



Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Policy and Procedures for Implementation



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Title: Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Policy and Procedures for Implementation at Tennessee State University (TSU)

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Division of Origin: Academic Affairs (Center for Extended Education)

Effective Date: Immediate

Purpose of Policy:

The purpose of this policy is to allow Tennessee State University to expand upon Tennessee Board of Regents policy and to develop procedures for the recognition of equivalent extra-institutional learning processes that include the awarding of credit or advanced placement.

Policy Overview:

Tennessee State University (TSU) values the diversity of its student body. This diversity includes the unique experiences, interests, and intellectual pursuits of students which may lead to the acquisition of knowledge at the college level. College level learning is the same, whether acquired in the traditional college classroom or through non-collegiate courses or activities. This equivalency is validated by academically sound and rigorous Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) methods. According to the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) publication, *Assessing Learning: Standards and Principles & Procedures*, PLA is defined as a process "by which an individual's learning from experience is assessed and evaluated for purposes of granting credit, certification, or advanced standing toward further education or training."

Since the initial publication of the Tennessee State University (TSU) Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Policy and Procedures for Implementation document, the University experienced a governance change in higher education (2016) and a revision of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) accreditation standards (2018). With the passage of the Focus Act in April 2016, Tennessee higher education was restructured to incorporate independent governing boards to oversee each of the state's six public institutions which had previously been governed by the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR). The governance change mandated that each independent governing board report to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC).

When the PLA Policy was initially drafted, the University was on the cusp of the change. The document reflected policy that had been developed by both TBR and THEC. After the governance change, the University devised and adopted its own PLA Policy which utilized THEC and TBR guidelines and policy as source documents. Furthermore, the original SACSCOC standards governing PLA policy were revised. The original documents from the three organizations have been included in the Appendix of this document for the historical record. The new referenced SACSCOC standard is 10.8.

In an effort to strengthen PLA standards at Tennessee higher education institutions and to augment completion strategies for Governor Haslam's "Drive to 55" initiative, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) appointed a Task Force on Prior Learning. In 2012, the group

released its policy recommendations governing awarding college credit earned through PLA methods. The work of the Task Force resulted in a document entitled, *"Recommended Standards in Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Policy and Practice for Tennessee Public Colleges and Universities."*

The TSU PLA policy is aligned with the institutional mission, academic integrity standards, student educational attainment, and student success goals. Undergirding the TSU PLA Policy and Procedures are the following documents which are presented in the appendices of this document: (a) the THEC *"Recommended Standards in Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Policy and Practice for Tennessee Public Colleges and Universities"* and (b) the SACSCOC position statement, *"Transfer of Academic Credit"*. To provide University oversight of this policy, the Division of Academic Affairs has established the Prior Learning Assessment Council (PLAC) which is chaired by a University faculty member and the PLA Coordinator; the Council has a representative from each academic college and from each unit in the Division of Enrollment Management. Details outlining the practices and guidelines for PLA at the University will be published in printed materials and presented online in the University's undergraduate catalog, the PLA webpage, and in the PLA Student Handbook.

Policy:

- A. The process for awarding of credits through "Extra-Institutional or Life-long Learning" by Tennessee State University must be in compliance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement (reference Standard 10.8), the Commission's Position Statement on the "Transfer of Academic Credit." (Appendix B).
- B. The institutional process for awarding credits through Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) by Tennessee State University must be in compliance with the The Tennessee Higher Education Commission *Recommended Standards in Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Policy and Practice of Tennessee Public Colleges and Universities* (August 7, 2012), (Appendix A).
 1. These Standards ensure that Tennessee State University will utilize best practices as outlined by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) and provide services to students that are consistent among institutions.
 2. The Standards ensure transferability of PLA credit, including identification of types of PLA credits available, instruct constituents on the transcription of PLA credit, and establish common standards for portfolio review.
- C. When awarding credit under this provision, Tennessee State University will use a recognized guide or procedure for awarding the credit for extra-institutional or life-long learning. The recognized guides or procedures include:
 1. American Council on Education (ACE) National Guide to Educational Credit for Training Programs.
 2. Guide to Credit by Examination.
 3. College Entrance Examination Board Advanced Placement Program (CEEB/AP).

4. Defense Subject Standardized Test (DSST) formerly DANTES.
 5. Credit by Departmental Examination.
 6. Subject matter experts who are not members of the institution's faculty but who evaluate extra-institutional learning at the institution's request.
 7. Individual portfolios using the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) or other standardized guidelines authorized, in advance, by permission of the institution.
- D. When awarding credit to students who are veterans or military service members, the Institution references the Joint Services Transcript (JST), DD-214 and/or transcripts from the Army/American Council on Education Registry Transcript System (AARTS), Community College of Air Force (CCAF), and Coast Guard Institute (CGI). The institution will use the American Council of Education (ACE) for awarding credit for military experience, education, and/or training obtained during military experience. The recognized procedures include:
- a. If military experience, education, and/or training are equivalent to a course that fulfills a general education or degree program requirement, the course credit will count towards graduation. Otherwise, appropriate course credit will be granted for elective credit.
 - b. Should credit not be captured through ACE recommendations, Tennessee State University will offer veterans and service members an opportunity for prior learning assessment via another recognized mechanism (refer to Section D, above).
 - c. Tennessee State University will provide veteran and military service members relevant information on awarding college credit for military education, experience, and/or training.
 - d. Tennessee State University will maintain a set of institutional policies on the awarding of academic credit for military experience within the undergraduate catalog. The policies will include a description of the procedure for removing excessive hours applied to transcripts, which may affect student eligibility for financial aid.
- E. When utilizing published guides for extra-institutional learning, the information provided should include:
- a. course title;
 - b. location of all sites where the course is offered;
 - c. length in hours, days, or weeks;
 - d. period during which the credit recommendation applies;
 - e. purpose for which the credit was designed;
 - f. learning outcomes;
 - g. teaching methods, materials, and major subject areas covered; and
 - h. college credit recommendations offered by categories (by level of degrees) and expressed in semester hours and subject area(s) in which credit is applicable.

Tennessee State University ensures that parameters for awarding extra-institutional credit are published in various University printed and online documents. Specific parameters guiding student eligibility and standards may be found in the *TSU Procedures for Implementation of the PLA Policy* document.

Approved - October 2017

Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) at Tennessee State University

Procedures for Implementation of the PLA Policy

PLA Standards and Parameters

Tennessee State University (TSU) ensures that parameters for awarding extra-institutional credit are published in various University printed and online documents. Specific parameters guiding student eligibility and standards are explained in this section of the policy document and they will appear on the PLA webpage (<http://www.tnstate.edu/atadistance/prior-learning-assessment-newhome.aspx>), and in the Tennessee State University Undergraduate Catalog and the PLA Student Handbook. As indicated above, TSU undergirds its policies and procedures with national and state best practices and recommendations. Thus, the University's PLA program complies fully with (a) the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) Standards for Assessing Learning, (b) the SACS policy on the Transfer or Transcribing of Academic Credit, and (c) the THEC Recommended Standards in Prior Learning Assessment Policy and Practice for Tennessee Public Colleges and Universities. Additionally, Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) Policy concerning awarding credit was used as a guide for the development of PLA Policy at TSU.

Based on the CAEL definition, Prior Learning Assessment at TSU is a process by which an individual's learning from experience is assessed and evaluated for purposes of granting credit, certification, or advanced standing toward further education or training. Students can **identify** areas of relevant learning from their past experiences, **demonstrate** learning through appropriate documentation, and **submit** materials in order that they can be assessed and possibly awarded academic credit relative to specific course objectives at TSU. PLA is not awarded for experience; rather it is awarded for college-level learning, which entails knowledge, skills, and competencies obtained as a result of prior experiences.

The University recognizes four (4) categories of PLA and they are as follows: (1) Credit by Examination, (2) Credit Recommendations for Past Training, (3) StraighterLine Articulation Agreement, and (4) Portfolio Based Assessment. Each type of PLA offered at TSU is detailed in the upcoming sections of this document.

University officials who award and transcribe PLA credit should adhere to the procedures and parameters outlined below which are the revised CAEL standards for assessing learning:

- Credit or competencies are awarded only for evidence of learning, not for experience or time spent.
- Assessment is integral to learning because it leads to and enables future learning.
- Assessment is based on criteria for outcomes that are clearly articulated and shared among constituencies.

- The determination of credit awards and competence levels are made by appropriate subject matter and credentialing experts.
- Assessment advances the broader purpose of equity and access for diverse individuals and groups.
- Institutions proactively provide guidance and support for learners' full engagement in the assessment process.
- Assessment policies and procedures are the result of inclusive deliberation and are shared with all constituencies.
- Fees charged for assessment should be based on the service performed in the process rather than the credit awarded.
- All practitioners involved in the assessment of learning pursue and receive adequate training and continuing professional development for the functions they perform.
- Assessment programs are regularly monitored, evaluated, and revised to respond to institutional and learner needs. (Ref: Younger, D. & Marienau, C. (2016). *Assessing Learning: Quality Standards and Institutional Commitments* (3d Ed.). Chicago, IL. CAEL).

PLA Credit Parameters

Students who might be eligible for PLA are asked to schedule an appointment with TSU's PLA Coordinator in the Office of Student Support Services for Adult and Distance Learners or with an Academic Advisor or PLA Faculty Advisor. The PLA Coordinator works with the Academic Advisor and/or PLA Faculty Advisor to determine if the student's prior learning experiences meet the criteria to earn college credit. TSU has implemented the following credit parameters regarding the awarding of PLA credit:

- Students must be currently enrolled and in good standing at Tennessee State University.
- Students must have other learning experiences outside of a traditional college curriculum.
- PLA credit will be awarded only in areas which fall within the regular curricular offerings of Tennessee State University.
- Students cannot submit remedial courses for PLA credit.
- PLA credit may not be counted toward the residency requirement in a degree program (25% of all credit hours needed to complete the degree).

- Students can earn a maximum of 60 semester hours for a bachelor degree and 30 semester hours for an associate degree through any combination of PLA offered at TSU. Students should work with the PLA Coordinator and the PLA Faculty Advisor to determine any additional requirements they may need to consider.
- Credit for prior learning can be awarded only after the assessment of the prior learning experiences and only for documented learning that has demonstrated achievement of all identified learning outcomes for a specific course(s).
- Credit recommendations accepted via the Prior Learning Assessment process should be limited to those courses leading the student toward completing degree requirements. This is done in an effort to avoid excess credits which may impact financial aid eligibility.
- All PLA credit must be awarded prior to the student's last semester of enrollment (before graduation).
- Students may not obtain PLA credit through departmental examinations, standardized test, or portfolio development for any course which they have previously or are currently enrolled as a regular or audit student.
- If a College Level Examination (CLEP) is available for a course, the student **may not** apply for a discipline-made examination for credit.
- Students denied credit through PLA for a specific course **may not** petition for any form of PLA credit again for that particular course.
- Students **may not** receive credit twice for a course that has been awarded through PLA.
- Students **may not** seek credit via PLA after enrolling in a given course and receiving a passing grade at TSU.
- Prior learning credits will be noted on the student's transcript as having been awarded through PLA. Grades are not to be recorded when credits are earned through PLA nor is a student's grade point average affected.
- After assessment, the student will receive notification via their MyTSU account and their TSU email account indicating the assessment results. The student's transcript will designate the course code, course title, number of credits awarded, and grade of Pass (P) or Fail (F). For more information on PLA descriptions and definitions for transcription see Appendix D.
- Department faculty are responsible for grading departmental examinations and determining the grading timeline for the examinations.

- Tennessee State University **does not** guarantee that another college or university will accept transfer of PLA credits. When transferring, students should check with the other institutions about their transfer and PLA policies.

Types of PLA Offered at Tennessee State University

As stated above, Tennessee State University (TSU) offers Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) credit in four (4) major categories under which individual assessment methods are available. Outlined and explained below are PLA opportunities of which TSU students may take advantage. In order to remain competitive with other state colleges and universities, TSU will add courses and other forms of PLA to this list when adopted by the faculty.

1. **CREDIT BY EXAMINATION** is a form of test-based evaluation. Students take an examination in order to demonstrate the extent of knowledge possessed in a given subject area. There are several national testing services which offer a wide variety of exams in many subjects ranging from the most basic to more advanced. At TSU, credit for prior learning may be awarded through Advanced Placement (AP), American College Testing (ACT), Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education Program (AICE), College Level Examination Program (CLEP), DANTES Subject Standardized Test (DSST), International Baccalaureate Program (IB), Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), Thomas Edison College Exam Program (TECEP), UExcel, Excelsior Examination Program, and Departmental Exams.

- *Advanced Placement (AP)*

Advanced Placement (AP) exams were developed by the College Board to give high school students the opportunity to take exams to earn college credit. TSU provides the opportunity for qualified beginning students to obtain credit for certain basic courses. The granting of AP credit is usually based on the College Entrance Examination Board AP Test scores. Students with passing scores on the approved examinations can earn credit for specific courses at TSU. Charted below are the AP exams accepted by TSU for credit.

Advanced Placement (AP)

<i>AP Subject Exam Title</i>	<i>Credit Hours</i>	<i>University Course Title and Number</i>	<i>Required Minimum Score</i>
Art History	3	Art 1012	3
Biology	8	Biology 1010/1011 & 1020/1021 Biology 1110/1111 & 1120/1121	3
Chemistry	8	Chemistry 1110 /1111 & 1120/1121	3
Computer Science A	3	Computer Science 1210	3
Computer Science Principles	6	Computer Science 1210 & 2110	4
Macroeconomics	3 6	Economics 2010 Economics 2010 & 2020	3 4
Microeconomics	3 6	Economics 2020 Economics 2010 & 2020	3 4

English Language & Composition	3	English 1010	3
	6	English 1010 & 1020	4
French Language and Culture	3	French 1010	3
	6	French 1010 & 1020	4
European History	3	History Elective	3
	6	History Elective	4
United States History	3	History 2010	3
	6	History 2010 & 2020	4
World History	3	History 2060	3
	6	History 2060 & 2070	4
Calculus AB	3	Math 1830	3
	4	Math 1910	3
Calculus BC	8	Math 1910 & 1920	3
Music Theory Aural Subscore	1	Music 1250	3
	2	Music 1250 & 1260	4
Music Theory Non Aural Subscore	3	Music 210	3
	6	Music 210 & 1211	4
Music Theory		Use subscores to determine credit award	3
Physics 1: Algebra-Based	4	Physics 2010/2011	3
Physics 2: Algebra-Based	4	Physics 2020/2021	3
Physics C: Electricity and Magnetism	4	Physics 2120/2121	3
Physics C: Mechanics	4	Physics 2110/2111	3
Comparative Government and Politics	3	Political Science 2010	3
Psychology	3	Psychology 2010	3
	3	Psychology 2010 & 2100	4
Spanish Language and Culture	3	Spanish 1010	3
	6	Spanish 1010 & 1020	4

- *American College Testing (ACT)*

The ACT readiness assessment is a standardized test measuring high school achievement and college admissions in the United States. At TSU, students earning a given score may be awarded credit for specific University courses. The ACT consists of five tests: English, Reading, Mathematics, Science, and Writing (optional). Charted below are the ACT exams accepted by TSU for credit.

American College Testing (ACT)

<i>ACT Subject Exam Title</i>	<i>Credit Hours</i>	<i>University Course Title and Number</i>	<i>Required Minimum Score</i>
ACT English	3	English 1010	27
ACT English	6	English 1010 & 1020	31

- *Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE)*

The Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) Diploma is an international curriculum and examination system that emphasizes the value of broad and balanced study. The Cambridge AICE Diploma offers breadth across the curriculum and depth in selected subjects, with a balance of math sciences, languages, arts and humanities. Charted below are the AICE exams accepted by TSU for credit.

Cambridge International Examinations (AICE)

<i>AICE Subject Exam Title</i>	<i>Credit Hours</i>	<i>University Course Title and Number</i>	<i>Grade</i>
Business (AS-Level)	3	Management 1010	A-C
Business (A-Level)	3	Management 1010	A-C
Sociology (A-Level)	3	Sociology 2010	A-C

- *College Level Examination Program (CLEP)*

The College Level Examination Program (CLEP) is a College Board initiative that allows students to earn college credit when the mastery of college-level material in introductory subjects is demonstrated. CLEP provides students of any age with the opportunity to demonstrate college-level achievement through a program of exams in undergraduate courses. Charted below are the CLEP exams accepted by TSU for credit.

College Level Examination Program (CLEP)

<i>CLEP Subject Exam Title</i>	<i>Credit Hours</i>	<i>University Course Title and Number</i>	<i>Required Minimum Score</i>
Biology	8	Biology 1110, 1120 and Labs	50
Natural Sciences	8	Biology 1010, 1020 and Labs	50
Introductory to Business Law	3	Business Law 3230	51
Chemistry	8	Chemistry 1110, 1120, and Labs	50
Macroeconomics, Prin. Of	3	Economics 2010	50
Microeconomics, Prin. of	3	Economics 2020	50
College Composition	6	English 1010, 1020	50
English Literature	6	English 2210, 2230	50
American Literature	6	English 2110, 2120	50
Analyzing & Interpreting Literature	3	English 2022	50
French Language	6	French 1010, 1020	50
French Language	6	French 2010, 2020	62
History of the United States I	3	History 2010	50
History of the United States II	3	History 2020	50
Management, Principles of	3	Management 3010	50

Marketing, Principles of	3	Marketing 3010	50
College Algebra	3	Mathematics 1110	55
Calculus	8	Mathematics 1910, 1920	50
American Government	3	Political Science 2010	50
Introductory Psychology	3	Psychology 2010	55
Introduction Educational Psychology	3	Psychology 3730	50
Spanish Language I	6	Spanish 1010, 1020	50
Spanish Language II	6	Spanish 2010, 2020	66
Introductory Sociology	3	Sociology 2010	50

- *DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST)*

The DSST is a nationally recognized testing program providing students the opportunity to earn college credit through a variety of lower and upper division course examinations. The American Council on Education's College Credit Recommendation Service (ACE CREDIT) has evaluated and recommended college credit for all DSST exams. Examinees may choose from titles in the areas of Social Science, Business, Mathematics, Applied Technology, Humanities, and Physical Science.

Students are encouraged to consult with the PLA Coordinator or the PLA Faculty Advisor in their departments for assistance with this examination. This should be done in order to ensure the test meets their degree requirements. The TSU Testing Center strongly recommends candidates visit <http://getcollegecredit.com> to obtain the most current information regarding all testing policies and procedures. Charted below are the DSST exams accepted by TSU for credit.

DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST)

<i>DSST Subject Exam Title</i>	<i>Credit Hours</i>	<i>University Course Title and Number</i>	<i>Required Minimum Score</i>
Introduction to Business	3	Management 1010	46/400
Management Information Systems	3	Business Information Systems 3230	46/400
Money and Banking	3	Economics 3200	48/400
Organizational Behavior	3	Management 3010	48/400
Personal Finance	3	Finance 3300	46/400
Principles of Finance	3	Accounting 2010	46/400

- *International Baccalaureate Program (IB)*

The International Baccalaureate Program offers secondary school students the opportunity to participate in college-level courses and to receive college credit. The courses listed below have been approved for credit. Students must request to have an

official IB transcript(s) sent to the Admissions Office. Charted below are the IB exams accepted by TSU for credit.

International Baccalaureate Program (IB)

<i>IB Subject Exam Title</i>	<i>Credit Hours</i>	<i>University Course Title and Number</i>	<i>Required Score</i>
Biology	8	Biology 1010/1011, 1020/1021	SL>6, HL>5
	8	Biology 1110 /1111 , 1120/1121	SL2:6, HL2:5
Chemistry	8	Chemistry 1110/1111 , 1120/1121	SL2:6, HL2:5
Language A: Literature	3	English 1010	SL2:6, HL2:5
Language A: Language & Literature	6	English 1010, 1020	HL>6
Mathematics	3	Math 1710, 1720 or Math 1730	SL2:5, HL2:4
Mathematics	3	Math 1830	SL2:5, HL2:4
Mathematics	3	Math 1910	SL2:6, HL2:5
Physics	8	Physics 2010/2011 , 2020/2021	SL2:6, HL2:5
Music	3	Music 1010	SL2:5, HL2:6

- *Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)*

The SAT is a standardized test widely used for college admissions in the United States. It is designed to measure basic critical reading, math, and writing skills. Charted below are the SAT exams accepted by TSU for credit.

Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)

<i>SAT Subject Exam Title</i>	<i>Credit Hours</i>	<i>University Course Title and Number</i>	<i>Required Minimum Score</i>
SAT Writing	3	English 1010	610
SAT Writing	6	English 1010 & 1020	690

For more information regarding transfer credit concerning the examinations, minimum scores, credit given, and fees assessed listed in this section, visit:

Tennessee State University Undergraduate Catalog

http://www.tnstate.edu/academic_programs/documents/Undergraduate_Catalog.pdf

PLA Webpage

http://www.tnstate.edu/atadistance/prior_learning_assessment-newhome.aspx

- *Thomas Edison College Exam Program (TECEP)*

The (TECEP) offers students the opportunity to earn college credit by taking exams rather than courses. TECEP is a credit-by-exam program specifically designed to

allow students to demonstrate the college-level knowledge they have gained through job experience, personal interests and activities, or independent study.

For more information regarding criteria for credit awarded for TECEP examinations, minimum scores, credit given, and fees assessed, contact the TSU Testing Center or visit <http://www.tesu.edu/degree-completion/Testing.cfm>. Charted below are the TECEP exams accepted by TSU for credit.

Thomas Edison College Exam Program (TECEP)

<i>TECEP Subject Exam Title</i>	<i>Credit Hours</i>	<i>University Course Title and Number</i>	<i>Required Minimum Score</i>
Music History II	3	Music 3380	70/100
Medical Terminology	3	Health Information Management I 040	77/100

- *UExcel Excelsior College Examination Program*

Students may earn college level credit in select subject areas by passing one of the UExcel proficiency exams. UExcel Excelsior College Examination is a credit by examination program offered in a computer-based format at thousands of test centers globally.

For more information regarding criteria for credit awarded for UExcel examinations, minimum scores, credit given, and fees assessed, contact the TSU Testing Center or visit the UExcel Excelsior College Examination Program at <http://www.excelsior.edu/exams/uexcel-home>. Charted below is the UExcel exam accepted by TSU for credit.

Excelsior Exam Program

<i>Excelsior Subject Exam Title</i>	<i>Credit Hours</i>	<i>University Course Title and Number</i>	<i>Minimum Score</i>
Introduction to Music	3	Music 1010	C

- *Departmental Examinations*

Departmental Examinations are given when there are no acceptable nationally recognized options available to students. These exams are developed and administered by the instructional department. Students should consult with the PLA Coordinator and the Registrar prior to requesting an examination for credit in order to ensure the credit meets their graduation requirements.

Students must present satisfactory evidence that they are qualified in a particular subject area before taking an exam. Satisfactory evidence may be, but is not limited

to, work experience, non-credit courses taken, course work taken at non-accredited institutions, or military courses. Students may receive upper division course credit based on the results of the examination.

The PLA Coordinator will obtain exam approval from the Department Chair. The current non-refundable fee must be presented to the Bursar in advance of the examination. The student will show the receipt to the faculty member conducting the examination.

The instructional department is responsible for reporting the course number, title, credit hours, and fee receipt to the Registrar's Office for processing. The credit will be entered in the student's academic record. However, the grade received **will not** be counted on the student's course load, calculated in the semester or cumulative grade point average.

To receive credit from a departmental exam, a student must achieve a grade of "C" or better on the test. A student **may not** attempt to take a departmental exam more than once for the same course. Grades will be reported and posted to the student's record at the end of the term as EP (Pass) or EF (Fail). Departmental exams will not be offered or available when classes are not in session.

Tennessee State University recognizes the right of a student to appeal a grade which they believe is incorrect and does not reflect his or her class performance. Therefore, a student may appeal the results of a departmental examination using the same process outlined for University grade appeals. This process may be found in the Tennessee State University Undergraduate Catalog at: http://www.tnstate.edu/academic_programs/documents/Undergraduate_Catalog.pdf

2. **CREDIT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PAST TRAINING** (Credit Recommendation Services) makes recommendations for college credit based on the evaluation of a particular type of training often workplace or military. If the student has successfully completed the training, then the student may be recommended for college level credit.

There are several national organizations, which evaluate different training programs and make credit recommendations for each. The most frequently used recommendation service for military personnel are provided by the American Council on Education (ACE).

Credit recommendations for formal instructional programs and examinations offered by non- collegiate agencies, including civilian employers, the military, professional associations, and related workplace trainings are published in the following guides:

- *American Council on Education (ACE) National Guide to College Credit for Workplace Training* <http://www2.acenet.edu/credit/?fuseaction=browse.main>

The University may individually evaluate non-collegiate instructional programs, such as those for industry certifications, professional licensures, apprenticeships, and other related workplace trainings that demonstrate the competency required for completion of degree or certificate programs. PLA credit may be awarded after the evaluation of the training or certification by faculty members in the student's program or based on recommendations in the *ACE Guide*.

- o *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.
- o *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.
- o *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.

In addition to apprenticeships, industry certifications, and professional licensure, TSU may evaluate other training not assessed via these methods may be evaluated for college level credit.

- *The ACE Military Guide - Guide to the Educational Experiences in the Armed Forces*
<https://www.acenet.edu/Programs-Services/Pages/Credit-Transcripts/Military-Guide-Online.aspx>

The American Council on Education (ACE) is an organization that provides guidance to colleges and universities to determine the acceptance of credit. Tennessee State University is a member of ACE and honors credits as appropriate for the student's program of study.

TSU is committed to helping veterans and current military personnel take full advantage of their eligible benefits from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (<http://www.va.gov>). Students seeking Veteran Affairs educational benefits should contact the Office of Veterans Services at <http://www.tnstate.edu/vets/> or http://www.tnstate.edu/atadistance/tsu_veterans_students.aspx Veterans may also contact the PLA Coordinator in the Office of Student Support Services for Adult and Distance Learners for more information.

In addition to TSU resources, veterans and military service members are also encouraged to explore the educational opportunities available through the Tennessee Board of Regents System: <https://www.tbr.edu/hr/educational-assistance-programs>.

Veterans and current military personnel may take advantage of the Military Evaluations Program conducted through ACE for service school courses. For further information, visit ACE Military Programs at <https://www.acenet.edu/Programs-Services/Pages/default.aspx> the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Educational Support or DANTES at <https://www.military.com/search?keyword=education+programs+and+military-funded+CLEP> exams at <https://www.tbr.edu/hr/educational-assistance-programs>.

Note: In an effort to bolster PLA credit for veterans, the State of Tennessee is assisting higher education institutions with building an online database which will allow veterans or service members to select the specific military occupational specialty possessed and instantly see how that prior learning equates to academic credit at Tennessee public institutions. This initiative, "Military Service to College," supports Public Chapter (PC) 31 - The Veterans Education Transition Support (VETS) Act. When this initiative is completed, the information will be placed on the TSU PLA webpage, in the PLA Student Handbook and in the Tennessee State University Undergraduate Catalog.

- *National College Credit Recommendation Service (NCCRS)*
<http://www.nationalccrs.org/>

NCCRS is a national training evaluation service offered by the University of the State of New York - Regents Research Fund. NCCRS evaluates training and education programs offered outside of the traditional college classroom setting and translates them into college credit equivalencies. Tennessee State University is a Cooperating University of the service and may accept their recommendations.

Students must contact the PLA Coordinator, PLA Faculty Advisor, and/or the TSU Office of Admissions and Records for information concerning documentation and verification of the applicability of ACE and NCCRS credits.

3. **STRAIGHTERLINE** works in partnership with colleges to provide students with transparent pathways toward a degree. TSU has partnered and executed an articulation agreement with StraighterLine, Inc. Courses offered through StraighterLine are ACE-approved general education courses, offered online, and are self-paced. For information students should contact the PLA Coordinator or the PLA Faculty Advisor. Information is also located at <https://www.straighterline.com>, the Tennessee State University Undergraduate Catalog at <http://www.tnstate.edu/academic-affairs/documents/undergraduate-catalog.pdf> and the PLA webpage at <http://www.tnstate.edu/atadistance/prior-learning-assessment-newhome.aspx>

Charted below are StraighterLine courses accepted by Tennessee State University for credit.

Straighter Line

<i>StraighterLine Course Title</i>	<i>Course Number</i>	<i>Credit Hour</i>		<i>University Course Title</i>	<i>Course Number</i>	<i>Credit Hour</i>	<i>Minimum Score</i>
English							
English Composition I	ENG 101	3		Freshman English I	ENG 1010	3	70 required for majors; Others passing score
English Composition II	ENG 102	3		Freshman English II	ENG 1020	3	70 required for majors; Others passing score
Humanities and Social Science							
Introduction to Religion	REL 101	3		Introduction to Religious Studies	RELS 2010	3	70 required for majors; Others passing score
Cultural Anthropology	ANTH 101	3		Introduction to Cultural Anthropology	ANTH 2300	3	70 required for majors; Others passing score
Introduction to Sociology	SOC 101	3		Introduction to Sociology	SOCI 2010	3	70 required for majors; Others passing score
Science							
First Aid/CPR	MED 101	2		First Aid & CPR	HPSS 2060	3	70 required for majors; Others passing score
Medical Terminology	MEDTERM 101	3		Medical Terminology	HIMA 1040	3	70 required for majors; Others passing score
Introduction to Nutrition	NUTRI 101	3		Elementary Nutrition	NUFS 2010	3	70 required for majors; Others passing score
Personal Fitness & Wellness	PE 101	2		Health & Wellness	HPSS 1510	3	70 required for majors; Others passing score
Pharmacology I	PHARM 101	3		Pharmacology I	NURS 1300	3	70 required for majors; Others passing score
Languages							
Spanish I	SPAN 101	4		Spanish I	SPAN 1010	3	70 required for majors; Others passing Score
Spanish II	SPAN 102	4		Spanish II	SPAN 1020	3	70 required for majors; Others passing Score

Note: Students who wish to take a StraighterLine course in the semester they apply for graduation must also be enrolled in the University for a TSU course during that semester.

- 4. PORTFOLIO BASED ASSESSMENT** allows students to use the PLA portfolio development process to document prior learning. This process requires students to prepare and submit a collection of documents that establish and support their claim to have specific skills, knowledge, values, attitudes, understandings, achievements, experiences, competencies, training, and certifications that align with specific course objectives. The

portfolio constructed in the PLA development course, **INDS 1000 (CAEL 100)** should describe the relevant experience and identify particular learning outcomes.

Developing a portfolio is a rigorous process. The student reflects upon and assesses their experiences in order to determine what they have learned and how that knowledge and skill applies in other contexts.

If students have other learning experiences, where a departmental examination or a national standardized examination is not available, they may be advised to consider PLA by portfolio.

TSU has partnered with CAEL's *LearningCounts.org*, an online portfolio assessment service that allows adult students to create learning portfolios. Students demonstrate their learning from work experience and earn undergraduate college credit. For example, a student with several years of marketing experience may be able to build a portfolio for an introductory Marketing course. If the portfolio receives a credit recommendation from the assessor, the student will not have to take the marketing course, and the credit recommendation will appear on the student's transcript.

Prerequisites for Portfolio Development

It is recommended that students seeking portfolio assessment meet the following criteria:

- Students should have at least 5-10 years of professional experience in an applied area that aligns with college coursework (communications, management, information technology, marketing, finance, healthcare, public relations, etc.).
- Students must have strong writing skills and must have taken or tested out of English or Basic Composition.
- It is recommended that students should have completed at least one (1) other online course, have technical literacy skills, and feel comfortable completing a course on another Learning Management System (LMS).
- Students must have availability in their degree plan to earn college credit via portfolio.
- Students are enrolled in the portfolio development course **INDS 1000 (CAEL 100)** after advising assistance from the PLA Coordinator or the PLA Faculty Advisor. **INDS 1000** is an online, three semester credit hour course that can be used as a lower division elective. Included in the course is the development of the student's first portfolio.
- Students should have the availability to commit the time necessary for building a successful portfolio.

PLA Portfolio Development

Students must offer a critical assessment of college-level learning acquired through selected non-traditional experience. This experience might include a variety of work, training, reading and research, civil and military service, or life learning.

Once students complete and submit the PLA portfolio, CAEL trained faculty assessors in the discipline will evaluate it to determine if the portfolio provides evidence which ties those skills to a specific course objective. Upon determination of evidence, grades will be reported and posted to the student's record at the end of the term as "TP" (Pass) or "TF" (Fail). Students may receive upper division course credit based on the results of the assessment.

It should be noted that credits earned via portfolio assessment for prior learning will count toward the calculation of a student's Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP). However, the consideration of credits during the portfolio review that does not result in credit being awarded, will not count as credits attempted as the student is not enrolled in a specific course.

Courses Not Available for PLA Credit

Courses covered by the CLEP, DSST, ACE, TECEP, or UExcel Examination methods of earning credit are not eligible for credit through the portfolio process (see section 1, Credit by Examination). Courses students are currently registered for are not eligible for portfolio development, nor are students permitted to develop a portfolio for courses previously taken.

Courses Not Offered at TSU

In some circumstances, a student might provide documented knowledge that is legitimate college-level learning, but does not match specific courses offered by TSU. The PLA Coordinator, the Department Chair, and one or more PLA Faculty Advisors may decide to evaluate the knowledge if appropriate to the student's major. In these situations, the PLA Coordinator will assist the PLA Faculty Advisor in selecting appropriate evaluation methods. These methods may include a combination of portfolio, departmental examination, essay, and other methods of documenting learning credit. Students must present evidence of knowledge related to theory as well as any evidence of skills or abilities related to practical applications.

Portfolio Assessment Appeal Process

Students have **seven (7) days** from the posting of the portfolio results to appeal the portfolio assessment. Students may submit an appeal for what they feel was an unfair, biased, or unethical portfolio assessment. To appeal a portfolio assessment, students must submit an e-mail to the Director of Assessment at CAEL.

Students must explain in detail why the appeal is being requested, provide specific evidence as to the bias, unfair or unethical treatment, and must also include the following information:

- Student's full name
- Name of the portfolio course being appealed

- Why the assessment is being appealed (e.g., assessment was unfair, biased or unethical)
- Documentation supporting the claim (i.e., specific points in the portfolio or the assessor's feedback)

Students will receive a decision within **seven (7) business days** of receipt. If an appeal request is granted, the portfolio will be reassigned for review in the same state in which it was originally submitted. No changes to the learning narrative or supporting documents are permitted. There is no additional cost to the student if a portfolio appeal is granted. The decision of the CAEL Director of Assessment is final. For more information refer to the LearningCounts Student Policy Handbook at <https://cael.adobeconnect.com/policyhandbook>.

Effective January 1, 2021, Tennessee State University will implement a Portfolio Assessment Program to assess portfolios for academic credit.

Appendix A

Recommended Standards in Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)
Policy and Practice for Tennessee Public Colleges and
Universities

The Tennessee Prior Learning Assessment Task Force 7
August 2012

RECOMMENDED
STANDARDS IN
PRIOR LEARNING
ASSESSMENT (PLA)
POLICY AND PRACTICE
FOR TENNESSEE
PUBLIC COLLEGES AND
UNIVERSITIES

7 August 2012

*The
Tennessee
Prior
Learning
Assessment
Task Force*

Introduction

The Complete College Tennessee Act of 2010 mandates that Tennessee's public higher education institutions implement actions to increase the number of Tennesseans with a post-secondary credential. One means to increase the attainment of higher education credentials, especially among adult students, is the provision of credit toward a college credential based on an assessment of students' prior learning.

The purpose of these standards is to outline the terms and conditions under which Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) and University of Tennessee (UT) universities and community colleges award and/or transfer 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.

PLA is a term used to describe the assessment of college level learning for college credit that is gained outside a traditional academic environment. There are many different forms that PLA can take, but college credit for PLA must only be awarded for an individual's demonstrated learning and knowledge at the college level.

In the summer of 2011, Tennessee was awarded the Completion Innovation Challenge Grant from Complete College America, with funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Part of that grant called for the creation of statewide standards regarding PLA. In the fall of 2011, a voluntary statewide PLA Task Force, with 21 of 22 public colleges and universities participating, was created to develop these standards. Through the summer of 2012, the Task Force worked to draft and approve standards in a variety of areas of PLA that it believed would benefit students and institutions. The document below is the completed work of the Task Force, including its recommended PLA standards.

Prior Learning Assessment Value Statement

The public colleges and universities of Tennessee value the diversity of their students. This diversity includes the unique experiences, interests, and intellectual pursuits that lead to the acquisition of knowledge that may be at the college level. College-level learning is the same, whether acquired in the traditional college classroom or through non-collegiate sources. This equivalency is validated by academically sound and rigorous prior learning assessment methods.

Tennessee's public community colleges and universities employ prior learning assessment aligned with their respective institutional missions, academic integrity, and student educational attainment and success.

The acceptance of PLA credits must be in accordance with the standards detailed in this document. PLA credits awarded by any TBR or UT institution are equivalent to the same credits awarded by any TBR or UT institution for traditional classroom-based college-level learning. Additionally, the transferability of these credits between public community colleges and universities is consistent with, but not limited to, the Tennessee Transfer Pathways framework.

Further, it is intended that the PLA Value Statement is in alignment with TBR and UT institutional missions; therefore, the standards in this document provide guidelines for the transcription and transfer of PLA credit at public institutions. Minor variance may occur based on an institution's mission statement as revised under the 2010 Complete College Tennessee Act, specialized program accreditation, licensure, or degree requirements.

The use or non-use of PLA credits by an institution or department must be consistent with this value statement and, in accordance with the standards of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), adhere to principles of good educational practice. The identification of the forms of PLA credit used by an institution/department should be documented and available to students, faculty, and other stakeholders "through publications that accurately represent the programs and services of the institution."¹ Institutions (or departments, if their policies differ from or are more specific than those of the institution) must also maintain documentation of the processes and rationale for the use or non-use of PLA credits.

¹ Southern Association of Colleges and Schools - The Commission on Colleges. §3.4.5 from "Comprehensive Standards." *Principles of Accreditation*. 2001.

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Definitions and Accepted Forms of PLA

The list below is provided for convenience and to avoid conflicting definitions for PLA terminology. It is not intended to be exhaustive. However, all institutions must adopt the same common definitions below for their own communications, policies, and internal purposes.

- A. **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).
- B. **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.
- C. **American Council on Education (ACE) Guides** – Published credit recommendations for formal instructional programs and examinations offered by non-collegiate agencies (including civilian employers, the military, professional associations, and other workplace related-training).
- D. **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.
- E. **Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Educational Support (DANTES) Subject Standardized Tests (DSSTs)** – DSSTs are examinations administered by Prometric. While originally being restricted to active and retired military personnel, these tests are now available to civilians.
- F. **Evaluation of Local Training** — Program evaluations of non-collegiate instructional programs done by individual colleges.
- G. **Excelsior College Examination Program (ECE)** – Formerly, Regents College Exams or ACT/PEP Exams, these are examinations for college credit offered by Excelsior College, NY.
- H. **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.
- I. **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. In addition, the program has three core requirements that

are included to broaden the educational experience and challenge students to apply their knowledge and understanding. To receive a diploma, students must achieve a minimum score of 24 out of a possible 45 points, as well as satisfactory participation in the creativity, action, service requirement. This is also a type of early postsecondary educational opportunity.

- J. **Locally Evaluated Industry and Workplace Credit** – Institutions 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, based on recommendations in the *ACE Guide*, or as part of a portfolio. Not all training that can be possibly assessed for college level credit is incorporated in industry certifications, professional licensures, apprenticeships:
 - a. **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.
 - b. **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.
 - c. **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.
- K. **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.
- L. **Prior Military Training Credit** – College credit for military training may be awarded through the American Council on Education (ACE) College Credit Recommendation Service or through direct evaluation of the student’s service school transcripts. For ACE evaluated credit, students must request and submit to the institution an official transcript from ACE in order to receive PLA credit, and the training must be evaluated by ACE and included in the *ACE Guide*.
- M. **Thomas Edison State College Examination Program (TECEP)** – TECEP exams are tests for college credit offered by Thomas Edison State College, NJ.
- N. **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.

- O. Dual enrollment program** (as defined by Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-15-102(3)) – "A program in which a secondary student is enrolled in a postsecondary course creditable toward high school completion and a postsecondary diploma or certificate or an associate or baccalaureate degree."

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 an institution.
 - b. After the student has consulted with an advisor about the possibility and advisability of seeking credit for PLA.
 - c. For students who have declared an academic program.
 - d. 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. Opting out of accepting types of PLA:**
- a. These standards for awarding PLA credit summarize terms and conditions through which opportunities will be provided for students to receive credit toward their college degrees. An institution can opt out of granting credit based on a particular type of PLA, except where prescribed by law. However, every institution which offers a particular type of PLA credit will follow these recommended standards.
 - i. Note: A list of some of the more commonly accepted forms of PLA are listed in Part I of this document for convenience. This list is not exhaustive, and therefore, this policy is not limited to only those forms of PLA listed. It is anticipated that new types of PLA will continue to be developed.
 - ii. Note: Additional types of PLA credit may be identified and incorporated into this policy or may be offered by individual universities and community colleges.
- C. Parameters for awarding PLA:**
- a. *External* - Any credits awarded for PLA, must be in accordance with the Standards of The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS Standard 3.4.4) and policies and guidelines of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, the Tennessee Board of Regents, and the University of Tennessee. If a program accrediting agency imposes a specific maximum for PLA credit, that maximum will be honored for that program.
 - b. *Internal*
 - i. For institutions that set a maximum number of credits that can be earned through PLA (any combination), this maximum should be no less than 60 SCH for a bachelor degree and no less than 30 SCH for an associate degree. Institutions may have maximum caps higher than 60 and 30 SCH respectively. In all cases a student must earn 25% of hours required for a credential in instruction delivered by the institution awarding the credential. PLA credit will not count toward this 25% minimum.
 - ii. No other limitations are to be placed on student eligibility for PLA credit, such as minimum age or work experience. However, institutions should adopt prudent practices for ensuring that potential PLA students are

those who are most likely to be able to successfully demonstrate their prior learning.

- D. **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 or appropriate block credit. PLA credits also satisfy prerequisite requirements in the same manner that their course equivalencies do at that institution.

Transferability of PLA Credits

How PLA credits are to be treated in transfer between TBR and UT institutions:

- A. Students who transfer to a TBR or UT community college or university may have their PLA credits transferred to that institution as long as the credits are applicable to the degree or certificate the student has declared and the transfer institution's policy grants credit for that type of PLA credit. However, item B (below) still applies in the event that the receiving institution does not grant credit to its native students for that type of PLA credit.
- B. PLA credit awarded at one institution, which meets Common General Education Core Requirements, and/or Tennessee Transfer Pathway (TTP) requirements must be accepted as transfer credit toward the degree if the student transfers to a TBR or UT institution in Tennessee, in accordance with Transfer Guarantee policies related to the General Education Core or the Tennessee Transfer Pathways.
- C. When credit has been awarded for standardized examinations or by credit recommendation services, institutions are strongly encouraged to accept PLA credits in transfer based on the student's transfer transcript from other TBR or UT colleges and universities.

Transcription of PLA Credits

- A. **Transcription Standards:** PLA credits shall appear on student transcripts in the following ways:
- a. **Prior Learning Portfolio** – Students may demonstrate college-level knowledge of a subject that they have acquired outside a traditional college classroom (work, community service, or other experiences) through the development of a portfolio. Two types of PLA credit may be awarded through the portfolio assessments:
 - i. **Course Equivalency Credit:** Prior learning which is assessed based on the documented achievement of course specific learning outcomes will be transcribed as that course. Prior learning will be assessed based on a pass/fail evaluation and will be assigned a “P.” Because no grade is assigned other than “P,” no Quality Points will be awarded to count toward GPA.
 - ii. **Block Credit:** In instances where prior learning is assessed as block credit, that assessed credit will be identified by subject (ex.: elective, accounting, health, etc.); by course as lower division (LD) or upper division (UD); with a grade of “P.” Because no grade is assigned other than “P,” no Quality Points will be awarded to count toward GPA.
 - b. **College Level Exam Program (CLEP)** – Students may earn college credit for certain examinations administered by the College Level Exam Program. To receive credit for a CLEP test, a minimum score (based on institutional or system policy) must be earned (see Catalog for details). CLEP credit will be transcribed as course specific credit with a grade of “P.” Because no grade is assigned other than “P,” no Quality Points will be awarded to count toward GPA. CLEP credit will be identified as transfer credit from the College Level Exam Program.
 - c. **College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB)** – Students may earn college credit by earning a minimum grade (based on institutional or system policy) or above on appropriate College Entrance Examination Board exams. A letter grade of “P” will be assigned for credit granted. Because no grade is assigned other than “P,” no Quality Points will be awarded to count toward GPA.
 - d. **Advanced Placement** – Course credit for successful completion of Advanced Placement examinations administered by the College Entrance Examination Board to high school students will be granted to students presenting Advanced Placement examination grades of three or higher. A letter grade of “P” will be assigned for credit granted. Because no grade is assigned other than “P,” no Quality Points will be awarded to count toward GPA.
 - e. **DANTES Subject Standardized Test (DSST)** – Students may earn college credit for acceptable scores on the DANTES Subject Standardized Test based on institutional or system policy. If no such policy exists and an institution accepts DSST credit, then college credit shall be awarded based upon the credit recommendations and minimum scores recommended by the American Council on Education by default. Students should submit an official DANTES transcript for

review. A letter grade of “P” will be assigned for credit granted. Because no grade is assigned other than “P,” no Quality Points will be awarded to count toward GPA.

- f. **Military Credit** – Credit awarded for completion of services schools will be governed by recommendations at the baccalaureate or associate level from the current Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experience in the Armed Services. Military transcripts, for example SMART or AARTS, must be presented to the Office of Admissions. Upon presentation of a copy of the veteran’s report of separation (DD Form 214), the following credit may be awarded:
 1. Six semester hours credit in health and physical education or physical education and military science is granted for a minimum of three years, eleven months, and twenty days of reserve or National Guard service in the armed forces of the United States. Veterans who have fewer than three years, eleven months, and twenty days will be awarded one semester hour credit for each year of reserve or National Guard duty. A letter grade of “P” will be assigned for credit granted. Because no grade is assigned other than “P,” no Quality Points will be awarded to count toward GPA.
 2. Credit will be awarded for formal service schools based on recommendation from the Office of Educational Credit of the American Council on Education after consultation with an academic advisor. All documentation supporting service-related educational experiences should be filed with the Admissions Office. A letter grade of “P” will be assigned for credit granted. Because no grade is assigned other than “P,” no Quality Points will be awarded to count toward GPA.
 3. Veterans with less than one year of continuous full-time service who have completed basic training while on active duty will be awarded credit as recommended in the Guide to Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services. A letter grade of “P” will be assigned for credit granted. Because no grade is assigned other than “P,” no Quality Points will be awarded to count toward GPA.
- g. **Occupational and Workplace Training** – Credit awarded for completion of workplace (corporate, volunteer, government, etc.) training may be awarded based on recommendations by nationally recognized college credit recommendation services or the individual evaluation and determination of a college or university. A letter grade of “P” will be assigned for credit granted. Because no grade is assigned other than “P,” no Quality Points will be awarded to count toward GPA.
- h. **Institutional Course Challenge Examinations** – An institutional course challenge examination may be available to students who have knowledge of a subject area

not covered by standardized exams (e.g., CLEP). Students should consult with their academic advisor as this method of earning prior learning credit is institution-based.

- i. **Other forms of PLA** – Students may earn college credit for additional forms of PLA not mentioned above according to institutional or system policy. A letter grade of “P” will be assigned for credit granted. Because no grade is assigned other than “P,” no Quality Points will be awarded to count toward GPA.

Internal Procedures for Maintaining Transparency and Consistency

- A. Periodic review of PLA policies** –Institutions are to review PLA program policies and procedures at least every five years corresponding with each institution’s SACS Ten-Year Re-Affirmation and the Five-Year Review. The review should involve evaluating all aspects of PLA policy, procedures, and portfolio audits, for consistency with state, regional and national practices. Additionally, institutions are encouraged to report a PLA Program Profile detailing
- a. Volume of PLA credits awarded annually (per PLA subcategory and total)
 - b. Average volume of PLA credits per award
 - c. PLA recipient data including, but not limited to, a demographic summary of PLA recipients (age, race, and GPA) as well as measures of recipient success (per PLA subcategory and total).
- B. Program transparency** – Every effort should be made to ensure that policies, electronic, and printed materials in the following areas are published and presented in a clear and transparent manner and made readily available for prospective students, current students, faculty, academic administration, potential employers of students receiving credit from assessment, and the general public:
- a. Description of Program
 - b. Catalog language
 - c. WEB pages and other social media
 - d. Program definitions
 - e. Student qualifications
 - f. Expectation on student participation
 - g. Tuition
 - h. Any and all fees or other associated costs (with a clear estimation of the costs involved for the student)
 - i. Uses of PLA credit
 - j. Limitations of PLA credit
 - k. Transferability of PLA credit
 - l. Transcription of PLA credit
 - m. Appeals procedures and related information
 - n. Assessor qualifications
 - o. Marketing materials
 - p. Advertising
 - q. Student advising
- C. Transparency of the award/denial of PLA credit:**
- a. When a student has applied for PLA credit, the following procedures must be followed:
 - i. Portfolio: Assessor must provide reasoning for amount of credit hours awarded or a written explanation provided for evaluation of portfolio regardless of outcome.

- ii. ACE, CLEP, and other forms of non-portfolio PLA credit: If credit is denied for a course equivalency, an explanation or justification must be made available to the student.

D. Appeals

- a. Institutions are encouraged to develop and communicate a process for appealing PLA decisions (e.g., credit awarded, review process). In cases where the appeals processes mirror applicable institution procedures for appeals in traditional courses, language should be explicitly included to note that PLA credit can be appealed following the same process.
 - i. In many cases, however, the point where a student begins his or her appeal may not be practical when considering how PLA credit is awarded. For example, many institutions require that a student discuss the matter with his or her instructor at first. This may be impractical if the student is unaware as to who has evaluated his or her portfolio or if a student wants to appeal the course equivalency of a CLEP exam. In such cases, institutions should indicate the first steps that are unique to PLA students.
- b. Recommendations and scoring by ACE, CLEP, and other external bodies are under the auspices of the evaluation body and cannot be appealed at the college/university level. Students should be directed to the appeals procedures for each testing agency or credit recommendation service.
- c. Revision of portfolio – Students may submit revised portfolios upon recommendation of the assessor after receiving recommendations for improvement or reasons for credit denial. Institutions should decide upon their own policy for portfolio resubmission.

Portfolio-Specific Standards for Prior Learning Assessment

Portfolio assessments are a unique form of prior learning assessments. They are particularly variable in their form and complex in their procedures. Unlike other forms of PLA, it places the greatest burden on the individual institutions to develop procedures and evaluate the credit, while also making the most demands on students to demonstrate their learning. Due to these characteristics, these standards were devised specifically for this type of PLA.

A. Student eligibility and expectations for portfolio assessment

- a. Portfolio assessment applicants shall be motivated, self-directed students with significant, demonstrable, and documentable experiential learning. Institutions may also set certain course prerequisites. However, no other specific eligibility requirements shall exist, including age requirements.
- b. Portfolio assessment student applicants should be pre-screened before entering the portfolio process using an institutional or state-provided screening mechanism to ensure the students have realistic expectations about the process and the necessary skills to successfully complete the process.
- c. Students should be clearly informed of
 - i. What a portfolio is – length, work involved, documentation required
 - ii. What level of writing skills will be required
 - iii. What formal documentation will be necessary
 - iv. The number of hours required to successfully complete a portfolio
 - v. The fact that portfolio development is a self-directed activity
 - vi. The fact that a portfolio is not a resume – it must include documentation of college level learning as well as experience
 - vii. The fact that institutions may have additional requirements such as completion of specific courses or hours of instruction before students may enter the process.
 - viii. The fact that limitations may exist on how many hours a student can earn or how they may be used.
 - ix. The fact that the learning to be assessed must apply to a specific degree program and not contribute the unnecessary accumulation of credit hours.
 - x. The fact that they may not earn any credit for their portfolio.
- d. Students should be properly advised as to expectations and limitations of portfolio assessments. In particular, it should be emphasized to students that portfolios cannot cover material that has already been assessed for college credit (duplicating credit) and that the portfolio only covers credit that could possibly be used in his or her specific degree program.

B. Portfolio process guidelines

- a. Prior Learning Assessment is rooted in the notion that legitimate, college level learning can be achieved outside the traditional classroom setting. Standard,

academically rigorous processes of assessing prior learning have been established by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) (see appendix A) and have been recognized by regional accrediting bodies, national discipline-specific accrediting bodies, and by the American Council on Education (ACE). Portfolio development and assessment should adhere to established and approved processes.

- b. For block (discipline specific credit not necessarily tied to specific courses or elective credit) content Portfolios, or course-specific Portfolios, two recognized processes should be observed to ensure academically rigorous and consistent assessment.
 - i. Subject block portfolios should be constructed to document the achievement of commonly recognized student learning outcomes for the subject program or subject courses.
 - ii. For course-specific assessment, the Portfolio should document the achievement of commonly recognized student learning outcomes for that course.
 - iii. The use of the term “commonly recognized” is meant to avoid student created learning outcomes that are not usually tied to discipline program outcomes or specific course outcomes in regionally accredited institutions and thus may not be appropriate for a discipline or a specific course in that discipline.
- c. Portfolio development may be done as a self-paced process or as the outcome of an assessment course. The self-paced development format also include a structure and guidelines for portfolio development as well as available interaction with a portfolio development expert and, when appropriate and possible, with the assessor.
- d. The resulting portfolio, and subsequent evaluative rubric, should incorporate the following:
 - i. identification of critical learning events experienced by the student
 - ii. breadth and depth of new knowledge and skill(s) acquired
 - iii. the relationship of new knowledge and skill(s) with appropriate theory/concepts associated with academic discipline and degree program
 - iv. the application of new knowledge and skill(s)
 - v. critical thinking, problem solving and decision-making skills
 - vi. where appropriate, supportive documentation.

C. Fees and costs associated with portfolio assessment – If an institution or group of institutions intends to charge students any fees or costs associated with portfolio assessment, these fees must be clearly publicized and made available to the student before enrollment. Such information should provide the student with a clear estimation of the costs involved.

D. Assessor training and requirements

- a. Assessment of portfolios for both block content and 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.
- b. Assessing faculty/staff, should meet the Portfolio Reviewer Qualifications listed below:
 - i. Subject Matter Expertise
 - 1. Educational experience and credentials appropriate to faculty position (e.g. based on SACS or other accrediting body guidelines)
 - 2. Experience teaching the discipline
 - 3. Knowledge of relevant college-level course objectives and outcomes
 - 4. Knowledge of overall curriculum and degree requirements
 - 5. Evidence of disciplinary writing skills and ability to mentor writing in the discipline
 - ii. Pedagogical Expertise of Assessor
 - 1. Training/application in writing and assessing goals, objectives and learning outcomes
 - 2. Training in matching evidence of college level learning with learning outcomes demonstrated in portfolios
 - 3. Experience with reflective practice or reflective writing
 - 4. Teaching and learning philosophy that includes a commitment to the value of experiential learning
 - iii. Training in consistency of process at the host institution
 - 1. Ideally includes completion of a nationally recognized training course or workshop, or a local adaptation thereof by an institutional individual who has undergone the training (e.g. CAEL certification).
 - 2. Should an institution embark on their own training program it should include
 - a. Guides for Portfolio development and format
 - b. Application of Portfolio assessment rubrics
 - c. Institution-specific practices (administrative, etc)
 - 3. Reviewers also ideally will have opportunities for ongoing professional development in portfolio assessment in order to maintain validity and reliability of assessments
 - iv. Institutional credentials sufficient to recommend award of credit

Appendix A - The 10 CAEL Standards for Assessing Learning²

As the nationally recognized body on prior learning assessment and the only body recognized by all regional accreditors for PLA, the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning's (CAEL) Standards for Assessing Learning have become the foundation for most PLA programs. Therefore, all PLA programs at TBR or UT colleges and universities in Tennessee should conform to these standards.

1. Credit or its equivalent should be awarded only for learning, and not for experience.
2. Assessment should be based on standards and criteria for the level of acceptable learning that are both agreed upon and made public.
3. Assessment should be treated as an integral part of learning, not separate from it, and should be based on an understanding of learning processes.
4. The determination of credit awards and competence levels must be made by appropriate subject matter and academic or credentialing experts.
5. Credit or other credentialing should be appropriate to the context in which it is awarded and accepted.
6. If awards are for credit, transcript entries should clearly describe what learning is being recognized and should be monitored to avoid giving credit twice for the same learning.
7. Policies, procedures, and criteria applied to assessment, including provision for appeal, should be fully disclosed and prominently available to all parties involved in the assessment process.
8. Fees charged for assessment should be based on the services performed in the process and not determined by the amount of credit awarded.
9. All personnel involved in the assessment of learning should pursue and receive adequate training and continuing professional development for the functions they perform.
10. Assessment programs should be regularly monitored, reviewed, evaluated, and revised as needed to reflect changes in the needs being served, the purposes being met, and the state of the assessment arts.

² Fiddler, Morry, Catherine Marienau, and Urban Whitaker. *Assessing Learning: Standards, Principles, and Procedures*. 2nd. Chicago: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company, 2006.

Appendix B - List of Institutional and Systems Representatives on the Tennessee PLA Task Force

Dana Willett
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Jackson State Community College

Michael Stokes
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Motlow State Community College

Leah Gray
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Jackson State Community College

David Welch
Interim Dean of Business, Applied Arts &
Technologies
Nashville State Community College

Billy Benton
Registrar
Northeast State Community College

John Townsend
Executive Director, Workforce Development
Community Colleges Office
Tennessee Board of Regents

Cindy Tauscher
Business/Industry Training, Continuing
Education, Non-Credit
Northeast State Community College

Patrick Wilson
Executive Director, Programs - ROCC
Tennessee Board of Regents

Celeste Evans
Cohort and Certificates Specialist
Pellissippi State Community College

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Project Director, Lumina Grant
Tennessee Board of Regents; Nashville
State Community College

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Pellissippi State Community College

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Tennessee Higher Education Commission

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Roane State Community College

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Tennessee Higher Education Commission

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Evening Weekend College
Tennessee State University

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Registrar
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Walters State Community College

Appendix B

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Colleges
Transfer of Academic Credit
September 2016



*Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Colleges
1866 Southern Lane
Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097*

TRANSFER OF ACADEMIC CREDIT

A Position Statement

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), the regional accrediting body for the eleven southeastern states, recognizes that issues surrounding transfer of academic credit continue to generate debate nationally. The debate touches on questions of accountability, access, and equity in the higher education community. The Commission encourages its member institutions to review their transfer policies and procedures with a view toward making transfer of credit easier for students while continuing to honor their obligation to maintain academic quality and integrity. Institutions participating in self-regulatory, nongovernmental accreditation are responsible to the public for establishing transfer processes that address both views.

Transfer of academic credit is a public policy issue for several reasons: (1) an increase in student mobility, (2) the proliferation of distance learning programs and common acceptance of their legitimacy, (3) the economics of expending public money twice for the same course, and (4) consumer protection from expending private money twice for the same course.

SACSCOC supports institutional autonomy in determining its own standards for transfer of academic credit while also encouraging institutions not to impose artificial impediments or meaningless requirements on the transfer process. Many systems and institutions have taken positive action such as negotiating articulation agreements, common course listings, common core curricular, and automatic acceptance of credit arrangements to facilitate the transfer of academic credit. These kinds of proactive approaches, involving qualified faculty in the decisions, ease the way toward resolving transfer of credit problems while maintaining curricular coherence and academic and institutional integrity.

The accreditation standards of SACSCOC require member institutions to analyze credit accepted for transfer in terms of level, content, quality, comparability, and degree program relevance. The accreditation standards do not mandate that institutions accept transfer credit only from regionally accredited institutions. When an institution relies on another institution's regional accreditation as an indicator for acceptability of credit, it should not be the only criterion used for acceptability nor should it be represented as a requirement of this accreditation agency, which it is not.

Maintaining academic quality and integrity remains the primary responsibility of each institution accredited by SACSCOC. This position paper should not be interpreted as supporting any idea that would undermine that responsibility or as impinging on the institution's right to establish and enforce its own policies. At the same time, SACSCOC encourages member institutions to consider ways in which they might ease the acceptance of transfer of academic credit while maintaining an acceptable level of academic quality reflecting their unique missions.

*Approved: Commission on Colleges, June 2003
Reformatted, September 2016*

Appendix C

Recommended PLA Descriptions and Definitions for Transcription

Recommended PLA Descriptions and Definitions for Transcription

<i>Transcript Code Description</i>	<i>Definition</i>
ACT/SAT Achievement Test	The credit based on specific scores earned on the ACT/SAT Achievement tests
Advanced Placement Program	The credit based on specific scores earned on the Advanced Placement Program (AP)
American Council of Education (ACE) – Workplace and Volunteer Training	The credit based on recommendations from the American Council on Education (ACE) Workplace and Volunteer Training. Include all workplace and volunteer (non-military) training evaluated by ACE for college credit
College Level Exam Program (CLEP)	The credit on specific scores earned on the College Level Exam Program (CLEP)
Dantes Subject Standardized Tests (DSST) Credit by Examination Program	The credit based on specific scores earned on the Dantes Subject Standardized (DSST) Credit by Examination Program or its predecessor, the DANTE (Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Educational Support) examination program.
Dual Credit by Assessment – Institutional	The credit earned by completing an institutional end-of-course exam based on specific score under institutional Credit by Assessment that is tied to a specific postsecondary course taught at a high school.
Dual Credit by Assessment – Statewide	The credit earned by completing a statewide end-of-course exam based on a specific scores under statewide Credit by Assessment that is tied to a specific postsecondary course taught at a high school.
Excelsior College Examination (ECE)	Excelsior College Examination (ECE) and Uexcell exams from Jan. 201 to the present.
Regents College Examination (RCE)	Regents College Examination (RCE) from Sept 1998 to Dec 2000.
ACT Proficiency Exam Program (ACT PEP)	ACT Proficiency Exam Program (ACT PEP) prior to Aug 1998.
Institutional Course Challenge Examinations	The credit earned by completing as Institutional Course Challenge Examination.
International Baccalaureate Credit	The credit based on specific scores earned through International Baccalaureate Credit (IB).
National College Credit Recommendation Services (NCCRS) Workplace and Volunteer Training	The credit based on recommendations by the National College Credit Recommendation Service (NCCRS) Workplace and Volunteer Training.
National College Credit Recommendation Services (NCCRS) Other Assessed Credit	The credit based on recommendation by the National College Credit Recommendation Service (NCCRS) Other Assessed Credit. Includes all other credits that do not fall into the above NCCRS Training category by have been evaluated by NCCRS for credit.
Other Credit for Locally Assessed Training	The total number of credits applicable toward college credit obtained under Other Credit for Local Assessed Training. Credit includes local business, nonprofit, volunteers, government, or other training that is not as comprehensive as an apprenticeship, certification, of licensure program and is based on an institutional evaluation.
Military Service Credit	The credit earned on recommendations from the American Council on Educational-Military Experience (ACE), Joint Services Transcript (JST), AARTS (Army ACE Registry), SMART (Sailor/Marine ACE Registry), CCAF (Community College of the Airforce), CGI (Coast Guard Institute), ROCR, DD214 (Report of Separation), Certificate of Release of Discharge from Active Duty, DD 295 (Application for the Evaluation of Learning Experience During Military Service), or other official documentation based on an institutional evaluation.
Other Prior Learning Credit	The credit earned from any other nontraditional course that has not been addressed in any of the other categories.
Portfolio Assessments	The credit earned from an institution evaluation of a portfolio (including written narrative and related documentation) compiled by the institution or an external portfolio evaluation service for college level credit.

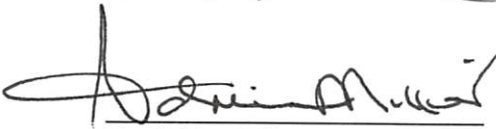
Technical or Professional Apprenticeship	The credit earned by institutional evaluation of a combination of comprehensive on-the-job training and related instruction of theoretical and practical aspects for highly skilled occupations.
Technical or Professional Certification	The credit earned by institutional evaluation of Technical or Professional Certification
Technical or Professional Licensure	The credit earned by institutional evaluation of Technical or Professional Licensure
Thomas Edison State College Examination Program (TECEP)	The credit earned on recommendation from under the Thomas Edison State College Examination Program (TECEP)

Title: Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Policy and Procedures for Implementation at Tennessee State University (TSU)

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have by their duly authorized representatives set forth their signatures:


SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL:

By:  10/17/17
Dr. Evelyn Nettles Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs Date

 10/17/17
Ms. Adrian Miller Coordinator, Office of Student Support Services for Adult and Distance Learners Date

TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

By:  10/18/17
Dr. Mark Hardy Vice President for Academic Affairs Date

 _____
Dr. Glenda Glover President Date