Credit for Prior Learning Policy

**Policy Statement:**

This policy defines the pathways for students to be awarded credit for learning experiences that occurred prior to their matriculation at SUNY ESF.

**Policy Description:**

At ESF, we acknowledge that some students have acquired skills and knowledge through prior learning experiences that may be equivalent to college-level credit.  Credit for prior learning (CPL) is available at SUNY ESF in certain instances to determine if the experiences a student has meets the standards and requirements of college-level learning.  Students must be able to provide evidence of college level learning that is aligned with their degree plan.

To be eligible for CPL, a student must be a matriculated undergraduate student at SUNY ESF in a bachelor’s degree program. Due to the nature of the Ranger School programs, students may not use prior learning credits to apply to any of the required residential courses.

Prior learning credits are considered transfer credits and are not GPA eligible. Students cannot apply more than 90 transfer credits towards their bachelor's degree requirements and must complete at least 30 residential credits at SUNY ESF to be awarded a baccalaureate degree, superseded only by memorandum of understanding with a partner institution. CPL credit does not count towards residency requirements.

Prior learning credits awarded at the lower-division level (100-299) cannot be applied to upper-division requirements. Students who are seeking prior learning credit to fulfill program requirements must have their work evaluated by the academic unit(s) that oversees the relevant subject area(s) based on the assessment metrics determined by that academic unit.

Prior learning credit cannot replace a failing grade of an attempted course or duplicate a previously earned course credit. Once credit has been awarded it may not be removed from a student record.

**Prior Learning Pathways:**

Transfer Credit Evaluation

ESF reserves the right to evaluate all credit-bearing courses.

Students may be awarded up to 90 transfer credits from regionally accredited colleges and universities that are validated by an official transcript.

Credit courses from institutions with other than regional accreditation may be evaluated for transfer purposes on a case-by-case basis, by request of the student.

Students must receive a grade of C or better to earn credit for their transfer courses.

*International credit*

College-level courses passed with a letter grade of C or higher completed outside the United States and recorded on official transcripts will be evaluated for transfer credit, provided that the institution where the courses were taken is accredited by the Ministry of Education in that country. International transfer students who have completed college level courses outside the United States may be requested to submit proof of accreditation by the Ministry of Education or provide a WES (World Education Service) evaluation

Standardized Exams

Students with Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate or College Level Examination Program scores may submit their official score report to be awarded credit. Each program has an affiliated table outlining what the course equivalency is for the exams and how many credits a successful score can receive.

Military Credit

Credit for military service may be awarded by:

* Joint Services Transcript (JST)
* Community College of the Air Force
* DANTES (Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support)
* DSST (DANTES Subject Standarized Tests).

As with other transfer institutions and standardized tests, students must send their official transcripts or score reports to ESF to receive a credit evaluation. Courses or exams that do not have a direct equivalency may be eligible for ESF Challenge Examination evaluation or Credit for Prior Learning Portfolio review. Matriculated students may apply for these credits following the outlined procedures.

ESF Challenge Examination

Students may establish credit for coursework based on activities other than normal class attendance. Each academic unit establishes its own policy for testing out, observing the following guidelines:

1. The basis for establishing credit must be explicitly formulated and approved in advance by the divisional faculty, the chairperson, and the Associate Provost. A copy must be on file in the Registrar’s Office.
2. Credit established under this policy must be used to satisfy degree requirements and must not extend the total number of credit hours required for graduation.
3. No more than 12 credit hours can be awarded by challenge exams for an individual student.
4. A grade of EX will be assigned for students who successfully pass their challenge exam. EX grades are not counted when calculating the student’s GPA.
5. A fee will be assessed for students taking a challenge exam, regardless of whether credit is awarded. Fees are not covered by Financial Aid.
6. Credits earned through this procedure may not be applied toward full-time status for a semester.
7. A student may only attempt a challenge exam for a particular course once.
8. Studio, lab, and field courses are not eligible for challenge exams.

Credit by Portfolio Review

Credit by Portfolio Review is designed to provide matriculated students with an alternative method of obtaining college credit. Knowledge acquired from a combination of work experience, non-credit courses, seminar training, workshops etc. may translate into college credit. If you can document your experience and articulate the learning that resulted based on the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) of the course, you may be eligible to receive Prior Learning credit.

1. How to earn credit by portfolio
2. Any credit awarded by portfolio review will be considered the same as transfer credit, which is not GPA eligible.
3. The course number, title, credit hours and the notation of “Credit for Experiential Learning (CEL)” will be recorded on the transcript.
4. Students may only request for portfolio review in courses that have an equivalent at ESF.
5. Portfolios will be reviewed by the faculty or department that delivers the course content. They will forward their recommendation for approval or denial of credit to the Office of Academic Administration.
6. The Associate Director or the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs is responsible for the final review of the portfolio documents and will approve or disapprove the granting of credit for prior learning based on the submitted portfolio demonstrating fulfillment of the stated Student Learning Outcomes of the course in question.
7. Eligibility

Only currently matriculated students shall be able to earn credit for Prior Learning by Portfolio Review.

1. Limitations
2. Credit earned will not count toward the semester course load for full-time standing.
3. Credit will not be approved for any course in which the student has previously earned a passing grade.
4. Credit must be applicable to the program in which the student is matriculated.
5. Credit hours earned by Portfolio Review shall not exceed 25% of the graduation requirements of the program in which the applicant is matriculated.
6. Students may not use Portfolio Review for Special Topics, Independent Research, or Internship courses.
7. A combination of Portfolio Review and Transfer credit shall not exceed 90 credits.
8. Students may not request Credit for Prior Learning after graduation.

\*Note- Credit may not be awarded by Portfolio Review for any of the residential requirements for Ranger School degree programs.

1. Fees

There will be a fee charged for the portfolio review set by the college. Fees are not covered by Financial Aid.

1. Guidelines for submission of portfolio credit for Prior Learning
2. The student, in conjunction with the mentor faculty member, chooses the course or courses for which the student will apply for credit.
3. The student is given the course syllabus with Student Learning Outcomes and the detailed course description.
4. In a written narrative, the student addresses each of the SLOs and how, through the student’s experiences, they have met the SLOs and what the student has learned from the experience as it relates to the SLOs.
5. The student should include with the narrative any supporting documents that can attest to the learning that took place as a product of the student’s experience. These documents may include but are not limited to: A letter from an employer detailing work performed and number of hours, certificates of achievement, a portfolio of written or visual work created by the student, or other forms of professional recognition.
6. The student submits the final portfolio to the evaluating faculty, who reviews the portfolio and forwards a recommendation with the portfolio to the department chair in which the course is housed. The evaluating faculty may request to interview the student to expand upon their submission. The portfolio and recommendations are then sent to the Associate Provost of Academic Affairs who will send the official decision to approve or deny credit to the Registrar’s Office.

**Implementation:**

This policy, once approved, will be in place for the 2025-2026 academic year and will not be applied retroactively.