

## 02-08-00 Standards for Awarding Credit for Prior Learning

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline the terms and conditions under which Nashville State Community College awards and/or transfers credits toward a degree or certificate based on Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), and to provide consistent and accessible methods for students to earn these credits. These terms and conditions apply to the entire institution, including all departments and colleges. Exceptions must be approved by the chief academic officer of the institution.

### DEFINITIONS

**Prior Learning Assessment (PLA):** PLA is a term used to describe learning gained outside a traditional academic environment. Put another way, it is learning and knowledge students acquire while living their lives, such as by working, participating in employer training programs, serving in the military, studying independently, volunteering or doing community service, and studying open source courseware. In short, PLA is the evaluation and assessment of an individual's life learning for college credit, certification, or advanced standing toward further education or training. PLA is *not* confined to portfolio assessment, which is simply one type of PLA (as are CLEP tests, ACE evaluations, challenge exams, etc.).

### POLICY

#### I. Standards for Awarding PLA Credit

##### A. Requirements for PLA credit to be awarded: Academic credit will be awarded only:

- A. For students who have been admitted to the institution.
- B. For students who have declared an academic program.
- C. For courses directly applicable to curriculum requirements of the declared program. Changing majors will result in a reassessment of the applicability of the PLA credit.

##### B. Parameters for awarding PLA:

- A. *External:* Any credits awarded for PLA must be in accordance with the Standards of The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS Standard 10.8) and policies and guidelines of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission and the Tennessee Board of Regents.
- B. *Internal:* No more than 75% of the credits in a program may be awarded through PLA. If a program accrediting agency imposes a specific maximum for PLA credit that is less than 75%, that maximum will be honored for that program.

- C. **How PLA credits may be used in a student's academic program:** PLA credits apply toward majors, minors, concentrations, general education requirements, and electives that count toward the degree or certificate being sought in the same manner as traditional courses. PLA credits shall not be treated differently in their application and use than their course equivalencies. PLA credits also satisfy prerequisite requirements in the same manner that their course equivalencies do at that institution.
- D. **How does PLA credit affect a student's GPA:** Credits awarded for PLA will be applied to progression to graduation, but no quality points will be awarded to count toward GPA calculation.

II. **Types of PLA recognized by Nashville State Community College:**

- A. **Advanced Placement (AP) Exams:** A series of tests developed by the College Board initially for AP High School courses. This is also a type of early postsecondary educational opportunity. See the Nashville State Catalog for current course credit equivalencies.
- B. **College Level Examination Program (CLEP) Exams:** Tests of college material offered by the College Board. In some circumstances, this is also a type of early postsecondary educational opportunity. See the Nashville State Catalog for current course credit equivalencies.
- C. **Dual credit program:** (as defined by Public Chapter 967) "A postsecondary course, taught in a high school by certified secondary instructors, the successful completion of which prepares a secondary student to sit for a postsecondary challenge examination, administered under the supervision of postsecondary faculty or a consortium approved certified secondary instructor. The student's score on the challenge examination shall be used by a postsecondary institution for evaluation to determine the granting of postsecondary credit towards a diploma or a certificate or an associate or baccalaureate degree." This is also a type of early postsecondary educational opportunity.
- D. **Evaluation of Local Training:** Program evaluations of non-credit instructional training programs through Workforce Development.
- E. **Institutional Course Challenge Examination Credit:** An academic program may allow students to receive credit for a course by taking a Challenge Exam for that course. The student must contact the individual program or department to learn about the availability and cost of course challenge examinations.
- F. **International Baccalaureate Programs (IB):** The IB Programme is an internationally accepted qualification for entry into institutes of higher education, much like the AP program. The Diploma Program is designed for students aged 16 to 19; it is a demanding two-year curriculum leading to final examinations. Graduates of the IB program must demonstrate competency in languages, social studies, the experimental sciences, and mathematics. See the Nashville State Catalog for current course credit equivalencies.

- 
- G. **Locally Evaluated Industry and Workplace Credit:** Nashville State may individually evaluate non-collegiate instructional programs, such as those for industry certifications, professional licensures, apprenticeships, and other local workplace trainings that demonstrate competency required for completion of degree or certificate programs. PLA credit can be awarded based on evaluation of the training or certification by faculty members in the student's program. Not all training that can be possibly assessed for college level credit is incorporated in industry certifications, professional licensures, apprenticeships:
- H. **Apprenticeship:** Apprenticeship is a combination of on-the-job training and related instruction in which workers learn the practical and theoretical aspects of a highly skilled occupation. Apprenticeship programs can be sponsored by individual employers, joint employer and labor groups, and/or employer associations.
- a. **Certification:** Certification is a designation earned by a person that ensures the individual is qualified to perform a task or job. Certification differs from licensure in that certification is an employment qualification and not a legal requirement for practicing a profession.
  - b. **Professional Licensure:** Professional licensure protects the public by enforcing standards that restricts practice to qualified individuals who have met specific qualifications in education, work experience, and exams. Licensure is a means by which "permission to practice" is regulated. Licensure is required by law.
- I. **Other forms of PLA:** Students may earn college credit for additional forms of PLA not mentioned above according through a process by which program faculty have determined that student prior learning meets student outcomes of a particular class. Assessment of course-specific prior learning not defined above should be completed by appropriately credentialed faculty/staff approved at the institution granting the assessed credit, academically qualified in the assessed discipline and institutional knowledge to assign and document credit appropriately and approved by the Instructional Dean.
- J. **Portfolio Review Credit (or portfolio assessment credit):** A portfolio is prepared by the student to demonstrate and validate credit for learning acquired outside of the classroom and must be relevant to the student's degree program. Program faculty will use rubrics to evaluate the student portfolio, which will include documentation such as certificates of training, work samples, awards and honors, job descriptions, performance evaluations, samples of artwork, evidence of self-directed learning, and resumes. A portfolio course may be offered by the institution. Assessment of portfolios course-specific prior learning should be completed by appropriately credentialed faculty/staff approved by the institution granting the assessed credit, academically qualified in the assessed discipline and institutional knowledge to assign and document credit appropriately.

- K. **Prior Military Training Credit:** College credit for military training may be awarded through the direct evaluation of the student's service school transcripts.

**SOURCES**

TBR Policy 5:02:02:30 Guidelines for Faculty Promotion

**RELATED POLICIES**

N/A

*Approved by the NSCC Cabinet 6/28/21*