Writer's Checklist for Self-Assessments in CMU Prior-Learning Assessment Portfolios

Your primary purpose in the portfolio is to develop arguments to persuade reviewers to grant credit for your prior learning from work, training, and/or life experiences. For *each* specific learning competency for which you want credit, you must develop an argument, and the best approach is to use a three-part structure for each competency: claim, supporting evidence, and reasoning.

Reviewers do not grant credit simply for the amount of time you spent working, training, or engaging in various other activities, although the duration of the experience is used to determine the maximum number of credits *possible* for each IV-tab. When deciding whether to grant credit and, if so, at what level, reviewers will consider the extent to which each self-assessment you have included for a specific competency is equivalent to 3-credit hours of college-level learning. For undergraduate students, reviewers will also decide whether the learning reflected by the self-assessment merits lower- or upper-level credit; for graduate students, they will decide whether the learning reflected by the self-assessment merits graduate-level credit.

Drafting the Content of Your Self-Assessments

As you draft the content of the self-assessments in each IV, V, and/or VI tab, consider the following:

IV Tabs (i.e., learning from work experiences)

☐ In each IV tab, do sections A.2 and A.3 begin with a brief introduction that identifies and explains your claim? In other words, does the introduction make clear to reviewers the primary learning competencies you are asking credit for and that are addressed (in that same order) in the rest of the section? Does the introduction identify a reasonable number of competencies? For example, if you are eligible for up to 6-credits for an IV tab, have you identified two competencies (each potentially worth 3 credits)?

☐ Does each subsequent paragraph or section in your self-assessment provide specific examples and reasoning to support your claims about what you have learned?

☐ Do the arguments you have created in A.2 and A.3 of each IV tab focus on what you have *learned* and how you learned it?

☐ In each IV tab, have you provided a self-assessment of 750 – 1,000 words for each competency for which you are requesting credit?

V Tabs (i.e., learning from trainings and workshops)

Note: *If you are requesting credit for courses you completed at a regionally-accredited school but that did not transfer to CMU, create a separate V tab for each course for which you are asking credit. However, you do NOT need to include a self-assessment. Instead, in each relevant V tab, include a copy of the transcript from the school(s) that shows the course number and title and the number of credits for each course for which you are requesting credit. Reviewers will check the transcript against the CMU Transfer Credit Evaluation (TCE), which you must include in the Tab II section of your portfolio.*

For trainings and workshops that are NOT college courses, please remember that every 45 hours is worth only 1 credit, so don't waste time creating separate V tabs for every little training you've completed, because you won't receive credit for them. Instead, if you have completed several small trainings all related to the same subject that, combined, required at least 45 hours to complete, then combine them into a single V tab, and include a self-assessment of one competency that encompasses what you learned from all those trainings.

☐ In each V tab, do sections A.2 and A.3 begin with a brief introduction that identifies and explains your claim? In other words, does the introduction make clear to reviewers the primary competencies you are asking credit for and that are addressed (in that same order) in the rest of the section? Does the introduction identify a reasonable number of competencies? For example, if you are eligible for up to 3-credits for a V tab (135 hours), have you identified one overarching competency?

☐ Does each subsequent paragraph or section in your self-assessment provide specific examples and reasoning to support your claims about what you have learned?

☐ Do the arguments you have created in A.2 and A.3 of each IV tab focus on what you have *learned* and how you learned it?

☐ In each V tab, have you provided a self-assessment of 750 – 1,500 words for the competency for which you are requesting credit?

VI Tabs (i.e., learning from life experiences)

Note: Determining credits for learning from life experiences is less straightforward than for the other tabs. No formula exists for calculating potential credits. However, for each hour of credit, reviewers generally look for evidence that the experience occurred over a sustained period of time. When deciding whether to grant credit and, if so, how much and at what level, reviewers also consider the quality of the self-assessment. When awards are made for a VI tabs, most are one or two credits, occasionally three.

☐ In each VI tab, do sections A.2 and A.3 begin with a brief introduction that identifies and explains your claim? In other words, does the introduction make clear to reviewers the primary learning competencies you are asking credit for and that are addressed (in that same order) in the rest of the section? Does the introduction identify a reasonable competency?

☐ Does each subsequent paragraph or section in your self-assessment provide specific examples and reasoning to support your claims about what you have learned?

☐ Do the arguments you have created in A.2 and A.3 of each VI tab focus on what you have *learned* and how you learned it?

☐ In each VI tab, have you provided a self-assessment of 750 – 1,500 words for each competency for which you are requesting credit?

Formatting the Content in Each Tab

☐ For each IV, V, and/or VI tab, have you included the required cover sheet?

☐ Have you provided the required information requested on each cover sheet?

☐ Are individual tabs within each section of the portfolio arranged in reverse chronological order, i.e., from most-to-least recent experience? (For example, IV-I should reflect your most recent job, IV-2 the job before that, and so on.)

☐ Within each tab, have you single-spaced your prose with an extra space between paragraphs and sections of text?

☐ Have you used an easy-to-read 12-point typeface?

☐ In each IV, V, and/or VI tab, have you included headings in boldface within A.2 and A.3 to help reviewers see quickly and easily what competencies you are asking credit for in your self-assessment?

Revising and Copyediting

Reviewers must be able to quickly and easily read and understand what you have written. If they have to work too hard to figure out what you mean, they will be less likely to grant credit. Reviewers also are unlikely to be persuaded by writing that contains numerous errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Not only do such errors slow down reviewers' reading time but they also reflect poorly on students who are asking for college-level credit. Do not rely exclusively on your software's grammar and spelling checker to find and correct mistakes. Such tools are extremely limited; they frequently give incorrect advice and will sometimes report an error where none exists. Bottom line? As in most professional contexts, the quality of your writing matters!

☐ Are your sentences clear and concise?

☐ Does each paragraph begin with a topic sentence that states your main point for that paragraph?

☐ In each paragraph, do the rest of the sentences support the topic sentence?

☐ Have you established clear, coherent, logical connections among ideas in each paragraph? Among paragraphs?

☐ Have you proofread and copyedited your portfolio thoroughly and carefully for grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors?

☐ Have you asked someone else to proofread your work?

> **Note:** *The CMU Writing Center is not an editing service, but its consultants can provide you with feedback on the content, formatting, structure, and overall effectiveness of your self-assessments. To find out how to submit sections of your portfolio to the Writing Center for review and feedback, visit http://global.cmich.edu/student/writing-center.aspx)*