**Academic Credit for Prior Learning**

**Purpose**

These policies and procedures are established to set standards for the recognition of college-level prior learning which Washington County Community College (WCCC) students acquire outside of the institution. WCCC relies on the following to ensure practices consistent with academic integrity and responsiveness to learners. Prior learning may be derived from various life, work, and educational experiences and the term “prior learning assessment” (PLA) refers to all of the processes WCCC uses to review and evaluate evidence of learning and to award academic credit. The basis for evaluating all prior learning is via course equivalency. WCCC commits to the academic and administrative standards proposed by the nationally-recognized industry leader, Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL). Adherence to this policy is also intended to support the transparent transfer of PLA credit among institutions of higher education.

The PLA program at WCCC is faculty-led, with coordination by the Academic Dean. Faculty are instrumental to the ongoing success of the PLA program by writing quality course descriptions and course learning outcomes, reviewing nationally standardized tests against WCCC learning outcomes, and assessing learning through Challenge Exams, Proficiency Credits, and Portfolios.

WCCC is committed to initial and ongoing professional development for Faculty and Staff who provide PLA recruiting information, advising, or review services. Faculty advisors and Student Services staff will communicate consistent PLA messages to prospects, applicants, and enrollees during the recruiting, post-acceptance, and orientation processes; encouraging students to initiate prior learning assessment directly upon matriculation. During advising sessions, Faculty and Staff will review new students’ potential eligibility for any of the prior learning assessment methods.

PLA promotion and information will be consistent across and available in the college catalog and other publications, on the college website, and from college representatives delivering public presentations.

**Policy**

1. **Student Eligibility**

* Students must be matriculated in a WCCC degree program to receive credit.
* Students must be in good academic standing.
* Students must have course(s) to which prior learning credits could potentially apply in the academic program.
* When portfolio assessment is requested, students must show proof of college-level writing credit prior to submitting any portfolio for review.

1. **Award of Credit**

* Credit for prior learning will be awarded based on faculty assessment of documented learning, which demonstrates achievement of learning outcomes for a specific course, i.e. credit by course equivalency.
* WCCC commits to having all course descriptions/objectives and learning outcomes written for each course, and available for use by students seeking prior learning assessment.
* Students may earn prior learning credit for any graduation requirement for which they demonstrate equivalent learning.
* The Career Studies program allows for some general elective credit via PLA, as outlined in the program descriptions.
* WCCC accreditation by New England Association of Schools & Colleges (NEASC) requires that students earn a minimum of 25 percent of degree credits at the college, exclusive of PLA credits, and the award of prior learning credit is subject to this residency requirement. Degree specific residency and competency standards may vary based upon program accreditation standards.
* All types of prior learning acquired more than ten years from WCCC matriculation date are subject to review.
* Prior to a formal review, faculty and other academic advisors will provide guidance, but not assurances, of the number of credits that may be awarded.
* A student may not receive credit twice for a course that has been awarded through PLA.
* WCCC is committed to transparency in the award/denial of academic PLA credit.
* When credit is awarded, students will receive notification from the Registrar’s Office to access the details in her/his academic record at the student portal.
* Students should be aware that PLA will not satisfy credit load requirements for veteran benefits funding or other similar third party financial assistance programs.

1. **Transcription**

* Prior learning credits will be applied to meeting degree or program requirements in the same manner as credits earned at the awarding institution.
* WCCC will award the appropriate catalogue course title and number to the credit awarded.
* The college will use a coding system for each method of PLA and designate the method of credit awarded on a student’s transcript.
* A grade of “P” (Pass) shall be used for prior learning credit; its definition being equivalent to a grade of C (2.0) or better. This will be clearly delineated on the student transcript key.
* Conventional letter grades will not be used, and PLA credit is not awarded quality points nor calculated in a student’s grade point average (GPA).

1. **Fees**

* Fees associated with PLA will be clearly publicized for students prior to their request for credit.
* WCCC assesses a fee for the *review* of learning for Challenge Exams and Portfolio Review, but not for the resulting credit(s).
* PLA fees cover administrative and assessment costs incurred by the College, do not guarantee the award of credit, and are non-refundable if any petition for credit is denied.
* For Challenge Exam and Portfolio Review, there will be a non-refundable $100 fee payable in advance at the Business Office. In addition, lab fees and/or material costs for these assessments may apply.
* This fee will be reviewed on an annual basis, similar to other college fees, and revised to reflect conformity with intuitional academic and administrative standards.

1. **Appeal**

* Students wishing to appeal a PLA credit award/denial may do so in accordance with the Maine Community College System’s academic appeals policy and procedure.
* Recommendations and scoring by nationally-standardized exam bodies (AP, CLEP, DSST, IB) are under the auspices of the evaluation body and cannot be appealed at the college level. Students will be directed to the appeals procedures for each testing agency or credit recommendation service.

1. **Transferability**

* The Maine Community College System is in partnership with the University of Maine System to transfer credits, including PLA credits, between systems.
* WCCC cannot guarantee the acceptance of PLA credits it awards in transfer to colleges/universities, nor the applicability of credits to a student’s future degree requirements.
* Students will be encouraged by all WCCC academic advisors to engage in careful academic *and* financial aid planning when their academic goals include transferring to other degree programs.

**Methods & Procedures**

The following are methods of prior learning WCCC will assess for the award of credit.

1. **Transfer**: WCCC assesses academic credit transcribed by other institutions (accredited by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation and/or the U.S. Department of Education) when the course, credit, and transcript key are clear and consistent.
   1. Credit should be relevant in the WCCC degree program.
   2. Credits will be subject to review by Department Chairperson for currency and relevancy.
   3. Students should request official college transcript(s) be sent directly to the WCCC Registrar’s Office for review and transcription.
   4. The transcript provided to WCCC should be in English. Students will be referred to World Education Services (WES) for the translation of transcripts in other languages.
   5. Students should monitor their academic record at the student portal to confirm when the WCCC Registrar’s Office receives the transcript(s) from other institution(s) and completes the transcription of courses.
   6. Please note: It is the student’s responsibility to provide course descriptions from the sending institution and provide them to WCCC’s Registrar. In some instances, a student may be required to obtain a course syllabus and provide it to WCCC’s Registrar.

NOTE: Early College for ME and On Course for College are unique higher education initiatives for Maine high school juniors and/or seniors who have taken MCCS courses and earned college credit. During advising sessions, advisors and students should be aware of any college credits already earned while in high school.

1. **National Exam**: WCCC will award academic credit for learning demonstrated by successfully passing a national examination program such as:
   1. CLEP (College Level Examination Program) – Offered by The College Board, CLEP features 33 exams in five subject areas, covering material taught in courses that students may generally take in the first two years of college. There are two scenarios for students using CLEP exams for prior learning assessment credit:
      1. A student has already taken one/more CLEP exams at an earlier time and recognizes s/he may be eligible for course equivalency in her/his WCCC program major. The student should confirm having a CLEP score that meets the WCCC requirement for credit then request the College Board score(s) be sent directly to the WCCC Registrar’s Office for review and transcription.

or

* + 1. A student has some significant prior learning in a subject area that could be counted toward his/her degree requirements, which could be tested via a CLEP exam in WCCC’s Testing Center and earn the student course equivalency credit. The student should register online at the CLEP exam site for the exam(s), and list WCCC as the preferred testing site and the college to the receive exam score(s). S/he should then make an appointment with the WCCC Testing Center to take the exam: 207-454-1040. For more information, please visit: [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).
  1. DSST (DANTES Subject Standardized Test) - DSST are credit-by-examination tests originated by the United States Department of Defense, but open to all learners. DSST sponsors a wide range of examination programs to assist service members and others in meeting their educational goals. The DSST program (formerly known as the DANTES Subject Standardized Tests) is a series of 38 examinations in college subject areas that are comparable to the final or end-of-course examinations in undergraduate courses. There are two scenarios for students around DSST exams:
     1. A student has already taken one/more DSST exams at an earlier time and recognizes s/he may be eligible for course equivalency in her/his WCCC program major. The student should confirm s/he has a DSST score that meets the WCCC requirement for credit then request the score(s) be sent directly to the WCCC Registrar’s Office for review and transcription.

or

* + 1. A student has some significant prior learning in a subject area that could be counted toward his/her degree requirements, and tested via a DSST exam in WCCC’s Testing Center and earn the student course equivalency credit. The student should register online at the DSST site for the exam(s), and list WCCC as the preferred testing site and college to receive the exam score(s). S/he should then make an appointment with the WCCC Testing Center to take the exam: 207-454-1040.
  1. Advanced Placement (AP) – A student will have taken a College Board AP exam(s) during her/his high school career. See the AP matrix located in the college’s portal for a list of the exams, acceptable scores and WCCC course equivalencies. The AP score(s) should be requested by the student and sent directly to the WCCC Registrar’s Office for review and transcription. For more information, see: [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).
  2. International Baccalaureate (IB –Higher Level) - At high schools offering an International Baccalaureate program, students take a standard set of courses and corresponding assessments in a rigorous two-year program, which they complete during their junior and senior year. IB courses culminate in a corresponding IB exam, much like an AP exam. WCCC recognizes IB achievement by awarding credit to students who score 5 or above on Higher level IB exams, taken during their high school career. A matrix of IB exam course equivalencies is maintained on the WCCC portal. Credit is applied to a student’s record after official IB transcripts/score reports have been received by the Registrar’s Office. For more information: www.ibo.org.

1. **Proficiency Credit**: Students may receive academic credit for some non-credit courses, certifications, licenses, examinations, Registered Apprenticeships, etc. gained outside of traditional college programs in several ways.
   1. A matrix for the most common and pre-approved Proficiency Credit recommendations by WCCC degree program are available in the colleges portal or by contacting your academic advisor or academic dean.
   2. Many other credit recommendations are listed in the American Council on Education (ACE) National Guide to College Credit for Workforce Training, and may also be used by Department Chairpersons to produce Proficiency Credit equivalencies with WCCC courses. See www2.acenet.edu/credit/?fuseaction=browse.main.
   3. Other trainings not already reviewed by WCCC or ACE may also be reviewed by the appropriate Department Chairperson for academic credit.
   4. Any type of Proficiency Credit assessment will require valid proof of learning such as the license, certification copy, course materials, certificates, or other information.
   5. Credit award is subject to applicability of the learning to the student’s program of study.
   6. Proficiency Credit review requires an *Application for Prior Learning Assessment* (found at the WCCC portal webpage) and a meeting with the appropriate Department Chairperson for consideration and signature.
2. **Military Review**: Students may receive credit demonstrated by formal service school training programs and off-duty educational activities in the Armed Forces, including: basic training, military service school recommendations by the American Council on Education (ACE), and U.S. Armed Forces Institute correspondence courses.
   1. Students need to request military transcripts either through the [Joint Services Transcript](https://jst.doded.mil/) (JST) or the [Community College of the Air Force](http://www.au.af.mil/au/barnes/ccaf/index.asp) for military experience they wish to have evaluated for credit.
   2. NOTE: Students requesting Veteran's Educational Assistance are *required* to have all previous postsecondary educational experience evaluated for possible transfer credit, in order to be eligible for benefits.
3. **Articulation Agreement** : High School/Career & Technical Center/Adult Education: Formal/pre-determined WCCC Articulation Agreements provide a seamless process that joins Career & Technical Education and some Adult Education programs to postsecondary programs of study for agreed-upon courses.
   1. To receive articulated credit, students must be accepted at WCCC and submit a completed *Request for Tech/Prep Advanced Placement Credit* form, with any other supporting information required in the agreement, to the appropriate WCCC faculty representative for verification of eligibility.
   2. The form is forwarded to the Registrar’s Office for transcription of credits awarded.
   3. For a list of all current articulation agreements, please contact WCCC’s admissions department at [admissions@wccc.me.edu](mailto:admissions@wccc.me.edu) or 207-454-1000
4. **WCCC Challenge Exam**:
   1. Exams do not exist for all WCCC courses, but may be requested where the exam is written and available. Exams may not be available for courses in which a CLEP or DSST examination is currently available.
   2. Exams are designed by the appropriate instructional department.
   3. Exams are equivalent to comprehensive final examinations.
   4. Exams are based on the current set of course learning outcomes.
   5. Exams are limited to students enrolled in the challenged course, and only one attempt prior to the end of the first week of the course.
   6. Exams may not be attempted if the student has previously earned credit in the course at WCCC.
   7. Exams are graded as is standard for the course. Where there is a result of C (2.0) or better, the student will be awarded the course credit and a grade of P will be transcribed.
   8. An *Application for Prior Learning Assessment* form (available in the portal) and applicable fees are necessary for completion of this type of prior learning assessment.
   9. The faculty member will schedule the Challenge Exam time with the student and document the results on the *Application for Prior Learning Assessment* form and submit it to the registrar within 24 hours.
   10. The faculty member will notify the student of the results, and send a copy of the form to the Registrar’s Office for transcription and/or filing.
5. **Portfolio Review**: A prior learning Portfolio is a written presentation plus pieces of evidence that are assembled and submitted for review of college-level learning equivalent to a specific course’s learning outcomes. Credit will be awarded only for learning that has a balance, appropriate to the subject, between theory and practical application.
   1. Only when the student has significant prior learning and none of the prior learning assessment methods listed above can help demonstrate the learning for WCCC credit, should the student be encouraged to develop a prior learning assessment portfolio.
   2. The award of PLA Portfolio credit is dependent on relevancy to courses in the WCCC degree program; including general education, major, and elective courses.
   3. Portfolio Review requires that a student show proof of college-level writing credit/equivalent, prior to preparing any portfolio for credit.
   4. The student will meet with an Academic Advisor or program Department Chairperson to determine if her/his knowledge and experience seems appropriate for consideration in putting together a PLA Portfolio. The Dean of Academic Affairs is also available for general consultation.
   5. The student references all of the portfolio development materials available for free at the WCCC website, and produces a complete and well-written Prior Learning Assessment Portfolio.
   6. Submitting a PLA Portfolio does not guarantee credit award.
   7. A Portfolio is reviewed on a Pass/Fail basis. This recommendation is based on the student showing narrative and evidence of learning outcomes that would constitute a grade level of C (2.0) or better for the course.
   8. The PLA Portfolio(s) should be submitted electronically, in PDF format, to the Dean of Academic Affairs.
   9. A separate *Application for Credit by PLA Portfolio* form (found on the WCCC website, Credit for Prior Learning page) and $100 assessment fee (paid at the Business Office) is needed for each course for which the student is seeking credit. This should accompany the electronic portfolio to the Dean of Academic Affairs.
   10. Once submitted, the portfolio and materials are forwarded to the appropriate faculty evaluator within the department in which the course is taught.
   11. Evaluation is completed and credit awarded/denied within 15 business days during a traditional semester, longer in the summer. The PLA Portfolio and materials will be reviewed carefully and the faculty evaluator will determine if:
       1. Credit is awarded. If PLA Portfolio credit is awarded, the student and Dean of Academic Affairs are notified of the decision by the Department Chairperson and course equivalency credit is applied to the student’s transcript by the Registrar’s Office.
       2. More documentation is needed for evaluation. If more documentation is needed, the student and Dean of Academic Affairs are notified via email by the Department Chairperson. The additional documentation is then forwarded to the faculty member for evaluation. Upon receipt of necessary additional documentation, credit is granted or denied, and the student is notified of the decision by the Department Chairperson. If additional documentation is not received within 30 calendar days, credit is denied.
       3. PLA Portfolio credit is denied. If credit is denied, the student and Dean of Academic Affairs are notified of the decision and reason(s) for denial. One revision is allowed within 30 calendar days of denial. If the revision is denied, the student did not sufficiently describe/demonstrate/gather evidence for a majority of the course learning outcomes and no further revision is allowed. Appeals may be addressed in writing to the Dean of Academic Affairs per Maine Community College System Academic Appeals Policy.

**Washington County Community College  
Prior Learning Assessment Portfolio**

**EVALUATOR RESPONSE & RATING RUBRIC**

**Student Name:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **ID #:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Evaluator:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Portfolio submitted as credit for:**

Course Number: Credits:

Course Title: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Item Inventory: all components must be included in this order -** ✔**if present**

--- Completed Request for Prior Learning Assessment

--- Title page

--- Table of Contents

--- Resume

--- Autobiography, including chronological record

--- Student’s most recent WCCC transcript

--- Course syllabus

--- Narrative which analyzes and articulates what was learned, how it was learned, how the knowledge has been used, and how this knowledge relates to course outcomes listed in the syllabus

--- Documentation (certificates, work samples, awards, licenses, etc)

**2. Summary of Evaluation (see Rubric for details)**

The student documented competencies in at least 74% of the course content per the course learning objectives. Programs that require higher standards due to program accreditation bodies may require higher percentage competency demonstration.

\_\_\_\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_\_\_\_No (If no, please elaborate):

The learner, using a mixture of theory and practice as well as appropriate terminology, indicated a competent understanding of the course material and demonstrated how the learning was acquired.

\_\_\_\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_\_\_\_No (If no, please elaborate):

Comments from Portfolio Evaluator:

**RATING RUBRIC**

**Criteria for Satisfactory grade:** Candidates must score the minimum of 74 overall points and a minimum score of 7 in any category. To do so, content for each course objective must meet criteria.

**Points Key: Total:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 0 = item/content insufficiently evidenced  6 = item/content inconsistently evidenced  10 = item/content satisfactorily evidenced | Total points possible: 100  Minimum to pass: 74 or program standard.  Criteria must be met for each course objective. Scores are reflective of overall content with break-down provided by objective. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **ITEM** | **Target** | **Item Score** |
| **1. Evidence:** Documentation and description of experiences relevant to the Learning Outcomes | * Portfolio content succinctly narrates and describes the significance of the candidate’s relevant learning experiences and supplies documentation as evidence in order to establish the candidate as qualified to write on the subject. * Candidate provides adequate and appropriate evidence of each learning outcome for the targeted course per the course syllabus. Student has constructed a portfolio accurately formatted, and with complete information for each section and learning objective. |  |
| **2. Theory:**  Evidence aligned with academic theory /learning objectives | Appropriate use of academic theory is integrated within the submission, so that the candidate’s learning is grounded in the academic frameworks of the topic. |  |
| **3. Narrative** | * Narrative clearly introduce the prior learning experience and its relevance to the targeted course. * Narrative effectively summarizes the main points, critical details, and states outcomes achieved through the experience. |  |
| **4. Source Material** | In-text and end-of-text citations of all sourced materials are correct, complete, and verifiable. |  |
| **5. Documentation** | Documentation provided is effective evidence of experience; documentation is effectively referred to within submission, and its significance and relevance is clear. |  |
| **6. Structure, Composition, and Mechanics** | * PLA submission is well-organized, uses appropriate format aligned, and progresses in logical, convincing order. * Virtually free of punctuation, spelling, capitalization errors; appropriate format and presentation for assignment. * Effective use of vocabulary, and correct and effective grammatical form(s). |  |
|  | **TOTAL SCORE** |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Course Objective (abbreviated)** | **Comments relative to ratings above** | **Objective Met or Not** |
| **1.** |  |  |
| **2.** |  |  |
| **3.** |  |  |
| **4.** |  |  |
| **5.** |  |  |
| **6.** |  |  |

**DETERMINATION OF PLA:**

**Recommendation:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Portfolio Approved. Credits Awarded for course requested.

\_\_\_\_\_ Minor Revisions Necessary.

**(Once the submission deadline is past, the student may no longer be granted credits for the portfolio.)**

If revisions necessary, please explain:

\_\_\_\_\_ No Credit Awarded. Extensive Revisions Necessary.

If credits are denied, please explain:

**Portfolio Evaluator**

Faculty Member Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Department Chairperson (please print) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Resubmit deadline\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Sent to student**:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Dean of Academic Affairs (please print) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Registrar’s Office:**

Registrar Approval\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Credits entered into record: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Staff Signature\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

PLA Evaluator Rubric\_AMS\_WCCC1