



Policy AC015: Earning Course Credit by Examination or Evaluation

Recommended for Approval by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Fisher".

James Fisher, Ph.D.
Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Approved by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon Anderson".

Jon Anderson, Ph.D.
President

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A. Intent

To provide policies and procedures by which non-credit-bearing learning or experiences may be counted for academic credits at PennWest.

B. Definition(s)

None.

C. Policy

1. Pennsylvania Western University offers the following options for assessing **undergraduate** student requests that non-credit-bearing learning or experiences count for academic credit:
 - a. College-Level Examination Program (CLEP)
 - b. Credit by Exam
 - c. DSST (formerly DANTES) exams
 - d. Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)
2. Pennsylvania Western University offers the following options for assessing **graduate** student requests that non-credit-bearing learning or experiences count for academic credit:
 - a. Credit by Exam
 - b. Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)
3. Options covered by this policy are only available to undergraduate and graduate students pursuing a degree or certification at the University. A student may begin the process for the awarding of academic credits after the first day of their first enrolled semester. Credits will not

be awarded, however, unless and until:

- a. The student is in good standing
- b. The student is enrolled in a PennWest degree program

- 4. An undergraduate student may not be awarded more than a total of thirty (30) semester hours of academic credit through the options provided under this policy. Joint Services Transcript (JST) credits are not subject to this 30-credit limit; see the Transfer Credit Policy (AC034) for additional information.
- 5. A graduate student may not obtain more than thirty percent (30%) of the credits required for a PennWest graduate degree, certificate, or certification through the options provided under this policy.
- 6. Credits obtained through the options in this policy may be applied to meet a student's degree requirements.
 - a. Individual degree programs may have limits on credit hours that may be applied toward major requirements.
 - b. Academic credits awarded under this policy are not counted as earned from PennWest for purposes of meeting graduation residency requirements as defined in the Graduation Residency Requirements Policy (AC033). A student, for example, cannot complete all major or degree requirements through a combination of these credits and other transferred credits without taking a minimum number of courses directly from Penn West, as described in Policy AC033.
- 7. **College-Level Examination Program (CLEP)**
 - a. PennWest offers subject examinations through the CLEP program; the availability of subject-area exams may change over time.
 - b. Students scoring at least 50 on a CLEP exam will be granted the number of credits equivalent to those allowed for a comparable course taught at PennWest. The Student Success Center will maintain a list of course equivalencies for approved CLEP exams.
 - c. Duplicate credits will not be awarded for a successful CLEP exam if a student has already earned credits in an equivalent college course.
 - d. Credits awarded through a successful CLEP exam will be coded on a student's transcript as the transfer grade associated with the CLEP score. Transfer grades do not affect a student's GPA.
- 8. **Credit by Exam**
 - a. Students may attempt to earn credit for courses in the PennWest catalog through an exam testing the student's course subject competency. Competency exams are available for courses at the discretion of the University; an interested student should contact the chair of the academic department housing the course to determine availability of a competency exam. The academic department chair determines whether a given exam score warrants credit for the course.
 - b. A student seeking to earn credit by exam for a course in which they are currently enrolled must complete the examination process prior to the end of the course's drop/add period.
 - c. Students may not earn course credit through credit by exam for a course for which they have previously received a grade or for a course they audited.
 - d. Credits awarded through a successful credit by exam will be coded on a student's transcript as a "CR" grade; CR grades do not affect a student's GPA.

9. DSST Exams

- a. PennWest accepts credit for DSST (formerly DAN TES) exams where a student has earned the minimum scores specified by the Pennsylvania Transfer and Articulation Center (<https://www.patrac.org/Student/Earn-Credit-by-Exam#3>).
- b. Credits awarded through a successful DSST exam will be coded on a student's transcript as the transfer grade associated with the DSST score. Transfer grades do not affect a student's GPA.

10. Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)

- a. For purpose of this policy, the term *prior learning* is defined as non-university-credit-bearing learning experiences that conveyed knowledge and/or skills analogous to knowledge and/or skills normally achieved through credit-bearing coursework at PennWest. *Prior learning* includes experiences like employment, military training, personal educational growth, volunteer work, certificate training, or specialized certifications.
- b. PennWest may award academic credit for prior learning through the Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) process. Credit may be awarded for developed knowledge and/or skills that are appropriately analogous to a specific PennWest course; credit may also be awarded for general knowledge and/or skills in a subject area that may not be equivalent to a specific course at the university. Prior learning credit may be awarded in lieu of internship credits through a successful PLA evaluation.
- c. While the PLA process is administered by the Student Success Center and the relevant academic department, the appropriate academic dean of the college overseeing a given subject area has final approval over the award, if any, of academic credits.
- d. Some accredited programs may not accept credits awarded through the PLA process.
- e. In certain academic disciplines, some earned certificates or credentials have predetermined PLA equivalencies. For earned certificates or credentials to have a predetermine equivalency, the following shall occur:
 - i. The academic department with relevant disciplinary expertise, through a department vote, recommends to its college dean that a specific certificate or credential equate, through the PLA process, to one or more credit-bearing courses in the PennWest course catalog.
 - ii. If the department's recommendation is approved by the college dean, the certificate or credential will be included in a list of predetermined PLA equivalencies.
- f. A student may begin the process for the awarding of academic credits through the PLA process after the first day of their first enrolled semester. Students should not be enrolled in a course for which they are requesting PLA credit at the time. Unless exempted by the appropriate dean for a specific student or specific degree program, however, credits will not be awarded unless and until:
 - i. The student is in good standing
 - ii. The student is enrolled in a PennWest degree program
 - iii. If an **undergraduate** student, the student has successfully completed at least 12 credits of PennWest coursework (non-transfer)
 - iv. If a **graduate student**, the student has successfully completed at least nine (9) credits of PennWest coursework (non-transfer)
- g. Credits awarded through a successful PLA application will be coded on a student's transcript as a "CR" grade; CR grades do not affect a student's GPA.
- h. Credits awarded through the PLA process may have financial and/or loan repayment implications. For example, prior learning credits are not eligible for financial aid

consideration. Furthermore, prior learning credits are not considered “registered credits.” (If a student’s schedule in a semester contains no “registered credits,” loan repayment may be triggered.) Before applying for prior learning credits, students are encouraged to consult with the Office of Financial Aid.

D. Procedures

College-Level Examination Program (CLEP)

1. A student may schedule a CLEP exam through the Student Success Center and pay the applicable fee through the Student Accounts Office.
2. Once testing is complete, the student should submit successful test scores to the Office of the Registrar so that awarded credits are posted to the student’s transcript.

Credit by Exam

1. The student will contact the appropriate academic department chair to determine if an exam is available for the course in question. If so, the student will complete the Competency Exam Form.
2. The student will discuss the competency exam with their academic advisor and secure approval on the form from their advisor and from the department chair offering the course.
3. The student will take the form to the academic department housing the course to schedule the examination.
4. The department chair, or designee, will administer the examination and indicate whether the student has successfully passed the exam on the Competency Exam Form.
5. The form is routed to the academic dean for approval and then to the Office of the Registrar for posting to the student’s transcript.

DSST (formerly DANTES) Exam

1. The student will complete DSST exams through the U.S. Military’s DSST (formerly DANTES) program.
2. Upon completion, the student should request that an official transcript from DSST is submitted to the Office of the Registrar for posting on the student’s transcript.

Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) without Predetermined PLA Equivalencies

The following is the process for reviewing requests for PLA credits where predetermined equivalencies for a student’s prior learning have **not** been established:

1. The student will request a PLA Application Form from the Student Success Center or the chair of the relevant academic department that oversees the courses for which PLA credits may be awarded. The student will complete and submit, to the Student Success Center, the PLA Application Form and a detailed portfolio that explains and documents how the student’s prior learning conferred developed knowledge and/or skills that are appropriately analogous to a specific PennWest course, or conferred general knowledge and/or skills in a given subject area that are equivalent to credit-appropriate learning (though not equivalent to a specific course at the university).
2. A member of the Student Success Center will review the application and portfolio for completeness and confirm the student’s eligibility and forward it to the appropriate

department chair/s or designee/s.

3. The department chair/designee will direct the application and portfolio to an appropriate faculty member or members for evaluation. (The department chair or designee may serve as the evaluator.) A specific faculty member's evaluation of an application and portfolio is voluntary. The faculty member's evaluation and subsequent recommendation that specific credits shall be awarded, if any, shall be completed and communicated within 15 working days to the department chair/designee and dean.
4. The academic dean will review the application and portfolio and the recommendation of the reviewing faculty member and approve an appropriate award of credits. The academic dean will return the materials to the Student Success Center with the decision.
5. The Student Success Center will inform the student and chair/designee of the dean's decision and work with appropriate offices to implement the decision.
6. There is a student fee for the award of PLA credits without predetermined equivalencies; a student does not pay a fee if no credits are awarded. The Office of Student Accounts will make information about the fee available.

Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) with Predetermined PLA Equivalencies

The following is the process for reviewing PLA requests for academic credit for certificates or credentials with predetermined PLA equivalencies:

1. The student will request a PLA Application Form from the Student Success Center or the chair of the academic department that oversees the courses for which PLA credits may be awarded.
2. The student will complete the PLA Application Form, but the student does not prepare a portfolio to apply for predetermined PLA credits. If, however, a student is applying to receive predetermined PLA credits *and* non-predetermined PLA credits, the student will prepare a portfolio as normal for all requested non-predetermined credits and submit the completed PLA request form and portfolio to a member of the Student Success Center.
3. A member of the Student Success Center will review the application to confirm completeness, student eligibility, and if the PLA credits being requested match certificates and/or credentials from the pre-approved PLA list and forward the application to the appropriate department chair/s or designees/s (along with the student's portfolio if the student is also applying for non-predetermined PLA credits).
4. If the student has only applied for predetermined PLA credits, the chair/designee signs the form and forwards the form to the appropriate dean; the request does not need to be reviewed by a specific faculty member within the department. If the student has also applied for non-predetermined PLA credits, the department chair/designee (and reviewing and recommending faculty member/s) will follow the procedures outlined in the section of this policy on awarding PLA credits without predetermined equivalencies.
5. The academic dean will review the application and approve an appropriate award of credits. The academic dean will return the materials to the Student Success Center with the decision.
6. The Student Success Center will inform the student and chair/designee of the prior learning credit decision and work with appropriate offices to implement the decision.

7. The student may appeal the dean's decision to the Office of the Provost with a written request and justification. The Provost or designee will communicate the decision regarding the appeal to the student, the Student Success Center, the dean, and the academic department.
8. There is no student fee for applying for PLA credits with predetermined PLA equivalencies.

E. Related policies

Grading Policy (AC019)

Graduation Requirements Policy (AC028)

Graduation Residency Requirements Policy (AC033)

Transfer Credit Policy (AC034)

F. Contact Information

For additional information, please contact the Student Success Center.

G. Policy Review Schedule

All policies will be reviewed every two years or on an as needed basis if a change in BOG, PASSHE or Pennsylvania law would create the need for an immediate change.