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Policy Name

4.4210 Prior Learning Assessment

Purpose and Scope

This policy recognizes that students may acquire knowledge equivalent to that obtained through completion of courses through their professional experience or other methods of instruction. Prior knowledge may be demonstrated in three ways: standardized examinations by nationally recognized external testing organizations; examinations administered internally by Alvernia University departments; and portfolio assessment.

Prior learning assessment is a student-centered and faculty-driven process for awarding students college credit for demonstrated knowledge. Alvernia University's Prior Learning Assessment program will be administered through the Alvernia University Division of Academic Affairs.

Title or Role	Definition and What They Are Responsible For
Provost and Chief Academic Officer	Maintains and enforces this policy. Receives exceptions to the policy.
Senior Leadership Team	Serves as final approval for policy and assists with reviewing exceptions to the policy.

Policy

Definitions

Prior Learning Assessment: A process to evaluate the knowledge and skills students gain from prior life experiences. When prior learning experiences demonstrate college-level learning and align with course competencies, an award of college credit will be considered and awarded when appropriate. Decisions are student-centered and meant to address the needs of students who have changed institutions or objectives or have learned in non-traditional formats. Credit for prior learning is awarded only for demonstrated college-level learning, not for experience merely per se.

Eligibility: To earn credit for prior learning, a student must be enrolled, registered, and in good standing.

Application of Credit: Credit for prior learning shall be applied to degree or program requirements in the same manner as credits earned through the completion of the equivalent courses at Alvernia University. Credit will be applied to course equivalents when students demonstrate mastery of course objectives. Credit will be counted only once for the same course. Credit awarded for a general education course will count toward the total number of general education credits required.

Undergraduate students may only receive a maximum of 30 credits of any type of PLA for undergraduate courses. Graduate students may only receive a maximum of six credits of PLA. Credits awarded through Prior

Learning Assessment (PLA) shall be subject to the University's applicable academic residency requirements and any additional limitations established by individual academic programs or accrediting bodies.

Residency: Credits for demonstrated knowledge earned through any prior learning method do not fulfill Alvernia University residency requirements or Bachelor's Degree Requirements for Students.

Grading: Credit awarded by prior learning assessment at Alvernia University shall receive a neutral grade such as "P" for Pass or "CR" for credit, or such other designation as adopted by the Registrar. Conventional letter grades will not be used. The transcript will not indicate an unsuccessful attempt to earn credit for prior learning.

Overview

Upon application and department review, students in good academic standing may be awarded Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) credits:

1) course credit(s) for Alvernia course equivalencies for which the outcomes are met, or
2) as general electives course credits upon entrance to Alvernia.

PLA Credits do not contribute to enrollment credits in any semester.

In order to best serve the needs of students, applications for PLA should be submitted as early as possible after enrolling. However, applications before matriculation are accepted but will not be transcripted until matriculation. Decisions will be made in a timely manner to ensure the best academic advising for the student. However, applications for PLA Awarded by Portfolio Assessment may take up to two months to complete review.

Applications for PLA will not be accepted during the student's final semester and/or final nine credits of enrollment at Alvernia University. Students should meet with an academic advisor who should assist the student with navigating the process and help decide the course(s) for which to apply for prior learning assessment. It may be determined that a course for credit is needed rather than PLA credits.

The following types of PLA may be awarded:

PLA Awarded by Internally Administered Examinations

Credit for prior learning can be awarded through examinations created and administered by academic units that offer the course. The examination is constructed to allow the student to demonstrate mastery of the course's learning outcomes.

An enrolled student may not challenge courses that have been audited or for which the student received a grade of “F.” A grade of “C”/2.0 or better on the examination is required to obtain credit.

Students may repeat an examination one time. No exam may be repeated before 30 business days have passed. If a department offers credit by examination, no eligible student can be refused the opportunity to take the exam for course credit.

PLA Awarded by External Standardized Examination

Credit for prior learning can be awarded through approved standardized examinations administered by nationally recognized testing organizations. To find the approved standardized tests and the scores required by individual programs, check the Alvernia University Registrar's webpage.

PLA Awarded by Portfolio Assessment

Credit for prior learning can be awarded through a portfolio assessment process managed by an academic department at Alvernia University.

Prior learning assessment by portfolio assessment will follow a course-equivalency credit and general education credit model as described above. Students demonstrate college-level learning by submitting a portfolio consisting of an organized collection of evidence demonstrating mastery of the learning outcomes of a specific course offered at Alvernia University or for general elective credit upon admission.

PLA Awarded through External Credit Recommendations

Alvernia University may award undergraduate credit for demonstrated college-level learning acquired through noncollegiate educational programs, professional training, or other structured learning experiences that have been evaluated and recommended for academic credit by nationally recognized credit recommendation services, including the American Council on Education (ACE) and the National College Credit Recommendation Service (NCCRS) or state recognized accrediting agencies, such as the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Municipal Police Officers' Education and Training Commission.

Credit recommendations issued by these organizations do not constitute academic credit awarded by an accredited institution. Such recommendations serve as independent evaluations of college-level learning and may be considered by Alvernia University in determining whether prior learning warrants the award of academic credit.

To be considered for credit, the student must provide official documentation verifying successful completion of the learning experience. The University must also verify that the specific course or training program received a credit recommendation applicable to the period during which the student completed the learning experience.

The appropriate academic department shall review the external credit recommendation to determine whether the documented learning is comparable to Alvernia University coursework or otherwise warrants general elective credit. The department may recommend the award of credit, the number of credits to be awarded, and the applicability of those credits to degree requirements.

External credit recommendations shall not automatically result in the award of academic credit. Alvernia University retains final authority over all decisions concerning academic credit, course equivalencies, degree applicability, and compliance with applicable accreditation and program requirements.

When an external credit recommendation provides sufficient evidence of college-level learning, a separate portfolio assessment or internally administered examination shall not ordinarily be required. Additional documentation or assessment may be requested when necessary to establish equivalency or demonstrate mastery of required learning outcomes.

Credit awarded under this provision shall be classified and transcripted as Prior Learning Assessment credit and shall be subject to the University's established limitations on PLA credit, residency requirements, and other applicable academic policies.

Military Credit

A student may earn up to 3 PED elective credits through military training following the American Council on Education (ACE) credit recommendations.

Fees or Tuition Charges for Prior Learning Assessment

Fees are assessed based on the services performed for review and assessment of Prior Learning awarded through Portfolio Assessment and Internal Examinations. Fees are assessed, regardless of whether the application is approved or denied, at the rate provided annually in the fees schedule in the course catalog. Should an application for PLA be denied and submitted for re-application, the fees will be reassessed. Students awarded Prior Learning credits through Internal Examinations pay a tuition charge for credits.

Transcription

Credit awarded for prior learning will be transcripted indicating which of the following methods of prior learning assessment were used as well as the course satisfaction if applicable. For example, the information on the transcript for College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) credit would include the following language: "COM 101 - PLA -External Standardized Examination (CLEP)"

- PLA Awarded by External Standardized Examination will be automatically transcripted upon receipt of scores meeting eligibility requirements as posted on the Registrar webpage.
- Military Credits will be transcripted upon student submission of the DD-214 form to the Registrar's Office.
- PLA Awarded by Internal Examination, Portfolio Assessment, or External Credit Recommendations will be transcripted upon award of such credits through the procedure set forth below.

Procedure

Application and Submission for Internal Examinations and PLA Portfolio Assessment.,

Students may apply for PLA Awarded by Portfolio Assessment by completing the application form available on MyAlvernia. Students will be billed for PLA Awarded by Portfolio Assessment as provided in our fees posted in the course catalog annually.

1. Students will digitally submit the Prior Learning Assessment Application to the Registrar's Office. Students applying for Prior Learning Assessment through Portfolio Assessment will include the digital Portfolio described in the Portfolio Contents section below.
2. The Registrar's Office will inform the Student Billing Office which will, in turn, bill the student based on the fee schedule posted annually in the Alvernia Course Catalog.
3. Upon payment to the Student Billing Office by the student, the PLA application, including the Portfolio described in the Portfolio Procedure below if credits are requested to be awarded by Portfolio Assessment, will be released to the Department Chair and/or Program Director [or Departmental representative] who oversees the courses included in the application.
4. The Department Chair and/or Program Director[or Departmental representative] will review the Application.
    a. For Internal Examination Applications, the exam will be administered at a mutually agreed upon time between the student and the Department Chair and/or Program Director[or Departmental representative], within 30 days of department receipt of the request.
    b. For Portfolio Assessment Applications, the Department Chair and/or Program Director[or Departmental representative] will review the portfolio within 30 calendar days of receipt.

    For both Internal Examinations and Portfolio Assessments, the Department Chair and/or Program Director[or Departmental representative] will provide a recommendation based upon the examination within 15 calendar days of the examination. A negative recommendation will be sent to the student with a written explanation for the denial. A copy of the negative recommendation will be sent to the Registrar. A positive recommendation will be forwarded to the Dean of the respective College and/or School.

    Students may submit a portfolio for assessment at most two times for a given course. The second portfolio cannot be submitted within 30 business days of notification of the outcome of the initial submission. If a program offers credit by portfolio assessment, no eligible student can be refused the opportunity to submit a portfolio assessed for course credit.
5. The Dean will provide a recommendation to the Provost within 60 calendar days from the original date of application.
6. The Provost will issue the final decision to the student within 90 calendar days from the original date of application for Prior Learning and inform the Registrar of the final decision.
7. The Registrar will then transcript the appropriate number of awarded credits as provided in this policy.

Application and Submission for External Credit Recommendations

Students may apply for Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) credit based on successful completion of noncollegiate educational programs or training that have received college credit recommendations from recognized external credit evaluation organizations, including the American Council on Education (ACE) and the National College Credit Recommendation Service (NCCRS).

Students will digitally submit the Prior Learning Assessment Application to the Registrar's Office, accompanied by official documentation of successful completion of the educational program or training for which credit is requested.

The Registrar's Office will verify that the educational program or training has received a college credit recommendation from a recognized external credit evaluation organization and that the recommendation was in effect at the time of the student's completion.

The application and supporting documentation will be forwarded to the appropriate Department Chair or Program Director (as determined by the applicable department) for academic review.

The Department Chair and/or Program Director will review the credit recommendation and supporting documentation to determine whether the learning is appropriate for academic credit and its applicability to specific Alvernia University courses or general elective requirements. A recommendation will be forwarded to the Dean of the respective College and/or School within 30 calendar days of receipt.

The Dean will serve as the final approval authority for PLA credit awarded through external credit recommendations. The Dean will review the departmental recommendation and provide a final decision to the Registrar within 60 calendar days of the original application. A negative decision will be communicated to the student with a written explanation.

Upon approval, the Registrar will notify the student and transcript the appropriate number of credits as Prior Learning Assessment credit in accordance with this policy.

Previously approved course equivalencies may be applied to subsequent applications without additional departmental review, provided the external credit recommendation remains valid and the applicable Alvernia University curriculum and degree requirements have not materially changed.

Portfolio Contents

To apply for PLA credits awarded by Portfolio Assessment, the student must submit a comprehensive digital portfolio which includes:

1. Completed PLA Written Request Cover letter.
2. Current transcript(s).
3. CV or resume.
4. Course descriptions and syllabi for each specific course equivalent requested for assessment, if any.

5. A minimum of 6 pages of narrative per course (including general elective course credit) identifying how the student's prior learning meets the course objectives and requirements. A detailed explanation of how the learning experiences fulfill the course objectives and requirements is required. Dates and locations of prior learning must be included.
6. Documentation of prior learning should also be attached. The documentation may include testamentary letters, evidence of mastery of course objectives, media documentation, certifications and/or licenses, relevant standardized testing scores, training program certifications, news articles, and prior assessments.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

The University's Honor Code Policies and Procedures apply to all of the submitted portfolio components and will be in effect at all times.

Appeals

Students must make appeals to the Department Chair in writing within seven days of a decision. If the Department Chair supports the appeal to proceed, then the Department Chair may assign a new evaluator to reassess the same materials or conduct a second review themselves. The decision of the second evaluator or reevaluation by the Department Chair, as the case may be, will be considered final, and there will be no further appeal. The student will be notified in writing within 45 days of the appeal date.

This policy complies with the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning standards for Assessing Learning.

Exceptions to Policy

Students matriculating in Alvernia's Associate of Science in Emergency Medicine Management program having earned a Commonwealth of Pennsylvania certification as an EMT-Paramedic are exempt from this policy. Please see Alvernia's undergraduate course catalog for details.

Other exceptions to this policy must be requested in writing by filling out the Policy and Procedure Exception form and submitting it to the individual named in the Responsibilities section, who assists with reviewing exceptions to this policy.

Policy Review

This Policy and Procedures will be reviewed every five years and updated as appropriate for institutional continuity.

Approved versions of this policy will be posted on the Alvernia University Portal.

Related Policies

4.4350 Honor Code Policies and Procedures

Exhibits and References

Policy and Procedure Exception Form

Document Review Log

	Description of Changes
4/19/2024	Updated from AY 23/24 Course Catalog
4/25/2024	SLT Approval
5/30/2025	Revised to allow graduate PLA and provide new exception
8/25/2026	Revised to clarify fees and tuition charges in accordance with Course Catalog definitions
8/26/2026	SLT Approval
11/4/26	Remove transfer credit inclusion from overall limitation on PLA credits and add a fourth PLA opportunity to aid in the transfer of external training program credits with department review and approval.
11/5/26	SLT Approval
11/27/26	Add recognition of state accrediting body review to training program form of PLA
11/19/26	SLT Approval