

WHAT IS PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT (PLA)?



Not all college-level learning takes place in the classroom. You may have learning from work, training programs, volunteering, or other experiences. The process of evaluating knowledge to determine if it translates into college credit is called prior learning assessment (PLA). This knowledge may be acquired through:

- Work experience
- Employer training programs
- Volunteer or community service
- Certifications
- Non-credit courses
- Military service
- Independent Study (i.e. open educational resources and massive open online courses, or MOOCs)

Prior Learning Assessment is not just one method or tool. It includes options such as:

TRAINING PROGRAM EVALUATION

- **American Council on Education (ACE) Guides**—Published credit recommendations for formal instructional programs offered by non-collegiate agencies, both civilian employers and the military
- **National College Credit Recommendation Service**—(formerly known as National PONS) evaluates learning experiences for noncollegiate organizations
- **Evaluation of Local Training**—Program evaluations done by individual colleges of non-collegiate instructional programs

PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

- Evaluations of learning portfolios such as those done through LearningCounts.org and many colleges under the CAEL standards for assessing learning.

TESTING

- **College Level Examination Program (CLEP) Exams**: Tests of college material offered by the College Board
- **DSST Credit by Exam Program**: Formerly known as the DANTE Program, owned and administered by Prometric, tests knowledge of both lower-level and upper-level college material through 38 exams
- **Challenge Exams**: Local tests developed by a college to verify learning achievement
- **Excelsior College Examination Program**: Exams for credit toward Nursing degrees at the Associate's and Bachelor's level. Formerly, Regents College Exams or ACT/PEP Exams, offered by Excelsior College, NY
- **UExcel Credit by Exam Program**: Tests knowledge of lower-level college material; awarded Excelsior College credit can be transferred to other colleges and universities
- **Advanced Placement (AP) Exams**: A series of tests developed by the College Board initially for AP High School courses, including 34 exams in 19 subject areas

IS PLA RIGHT FOR ME?

Here are some questions to help you determine if you may be appropriate for earning college credit through prior learning assessment. Circle your answers.

Are you working on or do you want to work on completing a degree or certificate?	Yes	No
Do you have several years of work experience?	Yes	No
Have you completed any training programs or apprenticeships?	Yes	No
Have you done significant learning on your own?	Yes	No
Are you now or were you previously in the military?	Yes	No

If you answered YES to at least two of these questions, PLA may be a good option for you. Talk to an Education Advisor about using PLA credits to help you complete your certificate or degree.