

Assessing Prior Learning to Gain College Credits

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As an educational consultant for adult students, I often hear this scenario: "I have worked for 10 years, taken corporate classes, taught myself software skills, been a manager, etc. Surely this should count for some college credits!!! Well, the answer is Yes....and No. The experience itself (being a manager) does not equate college credits; however, the learning might become credits. Several ways to gain "life/work experience" credits are: Military courses, corporate classes, licenses and certificates.

If you have served in the military and have a DD 214, you might receive some college credits for that military experience. Even basic "boot camp" might earn you credits for health and P.E. at many colleges. If you have taken classes, extensive training or served as an officer, your DD 214 will reflect that training and colleges and universities may use that training to help fulfill your requirements for a degree. Colleges use the recommended credits listed in the American Council on Education (ACE) for the branches of service-- Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force. Each class, training or ranking is listed on the DD 214 and each is awarded units, if listed in the ACE Guides

The most military units that I have seen were 123 units, from a Hewlett Packard employee with many years in the military and an officer in the reserves. However, only 30 of those units could be used as part of the degree because most military courses are transferred into a degree plan as electives, except for health and P.E. A few units might be considered part of the major in a technical field or part of a business degree if management courses were taken.

Check with your local colleges and universities to see if the school uses the ACE military recommendations. Some schools may limit the number of military courses accepted into a degree.

The American Council on Education (ACE) also publishes guide books for credit recommendations on corporate classes, licenses, certificates and government training. *The National Guide to Education Credit for Training Programs* and the *Directory of the National Program on Noncollegiate Sponsored Instruction* (PONSI) are two guidebooks with those recommended listings for credits. Many colleges and universities will accept ACE and PONSI recommendations of credits.

You will find classes from corporations, government, certificates, licenses and training courses listed in the ACE and PONSI guides, including courses taken at Ameritech, FAA, Pacific Bell, NYNEX, AT&T and Xerox, among others. The guide states the name of the class, location, length of class, dates and credit recommendation. Example: "Essentials of Data Communication", taken at Pacific Bell; length 48 hours, has a recommendation of 3 upper division units in Telecommunications.

Some licenses and certificates have recommended college credits, including: Dale Carnegie courses, Certificate of Professional Secretary, Certificate of Purchasing Manager, American Production and Inventory Control (APIC). Training classes from American Bankers Association, Berlitz International, Inc., and Computer Learning Centers, Inc. are also included in the guidebook.

Some colleges have reviewed corporate classes not listed in the ACE or PONSI Guides and grant college credits for those classes. A combination of these ways to assess your prior learning will shorten the time to complete a college degree.