

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE No. 3104

Prior Learning Assessment

Date Adopted: 1 April 1993

Date Revised: January 2022

Date Reviewed: 24 March 2014; 11 March 2022

References:

The Tennessee Prior Learning Assessment Task Force, "Recommended Standards in Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Policy and Practice for Tennessee Public Colleges and Universities," 7 August 2012.

https://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/server_files/files/Recommendations%20for%20Standards%20in%20PLA%20-%20Final%20Version%201-1.pdf

PLA Value Statement

COM-FSM's Strategic Direction 1 states: Innovate academic quality to ensure student success. Ensure student success by decreasing time to completion and increasing student satisfaction, persistence, retention, and graduation rates by innovating academic quality and enhancing student support services. The college believes in responsiveness to the education and cultural needs of the community, affirmative action for nontraditional students; and currency and relevance through continuing education and lifelong learning. Established research studies show that students who receive credit via PLA have a higher chance of completing their program of study towards an industry certificate, a certificate or degree. (Plumlee, Tucker and Klein-Colling, Rebecca. *Financial Aid for Prior Learning Assessment, Early Successes and Lessons from the U.S. Department of Education's Experimental Sites Initiative*. CAEL, July 2017. p.2)

Standards for Awarding PLA Credit

Requirements for PLA credit to be awarded: Academic credit will be awarded only:

- For students who have been admitted to COM-FSM
- After the student has consulted with an advisor about the possibility and advisability of seeking credit for PLA.
- For students who have declared an academic program.
- 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.

Opting out of accepting types of PLA:

- 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. COM-FSM can opt out of granting credit based on a particular type of PLA, except where prescribed by law. However, COM-FSM will follow these recommended standards.
 - A list of some of the more commonly accepted forms of PLA are defined in BP 3104 for convenience. This list is not exhaustive, and therefore, the policy is not limited to only those forms of PLA listed. It is anticipated that new types of PLA will continue to be developed.
 - Additional types of PLA credit may be identified and incorporated into the policy.

Student Process



1. Schedule an appointment with a PLA advisor



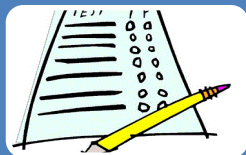
2. Decide with the advisor which COM-FSM course(s) you want PLA for and which PLA method to use



3. Your PLA advisor will work with appropriate faculty to approve your request



4. Upon approval, pay required fees



5. Take exam or submit evidence of non collegiate sponsored training



6. Registrar's office awards credit/no credit

Parameters for awarding PLA:

- *External* – Any credits awarded for PLA, must be in accordance with the Policies of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges ([Credit for Prior Learning](#)). If a program accrediting agency imposes a specific maximum for PLA credit, that maximum will be honored for that program.
- *Internal*
 - The maximum number of credits that can be earned through PLA (any combination), is no more than 15 credits/25% for an associate degree and no more than 60 credits for a baccalaureate degree. In all cases a student must earn 50% of credits required for a credential in instruction delivered by the campus where the degree is offered. PLA credit will not count towards this 50% minimum.
 - No other limitations are to be placed on student eligibility for PLA credit, such as minimum age or work experience. However, the college 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.

How PLA credits may be used in a student’s academic program: PLA credits apply toward majors, 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. PLA credits also satisfy prerequisite requirements in the same manner that their course equivalencies do at the college.

Transferability of PLA Credits

Transfer of PLA credits accepted at COM-FSM to other colleges and universities is dependent upon acceptance by the institution where the student is transferring to.

How PLA credits are to be treated:

- When credit has been awarded for standardized examinations or by credit recommendation services, the COM-FSM encourages acceptance of PLA credits in transfer based on the student’s transfer transcript from other colleges and universities.

Transcription of PLA Credits

Transcription Standards: PLA credits shall appear on student transcripts in the following ways:

- **Military Credit** – Credit awarded for completion of services schools will be governed by recommendations at the baccalaureate or associate level from the evaluation completed by ACE. 1 Credit of Exercise and Sport Science is waived for completion of boot camp. A letter grade of “P” will be assigned for credit granted through evaluation by ACE. Because no grade is assigned other than “P,” no Quality Points will be awarded to count toward GPA.
- **Credit-by-examination** – Credits for courses earned by examination will be entered on the student’s permanent record as “credit-by-examination.” Credits so earned will not count

toward the twelve-semester credit requirement for full-time student classification. Because no grade is assigned other than “P,” no Quality Points will be awarded to count toward GPA.

- Other forms of PLA – Students may earn college credit for additional forms of PLA not mentioned above according to BP 3104. 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

- Periodic review of PLA policies – The college is to review PLA program policy and procedures at least every five years corresponding with Board Policy 2001 and the established schedule. The review should involve evaluating all aspects of PLA policy and procedures for consistency with regional and national practices. Additionally, the college is encouraged to report a PLA Program Profile detailing
 - Volume of PLA credits awarded annually (per PLA subcategory and total)
 - Average volume of PLA credits per award
 - 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).
- 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:
 - Description of Program
 - Catalog language
 - Web pages and other social media
 - Program definitions
 - Student qualifications
 - Expectation on student participation
 - Tuition
 - Any and all fees or other associated costs (with a clear estimation of the costs involved for the student)
 - Uses of PLA credit
 - Limitations of PLA credit
 - Transferability of PLA credit
 - Transcription of PLA credit
 - Appeals procedures and related information
 - Assessor qualifications
 - Marketing materials
 - Advertising
 - Student advising
- Transparency of the award/denial of PLA credit:
 - When a student has applied for PLA credit, the following procedures must be followed:

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

Appeals

- Process for appealing PLA decisions (e.g., credit awarded, review process):
 - Informal Complaint –
 - A student who believes college academic regulations including college grading procedures and/or grading criteria have not been followed must attempt to resolve the issue by discussing the differences of opinion with his/her PLA assessor as a first step.
 - If the student is unable to reach agreement with the PLA assessor, the student may take the complaint to the Instructional Coordinator and then, if no resolution is reached, to the Dean of Academic Programs and finally to the Vice President of Instructional Affairs.
 - Based upon professional judgement, the PLA assessor is solely responsible for the PLA credit assigned. No PLA assessor may be directed to change the result unless a mistake, fraud or bad faith by the PLA assessor is proven; the burden of proof for the existence of mistake, fraud or bad faith on the of the PLA assessor is the responsibility of the student.
 - If resolution is not reached through the informal process, the student may file a Formal Complaint.
 - Formal Complaint
 - The Formal Complaint procedure for PLA must be completed within 90 calendar days of the conclusion of the assessment in which the result is being challenged.
 - The student submits to the Instructional Coordinator or appropriate supervising administrator a written request asking for a meeting to resolve the complaint. The written request must include a detailed description of the PLA assessment complaint and appropriate documentation. The student must initiate this request within seven (7) working days of the student's meeting with the IC. The appropriate supervising administrator will convene a Mediation Hearing Committee within fourteen (14) working days of receipt of the formal request and relevant data supplied by the student.
 - The Mediation Hearing Committee is composed of the PLA assessor, the student and the IC who serves as chair of the committee.
 - The PLA assessor and the student may have an on-campus representative if they choose. Meetings of the Mediation Hearing Committee will be closed to observers.
 - If the issue cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the PLA assessor and the student at this step, the Mediation Hearing Committee Chair becomes responsible for deciding if the PLA result complaint is valid and what appropriate action will be taken. The Committee Chair's written decision and proposed action will be sent to the Vice President of Instructional Affairs within seven (7) working days of the meeting date. Copies of the decision and proposed action will be sent to the student and PLA assessor involved. If

there is no appeal by either party, the action proposed by the committee chair will be taken.

- If either student or the PLA assessor is dissatisfied with the decision or proposed action by the Mediation Hearing Committee Chair, an appeal may be made within seven (7) working days to the Vice President of Instructional Affairs or designee. This appeal will be a written memorandum outlining the nature of and the basis for dissatisfaction with the decision or action taken. A copy of the appeal is to be given to the committee chair and the student or PLA assessor, as appropriate. Once the Vice President of Instructional Affairs or designee has received the appeal and a written answer from the committee chair, the Chair will meet with the student and PLA assessor, separately or together, at the Chair's discretion within fourteen (14) working days to discuss the matter.
 - After reviewing the appeal with the President, the Vice President of Instructional Affairs has discretionary power to uphold, reverse, or modify the recommendation of the Mediation Hearing Committee Chair. The Vice President of Instructional Affairs will prepare a written decision that will be sent to the student, to the committee chair, and to the appropriate PLA assessor.
 - The decision of the Vice President of Instructional Affairs is final and completes the procedure for a complaint about PLA practices at the College of Micronesia-FSM. The Office of the Vice President of Instructional Affairs will be the official repository of records regarding decisions or actions involving a PLA complaint.
- 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 level. Students should be directed to the appeals procedures for each testing agency or credit recommendation service.

Fees and Costs associated with PLA:

Fee	Amount	Comments
Assessment Request	\$10.00	Per request
Credit-by-Exam	\$25.00	Per exam, for computer or paper-based
Practical Exam	\$35.00	Per practical exam
Credit for Prior Learning (if awarded)	10%	Of prevailing resident tuition rate [\$43.50 for 3 credits] (\$87.00 for 3 credits)

Credit-by-Exam or practical exams are developed by program faculty and should follow the same standards used to evaluate classroom learning. Exams must assess the learning outcomes of the course being challenged. Faculty must have skills in test development and topic assessments.

- Identify goal of exam
- Determine structure of exam - multiple choice, short answer, etc.
- Select and write test items
- Pilot test exam with sample test takers
- Remove or revise unfair test items
- Pilot test exam with second sample of test takers
- Continue to maintain updated version of exam and test security

See Board Policy 3104.

Appendix A – The 10 CAEL Standards for Assessing Learning

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 COM-FSM should conform to these standards.

- 1) Credit or competencies are awarded only for evidence of learning, not for experience or time spent.
- 2) Assessment is integral to learning because it leads to and enables future learning.
- 3) Assessment is based on criteria for outcomes that are clearly articulated and shared among constituencies.
- 4) The determination of credit awards and competence levels are made by appropriate subject matter and credentialing experts.
- 5) Assessment advances the broader purpose of equity and access for diverse individuals and groups.
- 6) Institutions proactively provide guidance and support for learners' full engagement in the assessment process.
- 7) Assessment policies and procedures are the result of inclusive deliberation and are shared with all constituencies.
- 8) Fees charged for assessment are based on the services performed in the process rather than the credit awarded.
- 9) All practitioners involved in the assessment process pursue and receive adequate training and continuing professional development for the functions they perform.
- 10) Assessment programs are regularly monitored, evaluated and revised to respond to institutional and learner needs.