



Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Guide

For Students

2021-2022

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INTRODUCTION

Is PLA for you? The following checklist may assist you in determining if you are a candidate for Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) credit. Do any of these statements apply to you? If so you may be a candidate for PLA credit.

- I am over the age of 24.
- I have a minimum of 5 years' work experience.
- My work experience includes leadership, management, or supervisory responsibilities.
- I have certifications and/or memberships with professional organizations.
- I have participated in corporate training programs.
- I have completed non-credit college courses.
- I have hobbies, personal interests, or have completed an informal independent study.
- I have been involved with extensive volunteer or community work.
- I am or was a member of the armed forces.
- I have lived in a foreign country and/or traveled extensively.

Pellissippi State Community College awards various types of PLA credit, since different forms of PLA are better for some students than for others. This guide provides information for many of the potential PLA credits available. Please read each section carefully, determine if PLA is something you wish to pursue, obtain the required documentation, complete any necessary forms, retain copies, and submit your materials to the designated college personnel for evaluation.

What Is Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)?

Prior Learning is a term used to describe learning gained outside a traditional academic environment. PLA is a process by which learning mastered outside of a formal classroom is reviewed for college-level equivalency. Credit for PLA may be granted for learning acquired from

work and life experiences; civic, community, or volunteer work; individual study; and in-service training sponsored by associations, business, government, and industry, including the military. PLA is the evaluation and assessment of an individual's life learning for college credit, certification, or advanced standing toward further education or training. However, PLA is not awarded for experience per se; rather it is awarded for college-level learning, which entails knowledge, skills, and competencies obtained as a result of prior experiences. For the purpose of this guide, PLA credit is divided into two types. Section I addresses Traditional Prior Learning Alternatives, such coursework from non-regionally accredited institutions, standardized tests (DANTES, CLEP, AP) or institutional challenge exams, coursework from Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCAT), and professional certifications and/or licensures. Section II, Non-Traditional Prior Learning Alternatives, explains the options of credit for life experience, American Council on Education (ACE) recommendations for military and corporate credits, and the portfolio (life-experience for more than three credit hours).

PLA is a rigorous process in which a student must demonstrate that he or she has college level learning in a particular area. It is **not** a process by which credits are given away. PLA is evaluated on learning, **not** experience. PLA provides students the opportunity to validate their relevant learning. Awarded credit will correspond as closely as possible to comparable courses from Mississippi State's inventory of course offerings. Emphasis is placed on the satisfactory presentation of the student's achievement relative to each course's learning objectives.

Students must be enrolled at PSCC and meet all admission requirements for the program in which course credit for prior learning is being sought. **The student must make application to the institution for prior learning assessment and credit for experiential learning** (attached). Credit may not be awarded twice for the same learning. A maximum of 45 credits hours can be earned through all PLA.

APPLICATION FOR PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT

Prior to making an Application for Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), you must be enrolled at Pellissippi State Community College (PSCC) and meet all admissions requirements for the program in which course credit for prior learning is being sought.

Student Name _____ P# _____

Date _____ Email _____

Student Address _____

Phone _____ Major _____ Semester _____

Below you will find the various methods PSCC offers for prior learning assessment credit. Please read the PLA Guide for instruction (*attached*). **Please check the types of PLA you are interested in learning more about.**

Standardized Testing: *Please check*

College Level Exam (CLEP)	Defense Subject Standardized Test (DSST)	Thomas Edison	Excelsior	Advanced Placement (AP)
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Professional Certifications and/or Licensures: *Please check*

Certified Professional Secretary Exam (CPS)	Certified Administrative Professional Exam (CAP)
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)	National Joint Apprenticeship and Training Comm. (NJATC)
Union of Plumbers, Fitters, Welders (UA)	Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc. (ABC)
Other Department of Labor (DOL) Apprenticeships:	
Other Certifications/Licensures:	

Credit by Examination: Course(s) _____

Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology: Diploma/Certificate Program: _____

ACE Military Credit: **Military Transcript:** ARRTS _____ SMART _____

ACE Corporate Training Institutes: Course(s) _____

Credit for Life Experience: Credit for life experience may be petitioned for a course which cannot feasibly be granted by other PLA.

Portfolio: Portfolio option is available if you wish to petition for more than one course of credit.

My signature below indicates that all of the above information is accurate and I take full responsibility for providing all information required.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

PSCC PLA Advisor: _____ Date: _____

SECTION I: TRADITIONAL PRIOR LEARNING ALTERNATIVES

Transfer Credits

The process for petitioning for transfer credit at PSCC is the same for students transferring from regionally accredited and non-regionally accredited colleges and universities. Students must first have a transcript submitted. For courses that are not automatically accepted for PSCC credit, the student may request reconsideration of transfer credit decisions. **It is important for students to submit supporting documentation if they choose to petition for transfer credit.**

Steps in the appeal process are as follows:

1. The student contacts the Records office, (865) 694-6549, and requests a reevaluation of transfer credit. The student may ask that particular courses be reconsidered for approval.
2. The student must submit course descriptions, course syllabi and other documentation accompanied by a Petition for Transfer Credit form to the Records office (attached).
3. The Records office processes copies of college transcripts and supporting documentation to the appropriate academic dean for review.
4. The dean informs Admissions and Records of the transfer credit decision. ***Dean decisions regarding the awarding of transfer credit are final.***
5. The student is notified of the transfer credit decision by Records, and any approved transferable credit will appear on the student's record.
6. Forms may be accessed at: <http://www.pstcc.edu/pla>.

PETITION FOR TRANSFER CREDIT FORM

Student Name _____ P# _____ Date _____
 Student Address _____ Email Address _____
 Phone _____ Major _____ Term of Admission _____

This form is to be used to request acceptance of transferable coursework

Students seeking transfer credit must submit the following supporting documents for credit evaluation purposes:

1. Official transcript
2. Course description from college catalog [appropriate year(s) for course work completed]
3. Course syllabi for each course to be reviewed

Evaluation material must be attached to this request form and additional documents maybe required. Credit may be awarded only after review and approval by the appropriate academic department. Dean decisions regarding transfer credit are final.

List all transfer courses within a department on one form. Use as many forms as needed.

Transfer Institution: _____			City, State: _____	
Course Prefix	Course #	Transfer Course Title	Credit Hours	PSCC Equivalent Course
<i>*Example - PSYC</i>	<i>101</i>	<i>Intro to Psychology</i>	<i>3.00</i>	<i>PSY1010</i>

Advisor Signature: _____ Advisor Name (printed) _____ Date: __/__/__

TO BE COMPLETED BY AUTHORIZED DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL

To: _____ Department: _____

Please review this request for transfer credit and the attached material to make specific transferable credit recommendations applicable to your department.

Recommendation: Approval _____ Denial _____

Department Dean: _____ Date: _____

Additional Comments or Criterion:

Records Office Official: _____ Date: _____

**RETURN THIS FORM TO THE RECORDS OFFICE WITH SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION.
 Records informs student that credit has been recorded via PSCC email account**

Credit by Exam

Pellissippi State recognizes and accepts credit through various testing alternatives. Credits may be earned by taking standardized tests, such as the College-Level Examination (CLEP), DSST Credit by Exam Program (DANTES), or Advanced Placement (AP), or by taking PSCC exams for credit. Information for approved exams and required scores is available at <http://www.pstcc.edu/pla>.

Students who believe their prior academic or work experience fulfills requirements for a particular course may request permission to receive credit for the course through taking an examination in lieu of attending the course. Permission for granting of credit by examination requires the approval of the academic department dean and of the vice president of Academic Affairs. A list of the courses for which exams for credit are available may be found at <http://www.pstcc.edu/pla>.

The student will pay a \$25 non-refundable fee prior to taking the examination. A minimum high school or college grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 is required of students applying for credit by examination; students who do not meet this requirement will not be permitted to take an examination for credit. A student who has previously received a grade in a course may not apply for credit by examination, and a student can attempt an examination for any course only once.

A student must apply for credit by examination by September 15 in fall semester or by February 15 in spring semester. Tests will be administered by appropriate personnel. Credit will be given on a pass/no pass basis only and will not be computed in the student's GPA.

Credit by Exam Process

1. Student accesses Request to take Exam for Credit from the PLA website <http://www.pstcc.edu/pla/creditbyexam.php> by clicking on the appropriate academic department.
2. Student completes form and submits to the department dean.
3. Department dean reviews request, approves or denies request, and informs student of decision.
4. If request is approved, dean gives student instructions for paying fee at Cashier's office and for taking test.
5. Student pays fee and takes test.
6. Test is returned to department office and evaluated by a committee of department faculty.
7. Dean sends exam and completed Credit by Exam form to vice president of Academic Affairs, who approves or denies granting of credit and sends packet to Records office.
8. Records office verifies that student has paid \$25 fee for course, records credit, and notifies student.

Professional Certifications and/or Licensures

Depending on the student's chosen degree path, PLA credit can be awarded for many professional certifications and/or licensures previously earned. Students who have Certified Professional Secretary (CPS) certification may receive credit for 15 semester hours. Students who have Certified Administrative Professional (CAP) certification may receive 19 semester hours. Certifications from Computing Technology Industry Association (CompTIA), such as A+ certification or Microsoft Office Specialist Certification, may also be considered. The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), the National Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee (NJATC), the Plumbers and Pipefitters Joint Apprenticeship and Training

Program, and Department of Labor (DOL) Training Programs offer apprenticeships that have been approved for college credit.

SECTION II: NON-TRADITIONAL PRIOR LEARNING ALTERNATIVES

Credit for Life Experience

Credit for life experience is typically requested for one or two courses and may be granted by verification of college credit recommendation in the Directory of the National Program on Non-collegiate Sponsored Instruction or by approval of the vice president of Academic Affairs, the academic department dean, and an appropriate faculty committee. It is recommended for students requesting multiple courses for life experience credit to choose the Portfolio option for PLA credit listed on page 12.

A request to petition for credit for life experience will be approved by the appropriate academic department dean (or designee) prior to the student's submission of documentation of professional experience that directly relates to the content of a specific course at Pellissippi State. Credit for life experience may be petitioned for courses for which credit cannot feasibly be granted by other means, such as advanced placement, CLEP, credit by examination, or transfer credit. The student must also meet the College's graduation residency requirement as specified in the College catalog and follow the required procedure:

1. Student requests Credit for Life Experience form (attached) from the appropriate department office, completes the petition section of the form and schedules an appointment with the appropriate academic department dean (or designee).
2. If the dean (or designee) grants approval for the student to proceed, he or she appoints a faculty committee of at least two members, who schedule a meeting with the student to discuss instructions and guidelines for the documentation to be submitted.

3. Prior to submission, the student schedules an interview with the faculty committee to explain or clarify the experience as presented in the documentation.
4. The faculty committee reviews the documentation, completes the approval form and forwards it, along with the compiled documentation, to the dean for review.
5. Upon approval, the dean forwards the form and materials to the vice president of Academic Affairs for review.
6. Upon approval, the vice president of Academic Affairs forwards the form to the Records office for implementation of the credit and returns all documentation to the department office. The Records office will forward a copy of the completed form to the department office and file the original.
7. Forms may be accessed at: <http://www.pstcc.edu/pla>.

**CREDIT FOR LIFE EXPERIENCE FORM
PELLISSIPPI STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Name: _____ Phone#: _____ Date: _____
Student ID: _____ E-mail: _____

This is a request to petition for credit through life experience for the following course or other program requirements.

Course Prefix and Number	Course Title	Credit Hrs.
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This course(s) (or credit hours) is required for (AAS, AS, AA or certificate) _____
Degree in _____
Major

Request to petition approved/denied (please circle appropriate response)
by: _____
(Academic Department Dean or designee)

If credit is denied, the Academic Dean or designee informs student

Rationale for Denial _____

Date _____ Department _____
Course Objectives Achieved: Syllabus Attached
Comments (Committee Chair):

Faculty Committee

_____	Date _____
_____	Date _____
_____	Date _____

Department Dean _____ Date _____
VP of Academic Affairs _____ Date _____
* Records _____ Date _____

* Records implements credit and returns a copy of the form to the department

Records informs student that credit has been recorded via PSCC email account

Ace Military Credit

The American Council on Education (ACE) National Guide to College Credit for Workforce Training contains ACE credit recommendations for formal courses or examinations offered by various organizations, from businesses and unions to the government and military. Pellissippi State may award college credit for training and certifications based on ACE national guidelines when applicable to the student's program of study. This includes evaluation of military training, corporate training, certificates and/or apprenticeship programs which may lead to college credit.

ACE recommended military credit will be considered based upon submission of official military transcripts, such as AARTS or SMART transcripts. Course descriptions should also be submitted for recommended course credit. All course and occupation descriptions can be accessed from *the Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services* on the ACE web site, <http://www.militaryguides.acenet.edu/index.htm>.

Ace Corporate Training Institutes

The *National Guide to College Credit for Workforce Training* contains ACE credit recommendations for formal courses or examinations offered by various organizations, from businesses and unions to the government and military. This information is accessible through the *National Guide to College Credit for Workforce Training* tab on the ACE website, <http://www2.acenet.edu/credit/?fuseaction=content.getEvaluatedOrganizations>.

Portfolio

Currently enrolled students at Pellissippi State may petition for credits through documented work experiences or life experiences in the field in which a degree is being pursued by compiling and submitting a portfolio. The portfolio option is available for students who wish to petition for multiple courses for credit.

Prior learning credit may be granted as elective credit for specific courses if the learning experience correlates to courses to which the current Pellissippi State course inventory. Up to

45 credit hours may be earned through PLA (including CLEP, DANTES, AP, and ACE). Within the TBR system, “Credit based on Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) at another TBR institution will be accepted in transfer and applied toward the student's degree in the same way that any other type of transfer credit is accepted.” TBR Guideline A-030 I:H:4. PLA is guaranteed in the Tennessee Transfer Pathways for all UT and TBR institution. PLA credits with course matches are to be treated exactly the same as their non-PLA, traditional classroom equivalencies. If those traditional credits would have transferred, then their PLA counterparts are given the exact same guarantee. Any exceptions, limitations, qualifications, or other regulations within the TTPs for traditional courses would also apply.

Students interested in seeking prior learning credit by compiling a portfolio should contact the PLA advisor to discuss the process.

Credit for SOPHIA Learning

You may be able to earn college credit for courses taken through SOPHIA Learning. Courses taken will need to be submitted on an ACE Transcript. Students can use the ACE Request Transcript Page to find the credits they have earned.

Academic Program Inventory (PLA) Degree Programs and Courses that Accept PLA Credit

Department	Concentration	Can PLA be Awarded For Major Course(s)	Comments
Administrative Professional Technology	Medical Office	Yes	
Department	Concentration	Can PLA be Awarded For Majors Course(s)	Comments
Business	Accounting	Yes	
	Culinary Arts	Yes	
	Hospitality	Yes	
	Management	Yes	
Department	Concentration	Can PLA be Awarded For Major Courses(s)	Comments
Computer Information Technology	Cyber Defense	Yes	
	Networking	Yes	
	Programming	Yes	
	Systems Administration & Management	Yes	
Department	Concentration	Can PLA be Awarded For Major Course(s)	Comments
Criminal Justice		Yes	
Department	Concentration	Can PLA be Awarded For Major Course(s)	Comments
Early Childhood Education		Yes	
Department	Concentration	Can PLA be Awarded For Major Course(s)	Comments

Engineering Technologies	Civil and Construction Engineering	Yes	
	Electrical Engineering	Yes	PLA credit is only awarded to those actively participating in an IBEW or DOL approved apprenticeship.
	Architectural Design	Yes	

	Electromechanical	Yes	
	Mechanical	Yes	
	General Technology	Yes	
Department	Concentration	Can PLA be Awarded For Major Courses(s)	Comments
Interior Design		Yes	
Department	Concentration	Can PLA be Awarded For Major Courses(s)	Comments
Media Technologies	Audio Production Engineering	Yes	
	Design for Web and Print	Yes	
	Photography	Yes	
	Video Production	Yes	
	Web	Yes	
Department	Concentration	Can PLA be Awarded For Major Courses(s)	Comments

Paralegal Studies		No	The Paralegal Studies program does not award Prior Learning Assessment (PLA). The quality and integrity of the program cannot be assessed by PLA.
Department	Concentration	Can PLA be Awarded For Major Courses(s)	Comments
Water Quality Technology		Yes	
Department	Concentration	Can PLA be Awarded For Major Courses(s)	Comments
Welding Technology		Yes	
Courses		Can PLA be Awarded For Course(s)	Comments
Accounting		Yes	
Advertising		Yes	
Administrative Professional Technology		Yes	

Agriculture	Yes	
American Sign Language	Yes	
Anthropology	Yes	
Art	Yes	
Art History	Yes	
Biology	Yes	
Botany	Yes	
Business	Yes	

Chemistry	Yes	
Civil Engineering Technology	Yes	
Child & Family	Yes	
Chinese Language	Yes	
College Success	No	Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is not available for College Success because the purpose of taking the course is to introduce students to the skills and strategies that will help them in their pursuit of higher education.
Communications	Yes	
Communication Graphics Technology	Yes	
Computer Science	Yes	
Criminal Justice	Yes	
Culinary Arts	Yes	
Early Childhood Education	Yes	
Economics	Yes	
Education	Yes	
Electrical Construction Management	Yes	
Electrical Engineering Technology	Yes	
English	Yes	

Finance	Yes	
Geology	Yes	
German	Yes	

French	Yes	
History	Yes	
Hospitality	Yes	
Industrial Maintenance Technology	Yes	
Interior Design	Yes	
Mathematics	Yes	
Mechanical Engineering Technology	Yes	
Music	Yes	
Nursing	Yes	LPN's and Paramedics (Bridge to RN Program only)
Paralegal Studies	No	The Paralegal Studies program does not award Prior Learning Assessment (PLA). The quality and integrity of the program cannot be assessed by PLA.
Philosophy	Yes	
Photography	Yes	
Physical Education	Yes	
Physics	Yes	
Political Science	Yes	
Psychology	Yes	
Sociology	Yes	
Spanish	Yes	
Speech	Yes	

Social Work	Yes	
Theatre	Yes	
Video Production	Yes	
Water Technology	Yes	
Web Technology	Yes	
Welding	Yes	
Women's Studies	Yes	