

# UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I **COMMUNITY COLLEGES POLICY**

**UHCCP #\_\_\_\_\_ Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Program**  
January 2013

## **1. Purpose**

The purpose of granting credit for learning which has taken place outside of educational institutions is to enable students to complete degree and certificate programs more rapidly and without repetition when they have already acquired knowledge or skills relevant to their program of study.

This policy is to ensure consistency in awarding credits, to maintain the credibility of college-level learning, and to seamlessly transfer credits among participating University of Hawai'i campuses listed in Appendix A.

## **2. Related University Policies**

- A. Chancellor for Community Colleges Memo, CCCM #6300 (October 2, 1980), "Awarding Credit for Learning Which Has Taken Place Outside of Educational Institutions."  
[www.hawaii.edu/ccc/Docs/CCCM\\_PDF/6300-100280.pdf](http://www.hawaii.edu/ccc/Docs/CCCM_PDF/6300-100280.pdf)
- B. University of Hawai'i Board of Regents Bylaws and Policies, Chapter 5, Academic Affairs, Section 5-14 Student and Credit Transfer within the University, Section b.  
[www.hawaii.edu/offices/bor/policy/borpch5.pdf](http://www.hawaii.edu/offices/bor/policy/borpch5.pdf)
- C. University of Hawai'i Executive Memorandum No. 06-05, "Updated Executive Policy E5.209, University of Hawai'i System Student Transfer and Inter-Campus Articulation, August 2006.  
[www.hawaii.edu/apis/ep/e5/e5209.pdf](http://www.hawaii.edu/apis/ep/e5/e5209.pdf)
- D. Hawai'i House Bill 2639 (2012).  
[www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2012/bills/HB2639\\_HD2\\_.pdf](http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2012/bills/HB2639_HD2_.pdf)
- E. Dual Credit Articulated Program of Study (DCAPS) Policy  
[http://www.hawaii.edu/cte/publications/DCAPS\\_08\\_09.pdf](http://www.hawaii.edu/cte/publications/DCAPS_08_09.pdf)

## **3. Background Information**

Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is the process through which students can earn college credit by identifying and documenting college-level learning that has been acquired through life experiences such as military and/or work experience, training, professional certification, independent study, volunteer activities, and hobbies (e.g. astronomy, history, travel, cultural and/or fine arts).

- A. Hawai'i House Bill 2639; SECTION 1. Section 304A-802, Hawaii Revised Statutes  
[www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2012/bills/HB2639\\_HD2\\_.pdf](http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2012/bills/HB2639_HD2_.pdf)

There is established at the university and the community colleges a college—credit equivalency program. The purpose of this program is to award college credits to students who are enrolled in a degree or certificate program at the university or at a community college and who have successfully completed, at a high school, business school, trade school, adult education school, or military training program, courses that are equivalent to courses offered for credit in the University of Hawaii system. **The program shall also award credits for**

**professional experience gained through service in the United States armed forces.**

In this regard, the university, among other things, shall prepare and make public the following: **A learning assessment or other criteria to determine college-level learning gained during service in the United States armed forces.”**  
(Emphasis added—House modification to previous legislation.)

B. The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL)

Fueling the Race to Postsecondary Success: A 48-Institution Study of Prior Learning Assessment and Adult Student Outcomes (March 2010)  
[www.cael.org/pdf/pla\\_fueling-the-race.pdf](http://www.cael.org/pdf/pla_fueling-the-race.pdf)\*

1. **Summary of Findings\***

The data from 62,475 students at the 48 postsecondary institutions in our study show that PLA students had better academic outcomes, particularly in terms of graduation rates and persistence, than other adult students. Many PLA students also shortened the time required to earn a degree, depending on the number of PLA credits earned.

2. **PLA and Graduation Rates\***

PLA students in this study had much higher degree-earning rates than non-PLA students. More than half (56%) of PLA students earned a postsecondary degree within seven years, while only 21 percent of non-PLA students did so. In terms of the specific degrees earned:

- 43 percent of PLA students earned a bachelor's degree, compared to only 15 percent of non-PLA students.
- 13 percent of PLA students earned an associate's degree, compared to 6 percent of non-PLA students.

**4. Responsibilities**

It is the responsibility of each Chancellor to ensure that the components of the Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Program is carefully monitored and documented. Each Chancellor will assure that the institution, relying on the expertise of its faculty and institution's chief academic officer, determines the appropriateness of granting credit for prior learning. Examples of Prior Learning Assessment at participating UH campuses are presented in Appendix B. These credits may be granted using any of the following methods:

A. Credit by Examination (CE)

Students who feel competent that their background/learning experiences have adequately prepared them in certain subject areas may challenge instructor-prepared examinations. The credit by examination must be approved by appropriate faculty member(s) and/or Division Chairperson.

B. Equivalency Examination

Standardized national exams may be equated to equivalent courses. The equivalency examination must be approved by appropriate faculty member(s) and/or Division Chairperson. Examples of such examinations include the following:

1. AP – Advanced Placement Examination
2. CLEP – College-Level Examination Program

3. DSST – DANTES Subject Standardized Tests
  4. IB – International Baccalaureate
- C. Portfolio-based Assessment  
Prior learning must be documented in writing with evidence of the concepts learned and the achievement level attained. The documenter must also provide a background of his/her credentials and why he/she has the expertise to be a documenter in the field. The prior learning must be verified by content experts, i.e., supervisor, co-workers, personnel staff. Credit for such prior learning must be approved by appropriate faculty member(s) and/or Division Chairperson.
- D. Non-collegiate-Sponsored Education Credit  
This option evaluates learning from courses completed in non-collegiate settings (e.g., professional licenses, labor union courses, agency training programs, professional workshops, military courses) whose course content is substantially equivalent to offerings from a college. The non-collegiate-sponsored education credit must be approved by appropriate faculty member(s) and/or Division Chairperson. Examples of such education credit include the following:
1. Military (e.g. AARTS, SMART)
  2. American Council on Education (ACE) College Credit Recommendation Service
  3. Professional Licenses or Industry Certifications (nationally- or state-certified professionals)

## 5. Procedures

Participating UH campuses will establish procedures for granting PLA credit in each of the specific categories listed in Part 4. In determining its procedures, each campus agrees to the following at minimum:

- A. Courses for which credit is granted based on Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) will be recorded as Credit by Examination (CE).
- B. Courses for which credit is granted based on Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) will be accepted to fulfill applicable certificate/degree requirements.
- C. Limitations to the number of CE credits allowed will be based on current WASC recommendations (ACSCU 2012/2013: 30 credits maximum).
- D. Criteria for awarding credit should be demonstrated mastery of student learning outcomes at a “C” level or higher.

Signature Page is provided in Appendix C.

**Appendix A – List of participating UH campuses**

- Hawai'i Community College
- Honolulu Community College
- Kapi'olani Community College
- Kaua'i Community College
- Leeward Community College
- University of Hawai'i at Hilo
- University of Hawai'i – Maui College
- University of Hawai'i – West O'ahu
- Windward Community College

## Appendix B – Examples of Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) at Participating UH Campuses

Option	Credit-by-Exam Reference Part 4.A.	Equivalency Examinations Reference Part 4.B.	Portfolio-Based Assessment Reference Part 4.C.	Non-Collegiate-Sponsored Education Credits See Part 4.D.
How does it work?	With instructor approval, enrolled students may take instructor-prepared examinations covering the material in a specific course.	Equivalency examinations such as CLEP, DSST, IB, and AP exams give students the opportunity to earn college credit.	Students usually enroll in a portfolio-based assessment course (credit or non-credit).  Students prepare a portfolio in which they document college-level learning.	Students who have successfully completed military training, licensure or professional certifications, and/or ACE equivalency may be awarded college credit.
How is student learning assessed for earning credit?	Students must pass the examination with a "C" or higher.	Credit is awarded if the student meets the qualifying score set by the campus.	Student portfolios are evaluated by content expert faculty assessor(s) for evidence of meeting course-level student learning outcomes (SLOs) with a "C" or higher.	Individual campuses determine the equivalencies.
Which students should choose this option?	Students in degree programs that include specific courses for which a student believes he or she has current knowledge meeting the student learning outcomes (SLOs) of the course.  Students who have completed courses at non-regionally-accredited postsecondary institutions should consider credit-by-examination.	Students with specific knowledge in an area where tests are offered.	Students who have substantial professional or community experience and college-level writing skills (i.e. qualify for ENG 100)	Military experience that is documented through ACE or other official training records.  Employees/professionals who obtained industry certification or licensure and can provide original proofs of satisfactory completion.
How are these credits awarded?	Criteria for awarding credit should be demonstrated mastery of student learning outcomes at a "C" level or higher.	Transcripts from CLEP, DSST, IB, and/or AP examinations are sent to college specified by the student.	Credit must be approved by appropriate faculty member(s) and/or Division Chairperson.	Transfer credit awarded based on ACE transcripts. Professional certifications or licensures are awarded on an individual basis.

<b>Option</b>	<b>Credit-by-Exam</b> Reference Part 4.A.	<b>Equivalency Examinations</b> Reference Part 4.B.	<b>Portfolio-Based Assessment</b> Reference Part 4.C.	<b>Non-Collegiate- Sponsored Education Credits</b> See Part 4.D.
How are these credits recorded?	Institutional credit recorded by the college with a grade of CE on the transcript.	Institutional credit recorded by the college with a grade of CE on the transcript.	Institutional credit recorded by the college with a grade of CE on the transcript.	On other documentation, institutional credit is recorded by the college with a grade of CE on the transcript.
What are the costs?	Tuition and fees for the challenged course, but no books or supplies are required.	Test and administration fees.	Students pay portfolio class fee/tuition and textbook costs (if applicable), and portfolio assessment fees.	None, since assessments were administered and paid for previously.
Are there special considerations?	Students should talk with their advisors regarding campus-specific policies.	Students should talk with their advisors regarding campus-specific policies.  CLEP or DSST tests must be arranged at authorized test centers.	Students should talk with their advisors regarding campus-specific policies.  Students must be able to provide documentation as evidence for prior learning.	Students should talk with their advisors.

## Appendix C – Signature Page

---

John Morton  
Vice President for Community Colleges

---

Date