**UNIVERSITY WITHOUT WALLS**

 **STUDENT HANDBOOK**

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**INTRODUCTION**

The University Without Walls (UWW) Program is a fully accredited self-paced program that leads to a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree from Northeastern Illinois University. It requires strong motivation, self-direction, maturity, self-sufficiency and clear academic direction on the part of you the student. UWW is designed for adults who have achieved professional activity and little or no college credit. The program supports your long-range goals through an individualized course of study and features:

* Self-directed learning
* Intensive involvement with university faculty
* Inclusion of community experts in academic learning

**STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

**During your first semester in the UWW Program, you are expected to:**

* Take the Math Placement Test to determine your mathematics skill level if you have not already fulfilled NEIU Math/Quantitative Reasoning Requirement;
* Make an appointment with the UWW Faculty Advisor, Lorilene Cuevas

 (l-cuevas@neiu.edu), to discuss your UWW program and review sample Learning

 Contracts if you do not yet have an academic advisor;

* Begin to document prior and new learning;
* Prepare a draft of your UWW Learning Contract with the assistance of your academic advisor and your community advisor. This draft will be used to obtain an academic advisor if one has not already been identified;
* Make an appointment with the UWW Faculty Advisor or your assigned academic advisor to prepare the Independent Study/Tutored Study Request form, UWW Independent Study New Student Contract, and the UWW Independent Study Contract for additional credit hours;
* Submit a Semester Report with documentation (see pages 9-10) by the deadline established each semester.

**During your second and all subsequent semesters, you are expected to:**

* Meet with your academic and community advisors;
* Have your Learning Contract approved by your advisor and submit this to the UWW Faculty Advisor along with your semester report;
* Fulfill these NEIU graduation requirements:
	+ Writing Intensive Program (NDP 310: Diversity In the Workplace fulfills)
	+ Improving Human Relations (also satisfied by NDP 310).
	+ Math/Quantitative Reasoning (if you have not already done so)
	+ Minimum 24 credit hours completed at NEIU (*notes: developmental courses do not count toward this requirement; most UWW students complete their program in 33-35 credit hours*).

**LEARNING CONTRACT**

The Learning Contract is the formal statement of your UWW program and details your individualized degree program. It establishes an agreement for your learning experiences, and describes the mutual commitments between you and your academic advisor, community advisor, and other resource people such as teachers, mentors, supervisors, etc. This collaboration and partnership will help you:

* Identify and articulate your prior learning
* Discover and identify learning needs and formulate new learning objectives
* Identify learning resources
* Choose learning strategies/experiences and activities
* Identify means of documenting and evaluating the learning
* Develop a sense of ownership and commitment to the Learning Contract.

**Learning Contract Process**

The Learning Contract requires thoughtful educational planning, implementation and evaluation by all parties involved. It should be a comprehensive document: a blueprint of your curriculum. It should describe prior learning outcomes and proposed learning outcomes (independent studies and formal coursework). The Learning Contract process will help you to:

* *Identify your past college/university level learning accomplishments, and when, where, and how you gained each:* Consider how you will document or demonstrate what you have learned and who has or could evaluate your documentation (see pages 9-10).
* *Diagnose* *your learning needs:* A learning need is the gap between where you are now and where you want to be in regard to specific learning objectives. Consider what learning ought to be required for someone acquiring a Bachelor's degree in your proposed depth area. Consult a university catalog that offers a degree in your depth area, or discuss required learning needs with a professional in the field.
* *Specify* *your learning objectives*: Each of the learning needs you diagnosed in step 2 should be translated into a learning objective. Describe what you will learn.
* *Specify learning resources and activities:* How do you propose accomplishing each objective? Identify the resources (human and other) you plan to use.
* *Specify the documentation or evidence of accomplishment*: Describe what documentation you will include to demonstrate that you have met each objective (see pages 9-10).
* *Specify how the learning will be evaluated*: Evaluation involves making judgments about the quality of the learning accomplished. Your advisors or experts in specific fields can review and attest to the quality of the documented learning.

In addition:

* Review the draft of your Learning Contract with your advisors:Send a copy to them and arrange to meet with them to review the draft; then revise the draft accordingly.
* During your first semester you will register for a 3 credit hour Independent Study to develop the Learning Contract.
* Documentation (see page 8) is an important part of the Learning Contract and your Review Board portfolio.
* The Learning Contract is updated each semester and should not exceed 30 pages.

**Learning Contract Guidelines**

Use your UWW Narrative Application to help create the first draft of your Learning Contract. There is a particular format for you to use; <http://ndpuwworientation.weebly.com/learning-contract.html>.The Learning Contract should:

* Adequately address UWW's programmatic requirements of Depth, Breadth, and Effective Communication:
	+ **Depth** is defined as substantial knowledge and understanding in a specific area of academic expertise.
	+ **Breadth** refers to subjects other than the Depth area: comparable to General Education. Learning in Breadth must include demonstrated learning in four academic disciplines: Fine Arts, Humanities, Behavioral/Social Science, Natural Science.
	+ **Effective Communication** refers to both written and spoken English skills, and may include other languages, forms and media.
* Provide evidence that the your program is an integration of experiential and theoretical knowledge - practice and theory in your the depth area;
* Ensure that you address questions of values and ethics through exploring ideological perspectives other than your own;
* Describe prior learning outcomes and proposed learning objectives (see page 6);
* Clearly state learning goals and what resources and activities will be necessary to meet the goals, as well as how the learning will be documented (see pages 9-10).

**More information about Breadth:**

The UWW requirement of Breadth insures exposure to a variety of subjects other than your Depth area and is similar to the General Education, a hallmark of American college education. You will include demonstrated learning in Fine Arts, Humanities, Behavioral/Social Science, and Natural Science in your Learning Contract.

You are required to demonstrate learning in at least two subjects in each of these four areas:

* **Fine Arts:** Art, Media, Theatre, Music (including Dance)
* **Humanities:** Communication, English, World Languages and Cultures, Linguistics, Philosophy
* **Behavioral/Social Science:** Anthropology, Economics, Geography, Environmental Studies, History, Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology
* **Natural Science:** Biology, Chemistry, Earth Science, Physics, and Mathematics

**Getting Started on the Learning Contract**

As you begin to develop your Learning Contract, carefully consider the following:

*Prior Learning* refers to college-level learning you acquired after high school until the date you were admitted to UWW. You will need three sections of Prior Learning: one each in Depth, Breadth, and Effective Communication.

* What experiential learning (college-level knowledge and skills) do you possess?
* Through what experiences and activities did you acquire these learning outcomes?
* To which programmatic area does each learning outcome relate?
* Indicate all the post-secondary learning experiences that you have had in relationship to UWW requirements. Be sure to consider learning acquired through a variety of means: formal education; job experience; community work; CLEP or other proficiency examinations or tests; seminars or workshops, whether attended or conducted; teaching experience; research projects; structured reading programs; etc. Document each learning outcome that has been acquired. You may restate the prior learning sections of your Narrative Application in the Learning Contract format. Be as thorough as possible.

*Proposed/New**learning*refers to college-level learning outcomes you will acquire after your admission to UWW. Determine what knowledge and skills in the areas of Depth, Breadth, and Effective Communication, you seek to acquire during UWW participation. In consultation with each of your advisors, assess the available learning resources--both on and off-campus--and determine what activities, books, workshops, projects, and other learning experiences you will incorporate into your UWW program. Include formal course work and other structured learning activities in your program. Also include how you will meet graduation requirements

* Identify and describe new learning objectives planned for each programmatic area;
* Identify resources and activities needed to achieve the new learning;
* Describe the evidence that will be used to demonstrate the learning achievement.

**REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS FOR UWW STUDENTS**

Each term you will register for either UWW Independent Studies alone or a combination of formal classes and UWW participation. Although experiential learning is typically the primary style of learning utilized during UWW Independent Study, you may choose to enroll in formal course work as indicated by your learning contract. You should discuss course selection with your academic and community advisors.

UWW Independent Study credit hours require submission of university and UWW forms. These will identify the learning outcomes for each Independent Study, and the work/product that will be required to demonstrate competency. Typically, the academic advisor is the instructor of record for Independent Study. You will meet with the academic advisor to determine parameters, expectations, meeting schedule, and due dates. UWW Independent Study hours are Pass or Fail; no grades are assigned.

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**SEMESTER REPORT**

The Semester Report is the summary of learning experiences and activities accomplished as well as substantiate the learning outcomes by documenting them (see pages 9-10). Its purpose is to determine that you are making satisfactory progress toward your degree. The Semester Report is required for each semester you are registered and will bear the signatures of you, your academic advisor, and your community advisor.The semester report is to be submitted to the UWW Office by the end of each semester during finals week. <http://ndpuwworientation.weebly.com/semester-reports.html>

**Suggested Items to be Included in the Semester Report**

Create a brief paragraph of your progress for each Independent Study or courses taken during the semester just completed. **You will submit new learning outcomes for the Learning Contract with each Semester Report which should include:**

* Current semester activities in relation to learning contract
* How you met your semester goals
* A description of your progress to date in Depth, Breadth, and Effective Communication
* Your reflection on what and how you are learning
* Work and learning experiences
* Reports, papers, presentations
* Workshops, seminars, classes
* Include academic and community advisors signatures

## THE REVIEW BOARD PORTFOLIO

The Review Board Portfolio is a compilation of the written materials you developed and submitted during UWW participation. The Review Board Portfolio is prepared for and distributed to Review Board members. <http://ndpuwwreviewboard.weebly.com/>

Arrange your Review Board Portfolio in the following order:

1. Cover Page (on which you indicate: Review Board Portfolio; University Without Walls Program; Northeastern Illinois University; your name; date, time and location of RB; Depth area title and proposed graduation date);
2. Table of Contents;
3. Narrative Transcript (see page 8);
4. Autobiographical Statement;
5. Approved Learning Contract signed by both advisors;
6. Copies of transcripts from NEIU and all other schools where credits were earned;

Selected documentation (see pages 9-10) compiled during UWW Independent Study. This section of the portfolio should contain evidence of prior and new learning. Do not ignore or omit documentation of significant prior learning. Documentation should include semester reports, advisor evaluations, papers, annotated bibliographies, letters of evaluation, etc.

7. Last Page will be titled “Additional UWW Documentation.” List all documentation submitted

 to UWW and evaluated by your advisors, but that is not included in the portfolio.

The portfolio should not exceed 100 pages in length excluding documentation. The Portfolio pages will be numbered beginning with page 1, which will be page of your Narrative Transcript.

The portfolio should be reviewed by your advisors prior to duplication. UWW staff will review your portfolio at your request. You should make at least seven copies of the Review Board Portfolio. Seven copies should be bound or put in folders. You will submit an original unbound portfolio to the UWW office. It should contain documentation (see pages 9-10) and is retained on file in the UWW Office for five years. If you would like to submit a digital portfolio in place of hard copies please consult with your academic advisor and the UWW staff.

**THE NARRATIVE TRANSCRIPT**

The Narrative Transcript summarizes the demonstrated learning you acquired during and prior to UWW. It combines with your Northeastern Illinois University transcript to comprise the official record of your bachelor’s degree program. Whenever you request your Northeastern Illinois University transcript, the Records Office will send both along with an explanation of UWW.

The Narrative Transcript is developed in consultation your academic advisor. It includes prior and UWW learning outcomes in all three-program areas: depth, breadth and effective communication. It is approximately 6 pages in length and is the first of your portfolio (8 pages maximum). <http://ndpuwwreviewboard.weebly.com/narrative-transcript.html>

Use your approved Learning Contract to develop the Narrative Transcript. It will include the following:

* Your name, depth area and proposed graduation date spaced down 2.5 inches from the top of page 1, on the right side of the page. Title the document “Narrative Transcript.”
* The names and titles of your Review Board Evaluators.
* Summary of all formal college work completed. Indicate number of credit hours

 completed and the number of semesters of UWW Independent Study.

* Title of depth area and summarized version of new learning goals and objectives

 relating to depth as stated in Learning Contract.

* Statements of demonstrated learning acquired in the Depth, Breadth and Effective Communication.

**COMPLETING THE DEGREE**

File for graduation with the University Records office as you near fulfillment of your learning contract.Final academic requirements of your UWW program are determined by a Graduation Review Board.

You may request to convene a Review Board when **all** of the following conditions are met:

* The Learning Contract has been approved by the academic advisor, the community advisor, and the UWW Program
* The learning goals, objectives, learning experiences and activities identified in the Learning Contract have been achieved (or will be achieved by the review board) all prior and new learning identified in the Learning Contract has been documented and the documentation (see pages 9-10) has been reviewed by the academic and community advisors
* Academic and community advisors agree that you are ready to have a Review Board
* University graduation requirements have been met (see page 3)
* Successfully completed a **minimum** of twenty-four semester hours of UWW Independent Study hours and/or formal coursework (100-level and above) at NEIU
* Enrolled for UWW Independent Study hours or course(s) for the semester the Review Board will meet
* NEIU grade point average of at least 2.0

The Review Board can be held at any time during the semester. You should be aware that Review Board members may decide that additional requirements must be met before you are allowed to graduate. Sometimes this can require an additional semester.

# ORGANIZING YOUR REVIEW BOARD MEETING

If your advisors agree that you should convene a Review Board (RB) and you have met all conditions to have your Review Board, you are ready to begin organizing the meeting. To set up your Review Board meeting, you should follow these steps:

* Ask your academic advisor to identify two full-time Northeastern Illinois faculty members to serve on your Review Board.
* Contact the suggested faculty to ask their availability.
* Choose an outside evaluator who is an off-campus person other than your community advisor (Relatives or significant others are not eligible to serve on your Review Board).
* Arrange the Review Board meeting date and time by checking with the following people regarding their schedules: Academic Advisor, Northeastern Faculty (2), Community Advisor, Outside Evaluator Director, Nontraditional Degree Programs: k-sanborn@neiu.edu.
* Submit completed **REQUEST TO CONVENE REVIEW BOARD** form to UWW staff at least two weeks prior to the Review Board date.
* Check in with UWW staff to keep them informed about your Review Board.

Deliver the original (unbound) and one copy of the Review Board Portfolio to the UWW staff. Deliver copies of your Review Board Portfolio to your academic advisor and each of the two faculty evaluators, your community advisor and your outside evaluator. All Review Board Portfolios must be delivered no later than two weeks prior to the Review Board.

Review Boards should be scheduledon a weekday at least three weeks before the end of the term.Contact UWW staff to hold a tentative date/time. The NDP office will notify Review Board members of the location.

**DOCUMENTATION NEEDED FOR UWW PROGRAM**

As you document both prior and new learning outcomes, consider the following:

* You will document the knowledge and/or skills that resulted from the learning activities. Ask yourself: what have I learned (i.e. what do I know? what can I do?) as a result of this learning activity, project, and experience?
* If actual products cannot be put in your UWW student file, the product should be photographed and the photos placed on a DVD or flash drive.
* Letters of support and testimony should be typewritten and on official letterhead.
* If none of the above-mentioned forms of documentation can be provided for a particular learning activity, discuss an alternative means of verification with your advisors and the UWW Faculty Advisor.
* Documentation of learning outcomes can occur at any time during UWW participation. Presentation of appropriate evidence of learning is a vital part of the individualized curricula of the UWW Program. The documentation can take a variety of forms, such as:
	+ Work product - artwork, essays, research papers, manuals, case studies, annotated bibliographies;
	+ Performance - evaluations of teaching or speaking engagements; video or audio tapes;
	+ Third party validation - includes certificates, licenses, and evaluative letters.
* Transcripts from all secondary education will be included in your portfolio.
* The Graduation Review Board determines final academic requirements and documentation of your UWW program.

**NDP SUPPORT SERVICES FOR UWW STUDENTS**

**Academic Advisors**

The academic advisor is an NEIU faculty member selected to provide academic guidance to you towards your successful completion of the degree program. At the Orientation, students are advised on how to develop a working relationship with both the academic advisor and the community advisor.

**NDP Tutors**

NDP offers free tutoring in various areas of study. Please contact the NDP office at ndp@neiu.edu to schedule an appointment.

**UWW Documentation Assistance**

Each statement of prior or proposed learning must be supported by adequate documentation of the learning. Individual consultation is available to help you frame questions to your advisors on how best to document learning experiences, and to suggest, when necessary, specific forms of documentation to substantiate the learning activities.

**Review Board**

Advisement is provided for you as you begin planning to convene the graduation Review Board. The UWW Faculty Advisor will:

* Review the necessary steps to follow in preparation for the Review Board;
* Assist in the development and review of the Narrative Transcript;
* Advise you about selection of Review Board materials which will be compiled for the UWW Portfolio;
* Follow-up on the Review Board's recommendations.

**General Advisement**

The UWW Faculty Advisor is available by appointment to meet with the student and advisors to discuss any aspect of your individualized UWW program.

**Guidance on Applying to Graduate Programs**

The University Without Walls provides excellent preparation for graduate study. Since the program's beginning in 1971, over 1,100 students have graduated from UWW and many have continued to graduate study.

The Director of Nontraditional Degree Programs is a resource for those interested in pursuing graduate study and will provide guidance and advice regarding program selection and the application process. Request an appointment by contacting [ndp@neiu.edu](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CStudent%5CDownloads%5CNDP%40neiu.edu).

**NEIU GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Parking**

The University has implemented a license plate recognition system. Visit the website for details on registering your vehicle, parking fees, and opting out of virtual permit parking: http://www.neiu.edu/university-life/parking/virtual-permit-parking

**Health Insurance**

All confirmed full-time fall or spring undergraduates are billed for Student Health Insurance. Students have the option to waive the health insurance by completing a waiver by the established deadline.

**Student I.D. Card**

All NEIU students are required to have a NEIU photo identification (I.D.) card issued by the University. To obtain an I.D. card, proof of enrollment for the current semester and a photo I.D. such as a driver's license or State of Illinois I.D. card must be presented. See the online Schedule of Classes for additional information.

**Academic Catalog**

The Academic Catalog may be viewed at [www.neiu.edu](http://www.neiu.edu).The Catalog provides important information on bachelor’s degree requirements and other university policy.

**Transcripts**

Students will be assessed a $10.00 transcript fee at the time of their first registration at Northeastern. This will allow the student to request official transcripts up to a reasonable limit at no additional cost.