

“I Can Get Credit for That?!!”

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At age 49, Andre P. had to do something he thought would never happen—he was told to finish his bachelor’s degree. Andre was the Director of Engineering at a small Silicon Valley firm, and a new President mandated that all managers would have a degree.

Andre was no stranger to learning: He had taken many technical classes, a certificate program and several week-long management courses, including some at Stanford University. However, his for-credit coursework was over 20 years old.

Andre’s human resources manager set him up with an *EduPlan* counselor to see how long it would take for Andre to work towards a degree, any degree, as long as the school was regionally accredited. The counselor and Andre talked for over an hour, outlining Andre’s goals, background and skills. Andre had 40+ units from many years ago, but would still be transferable to an “adult-friendly” college that offered degrees for working professionals. He had his certificate and many years of training, from internal and external classes.

The counselor helped Andre set up an education plan with a business degree. Although Andre would have preferred to obtain an engineering degree, it would take 5 – 6 years for him to finish that degree. Instead, he decided on a management degree from a school with an accelerated format and a school that would allow him to gain credits from his life/work experience.

The Assessment of Prior Learning class offers the opportunity for working professionals to complete a “portfolio” of life/work experience. Students take a class to help them “package” their experience for credit. Usually the process is composed of: 1) Identifying your skills and knowledge that would be considered college level. 2) Writing about the skills and knowledge 3) Documenting that you have these skills and knowledge

Identifying your skills and knowledge that would be considered college level

Finding similar college courses that fit your skills and knowledge can be one way to identify what you know. Here is a list of some typical titles of classes which adult students have received credit:

Personal Finance	Marketing Procedures	Principles of Supervision
Computer Applications	Computer Programming	Public Speaking
Interviewing Techniques	Creative Writing	Marriage and the Family
First Aid	Electronics	Comparative Religion

Writing about the skills and knowledge

Essays of seven to ten pages are usually required for the portfolio process. This essay incorporates how you have developed the knowledge or skills and how you have been using it through the years. If you learned something 10 years ago and have not built on that learning in recent years, you probably can’t write extensively about that learning.

Documenting that you have these skills and knowledge

Documentation of college level life experience can take two forms: a) Direct documentation such as demonstrating office machines, programming printouts, giving a speech or b) indirect documentation such as course title and dates of training classes, letter from manager, resume.

Writing about your learning in a comprehensive manner is a learning experience in itself. It causes you to pause and reflect on your past learning experiences and the growth that developed from those experiences. It helps you understand what learning is and to expand your views as to the many different ways you learn. In addition, this writing of portfolio papers can gain valuable college credits that save time and money off a degree plan.

Andre's college taught the Assessment of Prior Learning class and Andre wrote essays and documented learning in 10 different area, from his work experience (engineering, management, project planning, etc.) and from his volunteer and home life (marriage and the family, investments, religious studies, coaching). His essays were given to faculty members for evaluation to see if Andre knew the subject material and units of credit were assigned to each essay. Andre received the maximum of 30 credits and these were applied to his degree program.

Many colleges, both public and private, community colleges and distance learning degrees offer the Assessment of Prior Learning. Here is a sample of some of the local colleges in California and distance learning colleges that make this option available to working professionals:

University of San Francisco
University of the Redlands
Regis University
Dominican College
Orange Coast Community College

St. Mary's College
University of Phoenix
Excelsior College
City University
Canada College