

POLICY 5162

ASSESSMENT AND AWARDING OF CREDIT BY PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT (PLA)

POLICY

The College recognizes that students may learn college-level knowledge and skills in a variety of situations: employment, military experiences, internships, externships, independent research, volunteer or civic work, certifications, licensure experiences and training, and college courses not previously transcribed. To minimize the loss of credit to students and repeated coursework, the College has created a process for the awarding of credit by prior learning assessment (PLA). High academic standards for the awarding of such credit will be applied.

Credit by prior learning assessment is awarded only for college-level learning and must be related to the theories, practices, and content of the relevant academic field. The learning assessed by PLA must have taken place after high school. Faculty members in a particular discipline or program in consultation with the program chair and division dean will determine which courses are eligible for credit by PLA. Credits must be tied to existing courses and learning outcomes. Only faculty members with content expertise will determine whether credit by PLA is granted. Credit will be awarded when demonstrated learning matches specific course outcomes. The documentation of learning shall be comprehensive, independently verifiable, authentic and up-to-date. All assessment processes used to evaluate prior learning will be consistent with effective contemporary assessment methodologies in the respective fields.

Reviewed and recommended by:
President's Leadership Team.....06/07/05
College Council. 06/21/05
Approved by:
Board of Trustees 06/22/05
Revision Reviewed and recommended by:
College Council.....05/01/12
Revision approved by:
President.05/01/12

The President hereby revises Policy 5162.

Shoreline Community College

By: _____
President

Date: May 1, 2012

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PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES

I. Student Eligibility for Credit by Prior Learning Assessment Application:

- A. Current Enrollment:** Students must be enrolled at Shoreline Community College during the current quarter in which they would like consideration for credit for prior experiential learning. Credit by Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) applies towards a program, certificate, degree or independent study program in which the student is enrolled or is planning to enroll. Students may apply for credit by PLA without the above requirements with instructor permission. The College makes no assurances regarding the number of credits to be awarded prior to the completion of the institution's review process.

II. Process

- A. Meeting with Academic Advisor:** Students considering credit by PLA will meet with an advisor to discuss the feasibility of acquiring such credit, all available PLA options, and the application process. The advisor will inform the student of required documentation to be submitted with the Credit by Prior Learning Assessment application form and will identify the appropriate division[s] in which the credit by PLA might apply. In addition, before students apply, he or she will be advised to research requirements and restrictions of the institutions to which they would like to transfer as restrictions may apply.
- B. Transcript Evaluation:** Students will have already received the result of their requested transcript evaluations before meeting with the Academic Advisor to discuss processing for credit by PLA. The transfer evaluation is for the purpose of verification of academic achievements, therefore, it shall be processed for the Specific Degree and Certificate Programs students wish to complete at Shoreline Community College. If the evaluation result cannot reflect acceptance of the desired transfer credits, students may consider credit by PLA. When the credit by PLA is approved by the relevant Faculty Advisor and Division Dean, the PLA shall overrule the result of the processed evaluation.
- C. Required Meeting Prior to Petitioning:** Before student petitioners apply for any type of credit by PLA, they must first meet with the appropriate faculty member(s) or program chair(s) to determine the optimal approach for demonstrating knowledge, skills and abilities in the relevant course and course learning outcomes.

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III. Credit by Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Restrictions:

- A. Not for Prior Unsuccessfully Completed Courses:** Students may not petition to earn PLA credit for a course which they have previously taken and either failed, earned an unsatisfactory grade, or have audited. In such circumstances, the students may pursue retaking that course. If that course is no longer available, the College may consider other possible options regarding credit by PLA.
- B. Transfer Institutions:** Credits granted by prior learning assessment will be so identified on students' transcripts and will transfer as restricted elective credits. These credits will be included in the 15-credit limit for all restricted elective credits. Some colleges and universities may not accept PLA credits in a transfer situation. Students are responsible for checking restrictions at their chosen transfer institution.
- C. Non-duplication of Credits or Grades:** PLA shall not duplicate other existing courses or credits, whether earned in the U.S. or abroad. These credits shall not replace a pre-existing grade for a course. No credit by prior learning assessment will be granted if the learner has already received such credit from another accredited institution of higher learning.

After the credit by PLA has been approved by the relevant Faculty Advisor and Division Dean, the relevant Division will be responsible for sending a copy of the credit by PLA form to the student and the original copy and related documents will be forwarded to Enrollment & Financial Aid Services to be used toward their graduation evaluation.
- D. Official Documentation:** All prior learning must be officially documented through places of employment, volunteer organizations, certifications, training records and other sources in order to be considered for credit. The documentation of learning shall be comprehensive, independently verifiable, authentic and up-to-date. The petitioners are responsible for obtaining and providing this documentation and any costs associated with obtaining this documentation.
- E. Credit Limitation:** Awarded PLA credit shall not exceed 25 % of the credits required for the program, certificate or degree.
- F. One-time Petition:** Learners may petition for such credit for a specific course if they have not already applied for such PLA credit at any other institution of higher learning. Learners may only petition once at this College for any particular course, and once a final decision has been rendered, they

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will not be allowed to petition again. They will then be required to take the course(s) in order to earn credit if they need the credit for their studies.

- G. No Vertical Credit:** No credit will be awarded for a course (pre-requisite or lower level course) that was bypassed once a student has taken a succeeding or higher-level course in the course series.
- H. No Partial Credit:** PLA credit is either given for an entire course or not at all. All learning outcomes of the chosen course must be met. No remedial work may be done for PLA credit after an application has already been considered. If there is a prerequisite(s) for a course, the student may have to show experiential learning for the course outcomes of the prerequisite(s) as well as for the petitioned course, but credit will not necessarily be awarded for the prerequisite(s).
- I. Unavailability of credit by PLA in Some Courses:** Credit by PLA may not be available in every discipline or for every course. Faculty members in a particular discipline in consultation with the program chair and division dean will determine which courses are eligible or not for credit by PLA. In order for a class to qualify for credit by PLA, the College must have trained SCC faculty assessors in the subject matter; PLA credit cannot be awarded if appropriate faculty is not available.
- J. No Statute of Limitations.** While no statute of limitations exists for credit by PLA, students will have to demonstrate current theoretical, applied and content knowledge of the course(s) in which they are attempting to earn credit by prior learning assessment (not experience alone). Effective contemporary assessment methods will be used to establish relevant knowledge and skills.
- K. Credits for College-Level Learning.** PLA credit will be awarded for college-level learning as delineated in the *applicable or current* Master Course Outline (MCO). Such credit will not be based solely on experience per se; it must be documented learning which was taken after high school.
- L. Challenge Exams.** Official challenge exams are one method of earning course credit. Students are encouraged to use any existent and recognized challenge exams to establish prior learning. In the absence of such exams, credit by PLA may then be an option.
- M. Skills and experience attained in a foreign country** may also be eligible for credit by PLA. Students will need to initiate and pay for the relevant records to be translated by a designated Translation Service agency. Criteria for the evaluation process and approved translation service are available at the

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“Request for International Transfer Credit” link at
<http://new.shoreline.edu/forms/>.

IV. Oversight:

A. Division or Department Responsibility: The divisions and departments that offer the courses will set the criteria and procedures for awarding credit by prior learning assessment (PLA). These criteria and procedures shall be within College guidelines and adhere to both the Washington State Board for Community and Technical College Guidelines (SBCTC) for Prior Learning Assessment, and the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities’ (NWCCU) Policy on Credit by Prior Learning Assessment. Such learning assessed for post-secondary credit shall be:

1. linked to established learning outcomes, skills standards or other criteria consistent with institutional standards for a given course. It is not linked to time spent or seat time;
2. transferable to contexts other than the one in which it was learned;
3. current and relevant;
4. at an average level of achievement equivalent to that of other learners engaged in studies in that program or subject area, and
5. assessed using a range of strategies consistent with institutional standards for a given course.

B. Record keeping: Enrollment Services will maintain the relevant records for all applications for credit by PLA and for granted credits for at least a year after the last quarter the student would be attending Shoreline Community College. Duration for record maintenance is in accordance with State of Washington guidelines, General Retention Schedule: Schedule CT04-Student Records and Support Services.

C. Courses Eligible for credit by PLA Considerations: Only courses that are active, pre-existing, documented in the current catalog, in current master course outlines (MCOs), and in recent syllabi may be used for the awarding of PLA credit. Faculty member(s) in each academic discipline and program in consultation with the program chair and division dean will decide whether a course is appropriate for the awarding of such credits. Approved courses may not be available every quarter, depending on faculty availability and workload.

D. Qualified Full-time and Associate Faculty: Only qualified teaching faculty who maintain a regular appointment with the College on a continuing basis and who are content specialists may oversee the awarding of PLA credit. The

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document validating the awarded PLA credit will include the faculty evaluator's name, professional title, discipline, and signature. Faculty evaluators may also seek additional consultation from off-campus sources of expertise in the field, with administrative oversight.

- E. School Administration Oversight:** The VP of Academic and Student Affairs Office, in consultation with faculty, staff, and learners, will review, monitor and re-evaluate the credit by PLA policy annually to ensure the quality of the PLA credits awarded to students. Efforts will be made to streamline the process and improve accessibility over time. The College will monitor, review, re-evaluate and redesign the program, including the policy and procedures to reflect faculty and learner needs.

V. Acceptable Assessment Methods:

- A. Individualized Assessment:** Outcomes assessment should be a central tenet of awarding credit for prior learning. Students may submit a petition for PLA credit with appropriate documentation to a faculty member trained in PLA procedures. The faculty member deciding on the validity of the petition will require objective measures based on established learning outcomes for the determination of student prior learning. Measures may include a standardized test, competency exam, writing sample, skill demonstration, role-play or simulation, case analysis, scenario-based testing, product creation, or other reasonable assessment measures. An interview (which may be videotaped at student request) with the specific division instructor may be included as part of the portfolio documentation. The widest types of measures should be considered in order to address the various needs of the academic and professional/technical programs of the College. Special arrangements shall not be offered to students beyond a reasonable range of acceptable measures.

- B. Portfolio Development:** Portfolio development through a 3-credit course may be utilized as part of the petition process for PLA credit. This portfolio course may involve the following elements:

- Documentation skills,
 - Writing résumés, essays, professional letters of request, letters of transmittal, and other relevant technical writing, and
 - Adult learning enrichment strategies and skills.
- A portfolio may consist of
- A summary letter requesting the credit by prior learning assessment (PLA),
 - A current comprehensive résumé and/or a targeted résumé for the respective field,
 - A list of relevant official courses taken,

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- The prior learning experiences for which he/she would like credit,
- Existing college course learning outcomes must be used,
- Verification of skill from the relevant employer(s),
- A job description from the relevant employer(s),
- A checklist from the immediate supervisor verifying the individual's competencies (if applicable),
- A personal essay by the applicant,
- Official documentation of competencies and,
- Other relevant information as requested by the verifying faculty.

VI. Portfolio-Based PLA Costs:

- A. Credit by Prior Learning Assessment petitioners will pay a processing fee and a faculty evaluation fee.** If applicable, they will pay for fees related to the portfolio course, such as tuition, textbooks, and other fees. They shall also cover any related costs such as formalized testing, proctoring costs, evaluator fees and other expenses that the College may include for services rendered. The College will inform the student in writing of necessary costs at the beginning of the portfolio petition process. Fees will be consistent across the campus and will be based on the number of credits petitioned for, not the number of credits awarded.

VII. Scheduling and Cancellation:

- A. Usually, portfolio petitions will begin with the portfolio course.
- B. Portfolios must be submitted to the respective departments for consideration by the 7th week of the quarter for a decision to be rendered by the end of the quarter. Any incomplete portfolio may be disqualified or delayed until the next quarter for consideration. If the faculty assessor deems it necessary or if an addendum is requested by the faculty evaluator the PLA evaluation process may be extended until the 7th week of the subsequent quarter for full verification of the credit by PLA application and supporting information.
- C. Students who do not show up at the scheduled time for credit by PLA testing or demonstrations may forfeit that time and have to reapply.
- D. Students may cancel their PLA portfolio application at any time during the process before the final submittal without penalty or transcription of their attempt.

VIII. Academic Dishonesty:

- A. Disqualification based on Fraud:** Any dishonesty or fraudulent information included in a portfolio will disqualify it from consideration and result in transcription of the failure to attain credit through PLA.

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- B. Retraction of PLA Credits:** Credits by PLA found to have been gained fraudulently may be retracted by the College at any time. Transcripts will have comments posted by the office of Enrollment and Financial Aid Services, who will retain appropriate documentation.

IX. Grading:

- A. Grading:** Only a pass/no credit (P/NC) grade will be given for credit by PLA petitions. Faculty assigning a P grade to the portfolio certifies a performance level of at least 2.0.
- B. Addendum:** Faculty may request an addendum from the student in order to make a credit decision. The student must submit the addendum by the 7th week of the subsequent quarter to complete and submit the addendum. If the addendum is not submitted by the deadline, the student will receive a no credit (NC) for the applied PLA credit.
- C. PLA Awarded Credit Decision and/or Grade Appeals Process:** Both the grade issued for the portfolio and the number of credits awarded by prior learning assessment may be appealed. The student may initiate the appeal no later than the last day of the next regular quarter after receiving the PLA decision.
- Step 1:** The first step in an appeal is for the student and the instructor to meet to discuss the decision and strive to come to a mutual understanding.
- Step 2:** If this meeting does not result in a satisfactory resolution, the student must contact the division dean (immediate supervisor) of the involved faculty member(s). The student shall present a written and signed statement of the nature of the grievance to the division dean and any related documentation necessary. The division dean will then attempt to work out a mutually satisfactory resolution of the issue.
- Step 3:** If this does not produce a satisfactory result to all parties to the grievance, the division dean will call a meeting within 10 instructional days of the termination of the discussions; this meeting will include the student and the involved faculty member(s). A student may be accompanied by a representative of the student body association. If the faculty member chooses, he/she may be accompanied by a representative of the faculty bargaining agent. The division dean shall conduct the meeting with the aim of achieving a mutually satisfactory resolution of the problem.
- Step 4:** If this effort fails to result in a satisfactory solution, the student must file a written grievance with a designated committee to discuss PLA grade grievance. This committee will be made up of 1-2 faculty members from the course-relevant division or department that is responsible for evaluating the

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PLA credits. Consideration of the portfolio and grievance will be “blind,” without the use of any identifying characteristics of the petitioner. This process may be overseen by an administrator of the division or department. The decision of this appointed committee will stand. An outside PLA-trained advisor or counselor may provide support to the student.

Or, CRAG Option Step 4: The student may request a hearing with the Committee for Resolution of Academic Grievances (CRAG) per Policy 5035-Student Grievance Procedures – Academic Evaluation. To begin this process, the student must file a written grievance with the Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs (VPASA) within ten (10) instructional days of the meeting as described in the prior step. Within five (5) instructional days of the receipt of such a request, the VPASA shall furnish a copy of the complaint to the faculty member(s) mentioned in the complaint. A session will be scheduled with CRAG no sooner than ten (10) instructional days and no later than twenty (20) instructional days from the time of the official filing of the written report to CRAG by the aggrieved student. This will be a closed session unless both contending parties agree to an open session. The VPASA will serve as a non-voting presiding officer of the CRAG hearing. The CRAG committee will hear testimony regarding the grievance, deliberate and decide the issue.

X. College Credit Transcription and Transferability:

- A. Transcription:** The credits for prior experiential learning will be recorded differently than regular credits. This is a type of demonstrated competency credit, or vertical credit which may allow students to skip over basic courses. As course petition credits, they are different than regular course credits. Such credit could be identified on the transcript as “credit by exam” or “credit by prior learning assessment” with the regular course name and regular course number.
- B. Transferability:** Transfer institutions may not recognize transcribed courses based on prior experiential learning, except as restricted elective credit. Students, advisors and faculty are encouraged to explore known transferability needs prior to students taking the portfolio course or applying for PLA credit. Clear advising, publicity and articulation work will be done to ensure appropriate student decision-making. The College makes no guarantees as to the transferability of PLA credit.

XI. Payment for Faculty:

- A. Remuneration:** In accordance with the negotiated Faculty Agreement, faculty will be paid a fee for assessing and evaluating the petitioner’s

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portfolio, presentation, examination or any other process for demonstrating knowledge, skill and abilities in a program or discipline. The rate of pay for this work will be determined by the general hourly rate of pay per the current faculty contract. Faculty hours will be officially logged. Faculty will be paid for up to 5 hours per 5 credit class depending on what was required in terms of creating an exam, reviewing a portfolio or other documentation. Hours beyond the range must be approved in advance by the supervising division dean.

XII. Roles and Responsibilities

A. Instructor of the PLA Portfolio Course

- Support learners through the credit by PLA Portfolio Course curriculum
- Revise and update the portfolio course
- Maintain an online Blackboard version of the course (for either hybrid or fully online delivery)
- Liaise with PLA instructors/subject matter experts on behalf of learners

B. PLA Administrator

- Provide general PLA advisement on credit by PLA.
- Create publicity for the credit by PLA initiatives on the website, in brochures, and in campus publications
- Maintain a list of PLA-challengeable courses from the various departments
- Maintain statistics and information on credit by PLA on campus, with attention paid for policy and procedural improvements
- Handle queries from students and other educational institutions and workplaces about credit by PLA
- Conduct student workshops for credit by PLA based on student interest
- Support faculty and staff working with PLA
- Update the policy with campus feedback

C. Credit by PLA Assessor/Subject Matter Expert (SMEs)

- Assist in the creation of a list of courses available for credit by PLA challenges
- Receive training in prior learning evaluation and assessment techniques
- Create assessment materials and test or demonstration scenarios for credit by PLA challenges
- Assess PLA portfolios

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- Provide a one-time preliminary meeting with potential would-be credit by PLA applicants. To maintain objectivity and consistency in the assessment process, after the one-time meeting with the credit by Prior Learning assessor, students will work independently or with the Instructor of the Portfolio course to write, assimilate, revise and submit the portfolio.
- Transmit documentation of PLA portfolio application decisions to Enrollment Services for record-keeping

Approved by:

President's Leadership Team 06/07/05

Reviewed and recommended by:

College Council. 06/21/05

Revision reviewed and recommended by:

College Council.....05/01/12

Revision approved by:

President.....05/01/12