

# **Credit for Prior Learning Experience in Washington**

Washington Student Achievement Council

January 23, 2013

# What is Prior Learning

**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

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

- **Finalize** draft Statewide PLA Policy. Council and SBCTC review.
- **Finalize** draft policy for transcribing PLA credit 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](http://www.wsac.wa.gov/PreparingForCollege/PriorLearningCredit)

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

## *Questions?*

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