



Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)
GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

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TEXAS SOUTHMOST
COLLEGE



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INTRODUCTION

Texas Southmost College (TSC) strives to provide students with opportunities to receive credit for prior learning while still maintaining the academic integrity of its academic programs. Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is the evaluation of an individual's learning outside of the college classroom. PLA gives students an opportunity to earn college credits for college-level knowledge they have acquired through experience including military service, employment history, advanced high school courses, or vocational training. Students may petition course credit for experiential learning, non-credit course completion, professional development, licensure/certifications, and national exams. Course credit is awarded when content mastered through an experience is comparable to the student learning outcomes of an TSC course. Participants benefit from recognized learning outside the traditional classroom, reduced program costs, and timely degree completion.

To accommodate this need, TSC has developed the Prior Learning Assessment Guidelines and Procedures Manual. This Manual is designed to provide information about the diverse ways in which students obtain academic credit for learned knowledge and skills outside a classroom setting. This academic college credit can be awarded through the following seven (7) prior learning programs/pathways:

- Military Training
- Professional Work Experience
- External Exams – CLEP, AP, IB
- Internal Credit by Exam
- Continuing Education Mirror Courses
- Licensure or Professional Certification
- Career Education or Workplace Training

PLA adheres to institutional policies and regional accreditation standards, maintains academic integrity, and follows current business processes. TSC Policies are consistent with Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) principles and with Texas Southmost College Board Policy 3346 - Awarding Academic Credit for Experiential Learning and Non-Credit Coursework.

This PLA Guidelines and Procedures Manual provides students with insight regarding student eligibility requirements to request credit, the credit for prior learning guidelines, the amount of fees required if applicable, the criteria for each prior learning pathway, and the TSC procedures for granting credit.

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY to REQUEST CREDIT

To request PLA credit, students must meet the following requirements:

1. Student must be admitted in an Academic or Workforce Program past census date of the current semester and be in good standing (GPA 2.0).
2. Student must have successfully completed a minimum of 6 hours of TSC course work.
3. Student must provide official documentation of Prior Learning (transcripts, licensures, certificates, work experience, etc.)

GUIDELINES for AWARDING CREDIT

Credit for prior learning can be awarded only after the assessment of prior learning experiences and only for documented learning that demonstrates achievement of all identified learning outcomes for a specific course or courses.

1. Students cannot request PLA for courses attempted or previously taken.
 - a. Attempted – Courses that appear on an TSC or transferring institution transcript as withdrawn (W) or incomplete (I).
 - b. Previously Taken – Courses that appear on TSC or transferring institution transcript with a grade.
2. Credit may only be awarded for courses applicable to the student's declared degree plan.
3. Credit is posted after census date of the semester in which the prior learning assessment was approved.
4. Credit does not count toward the 25% residency requirement of the college, nor meet eligibility requirements for financial aid or loan deferment.
5. Credit may not exceed 75% of a student's Certificate or Associate degree coursework.
6. Credit earned through PLA cannot be removed from a student's transcript once it has been awarded.
7. Course credit is documented as "CR" on an TSC transcript and contributes toward graduation requirements. Letter grades cannot be given for course credit earned through PLA.
8. Other institutions are not obligated to accept credit earned through PLA. It is the student's responsibility to check with the transfer institution before pursuing the PLA process.
9. Upon completion, the PLA Application and copy of the results (exam, portfolio, and etc.) will be forwarded to the Office of Admissions and Records for filing.
10. Students who are denied credit through PLA for a specific course may not petition for credit again for that course by any options defined under PLA.

APPLICATION for PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT

To receive credit for the following prior learning pathways, students must complete an application (Appendix A), indicating the PLA pathway requested for each course.

- Military Training
- Professional Work Experience
- Continuing Education Mirror Courses
- Licensure and Professional Certification

An application is not required for External Exams or Internal Credit by Exam.

APPLICABLE FEES

The chart below indicates applicable fees for processing credit for prior learning. Fees are non-refundable and must be paid to the Cashiers Office prior to submitting an Application for evaluation.

Prior Learning Pathway	Fee
Military Training	No fee
Professional Work Experience	\$120 per course
External Exams – CLEP, AP, IB	Varies by exam
Internal Credit by Exam	Varies by exam
Continuing Education Mirror Courses	No fee
Licensure or Professional Certification	\$25 per course
Career Education or Workplace Training	Same as Professional Work Experience pathway

PATHWAYS for PRIOR LEARNING

Military Training

TSC is committed to ensuring our active duty, former, and retired military personnel receive credit for college-level knowledge gained through their service to our country. Service members

(Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard) should provide a Joint Services Transcript or (Air Force) Community College of the Air Force Transcript for evaluation.

NOTE: There is no fee for this prior learning assessment pathway.

Student Responsibilities

- Request official military transcripts to be sent directly to the TSC Office of Admissions and Records
- Meet with PLA Academic Advisor to complete and submit the Application for Prior Learning Assessment

TSC Procedures

Office of Admissions and Records:

- Receive and distribute transcript to Associate Vice President of Instruction – Academic Success for review and evaluation
- Associate Vice President of Instruction conducts crosswalk of military transcript to the National Guide to College Credit for Workforce Training on the ACE website, notes course approved for credit on submitted Application, and sends results to Office of Admissions and Records
- Grant applicable credit for knowledge, skills, and training

Professional Work Experience

Credit for Professional Work Experience indicates that a student has received credit by successfully documenting professional work experience closely related to defined course work, or degree requirements. Qualified experience may include occupational/technical, supervisory or managerial skills obtained in any industry or business sector. The experience shall be from employment or workshop learning, recent and relevant, and of satisfactory performance.

College credit granted through Professional Work Experience shall not be based on hours of experience but on relevant college level learning attained. To be considered for credit toward degree requirements, experience must have been at increasingly rigorous levels of learning equivalent to the level of difficulty associated with college course work. Learning must meet standards as set by the course syllabi for which credit would be granted.

Student Responsibilities

- Meet with PLA Academic Advisor to complete and submit the Application for Prior Learning Assessment
- Pay for courses to be evaluated for Professional Work Experience credit via the TSC Advising and Testing Marketplace at:

https://secure.touchnet.net/C20456_ustores/web/store_main.jsp?STOREID=5&clearPreview=true&SINGLESTORE=true

- Follow instructions provided by PLA Academic Advisor to complete a digital portfolio (See Appendix B for the portfolio checklist)
- Notify the PLA Academic Advisor when the digital portfolio(s) is completed and ready for evaluation

TSC Procedures

Department Dean/Program PLA Evaluator:

- Review and evaluate submitted portfolio
- On student submitted Application, note course(s) approved for credit and send results to PLA Academic Advisor

Office of Admissions and Records:

- Receive results from the PLA Academic Advisor
- Grant applicable college credit hours aligned to student's declared degree plan credits and post to student transcript

External Exam Credit

PLA credits may be granted for several national examinations including the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), Advanced Placement (AP), and International Baccalaureate (IB). TSC recognizes the credit-granting scores recommended by the American Council on Education (ACE).

College Level Examination Program (CLEP)

A CLEP exam allows students to demonstrate mastery of college-level knowledge in a particular subject.

Advanced Placement (AP)

While attending high school, students are able to pursue college-level studies with the opportunity to earn college credit by taking AP exams.

International Baccalaureate (IB)

IB exams are administered for students at specific high schools that follow the IB curriculum. Appendix D of this Manual lists the required scores to earn credit through IB exams.

Any student interested in demonstrating their knowledge by passing an external exam should see an Academic Advisor to ensure the exam(s) are applicable to the student's degree plan. For more information on the process to receive course credit via external exam as well as the external exams available with corresponding college credit hours, visit the Testing Center website at <https://www.tsc.edu/testing-center/credit-by-exam/>.

NOTE: Students may not earn more than 32 total hours from any testing equivalency source, including external and internal exams for credit.

Internal Credit by Exam

PLA credit may also be awarded based on TSC Departmental Exams (i.e., Internal Credit by Exam) for certain courses. Internal exams are administered by the TSC Testing Office. Department faculty determine which courses can be challenged via internal exams and the competencies that will be assessed based on the learning outcomes for the course. All internal credit assessments are similar to exams administered in the traditional course. Depending upon the nature of the course, the examination may consist of written and/or practical demonstration(s) of competence.

NOTE: Internal Credit by Exam can only be attempted once per course. Students may not earn more than 32 total hours from any testing equivalency source, including external and internal exams for credit.

For more information on the process to receive course credit via internal exam as well as the internal exams available with corresponding college credit hours, visit the Testing Center website at <https://www.tsc.edu/testing-center/credit-by-exam/>.

Continuing Education Mirror Courses

A Mirror Course is the articulation of a Continuing Education Unit (CEU) (i.e., non-credit course) into Semester Credit Hours (SCH) applicable toward a Certificate or an Associate of Applied Science Degree. The TSC Workforce Training and Continuing Education department works with Academic Divisions to identify courses which award SCH for qualifying CEUs (See Appendix C). Students seeking CEU to SCH conversion must submit an Application for Prior Learning Assessment to the PLA Academic Advisor.

NOTE: **There is no application fee for this prior learning assessment.**

Student Responsibilities

- Submit an Application for Prior Learning Assessment to the PLA Academic Advisor

TSC Procedures

PLA Academic Advisor:

- Review application and transcript
- If all requirements are met, approve by signing student submitted Application
- Forward approved Application and related documents to the Office of Admissions and Records

Office of Admissions and Records:

- Issue a “CR” on student’s transcript for SCH

Licensure and Professional Certification

TSC provides educational pathways for individuals who earn professional certification(s) locally, regionally, and nationally. Course credit is based on competencies demonstrated through successful completion or earning of a professional certification or state licensure examination. Accepted licensures and professional certifications are listed according to program on the Certificate/Licensure Crosswalk document.

Student Responsibilities

- Meet with PLA Academic Advisor to complete and submit the Application for Prior Learning Assessment
- Pay for courses to be evaluated for Licensure and Professional Certification credit via the TSC Advising and Testing Marketplace at:
https://secure.touchnet.net/C20456_ustores/web/store_main.jsp?STOREID=5&clearPreview=true&SINGLESTORE=true
- Follow instructions provided by PLA Academic Advisor to upload certifications into a digital portfolio (See Appendix B for the portfolio checklist)
- Notify the PLA Academic Advisor when your certifications are uploaded to the digital portfolio(s) and ready for review

TSC Procedures

Department Dean/Program PLA Evaluator:

- Review and evaluate submitted certifications
- On student submitted Application, note course(s) approved for credit and send results to PLA Academic Advisor

Office of Admissions and Records:

- Receive results from the PLA Academic Advisor
- Grant applicable college credit hours aligned to student's declared degree plan credits and post to student transcript

Career Education or Workplace Training

The Career Education or Workplace Training pathway offers equivalent course credit for employer offered courses of study or practical trainings in a particular field. For further information on this PLA pathway, please see the PLA Academic Advisor.

Part 2: Student Eligibility and Course Credit Guidelines - Affirm by initialing each box.

- I have reviewed the PLA Guidelines and Procedures Manual and understand the eligibility requirements and course credit guidelines.
- I understand I am responsible for determining transferability of credit obtained by contacting the institution(s) to which I plan to transfer.
- I will submit official records and documents for evaluation to TSC.
- I attest to the accuracy and integrity of documents submitted.

Part 3: Fees - Please refer to the fee schedule in the Prior Learning Assessment Guidelines and Procedures Manual. Request for evaluation **does not guarantee college credit**. The evaluation fee is non-refundable and payable via the TSC Advising/Testing marketplace. Affirm by placing your initials in the blank: _____

Part 4: Student Signature - Sign and date to complete this application. Then return the completed application to: Bervick Simon, Director of Advising and Testing/PLA Academic Advisor (bervick.simon@tsc.edu).

Student Signature

Date

****Texas Southmost College Staff Only****

_____	_____
Dean Signature	Date
_____	_____
Program Faculty Evaluator Signature	Date

APPENDIX B – EXAMPLE OF PORTFOLIO CHECKLIST

Below is an example of the documents included in a digital portfolio to be evaluated for the Professional Work Experience pathway. Additional information can be found in the Portfolio Creation for Professional Work Experience document that is specific to the degree that you seek.

Completed	Contents	Description
	Title Page	Should include a title, the student’s name, student identification number, contact information, and current date
	Table of Contents	Include a Table of Contents for each section
	Cover Letter	Include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of student’s educational goals • Statement on how prior learning assessment relates to the stated goal • Statement on courses or outcomes being petitioned for credit • Signature authorizing the goal statement letter
	Resume and Degree Audit or Unofficial Transcript(s)	Include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chronological resume • Degree audit or unofficial transcript(s) by logging in to mytsc.edu or seeing the PLA Academic Advisor
	Application for Prior Learning Assessment	Complete the TSC Application for Prior Learning Assessment, noting the course(s) that you are requesting an award of credit(s)
	Program of Study	Provide the Program of Study for which you are requesting an award of credits; Program of Study can be obtained from tsc.edu > degrees and certificates
	Prior Learning Narrative and Documentation	Provide narrative and other documentation demonstrating knowledge learned and skill(s) obtained through work experience, licensure and professional certifications earned

APPENDIX C – CROSS WALK OF CEU TO SCH COURSES

Continuing Education (CEU) Course	Credit (SCH) Course	Course Name	Semester Credit Hours Earned
CJLE 1006	CJLE 1506	Basic Peace Officer I	5
CJLE 1012	CJLE 1512	Basic Peace Officer II	5
CJLE 1018	CJLE 1518	Basic Peace Officer III	5
CJLE 1024	CJLE 1524	Basic Peace Officer IV	5
CJLE 1029	CJLE 1429	Basic Peace Officer V	4