



Prior Learning Assessment Procedure Administrative Procedure

Authority reference: Community and Technical College System of West Virginia Series 59

West Virginia Northern Community College (WVNCC) will use a formal evaluation process involving faculty and academic administrators to assess learning from non-traditional settings and award academic credit for experiences that are determined to be equivalent to college-level learning through the prior learning. Credit may be awarded on a course equivalency evaluation model or through block credit award.

Credit through PLA is awarded only for documented and demonstrated experiences that are equivalent to college-level learning. The learning experience must be verifiable. College credit will be awarded for the college level *learning* that is demonstrated by the student and not solely for the stated experience.

Credit for prior learning shall only be awarded to students who are admitted to the institution and have declared a major field of study. Admitted students must formally request review for PLA by submitting the PLA Application and must pay the PLA Application Fee. Other associated fees may be required and will be published annually with the list of the College's fees.

Credit awarded through PLA shall not count toward institutional residency requirements.

Credit for prior learning can apply toward majors, minors, general education requirements, and electives that count toward the student's chosen degree or certificate. Prior Learning Assessment credit may also satisfy prerequisite requirements. Credit awarded through Prior Learning Assessment may not duplicate credits previously earned by the student.

No more than 30 credit hours of PLA may be applied toward an associate degree (except for the BOG degree) and no more than 15 credit hours of PLA may be applied toward a certificate.

The Board of Governors Associate of Applied Science degree program maintains specific guidelines and requirements at the State level for the use of credit for prior learning. This regulation does not replace existing guidelines.

The credit shall be recorded as "K" credit and shall not be used in determination of a student's grade point average or used in the calculation of honors. Credit granted will be recorded on the student's transcript in the term in which the credit is awarded and after payment of required fees. All Prior Learning Assessment documentation will be retained by the College in the student's official academic file for five years.

Roles for awarding and recording PLA credit

Academic responsibilities

- Discipline faculty or program director determine what is credit worthy with recommendations to the dean of academic affairs then to VPAA who makes the final determination.
- Discipline faculty or VPAA designee assess student achievement and determine whether student has earned credit.
- All responsible individuals sign PLA application indicating reasons for awarding or rejecting credit. The final authority/signatory is the VPAA.

Records/registrar responsibilities

- Records/registrar serves as quality control and ensures that proper procedures are followed in assigning credit.
- Records/registrar ensures that proper documentation of credit is received and maintained.
- Records/registrar places credit on transcript.

Method of Assessment

The assessment of prior college-level learning can be accomplished through a variety of assessment methods including, but not limited to the following:

- Standard Award from the Board of Governors AAS Program
- ACE – American Council on Education Guides
- Advanced Placement Exams
- CLEP – College Level Examination Program
- DANTES Subject Standardized Test (DSST)
- Institutional challenge exams (developed by qualified faculty and administered by faculty in the division or designee assigned by VPAA)
- Institutional evaluation of workforce training, certifications, licensure
- Portfolio assessment
- Military credit

Process

A student wishing to receive credit through PLA must formally apply using the *Prior Learning Assessment Application* process. Each course requires a separate application:

Step One: Schedule an appointment with a faculty advisor or a campus counselor to determine the appropriateness of Prior Learning Assessment (PLA). If it is determined that PLA is an appropriate choice for a student's program, the advisor/counselor will work with the student to complete *Section One* of the application. If PLA is not an option for the student, the advisor/counselor should advise the student of other options.

Students wishing to use portfolio assessment should begin the process by meeting with the Division Chair or the Dean of Academic Affairs for the Board of Governors AAS program. The Division Chair or the Dean of Academic Affairs should retain the portfolio while the application is processed. Additional fees may apply for the portfolio review.

Step Two: The student takes the completed application packet to the business office for payment of the non-refundable PLA Application Fee. Once payment is received, the Business Office will complete *Section Two* and forward the application within five (5) business days to the Registrar's Office for recording. The business office will notify the student via WVNCC email that the application has been forwarded.

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Step Three. Within five (5) business days of receiving the application packet, the Registrar's Office will complete *Section Three* and forward the application packet to the division chair or the dean of academic affairs (BOG). The Registrar will notify the student via WVNCC email that the application has been forwarded to the division chair or dean of academic affairs (BOG).

Step Four: Within two (2) days of receiving the application packet, the division chair or dean of academic affairs identify the discipline faculty to review the PLA request. The division chair or dean will notify the student via WVNCC email that the application is now under review.

Step Five: The evaluator will have ten (10) business days to complete the review. If more information is needed, the request will be made through the division chairperson or dean, who will request additional information from the student via WVNCC email. The student will have thirty (30) business days in which to provide additional information to the division chair, who will return it to the evaluator(s) within two (2) business days. The evaluator will have ten (10) business days to complete *Section Five*. The evaluator will notify the division chair or dean of his or her decision. The division chair or dean will notify the student via WVNCC email that the application is proceeding unless it has been denied. If denied, the application is sent to the Registrar for recording and the Registrar completes *Section Seven*.

Step Six: If the application is approved to proceed, the VPAA will review the application and make final decision and indicate the basis for awarding or rejecting the credit requested within five (5) business days. The VPAA will send the signed Application packet to the Registrar's Office within five (5) business days.

Step Seven: The Registrar's Office will notify the student in writing or VIA WVNCC email within five (5) business days of receipt of the completing the process for documentation. Notation will be made by the Registrar's Office in the student's official record of the outcome and (if applicable) the transcript will be updated.

Appeal Process

A student may appeal a decision concerning the amount of credit awarded and/or denial of a request for prior learning credit by a faculty member or the College.

Prior Learning Assessment Appeals Committee

The Prior Learning Assessment Appeals Committee shall be made up of five persons from the academic appeal committee pool recommended by the Vice President of Academic Affairs: three faculty from the College and two students from the campus of the appeal. The Committee shall select its own faculty chairperson who will have voting privileges only in the case of a deadlock decision. In a Prior Learning Assessment Appeal, one faculty member must be from the discipline and/or program of the prior learning in question or from a related discipline and/or program. If the faculty is not available to hear the appeal due to being off contract, the Committee will recommend a substitute; the Vice President for Academic Affairs will notify the substitute. The Prior Learning Assessment Appeals Committee may reference expert sources, such as Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, or individuals from the field but, in the case of a subject matter expert, he or she may not take part in the Committee's deliberations or in its decisions.

Prior Learning Assessment Challenges

Challenges of prior learning assessment may be initiated by a student if it is believed that the rejection of prior learning experience is incorrect, represents an arbitrary or prejudiced evaluation or discriminates on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or national origin.

Prior Learning Assessment Appeal Process:

Step One: Student must initiate appeals in writing within twenty (20) business days of the rendering of decisions of the prior learning assessment application. The student will submit the request to the division chair or the dean of academic affairs. The division chair or dean will request a meeting with the faculty member(s) assigned to approve the PLA request and the student take place within ten (10) business days.

Step Two: After the student and the appropriate faculty member(s) meet, the faculty member provides a written response to the student via WVNCC email, the Registrar's Office and the VPAA within seven (7) business days.

Step Three: If the appeal is denied in step two, a student may appeal to the Prior Learning Assessment Appeal Committee by submitting a written appeal request to the Vice President of Academic Affairs' Office within five (5) business days after receiving the denial.

Step Four: Upon receipt of a written student appeal, the Vice President for Academic Affairs shall notify the student, faculty member (s), the Division Chair (s), and the chairperson of the Prior Learning Assessment Appeals Committee of the date, time, and place of the hearing, which should take place within fourteen (14) business days of receipt of the written appeal.

Step Five: Within five (5) business days of the hearing, the Prior Learning Assessment Appeals Committee must make a recommendation to the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Step Six: The VPAA, within seven (7) business days, must accept, reject, or modify the recommendation and respond to the student, the faculty member(s), the Division Chair (s), and the Registrar's Office.

Step Seven: Within seven (7) business days of the Vice President for Academic Affairs' decision, the student may appeal to the President.

Step Nine: Upon receiving the VPAA's decision and the appeal request, the President of the College, whose decision is final, must respond in writing within ten (10) business days of the student's final appeal.