**Assessment of Prior Learning**

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**Prior Learning Policy**
The University respects the college-level prior learning of its adult students to the extent that such learning is appropriate to the degrees pursued by our students and satisfies the expectations of the University’s faculty. The University allows prior learning to be credited from professional portfolio evaluations and course challenge examinations.

Most mid-career adults have creditworthy elements in their backgrounds for which sufficient credible evidence exists of advanced level learning. The source of prior learning might include work experience, non-college training, continuing education, seminars and conferences, career experiences and personal achievements, employment training, language training, technical classes, training leading to special certificates, diplomas and licenses, and other advanced level learning obtained from personal and professional achievements.

Under the direction of the University’s senior faculty, and within certain clearly defined limits, students may submit prior learning portfolios for assessment of college or graduate equivalency credit, and if found creditworthy, will be authorized to pursue course challenge examinations in fulfillment of the requirements for any course available at the University, with reviews conducted course-by-course.

**Limits on Prior Learning Assessment**
The University has established limits concerning the number of credits that may be applied to a degree. In doing so, the University upholds extremely high standards for the quality of the reviews conducted and archival records maintained relative to prior learning assessment. The student is expected to demonstrate a thorough and far-reaching level of prior learning in comparison with the learning objectives for the course(s) under assessment. Under most circumstances, only highly qualified students should request a review of professional portfolio or course challenge examination. As a bottom line, at all degree levels, Akamai expects that our students will complete at minimum of 25% of their degree programs under the assessment of Akamai faculty, including any mandated classes for a specific degree,

**Professional Portfolio Evaluation**
Professional portfolio evaluation is a detailed assessment of a student's prior learning in a limited and defined area, including the gathering of authentic documents to validate and demonstrate advanced level learning. The task of the University faculty is to guide the student in structuring a formal written presentation in support of documentation from professional achievements and non-college training. To be awarded credit, all prior learning must clearly fulfill the academic objectives of the course and reflect the appropriate level of complexity in academic learning. Duplicative credit may not be awarded. Each course approved for portfolio assessment is evaluated independently by the most appropriate member of the faculty via course challenge examination. Upon completion of each course pursued by prior learning assessment and challenge examination, at the time of submission of the course grade, the documentation is transferred by post or electronic means to the University headquarters for storage in the University archival library.

**The Portfolio Document**
The portfolio document must be presented in a manner that allows a detailed formal evaluation to be made of the prior learning to determine if enough evidence exists to qualify the student for completion of the course challenge examination. Students are required to attach copies of the necessary documents, affidavits, and certificates, which permit an effective comparison of the prior learning experiences to the course objectives. While the portfolio document must include this authentic documentation, an equally important element is the student’s narrative, which summarizes and discusses the knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired in the professional setting, or through non-college training. Portfolios are allowed in all academic fields and should be designed to permit the student to demonstrate higher levels of cognition where they have used the subject matter to address real world situations in a creative manner. Permission to submit a portfolio for assessment should be requested by the student at the time the Study Plan is established with the Chair of the Graduate Committee.

Prior learning assessment courses deemed complete, once evaluated by challenge examination, will have the specified semester credits awarded on the student’s permanent record. If a student is unsuccessful at passing the portfolio assessment, the mentor may decide to assign additional text and journal readings and other necessary exploratory activities to prepare the student for an additional course assessment. After successfully completing these additional assignments and assessments, course credit may be granted. An attachment to the Study Plan is used to clarify the content of the prior learning assessment and challenge examination to be undertaken.

**Course Challenge Examinations**
Prior learning is primarily awarded college equivalency credit through conduct of course challenge examinations, once the student is approved via assessment of the professional portfolio related to the course under consideration. Challenge examinations allow students with prior learning to have study requirements waived in certain courses by passing assessments conducted by qualified faculty members. Students are allowed to undertake course challenge examinations when it is clearly demonstrated they have acquired sufficient knowledge and expertise from prior experiences and training to satisfy the learning competencies and pass the final examination for the course under evaluation.

To be considered for challenge examinations, students must submit documentation and information to faculty, which corresponds to courses being considered for challenge examination. Students outline the details of their background they believe satisfy the learning objectives for courses in question. Required information includes an overview of the relevant prior learning, the location, and person overseeing the professional activities, formal training, or college courses. Students should submit a syllabus or outline for the prior courses, any scholarly papers, or professional projects they completed, which supports the level of knowledge and competencies appropriate for competency areas of a course module for the program in which they are enrolled.

If the course instructor determines the student has acquired adequate prior knowledge, skills, and understandings appropriate for specific competency areas for the course under consideration, the student will be granted eligibility to attempt a course challenge examination. Faculty in charge of the competency area under assessment will dictate the final requirements and scheduling of the challenge examination. Course modules deemed eligible for challenge examinations should be scheduled within the Study Plan by the primary faculty advisor.

**Conducting the Challenge Examination**
Faculty members may conduct the course challenge examinations by any combination of oral or written examination or by assignment of a scholarly paper, whichever is most appropriate to the subject matter. If the faculty member conducts the challenge examination using telephone discussions, arrangements should be made for the student to initiate contact at a scheduled date and time. Test questions are to be prepared beforehand and oral examinations recorded for later review, if possible. In any case, faculty members are expected to document the oral examination by journal notations, at the very least, and provide this documentation for the permanent record.

If faculty members use an essay type written examination, the test may be conducted in an open book fashion, with the questions requiring the student to demonstrate the ability to conceptualize within the subject matter at higher levels of cognition, to avoid simple reiteration. If mentors assign a course paper as a challenge examination, the written document should conform to acceptable manuscript style. Guidelines for such papers should require the student to express learning at higher levels of understanding, demonstrating an ability to explore the issues in a creative manner and answer complex and probing questions.

Upon completion of the challenge examination, faculty members prepare and send a written determination to the student. If the student has successfully passed the examination, a course grade is assigned and course credit is awarded via submission of the University’s course grade report. Faculty reviewers are expected to submit the supportive documentation of the challenge examination to the University headquarters for archival storage in support of the student's program.

**Failure of Challenge Examinations**
If the student has not successfully passed the examination, a letter of determination prescribes a corrective action plan that must be completed to receive course credit. Should the student wish to complete the action plan, an additional fee is assessed per credit for re-examination. In all cases, challenge examinations, together with any assigned corrective action plans, should be completed within the maximum time allowed for the course.

The corrective action plan may include additional text and journal readings, and other exploratory activities that serve to prepare the student for reexamined. Once the student has successfully responded to the corrective actions, and has passed re-examination, a final grade and course credit will be assigned.

**Timeline for Credit Transfer, Challenge and Portfolio Assessments**
Students interact with their primary faculty advisors or their Committee Chairs during the student plan activity that immediately follows formal Registration, to determine the eligibility of transfer credits, and to approve and schedule the time frame for challenge examinations or portfolio development and reviews. While these matters may be explored briefly between students and their primary faculty advisors prior to registration, the credits are never fully agreed upon or awarded before the actual approval of the study plan.

Should a student benefit from credits earned from transfer credits, the credits are formally approved and applied as a part of the study plan approval process. The University awards a $100 per credit tuition reduction award for approved transfer credits from eligible classes completed at outside accredited universities and colleges. No tuition reduction is awarded for credits earned from passing challenge examinations or successful portfolio reviews. These may speed the student's progress through the degree process but do not impact the tuition, as faculty undertake substantial activities in conducting these reviews.