

Project Based-Learning Transcript Notation: Instructor Guide

What is the Project-Based Learning Transcript Notation (PBLTN)?

This notation demonstrates that Bellevue College understands the utility of Project-Based Learning (PBL) as a teaching methodology, particularly in helping students better understand and/or apply course content, build transferrable skills such as critical thinking and problem solving, and bolster their résumés and transfer applications. When students list PBL experiences in their résumés and transfer applications, as they should be encouraged to do, the transcript notation provides official recognition that they actually had these experiences.

Qualifying students will receive a special note in their transcript alongside the qualifying course. The note will read: "Demonstrated excellence in project-based learning, including practicing the skills of collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving, and time management."

Does a PBL course need to qualify for or offer the transcript notation?

No, it does not. Instructors are strongly encouraged to offer courses with PBL components, even if they do not meet the rigorous criteria (explained below) to qualify for the transcript notation. Research has shown that these types of courses and pedagogy provide benefits for students that go beyond traditional education.

Instructors should contact the RISE office if they need support to qualify for the transcript notation.

Qualifying for the PBL Transcript Notation (PBLTN)

Do all PBL courses qualify for the PBLTN?

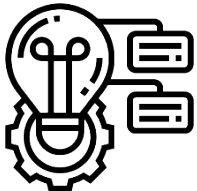
No. Just because a course uses PBL does not mean it automatically qualifies for the transcript notation; it must be approved by a committee consisting of one administrator, one instructor, and one student. Once approved, the course may automatically qualify for multiple quarters.

A PBL course must create an opportunity for students to do the following to qualify:

- Integrate a group or individual project into course content.
- Include a presentation or sharing of information to an audience beyond the class/classroom.
- Reflect critically on experiences and connections to help grow more holistically.

How can a PBL course qualify?

Before a student can earn the PBL transcript notation, a course must meet certain criteria. The criteria depend on the type of PBL course, thus allowing for a greater variety of courses to meet it. Review the options over the next few pages to find the PBL style that best matches your course, and what is required for the PBL transcript notation:

	Project-Based Service-Learning: Creating a product or 'consulting' for a nonprofit or government client. Usually, this lasts for more than one module or is a final project for a class. Criteria for PBL transcript notation: ○ Provide end-product to partner agency/client ○ Minimum of two (2) reflections Community-Engaged Problem-Based Learning: Using a community issue to formulate a problem for students to explore. May or may not engage with external clients or agencies, and may last for one module or longer. Criteria for PBL transcript notation: ○ Conduct the learning activity ○ Present or share information with audience beyond the class/classroom ○ Minimum of two (2) reflections Examples: ○ Project-Based Service-Learning: <i>Teams of students in an IT capstone partner with non-profit clients to create a software application. At the end of the quarter, they present and give the software to the clients. As they work on the project, they complete a written reflection and participate in one reflective discussion. At the end of the course, the students complete the experience Post Survey, which also has reflections.</i> ○ Community-Engaged Problem-Based Learning: <i>Students in an environmental science class work in groups to identify a problem in their environment/community and brainstorm possible solutions. They apply course learning and participate in a class discussion that includes</i>
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	reflective components. The students additionally share their possible solutions by creating a webpage, blog post, video, etc. that can be accessed by the public. Finally, they complete the Post-Survey, which has reflective questions.
	Community-Engaged Research: Conducting research and/or analysis in partnership with, and for, a community organization. Usually lasts for multiple teaching modules. Criteria for PBL transcript notation: ○ Provide end research/analysis to partner agency ○ Minimum of two (2) reflections Community-Based Research: Conducting research and/or analysis on community issues, with or without external inputs. May last for one module or longer. Criteria for PBL transcript notation: ○ Conduct the learning activity ○ Present or share information with audience beyond the class/classroom ○ Minimum of two (2) reflections Examples: ○ Community-Engaged Research: <i>Students in a Biology class partner with a local government agency to collect data for that agency as part of an ongoing project. Students complete written reflections before, during, and after the research and/or complete the experience Post-Survey, which also has reflection questions. At the end of the quarter, students present their research findings to the partner agency.</i> ○ Community-Based Research: <i>Students in a Sociology class work in teams to research local issues. They interview local non-profits and send surveys to their friends. They compile the research into a presentation for the Making Learning Visible showcase. They participate in a reflective discussion halfway through the research process and then complete the experience Post-Survey</i>

	and its reflection questions.
	Community Economic Engagement: Partnering with small or minority-run businesses to help improve their capacity. This often is framed as a form of community support or revitalization and would most likely be a multi-module or final project. Criteria for PBL Transcript Notation: ○ Provide end-product and/or research findings to partner agency/client ○ Minimum of two (2) reflections Example: ○ <i>For a business course, students partner with small, minority-run businesses throughout the quarter, giving them analyses of their business processes. Students complete one in-class reflective discussion and one reflection with the community partner. Students also take the experience Post-Survey which has a reflective component.</i>
	Philanthropy: Planning, organizing, and executing a fundraiser or collecting food/goods for an organization as part of a class project. This may last one module or more. Criteria for PBL Transcript Notation: ○ Plan donation/fundraising event (monetary, food, or goods) with partner agency ○ Minimum of two (2) reflections Example: ○ <i>In a community nursing course, students research the supply challenges that small health and non-profit organizations face during an economic recession. The students organize a goods collection drive for two local agencies and complete a written reflection. They also take the experience Post-Survey, which has a reflective component.</i>

Some additional requirements for consideration:

- 1) The PBL must be **integrated into the course**. The syllabus must talk about the PBL component and explain why it's an integral part of the course. Project-Based Learning should also be seen as contributing to the overall course grade. While RISE prefers the PBL component to be required, it could also be one of many project options, or given for extra credit.
- 2) The instructor must **talk with the RISE Learning Institute** before implementation. This helps to strengthen the depth of the PBL component through the sharing of resources and best practices and support the course in meeting the PBL requirements.
- 3) The goal of project-based learning is to apply classroom learning to the real world and/or real-world situations. That is why students are required to present or share their project/research outside of the class/classroom (project-based) and are asked to complete several reflection activities (learning).
 - a. RISE maintains a list of 175+ vetted agencies that can be utilized for finding partner organizations
 - b. RISE has many resources for how to create and assess deep, meaningful reflections. It also has examples used in other classes. These all can be found on the [Service-Learning SharePoint](#). There are also tips in Appendix A.
- 4) RISE's **Pre-Survey** and **Post-Survey** work with all formats of PBL. While students do not need to complete the Pre- and Post-Surveys to earn the transcript notation, instructors must offer them for the class to qualify for the PBL.

What is the process for the PBL?

- 1) If not previously approved, the instructor will submit the following to the committee, either by email or meeting:
 - a. Syllabus (with clear integration and explanation of PBL)
 - b. Relevant assignments
 - c. Relevant reflections
 - i. For in-person discussion reflections, the instructor should just send the proposed questions
 - d. Any additional information about the PBL that would help guide the committee (e.g. anything you might tell the students that helps to build the connection between the PBL and the course content).
- 2) The committee will review the material and provide feedback (see below). If approved, the students are then eligible for the PBL.

- 3) At the end of the quarter, RISE will send out a reminder to instructors to include the notation for qualifying students as a part of grading. For students to qualify, they will have:
 - a. Fully completed the project component for their course (e.g., submit end product to partner, share outside classroom, etc.)
 - b. Submitted and given meaningful effort to at least 2 reflection assignments
 - c. Done nothing to disqualify themselves (e.g. act poorly with partner agency, falsify signatures, etc.)

What is the timeline for this process?

Middle of previous quarter – Meet with RISE to discuss options and ensure an understanding of policies and procedures. *This does not need to be repeated if done before.*

- 1) **End of previous quarter or first 2 weeks of the new quarter** – Submit syllabus and supporting documents to RISE for review by the committee
 - a. A previously-approved course may need to be resubmitted (see below)
 - b. RISE encourages instructors to submit before the previous quarter ends in order to utilize the PBL the next quarter to get student buy-in and use for promotional purposes
- 2) **During grading** – Add the notation in the Notes section to qualifying students

What is the process to add the notation during grading?

Due to ctcLink regulations, **you must add the notation while you're submitting your grades.** The process should take you no more than 5 minutes to complete, and it ensures that your students receive the notation in a timely, immediate manner. Here are the steps:

- 1) Log into ctcLink.
- 2) Click Faculty Center.
- 3) Click My Schedule and make sure you're on the current quarter.
- 4) Click the Grade Roster icon next to the class (should be the second icon from the left). Make sure that the Grade Roster Status is "Not Reviewed."
- 5) Scroll to the bottom and click the "Transcript Note" tab.
- 6) If a student qualifies for the notation (see below), click the "Note" link associated with them.
- 7) In the "Note ID" box for the student, enter "PRBL".

- 8) Click "Add."
- 9) Do this for all qualifying students.
- 10) Click "Save" at the bottom.
- 11) When you're fully ready to submit the grades and notes, go to "Grade Roster Action," choose "Approved" in the drop-down menu and click Save.

Do **not** use this Note ID or this note for other classes. Qualifying sections are passed on to Evaluations, which will audit and remove any notes for sections that did not qualify.

Do I really need to resubmit my course to the PBLTN Committee every time I offer it?

The short answer is – it depends on the feedback from the Committee:

- 1) **Approval** – The feedback is good and the committee feels that the course provides meaningful PBL. The committee might provide suggestions for improving future iterations of the course but feels confident that the course is already strong. **Courses with unequivocal Approval are approved for 3 quarters of offerings**, including the quarter seeking approval, with the assumption that the course will not change much over that time. Instructors are encouraged to submit the latest versions of altered courses as an update.
 - a. Example: if the course is offered 3 quarters per year, resubmission will occur yearly.
 - b. Example: if the course is offered once per year, resubmission will occur after the third year.
 - c. Example: multiple sections offered in the same quarter will not be considered separate, and will be seen as one quarter.
- 2) **Request for Resubmission** – The committee feels, based on the material given, that either the course submission does not provide enough information to make a decision or the course falls short of the criteria described in this guide. Depending on when the instructor initially submits the material, the committee may be able to approve a resubmission for that quarter. **Courses in this category will be considered rejected until a resubmission is approved.** RISE hopes that a Request for Resubmission will not dissuade an instructor from continuing to offer PBL experiences during that and future quarters.
 - a. Example: A course initially submitted before the end of the previous quarter resubmits with meaningful alterations before the second week of the new quarter. It is then Approved or Conditionally Approved for that quarter.
 - b. Example: A course is initially submitted midway in the quarter the class is offered. There is no time for a resubmission to be considered this quarter, and any approval will be applied for the next offering.

Anything else to know?

Submitted materials for qualifying courses may be uploaded to SharePoint as support for other BC faculty. RISE will contact the qualified instructors for approval before doing so.

Send all materials to, arrange meetings with, and ask questions, email Alex Berger, High Impact Practices Project Manager, at alex.berger@bellevuecollege.edu.

Appendix A: Tips for making more meaningful or critical reflections

- 1) The assignment should be focused on or dedicated to reflection. It can be a part of another assignment but should still be distinguishable from the rest of the assignment.
- 2) For ongoing, longer PBL assignments, consider having one reflection before the experience, one during it, and one after it. While 2 should be a minimum, RISE recommends 3 for the best effect.
- 3) For single or short PBL experiences, you can use the Post-Survey as a reflection.
- 4) In order to provide the greatest accessibility to reflections, a variety of modalities is best. These include written and spoken, in-class and online/Canvas, individual and group-based. Reflecting with community partners (if applicable) is considered best practice, though is not always easy to arrange.
- 5) Reflections should help students build connections to the 8 Cs. While they don't need to include all 8 Cs, they should include at least 4-5.
 - a. Coursework – How does the experience help students meet the course outcomes and/or contextualize the course content?
 - b. Community – How does the experience engage with a social or environmental issue, improve the capacity of the partner agency, and/or make a positive impact on the community?
 - c. Character – What has the student learned about themselves through this experience? What can they contribute?
 - d. Capabilities – How has this experience contributed to growth in enduring skills such as professional behavior, teamwork, conflict management, leadership, critical thinking, etc.
 - e. Career – How does the experience impact their future plans and/or careers?
 - f. Change – What in the community or world needs to change? What do the students plan to change in themselves?
 - g. Commitment – Based on the experience, how will the student choose to make an ongoing impact in the community?

- h. Culture – What has the student learned about American culture through the experience?
- 6) A way to plan out a good mix of reflections is through "Reflection Mapping." Within the different boxes, place the learning outcomes, modality, and connections, and then develop the reflection and its questions accordingly. *Adapted from Eyler (2002)*

	Before Experience	During Experience	After Experience
Reflect Alone / At Home			
Reflect with Classmates / In Class			
Reflect with Community			

- 7) There are many ways to scaffold critical reflection. Some of them are:
- a. DEAL – Describe-Explain-Articulate Learning
 - b. DIGA – Describe-Interpret-Generalize-Apply
 - c. 5Rs – Report-Respond-Relate-Reason-Reconstruct
 - d. Kolb – Describe the experience, reflect on the experience, apply to learning, determine next steps
 - e. Bloom's Taxonomy – Reflections move up Identify-Examine-Apply-Analyze-Synthesize-Evaluate
 - f. ABCs – Affect-Behavior-Cognition/Content
- 8) Some possible reflection topics are (*NOTE: If using these examples, please adapt them to the specifics of your class rather than reproducing them verbatim.*):
- a. Beginning Reflection
 - i. Why are you being asked to do this activity, so you can have a particular community-engaged experience?
 - ii. Take a *temperature check* (e.g. What are you excited about? Nervous about?)
 - iii. How do you plan to manage their time/project over the course of the quarter? How will you address challenges along the way?
 - b. Mid-term Reflection
 - i. How can the material being learned in class benefit the world around you, and in particular, the issue being addressed through your community partnership?
 - ii. How does the coursework relate to what you're doing for this PBL component?
 - iii. What is something you have observed or experienced as part of PBL,

what was your reaction to it, and how does it relate to your coursework?

- iv. What are some challenges and/or discomfort you have been feeling as part of PBL, and how have you been dealing with them?

c. End Reflection

- i. How was the PBL experience useful in helping you better understand or make sense of the course material?
- ii. What impact did the course material make on communities, agencies, or local issues? How did your work impact the communities, agencies, or local issues you worked with this quarter?
- iii. How have you personally changed because of the PBL experience?
- iv. What will you do in the future? What changes will you make in how you do or see things? How can you use your new knowledge or skills to become more civically engaged or help address the issues you experienced?

Reflection References:

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