

GUIDELINES FOR POLICY
706.01: CREDIT AWARDED THROUGH NON-TRADITIONAL MEANS
PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

I. General

- A. The Alabama College System recognizes that learning occurs in a variety of ways. Individuals can develop mastery of course competencies through employment, training, and other experiences, which is termed “prior learning.” Credit can be awarded for prior learning from which the skills that comprise courses (terminal objectives) are mastered to an acceptable degree of proficiency and the individual documents skill mastery.
- B. Each institution shall publish in its catalog, website, and other appropriate sites the procedures for students to earn credit for prior learning. Institutions shall have detailed policies and procedures for prior learning assessment (PLA) and the awarding of credit for prior learning, and shall communicate these procedures in appropriate institution publications. Institutions shall regularly monitor, evaluate, and, if necessary, revise prior learning assessment activities in response to changes in the needs of individuals and in the state of assessment. Each institution shall submit its policies, procedures, and other applicable materials (e.g., forms, applications for PLA) to a committee appointed by the Chancellor for review and approval.
- C. These guidelines are not applicable to secondary/postsecondary articulation agreements or dual enrollment.

II. Awarding Credit Through Prior Learning Assessment

- A. 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 terminal objectives for a specific course or courses.
- B. Course credit earned through prior learning shall be noted on the student’s transcript as having been awarded through PLA.
- C. Credit for academic transfer courses awarded through PLA **may only be awarded** by examination or nationally recognized guidelines (AP, CLEP, ACT/PEP, DANTEs, Challenge Exams, ACE PONSI/CREDIT, ACE/MILITARY). **Credit for experiential learning (portfolio review) may not be awarded for academic transfer courses.**
- D. In the process of determining if credit can be awarded for prior learning, institutions shall charge students only for the cost of the PLA services and not for the amount of credit awarded.

- E. There shall be a charge of \$25 for each portfolio review to assess experiential learning for credit. Documentation must be provided for each course for which credit through experiential learning is requested, and the \$25 fee applies to each review of the documentation (e.g., individual is charged \$50 if the person is seeking credit through experiential learning for two courses, and thereby requires portfolio reviews in relation to those two courses). Students seeking credit for academic transfer courses through examination or nationally recognized guidelines are not charged a fee for PLA or for credits awarded through PLA.
- F. Not more than 25 percent of total credit required for any program may be awarded as a result of PLA. Credit awarded through PLA does not count toward the minimum of 25 percent of semester credit hours that must be completed at the institution granting the degree as referenced in State Board of Education policy 715.01.
- G. Before receiving credit through PLA for a course, an individual must meet enrollment requirements of the course.
- H. Credit may not be awarded twice for the same learning.

III. Procedures for Prior Learning Assessment

- A. The student must enroll at the institution and meet all admission requirements for the program in which course credit for prior learning is being sought.
- B. The student must make application to the institution for prior learning assessment and credit for experiential learning.
- C. At least one person from each institution shall be trained in the standards, principles, and procedures of PLA (institution PLA contact). This person must successfully complete PLA training provided by the Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education. This person shall provide related training and technical assistance to other institution personnel having PLA responsibilities.
- D. In the portfolio assessment process, an instructor of a course for which credit for experiential learning is being sought shall evaluate the student's work and training experiences in the program field and determine if the student should be considered for PLA. Evidence of experiential learning may include certifications, licensures, continuing education units, employer verification of tasks performed, and examples or demonstrations of skills possessed. If the student is deemed a candidate for PLA, the instructor shall recommend the student to the institution PLA contact (or conduct the PLA if the instructor is trained to do so) and specify the course(s) for which the student may be eligible to receive credit for experiential learning.
- E. Portfolio assessment by itself may be used for PLA only when the following methods cannot be used: course challenge exams, College Level Examination

(May 2005)

Program (CLEP), American College Testing Proficiency Examination Program (ACT/PEP), Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Support (DANTES), American Council on Education's Program on Noncollegiate Sponsored Instruction (ACE/PONSI), College Board Advanced Placement (AP) Program, American Council on Education College Credit Recommendation Services (ACE/CREDIT), or American Council on Education Military Program (ACE/MILITARY).

Attachment A

**GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSING PORTFOLIOS FOR
EVIDENCE OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**

- I. A portfolio is a detailed summary of an individual's experiences applicable to college-level learning. The portfolio includes a description of experiences and the skills learned from these experiences. The portfolio includes a brief life history, statement of individual's career goals, description of experiences (work and non-work related) and related learning matched to courses for which credit is being sought, and any supporting documentation (e.g., licensures, certifications, continuing education units, training records, employer statements).

- II. Faculty in the applicable program will assist the institution PLA contact in evaluating a portfolio for college equivalent learning and recommend the awarding of appropriate college credit based on demonstrated competencies. The faculty evaluator recommends the appropriate course to be credited and number of credit hours that will appear on the student's transcript.