

Credit for Prior Learning Experience in Washington

April 2013

Prior Learning is defined as knowledge and skills gained through

- Work and life experience
- Military training and experience
- Formal and informal education and training from in-state, out-of-state, and foreign institutions



Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is a means of determining whether the knowledge, skills, and abilities a student has gained through prior learning match the knowledge, skills, and abilities a student would gain by completing a specific course.

Prior Learning Assessment can be accomplished through standardized tests, course challenge examinations, portfolio assessment, and crosswalks between work-based learning and college courses.

Washington often is regarded as a bellwether state in prior learning assessment.

Every college and university in Washington currently offers some form of prior learning assessment.



PLA – A 3-Step Process:

1. A student applies for prior learning credit for a course offered at a college or university.
2. An **assessment** (written exam, practical activity, portfolio, or other, as appropriate) is administered to determine whether the student has achieved the **course outcomes**.
3. If the student has achieved the outcomes for the course through prior learning, the student **may be awarded credit for the course**.

What does credit for prior learning do?

- Shortens time to degree or completion of certificates.
- Improves retention and completion rates.
- Acknowledges diversity of learning methods that result in achievement of learning outcomes.

Credit for Prior Learning does not...

- Include awarding credit without assessment of the student's prior learning.
- Apply if prohibited by specific industry licensure or certification.

RCW 28B.77.230

The council shall convene the Academic Credit for Prior Learning Work Group to:

- **Increase** the number of students who receive academic credit for prior learning and the number and type of academic credits accepted for prior learning.
- **Develop transparent policies and practices** in awarding PLA credit and improve prior learning assessment practices.
- **Create tools** to develop faculty and staff knowledge and expertise in awarding credit for prior learning.
- **Develop articulation agreements.**
- **Develop outcome measures** to track progress on the goals outlined in this section.

70 Workgroup Participants

9	Postsecondary education boards and councils
26	SBCTC (including 7 faculty)
9	Baccalaureate institutions <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 7 public▪ 1 private non-profit▪ 1 WGU Washington
3	Career Colleges
7	House of Representatives, Senate, other state agencies
2	Public safety
1	Student
1	Military/Department of Defense
12	Workforce and apprenticeship sectors

2011

- **Identified** single contacts for all campuses.
- **Developed** a preliminary definition of PLA.
- **Established** crosswalk examples for specific career clusters.
- **Analyzed and recommended** a consistent fee structure.
- **Collected and shared** state and national best practices.
- **Developed** resources and training for faculty and staff.
- **Increased** transparency and consistency of information available to students and stakeholders.
- **Discussed** PLA practices with regional accrediting commission.

2012

- **Drafted** Statewide PLA Policy containing clear operational definitions.
- **Drafted** a policy for transcribing PLA credit.
- **Implemented** consistent PLA tracking method and collected initial data on CTC students receiving PLA credit.
- **Council** and ERDC staff developing method to collect PLA data at public baccalaureates.
- **Improved** college, university, and agency websites to provide better information about PLA practices.
- **Developed** faculty handbook for PLA implementation.
- **Convened** 2nd annual PLA Conference.

- **Finalize** draft Statewide PLA Policy/Agreement after review by stakeholders.
- **Finalize** draft policy for transcribing PLA credit, review by stakeholders, and deploy statewide.
- **Increase** transparency and consistency of information available to students, stakeholders, faculty and staff.
- **Develop** recommendations for PLA financial assistance.
- **Increase** crosswalks between industry certifications and college credentials, especially for military training.
- **Align** PLA and transfer policy, including review of national standardized examinations.
- **Develop** recommendations for expanding PLA credit acceptance using multiple accreditation standards.

Washington Student Achievement Council website:
www.wsac.wa.gov/PreparingForCollege/PriorLearningCredit

Washington State Prior Learning Work Group wiki:
<http://wa-priorlearningworkgroup.wikispaces.com/>

Questions?

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