



**UNIVERSITY OF THE  
COMMONWEALTH  
CARIBBEAN**  
*Fostering Leadership & Innovation*

# **Prior Learning Assessment Portfolio Guide**

**December 2023, Last Revised October 2024**

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Undergraduate and Graduate Programmes



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## **Prior Learning Assessment Portfolio Guide** December 2023, Revised September 2024

**Purpose-** A Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Portfolio allows a candidate to receive recognition for knowledge gained in a variety of ways other than traditional post-secondary education. It is a process by which a candidate can demonstrate informal learning achieved at the post-secondary level. It allows the institution to determine if an applicant who does not meet the regular matriculation requirement can enter into a university programme.

**Scope-** Applicants to:

- **Bachelors-** All bachelor's programmes who are without traditional matriculation requirements will be asked to submit a Prior Learning Assessment Portfolio.
- **CEMBA/CEMPA-** The Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration (CEMBA) and the Commonwealth Master of Public Administration (CEMPA) who are without traditional matriculation requirements will be asked to submit a Prior Learning Assessment Portfolio.
- **MBA-** The MBA Programme may be eligible for matriculation by Prior Learning Assessment if they have completed an Associate Degree and meet portfolio requirements.

### **WHAT IS THE PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT (PLA) MATRICULATION REQUIREMENT?**

Graduate: Applicants to the UCC Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration (CEMBA) and the Commonwealth Master of Public Administration (CEMPA) programmes and MBA Programme who are without bachelor's degrees will be required to submit a portfolio consisting of documents relating to the following:

- Career achievement / Experience / Effectiveness
- Community involvement / Leadership
- Academic qualifications (not including matriculation requirements)
- Authorship
- Testimonials/Recommendations

PLA candidates for the CEMBA and CEMPA programmes and MBA Programme will be interviewed to assess the acceptability of the contents of their portfolios.

Undergraduate: For applicants to Undergraduate Programmes, the application documents should be submitted as a portfolio. PLA candidates for bachelor's programmes may be invited to interview to assess the acceptability of the contents of their portfolios.

### **WHAT IS A PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT PORTFOLIO?**

A Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Portfolio allows a candidate to receive recognition for knowledge gained in a variety of ways other than formal education. It is a process by which the candidate demonstrates learning that is equivalent to the learning achieved at the postsecondary level. It allows the institution to determine if an applicant who does not meet the regular matriculation requirement can enter into a university programme.

### **WHO IS REQUIRED TO PRESENT A PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT PORTFOLIO?**

#### **Graduate Programmes:**

A Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Portfolio is used for matriculation into the UCC Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration (CEMBA) and the Commonwealth Master of Public Administration (CEMPA) if one does not hold a first degree but has acquired at least five (5) years' work experience in an executive position (supervisor, manager, business owner, etc.), and possesses acceptable and verifiable alternative academic and/or professional qualifications.

- Candidates seeking matriculation into the CEMBA and CEMPA programmes via Prior Learning Assessment Recognition must be at least 30 years of age.
- Candidates for the MBA Programme are required to have an Associate Degree and has acquired at least three (3) years' work experience in a supervisory position (supervisor, manager, business owner, etc.) and must be at least thirty years old.

**Undergraduate Programmes:**

Applicants to bachelor's programmes who have fully satisfied the Standard Admission Requirements except for the basic academic qualifications may be accepted via the Mature Candidate Route and be granted admission. The Minimum age requirement is 25 years.

**PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT PORTFOLIO COMPONENTS (For applicants to Graduate Programmes)**

It is required that the PLA Portfolio must include a number of components in order for it to be accepted for review by UCC Admissions. These components are as follows:

1. Title Page
2. Table of Contents
3. Personal Profile
4. Statement of Purpose
5. Current Resumé
6. Documentation of Learning
  - i. Copies of certificates: degree, diplomas, professional certificates
7. Career Achievement/Experience/Effectiveness
  - i. Recommendations
  - ii. Promotional letters
  - iii. Training sessions
  - iv. Summary Transcript of Relevant Learning from Experience
8. Community Involvement /Leadership
  - i. Images of voluntary service
9. Additional documentation the candidate wishes to be considered as part of the review process
10. Conclusion

**PORTFOLIO COMPONENT DETAILS (For applicants to Graduate Programmes)**

**1. Title Page**

The title page of the portfolio should capture the candidate's personal details:

- Portfolio title
- Photograph of applicant
- Applicant's name
- Academic programme name
- Date of submission

**2. Table of Contents**

The Table of Contents should include a clear listing of each section in the document and must be on a separate page.

**3. Personal/Professional Profile**

This section should outline to the assessors, relevant information related to the candidate's personal and professional life, his/her learning experiences, areas of personal growth, and competences.

**4. Statement of Purpose**

The Statement of Purpose should convince the Admissions team that the candidate's achievements show promise for success in a graduate programme. The candidate should provide an introduction and give reasons for pursuing graduate study. The inclusion of any unique qualifications or interests, and a brief discussion of professional and community service engagements will be expected. Descriptions and examples of personal determination and success drivers, practical demonstrations of initiative and creativity, and problem-solving ability are to be provided.

The candidate should be able to describe any plans, or goals and objectives for the immediate period after the successful completion of the degree and define how the programme will support these goals and objectives. The document should also include the date and the candidate's signature.

It is useful for the candidate to think of the Statement of Purpose as a composition with four different parts:

- i. Introduction of self, interests and motivation
- ii. Summary of academic history
- iii. Discussion of the relevance of recent and current personal and professional pursuits
- iv. Elaborating on academic interests, the candidate should name the degree being sought and explain the reason for the application to the programme.

### **5. Current Resumé**

A resumé is a formal document that displays an individual's professional background and relevant skills. The resumé should be very detailed, concise and accurate. Most resúmes consist of work history, training history, educational history, professional summary, professional reference or a statement advising how the reviewer can request a professional reference.

### **6. Documentation of Learning**

This may include licenses and certificates held:

- i. Certificates of completion for training
- ii. Certificates of completion along with detailed description of training (programme/course that was successfully completed)

### **7. Career Achievement/ Experience/Effectiveness**

- i. Performance assessments/appraisals and/ or written commendations showing evidence of excellence in job performance, superior intellect/application/initiative, rewards/ recognition for outstanding results
- ii. Descriptions and demonstrations of involvement in special assignments or projects; team leadership; product improvement, design or development
- iii. Evidence of promotions to positions of increasing responsibility
- iv. Evidence of successfully conducting formal workshops/seminars/training sessions
- v. Evidence of successful participation in a formal work-related mentoring or management development programme
- vi. Company/industry awards and citations
- vii. Non-formal training – provision of signed certificates to validate attendance at career development/skills training workshop/seminars (minimum 16 hours per workshop/seminar)
- viii. Significant business ownership – Articles and Memoranda of Association and financial statements (specifically for those seeking to pursue the EMBA).
- ix. Summary Transcript of Relevant Learning from Experience

### **8. Community Involvement and Leadership**

- i. Leadership/Directorship/Board Chairmanship/Membership/Founding role in established/ significant body, for example, civic organisation, church, clubs/societies
- ii. Founding role in organisation exhibiting sustainability beyond 3 years
- iii. Selection by peers for commendation
- iv. Community/National/International awards/ recognition
- v. Membership in professional organisations or lobby groups
- vi. Articles published about the applicant's accomplishments

### **9. Additional Documentation that candidate wishes to be considered as part of the review process**

#### **Authorship**

- i. Book(s) published or contributed to
- ii. Scholarly essays/articles written by the applicant in journals
- iii. Newspaper articles submitted by the applicant
- iv. Recognised involvement in research activity – published results

### **Photographs**

Adding photos to the document is useful in conveying and verifying concepts and information and to also provide clarity.

### **10. Conclusion**

The conclusion is a short summary of what was presented to the assessor.

## **PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT PORTFOLIO COMPONENTS**

*(For applicants to Undergraduate Programmes)*

It is required that the PLA Portfolio must include a number of components in order for it to be accepted for review by UCC Admissions. These components are as follows:

- Application documents should be submitted as a portfolio (see details below).
- Detailed resumé
- Certified academic qualifications, where applicable and available.
- Job Letter
- References
  - Pre-assessment screening questionnaire, and if required a pre-acceptance interview.
  - All candidates are required to attend special orientation sessions.

## **PORTFOLIO COMPONENT DETAILS**

*(For applicants to Undergraduate Programmes, the application documents should be submitted as a portfolio, as follows):*

### **1. Title Page**

The title page of the portfolio should capture the candidate's personal details:

- Portfolio title
- Photograph of applicant
- Applicant's name
- Academic programme name
- Date of submission

### **2. Table of Contents**

The Table of Contents should include a clear listing of each section in the document and must be on a separate page.

### **3. Current Resumé**

A resumé is a formal document that displays an individual's professional background and relevant skills. The resumé should be very detailed, concise and accurate. Most resumés consist of work history, training history, educational history, professional summary, professional reference or a statement advising how the reviewer can request a professional reference.

### **4. Documentation of Learning (if applicable)**

This may include:

- i. CSEC/GCE O 'level and other accepted secondary level certificates
- ii. Certificates of completion for training

### **5. Career Achievement/ Experience/Effectiveness**

- Evidence of five (5) years' work experience in a field related to desired programme of study
- A formal job letter. Employment Verification Letter indicating a statement on the quality of the applicant.
- As an alternate for a job letter, self-employed candidates would be required to provide proof of income verified by a Justice of the Peace.
- Three professional references.

**6.** Applicants are also required to submit a completed *Mature Entry Supplemental Application Form*.

### **7. Conclusion**

The conclusion is a short summary of what was presented to the assessor.

**Revision History:**

<b>Version</b>	<b>Description of changes</b>	<b>Approved by</b>	<b>Revision date</b>
1.0	Guide developed	Dianne Boyd, Director, Administration and Student Services College of Graduate Studies and Research	December 2023
2.0	Inserted purpose and scope; inclusion of PLA Portfolio requirements for Undergraduate	Dianne Boyd, Director, Administration and Student Services College of Graduate Studies and Research	October 2024
3.0	MBA matriculation requirement	Andrea Sutherland, Dean, Graduate Studies and Research	October 2024

***Policy- Mature Entrant Policy***