic goals, you are invited to participate in the APL process, you must have completed the following:

- Attended the residency *APL Informational Workshop*
- Met with the APL Coordinator
- Attended the *Progress Review Workshop* as the APL will change the dates of your Progress Review portfolio submission
- Attended the *APL Petition Preparation Workshop* at the residency or arranged another plan with the approval of the APL Coordinator
- Participated in the ongoing six-week online *APL Petition Preparation Course*

Before or during the semester in which you plan to submit your **APL portfolio**, you **must** attend the *APL Portfolio Preparation* workshop at the residency.

Progress Reviews

Every APL participant completes a Progress Review Portfolio and includes their APL Petition as part of the review process. This review takes place early in order to ensure that the student is ready for an accelerated path to program and degree completion.

The Progress Review (PR) process is one of the ways you and Goddard College can see that you are prepared and on track for meeting all degree requirements for graduation. A Progress Review Group (PRG) is comprised of faculty across the college that reviews your materials and offer questions, thoughts or suggestions to support you on your academic path. Each PRG sends a reply letter to each student whose work they review to let you know the successes and concerns they see. The BA Undergraduate Curriculum Guide (available online: <https://www.goddard.edu/academics/curriculum-guides/>) provides detailed information about the materials you will upload into your Progress Review Portfolio at your ePortfolio site (this is usually set up for you as soon as you take part in a PR workshop). Samples and guidelines are provided for each section.

As noted earlier, when you take part in the APL process, your dates for the submission of your PR Portfolio change to an earlier moment in your trajectory to graduation because your plans to complete all requirements. **Be aware that depending on the Level at which you start the APL process; you may be preparing a Progress Review Portfolio along with creating your APL Petition.**

1. Before submitting your APL Petition with your Progress Review Portfolio to the PRG, you will give a full draft of the APL Petition to the APL Coordinator. If all is in order, you will receive an approval letter (to be included as the final item in your APL Petition), to upload your APL Petition into your Progress Review Portfolio.
2. The Progress Review Group (PRG) will review your PR Portfolio and APL Petition to determine if your plan to prepare the APL Portfolio requesting credit acceleration through your program is recommended.

3. The PRG will send you a letter regarding your PR Portfolio and APL Petition.
4. If the PRG endorses your APL Petition, you will move forward in the creation of an APL Portfolio requesting college-level credit.

You are required to submit the appropriate Progress Review Portfolio during the semester you submit the APL Petition. Refer to the Undergraduate Curriculum Guide for detailed information on the Progress Review process and submission requirements.

Note: In rare circumstances, your Progress Review due dates may shift. Approval from the APL Coordinator and the Coordinator of the Undergraduate Assessment Coordinating Committee is needed before due dates are changed.

The actual APL credit award is determined if (and after) the PRG endorses your APL plan. A determination of your APL credit award is based on a review of the APL Portfolio you submit, and will be made during or after the semester in which you submitted it.

Course Equivalents

Goddard transcripts do not list Course Equivalents for credit awarded through Assessment of Prior Learning. However, your transcripts will list the titles of your Learning Areas and the credit amount awarded for each as listed in your APL Portfolio Assessment Award Letter.

This means that if your future goals include applying to a graduate program with specific prerequisites for professional licensure that can be met by your prior learning, you will want to give serious consideration to the way you craft your course titles, learning area descriptions and credit requests. Consult with the APL Coordinator to see that your prior learning titles, descriptions and credit requests accurately reflect the knowledge, skills, theories and training you have acquired so that, when possible, they also support your future educational goals.

Once your APL Petition has been approved by the Faculty Progress Review Committee and your APL Portfolio has been reviewed by the APL Portfolio Assessment Committee **you cannot modify** the course titles, learning area descriptions or credit allocations at the end of a semester or near completion of your degree.

APL CREDIT

How Much Credit may be Requested and Earned?

The combined total of APL credit awards and any credits you transfer in from other institutions **may not exceed 75 credits**. A maximum of **45 credits** may be requested and earned through the APL process; however, all credit requests are based on the consideration of five conditions:

1. how your prior learning meets the criteria for college-level learning,
2. the amount of transfer credit from other colleges accepted by Goddard,
3. the level at which you begin your studies,
4. the level at which you are invited to begin and complete the APL process, and most importantly,
5. the amount of time and semesters you need to address all program and college degree requirements to graduate. You will be guided to request an amount of credit that considers all five of these conditions.

All Goddard students, including APL participants, are required to complete three full semesters to be eligible for a Goddard diploma. Two of those semesters must be your Level 7 and 8 (your senior year). In general, the amount of credit requested cannot take a student beyond a returning Level 7.

There are very rare occasions when these policies are waived, but they never occur without full approval from the Academic Dean in careful consultation with the Program Director, the APL Coordinator and all other relevant Offices.

How Does a Learning Experience Relate to a Credit Request?

Since the APL process credits learning, and not experience itself, there is no fixed formula that links a prior learning experience to an exact amount of credit you can request. Since prior learning varies in the way it is acquired, the content it covers, and the time involved for each APL participant. However, colleges do often use contact time in the classroom and time preparing and working outside the classroom to establish a baseline for a credit-hour. For example:

In a traditional academic setting, **one** college credit often measures 15 hours of direct instruction in a classroom setting and 30 hours of student preparation and work outside the classroom. These equal a combined 45 hours of learning.

The most common credit designation is **three credits** per one college course that equals 45 hours of direct instruction and 90 hours of student preparation and studies outside the classroom. Combined these hours total 135 hours of learning (this kind of formula may vary from college to college. We will work with this ratio as a lens through which to view your prior learning to be sure that credit allocations are realistic).

In consultation with the APL Coordinator, you will arrive with a sense of what is a plausible amount credit for your kind(s) of prior learning and then see if it makes sense in terms of your

academic path (for example, some students come in with strong prior learning equivalent to 45 or more credits). However, a request for 45 credits is ill-advised if it intrudes on your ability to meet all degree requirements, craft a strong senior study, and maintain a balance of rigor and pleasure in their studies. If your experiential learning is job related, you cannot simply translate length of employment into credit hours, because not all the time spent on the job is time learning. At some point “learning by doing” usually becomes the experience of doing, as tasks become routine rather than new or challenging.

Dangling Credits

As Goddard gives both partial and full credit for each successful semester and credits transferred from attendance at previous colleges rarely come in 15 credit units, you may have what are called “dangling credits” that affect your standing. For example, if Goddard accepts 25 credits from another college, you will be five credits shy of the 30 credits needed to be a Level 2 student. Rather than earning an extra 10 credits, some students may be advised to address their dangling credits through APL.

Other students may be guided to take CLEP exams, 16 credit semesters, or enroll in courses online to transfer in credit that address dangling credit or degree requirements (with the pre-approval of the Program Director and Registrar). You can decide on your best path in conversation with admissions counselors, the APL Coordinator, your Program Director and faculty advisor.

THE APL PROCESS

There are two major phases to the APL process. The first is the preparation of an APL Petition in which an outline is created of the prior learning areas that you believe are worthy of college-level credit and show how these link to your ongoing studies at Goddard. When the APL Petition is endorsed by the Progress Review Group (made up of Faculty across Goddard's Undergraduate Programs), you are given the "go-ahead" to prepare an APL Portfolio that documents the learning you are presenting. Your **APL Portfolio** expands on the APL Petition outline by describing and demonstration of your learning in detail to make the case that your prior learning is college-level and relevant to your degree.

Though most participants in the APL process find it meaningful, useful, and surprising, it is a different kind of task than the packet work of a semester packet work, APL is looking back at, and sharing with others, learning that has happened in the past, while packet work is learning taking place in the present (though, of course, it may be linked to knowledge and perspectives acquired in the past, too). Holding these two perspectives offers a unique and sometimes challenging set of tasks, especially if you plan to prepare the APL Petition or APL Portfolio during a semester when you are also preparing packets for your adviser. If circumstances allow, some APL participants choose to work on components of their APL process between semesters or even on-leave.

Preparing to participate in the APL Process means planning your time so you can:

- 1) Review all previous college-level education that took place after high school (or completion of a GED) prior to entering Goddard, up to and including this current semester, to identify how your studies to date address Goddard's degree requirements. Look ahead to what you wish to accomplish by the time you graduate so you can form an overall plan for your BA degree including areas you may be able to address through APL or through Goddard work in future semesters.
- 2) Think about the significant experiences you've had prior to entering Goddard, *the learning you gained from them, and the kinds of documentation you think you will be able to provide* that will attest to the college-level equivalency of your activities.
- 3) Share the information and thinking about your prior learning with the APL Coordinator at the beginning of your residency to see if the APL process fits into your overall Goddard degree plan.
- 4) Attend the first *APL Informational Workshop* and a *Progress Review Orientation Workshop* during your residency.
- 5) If, after the *APL Informational Workshop*, you feel it makes sense for you to explore APL, arrange a time to meet with the APL Coordinator. Plan on an hour and a half for this meeting.
- 6) If your intention is to complete the entire APL process in one semester, the APL Coordinator will communicate with you, your advisor, and your Program Director to determine if it makes sense for you to complete the entire APL process in one semester.

- 7) Inform your advisor of your intention to apply for APL credit and seek their support in preparing for a Progress Review appropriate to the level to which you hope to advance.
- 8) Attend the *APL Petition Preparation Workshop* during your residency.
- 9) Continue working on your petition through participation in the **APL Petition Preparation Online Course**, led by the APL Coordinator that begins the first week after your residency.
 - You will have access to an *APL Petition Preparation* folder online that holds weekly activity guidelines, samples, and templates.
 - You will post work weekly and receive feedback. You will be able to ask questions that will guide you through the process.
 - You will participate in a group or individual conference call (depending on schedules).
 - If your APL Petition is endorsed by the Progress Review Group (PRG), you will receive a PRG Response letter that indicates the endorsement and you may move forward in creating your APL Portfolio. If the PRG requests additional information, they will say so in their response letter. If the PRG does not think it wise to participate in APL, they will offer reasons in their response letter.
- 10) Once your APL Petition has been approved and you have uploaded materials into your online Progress Review Portfolio, you will be guided to submit to the Progress Review Group. If your materials support the plan to create an APL Portfolio to request college-level credit, the PRG will endorse this plan in the Response Letter they send you.
- 11) Once the endorsement has been received by the PRG, you can officially begin work on your APL Portfolio which will contain all the information outlined in your APL Petition, as well as other sections indicated in the template, guidelines, and samples made available to you in an online folder for *APL Portfolio Preparation*. You will work on your APL Portfolio with the support and guidance of the APL Coordinator.
- 12) Once the APL Portfolio has been approved for submission, you will upload it. If your APL process is designed to meet certain graduation degree requirements or address dangling credits, your PR Portfolio will be considered still open and incomplete until you have created and submitted an APL Portfolio for review and the PRG (along with the BA Programs, the Registrar's Office, your Program Director, your Advisor, the APL Coordinator and of course, you), receives the APL Portfolio Review Committee's decision regarding your college credit award. This information will be placed in your official records and the change in your status will appear in SIS.

- If additional evidence of your Prior Learning is required by the APL Portfolio Review Committee, you will be notified by the Chair of the Committee with specific details of how to address their request.

The APL Coordinator is your contact person throughout this process for all questions concerning APL. If you have any questions throughout this process, contact the APL Coordinator.

APL PETITION DETAILS

The APL Petition is organized into five basic sections: the **Cover Letter**, **Prior Learning Areas of Study**, a **Summary of Studies**, an **APL Reflective Essay**, and an **Approval Letter** from the APL Coordinator that states that your APL Petition is complete and approved for submission with your Progress Review.

You will receive guidelines and samples to help you complete each of these sections.

Cover Letter

Your cover letter will include your name, program, address, current level, and date submitted. It will list the contents of the APL petition.

Prior Learning Areas of Study (Petition Text)

The APL Petition is organized into separate areas of Prior Learning if you have more than one area of learning. It is useful to think of each area of study as if it is a course that you might read in a college catalogue. You can search online for courses offered at accredited colleges and universities to find a match with your prior learning. This process is called **Course Matching** and can be a good way to think about how your prior aligns with similar college-level learning.

As part of your APL petition preparation, you will be invited to list all that you now know, can now do, and can now teach to others as a result of your prior learning experiences. This establishes a bridge to the kinds of course objectives and outcomes of traditional college courses.

For example, suppose you spent 11 years running your own business and you have a list of all the things you can do and know and could teach others. When you go online, you start a search for syllabi (or curricula) from accredited colleges and universities by typing in the phrase, *syllabi for running a business* and discover courses from several accredited colleges titled: *Principles of Business, Introduction to Business, Small Business Administration, Business Math, Entrepreneurship* and more. You realize that you can demonstrate all the basic skills and knowledge listed for courses in small business administration, business math, human resource development, organizational leadership and basic marketing. This might mean that your learning is equal to five college-level three-credit courses for a total of 15 credits. When you meet with the APL Coordinator, you can determine if this is accurate and how this might fit your overall plan of studies and your future academic goals.

For each distinct area of Prior Learning you must include:

- **Title of Study:** Choose a title that matches the knowledge and learning that *you* gained from this experience (or this combination of experiences). Check college courses that are related to your area and note titles. Then design a title that as closely as possible describes your study.
- **Dates of study:** List when (from month/ year to month/year) after high school graduation and prior to your enrollment in Goddard—you engaged in this study.

- **Number of Credits:** The number of credits you are requesting.
- **Brief Description of Learning Activity:**
 - Describe the content of the learning you acquired as well as the particulars of how and where the learning occurred. Were there instructors, mentors, events, trainings, etc. involved. How long did the process of acquiring the knowledge and skills take?
 - **Intentionality:** Describe why you undertook this learning. What would you say was your key "inquiry question," i.e., essentially, what did you seek to learn, or need to know?
 - **Knowledge, Theories and Skills Acquired: Describe what you learned in bulleted format.** Name the academic area(s) you explored. Identify the major theories, principles, content areas, and skills you learned. For APL purposes, *the key is the ability to identify learning and describe it in academic languages*. This will become the major part of the APL Portfolio. A helpful approach might be to think about how you would organize a list of what you know to teach it to someone else.
- **Bibliography/Resource List:**
 - Include a selected bibliography of relevant resources using the appropriate formatting style for your learning area (e.g., MLA or APA). Resources may include materials from workshops, lectures, certificate programs, as well as relevant films, expert consultants, internships, etc. You will annotate these sources in your APL Portfolio.
 - **Documentation: List the evidence you will submit to support your learning.** Specify how you intend to document your learning. Each area of study must include in the list of evidence: the Narrative Essay and Annotated Bibliography, as well as a minimum of two other pieces of supporting evidence. Examples of supporting evidence are, but not limited to: newspaper articles about you and your work, texts you have written, artwork, samples of products you created, projects you implemented, CDs, DVDs, websites you designed, PowerPoint presentations, letters of expert testimony, etc. Include names, titles and qualifications of persons from whom you are seeking expert testimony.
 - **Program Fit:** Explain how this learning fits into your overall Goddard BA program and fulfills your specific Goddard degree requirements. Make very sure that what you claim in the program fit is aligned with the knowledge/theory base. E.g. do not claim, in the Program Fit section, that the work involves math if you are not going to demonstrate your understanding of math in the Portfolio.

Summary of Studies

A Summary of Studies is necessary for the reviewers to understand how you intend to your complete your Goddard Degree Program. The *Summary* is a semester by semester breakdown of your undergraduate education (all 8 levels) including:

- All *transfer credit* (that has been officially accepted by the Records Office): date, institutions attended, titles of courses, course numbers, and number and kind of credits awarded (semester or quarter hours).
- All *Goddard semesters finished*: date, descriptive titles of study (and degree requirements each study addresses), and advisor's name.
- All *Prior Learning Areas for which credit is being requested advancement sought*: titles, dates of areas of learning, length of time engaged in that learning, brief description titles of each prior the learning area, number of credit hours requested presented in each area, and the degree requirements these address. You must include a brief, one sentence and description of the Course Title for each area of study.
- All *Goddard semesters anticipated*: dates and general descriptive title of studies. You must include a tentative plan for your senior study.

Reflective Essay on Creating the APL Petition

In a reflective essay of 5 – 10 pages, which you send to the APL Coordinator, you will demonstrate the learning that occurred for you while creating your APL Petition. This learning is new learning; it is **not** the learning that occurred during your prior work/experience, but rather the discoveries about yourself or your learning through the process of preparing an APL Petition.

Your essay may address the following competencies:

- **Critical Thinking and Writing**
In order to create your APL Petition outline, you had to critically review past experiences in order to determine what prior learning met the criteria for college-level learning.
- **Educational Reflection**
The format of the Petition also invites you to think critically about the intention behind your prior learning experiences and how the learning occurred through the reflective lens of academic coursework.
- **Writing for a Specific Audience/Purpose**
In order to successfully complete a Petition, you write for a specific audience (the PR Group of faculty who you do not know). This means you must write as clearly and concisely so that anyone reviewing your work is comfortable endorsing your request to continue with the APL process.

- **Learning Theory**

To complete your APL Petition, you have had to reflect on your prior learning from the vantage point of formulas for credit, course outcomes in college syllabi that resemble the studies you have completed, etc.

- **Organizing Information**

Learning often happens in a holistic way and yet, to request college-level credit, you have been asked to separate some of that learning into specific categories, summaries, lists, and types of documentation. How did you experience and what did you discover in taking on these tasks?

You may also reflect on:

- what the process of consolidating your life's learning taught you
- what it was like to go back and view your life's work/experience through the lens of "college-level learning"
- what you discovered in reviewing college course syllabi that teach content that is the same as or similar to the knowledge, theories, and skills you acquired through your prior learning
- the process you had to go through to extrapolate learning from your life's work/experience
- the process of articulating that learning
- the process of how you will integrate your prior learning into a narrative essay for your portfolio
- preparing an outline that clearly states how you will develop your portfolio

APL PORTFOLIO DETAILS

The APL Portfolio demonstrates and documents the learning that you outlined in your APL Petition.

What you put in your APL Portfolio follows the flow of, and includes, the material detailed in each section of your APL Petition. The demonstration and documentation of learning should be sufficient for the APL Portfolio Review Committee to evaluate the scope and quality of your learning.

The APL Portfolio Review Committees consists of faculty members from programs at Goddard College, and when necessary, other context experts from across and outside the college.

APL Portfolio Components

The Portfolio includes the following components and must be organized in the following order:

- **Cover Letter** that includes your name, program, advisor, level, email address, and date submitted. It should also *briefly* delineate the contents of the portfolio.
- **Table of Contents with page numbers**
- **Full Approved APL Petition**
- **APL Petition Approval to submit letter from the APL Coordinator**
- **Progress Review Reflective Essay and Progress Review Group Response Letter**
- **Each Prior Learning Area**
 - Narrative Essay
 - Introduction
 - Sections titled as, and covering, each of the Knowledge, Theories, Skills Acquired listed in the APL Petition
 - Conclusion
 - Annotated Resource List
 - Additional evidence (such as certificates of completion, newspaper or journal articles about your work, examples of products created, video links to work, signed letters of expert testimony, etc.)

The APL Portfolio Narrative Essay

The Narrative Essay is where you get to tell your story of your prior learning. You will write an in-depth *description, demonstration and evaluation of your learning* in the context of your experience. Though you will introduce yourself to the reader, the focus is not autobiographical but rather a demonstration of your acquisition of knowledge and skill that bridges the unique foundation of your experience with learning that is equivalent to, (and in some cases, beyond that of college-level learning .

The primary question you will be answering in the Prior Learning Area section of your APL Portfolio is, *if I were to guide someone to acquire the same learning I acquired, what skills and knowledge would they seek and what would they be know and be able to do after?*

- The body of your essay will describe the core principles or components of the knowledge and skill you've acquired in terms of theories, disciplines and/or fields of learning.
- You will describe all of the learning in terms
- You must clearly demonstrate how this learning fulfills your Goddard degree requirements as outlined in the Program Fit section of your Petition.
- You must be able to describe the learning with enough detail and appropriate terminology that the members of your APL Portfolio Review Committee are persuaded that your acquired learning is equivalent to college-level learning in order to award credit.
- Your learning descriptions must be detailed and explicit.
- Credit **will not** be awarded if your narrative is vague, the learning is implied, or you simply list experiences in which you took part.
- You will also explain the documentation/evidence beyond your annotated bibliography and narrative essay(s) that you have submitted to support your learning.

Do not describe only what you did; describe what you learned. **Describe** the experience and introduce the evidence you will offer to document both the experience and the learning. You may describe *the core principles and scope of what you learned in a theoretical context*. You **must** address all the learning components that you outlined in the Knowledge, Theory and Skills section of your APL Petition. You will also **clearly demonstrate** how the learning fulfills your Goddard degree requirements as listed in the Program Fit section of your APL Petition.

In order to write this detailed narrative of your learning, ask yourself the following questions:

- How did you come to be in a position that required or compelled you to know more than you knew at the time the experience began?
- How did you set about learning what you needed to know?
- How did you know that you had succeeded in learning what you needed to know?
- How did you apply/test theoretical learning in practice?
- How did theoretical understanding emerge out of the practical activities in which you were engaged, and how did it transform your practice?
- What work of the influential thinkers in the field did I study? (which fields/published works)
- Look at the resources that have helped you grow in this field.
- What college-level books, mentors, workshops, in-service training, etc., helped you come to these understandings?
- What were the key concepts or ways of thinking about the subject that each author or presenter gave you?

- How did you integrate/test those concepts in practice?
- What do you know now that you did not know before?

In the narrative, you may also discuss how your learning can be:

- differentiated from an experience that involved only repetitious application of one piece of knowledge and your new learning
- differentiated from learning that is common to all
- linked to known academic fields, disciplines, and traditions
- linked to sources that are credible in the field where your learning resides and/or scientifically supported (these are the sources annotated in your bibliography)

Engaged Critical Reflection and Writing

As described in the Goddard Undergraduate Curriculum Guide, critical thinking *happens in a variety of learning experiences, including visual, oral, movement and written work* and your writing will show your critical thinking via your:

- Curiosity and openness to ideas and information beyond your own experience or ideas, and reflection on your own biases and perspectives.
- Well-reasoned conclusions and solutions to questions that are part of any study
- Attributing ideas and information to their sources critical thinking

All the narrative sections of your APL Petition and APL Portfolio will demonstrate a capacity for critical reflection and writing. Critical reflection is the ability “to think mindfully about the world around us”. We do this through questioning, reasoning, noting our and others’ biases, perspectives and assumptions, and making decisions. Critical reflection is a lifelong process of self-assessment through analyzing and processing the information we take in. We are constantly discovering new information and new perspectives which lead to creative thinking that ultimately can empower us and the communities where we work and live.

Critical writing is the art of expressing and presenting the evidence and conclusions generated by this new creative thinking. It is a conversation between you the writer and the reader. In order to write critically one must think critically. “The goal is to gain new understanding by carefully examining evidence, carefully reflecting upon it, and coming to well reasoned and supported conclusions.” This process allows you and the reader to examine topics from a fresh and oftentimes different point-of-view.

In summary, critical reflection and critical writing are engaged processes that can be linked to all interests and desires. These goals allow you to develop lifelong skills that serve your communities and the broad based engagement with lifelong learning.

Portfolio Submission Process

The APL Coordinator must review and approve all Prior Learning Essay Narratives and sections of the APL Portfolio before the completed APL Portfolio is uploaded for review.

Submission Materials

Your full APL Portfolio is saved as a PDF and then uploaded to the ePortfolio site which is the same site the APL Petition was uploaded. Some APL participants create one PDF file for all the materials in their APL Portfolio. Others upload a PDF file with all materials except their documentation which is placed in a separate folder, titled APL Documentation with student name. Generally, most forms of documentation can be uploaded or linked to with ease. If you have any questions or difficulties with documentation, contact the APL Coordinator for guidance.

The APL Portfolio Review Committee is made up of faculty and content experts in your area(s) of learning. In the process of review, the committee may request clarification(s), submission of original documents for verification of authenticity, and more or expanded forms/kinds of evidence of learning. On some occasions, they may request an email or phone call for clarification of sections of your submission.

Award letters are usually sent within 4-6 weeks of receiving your materials.

APL PETITION AND PORTFOLIO SUBMISSION DATES

Due Dates According to Level and Timing

- If you are completing the entire APL process in one semester, your completed APL Portfolio is due to the APL Coordinator before the **packet 4 due date**.
- If you are completing the APL process in two semesters, your completed APL Portfolio is due to the APL Coordinator before the **packet 3 due date** of the second semester.

In the charts below, you can see how the submission process flows when preparation of the APL Petition and the APL Portfolio take place in one and two semesters.

For example, if a Level 3 student completes the APL process in one semester, the maximum number of credits they could request would be 45. If all credits were awarded, they would be a returning Level 7 student. If however, the same student completed their APL Petition in one semester and the APL Portfolio in the following semester, the maximum amount of credit they could request would be 30. If all credits were awarded, they would be a returning Level 7 student.

Two Semester APL Process and Level Change Chart

The following chart shows the flow of submissions when completing an APL Petition in one semester and APL Portfolio in the following semester. Notice how the credit requests, if awarded, move the student's status to another level.

Status upon completing APL Petition	Status upon submitting APL Portfolio the following semester	APL credit request	Returning Status if all credit granted	Progress Report Due
Level 1	Level 2	15	Level 4	PR I
Level 1	Level 2	30	Level 5	PR I or PR II
Level 1	Level 2	45	Level 6	PR II
Level 2	Level 3	15	Level 5	PR I or PR II
Level 2	Level 3	30	Level 6	PR II
Level 2	Level 3	45	Level 7	PR II
Level 3	Level 4	15	Level 6	PR II
Level 3	Level 4	30	Level 7	PR II
Level 4	Level 5	15	Level 7	PR II

Important Reminder

It is rare for students to participate in any part of the APL Process at Level 1 or as a New Student regardless of their level, as, generally, new students need time to adapt to the Goddard model of packet work with advisers in order to complete at least one successful semester before moving forward with APL.

One Semester APL Process and Level Change Chart

The following chart shows the flow of submissions when completing an APL Petition and APL Portfolio in the same semester. Notice how the credit requests, if awarded, move the student's status to another level.

Status	APL credit request – same semester	Returning Status if all credit granted	Progress Report Due
Level 1	15	Level 3	PR I
Level 1	30	Level 4	PR I
Level 1	45	Level 5	PR I or PR II
Level 2	15	Level 4	PR I
Level 2	30	Level 5	PR I or PR II
Level 2	45	Level 6	PR II
Level 3	15	Level 5	PR I or PR II
Level 3	30	Level 6	PR II
Level 3	45	Level 7	PR II
Level 4	15	Level 6	PR II
Level 4	30	Level 7	PR II
Level 5	15	Level 7	PR II
Level 6	0		
Level 7	0		
Level 8	0		

A FEW HARD AND FAST RULES

- Every student must complete at least one and a half years (three full semesters) of packet work in order to receive a Goddard degree. All students must complete level 7 and 8 at Goddard.
- Undergraduate programs may have different admission requirements. If you hope to use APL to transfer into a program other than the one you are in, review that program's requirements and speak to the program director to see if you are a good candidate for acceptance.
- APL cannot place you beyond level 7. Level 7 is typically devoted to finalizing the research for your senior study project. Be sure to plan your Level 7 semester as the beginning of your Senior Study research.
- Successful completion of the undergraduate degree is dependent on meeting program course requirements as well as all graduation degree requirements, not just accumulating credit. Prior learning areas should fit into a coherent program that addresses all sets of the degree requirements.
- APL credit will not be awarded for any learning for which a student received credit at another accredited college or university. (Refer to the Undergraduate Student Handbook – Transfer Credit Policy for further information on what to do with these credits.)
- APL credit will not be awarded for any learning from courses or experiences in which a student was enrolled through an accredited college or university but DID not complete or receive credit.
- APL credit will not automatically be awarded for learning certified by an unaccredited institution. However, students may earn credit for that learning if it is substantively documented through the APL process in a way that shows it is college-level.
- APL credit cannot duplicate credit you have earned or will earn through Goddard packet work.
- The prior learning must have occurred after High School graduation or GED completion and before entering Goddard.

Note about Exceptions

Though rare, there are some circumstances that may result in exceptions to these policies.

However, any exception requires written approval from the Academic Dean or their designee, in consultation with the APL Coordinator, Program Director, and other relevant parties.

CULTURAL IMMERSION AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

Students wishing to have their experience of immersion/language learning in another culture assessed for prior learning credit, please read the following guidelines.

- 1) Create an **Outline** that includes location(s), dates and amount of time spent in another culture(s), as well as the major aims and activities while participating in the culture (such as jobs, formal study, etc.).
- 2) Consider the following **Questions/Discussion Topics** when developing your portfolio narrative:
 - **Language:** Did you study the language(s), or local dialects, and if so how? (Formal school study? By ear through family or friends?) How fluent were you/did you become? (You might discuss moving toward fluency, barriers to deeper fluency, noticing linguistic differences, problems of translation, etc.)
 - **Preconceptions of the culture:** What expectations did you have before going? From what sources had your images of this culture been gleaned? For instance through formal language study in school, through reading, cultural products (movies, novels), from your home culture?
 - **Perceptions on arrival:** Were you seeking to confirm your preconceptions? What did you later realize you had noticed/not noticed? What did you notice about the “polite fictions”¹ in that culture, how they are similar to or different from those operating in your own?
 - **Danger (to yourself or others):** to what extent did you familiarize yourself with the major political/social concerns or divisions (including those related to religion, class, gender, age, etc.), prevailing government structures, laws you might inadvertently fall foul of? How about physical dangers due to climate, wildlife, etc.?
 - **Appropriate behavior:** Were you aware of behavioral taboos? Did you find yourself altering your behavior as you became aware of discomfort on the part of your listeners, or because friends/teachers in the culture alerted you to inappropriate behavior?
 - **Study in/of the culture:** did you undertake formal study while there? How was this presented and what assumptions accompanied the teaching, do you think?

¹ “Polite Fictions” is a term coined by Nancy Sakamoto and Naotsuka Reiko (1982) in *Polite Fictions, Why Japanese and Americans seem rude to each other*, Tokyo: Kinseido. An example of a polite fiction is the invitation to visit our home that we may offer to a casual acquaintance, without ever expecting (or hoping) that they will come.

- What **informal activities** changed your understanding of that culture? For instance, “**critical incidents**”² events, or verbal communications, exchanges that triggered obvious problems, causing you puzzlement, or crisis? How did you come to understand what had “caused” the crisis? (If you engaged in discussions with indigenous people(s), to what extent did you think it likely that their information was given from true feelings, to what extent perhaps trying to meet your expectations?)
- **List Sources of Learning:** texts, etc., that did/did not enhance your culture-specific learning and your understanding of the nature of culture shock, effects of culture on perception, etc. (An annotated bibliography should be submitted with the APL Portfolio.)

Note: original signed copies of expert testimony and/or official certificates of progress and/or standardized proficiency language test certificates are required to document language studies. These may be supported by testimonials, and (if appropriate) “objects,” such as video, that demonstrate your skills in action.

² “Critical Incidents” refers to situations when a person realizes s/he has done something wrong/inappropriate, but cannot figure out what. When finally informed, the person learns something about her/his own and the other culture.

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