

Montana State University Billings
Montana State University Billings City College
Prior Learning Assessment
7.2017 DRAFT

Will replace languages on pages 28-30 Catalog Language when approved

Introduction and Purpose

Montana State University Billings (MSUB) recognizes that learning occurs outside of the college setting. The outcome of this learning is often the acquisition of skills and/or knowledge, which may be equivalent to learning at MSUB, and other institutions of Higher Education. MSUB may award credit for this learning through its Prior Learning Assessment Policy (PLA).

Policy

Eligibility

- Credit for prior learning may be granted only at the undergraduate level.
- Credit may be granted only to student admitted to MSUB or MSUB City College.
- Credit for prior experiential learning cannot duplicate other credit awarded.
- Students seeking PLA via portfolio, challenge exams, or other faculty-determined assessment methods must be currently enrolled at MSU Billings or MSUB City College.
- MSUB does not allow prior learning assessment for prospective students.
- PLA is appropriate only for college-level learning.
- Credit may be granted only for documented learning, which falls within the regular curricular offerings of the institution or as elective credit.
- A course previously taken (as an audit or for credit) may not be challenged for credit.
- By action of the University's Academic Senate, AP, CLEP, and DANTES credits are awarded with a "P" (pass) grade.
- Departmental challenges may carry a letter or "P" grade.
- Challenge credit may be granted only if the grade received is "C" or higher.
- PLA credits do not count towards enrollment in evaluating financial aid.
- PLA credit must be consistent with accreditation practices and policies already in place in various colleges (NCATE/CAPE, AACSB, etc...)

Transferability

- Credits granted for PLA at MSUB may transfer to other institutions in the Montana University System (MUS) according to Board of Regents [Policy 301.19](#) and outside the MUS and is subject to limitations imposed by the receiving institution based on academic policy of that institution
- Students should check with the transfer institution regarding transferability.
- Credits earned at other MUS institutions via PLA are eligible for transfer to MSUB subject to institutional policies and procedures for the evaluation of transfer credit.

Faculty Assessors Professional Development

The institution will provide training on PLA principles and best practices for faculty involved in assessment of prior learning via challenge exam, portfolio assessment or other faculty-determined assessment methods.

Related Forms

Prior Learning Assessment Form
Faculty Portfolio Form

Related Policies

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) [Policy 2.C.7](#)
Montana Board of Regents [Policy 301.19](#)

Resources

- Challenge exams such as CLEP and Dantes can be schedule through the City College Testing Center (406-247-3025).
- Students who have certificates or documentation which state that the American Council on Education (ACE) or the National College Credit Recommendation Services (NCCRS) assesses the course/training, credit may be available for work in which there are equivalencies in MSU Billings' curriculum.
- Military credit is assessed based on the joint services or military transcript. Contact Advising and Career Services (406-657-2240) for questions related to military credit.

Procedure

Number of Credits and Assessment Methods

- Credit for PLA experiential learning (i.e. CLEP, DSST (previously known as DANTES), UExcel, challenge exam, portfolio assessment or other faculty-determined assessment methods) cannot constitute more than 25% of the credits needed for a degree.
- The Department Chair of the discipline in which PLA credit is desired will designate the appropriate faculty member, Department Chair or Program Director to develop the criteria of the portfolio, challenge exams, and/or other faculty-determined assessment methods.
- Credit for PLA instructional based credits (i.e. Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), military training/educational/business/industry/training programs evaluated by the American Council on Education (ACE) or National College Credit Recommendation Service (NCCRS) are not considered experiential learning-based credits and do not count toward the 25% limit needed for a degree.
- No assurances are made as to the number of credits to be awarded prior to the completion of the institution's review process.
- Credits earned via PLA are not considered part of the institutional residency requirements. Students must complete 25% of the coursework required in the degree program at MSUB.
- Once credits have been applied to a transcript they will not be removed. PLA credits in excess of degree requirements may limit the student's eligibility for financial aid.

Credits awarded

Credits earned through PLA:

- Are posted on transcripts when the credit is awarded.
- Are applied to degree program requirements in the same manner as all other credits earned at MSUB
- Will be designated on the student's transcript by the appropriate course prefix, course number, course title and number of credits awarded as aligned with the course for which the credit was awarded.
- Will be identified as earned via PLA on transcripts in accordance with BOR standards.
- PLA experiential learning (i.e. CLEP, DSST (previously known as DAN TES), UExcel, challenge exam, portfolio assessment or other faculty-determined assessment methods) will not be posted on the student's transcript until the student has completed the institution's review process.
- PLA will be treated the same as transfer credit and it will not count toward the students' MSUB GPA.
- Materials and documents submitted for consideration of credit for PLA must comply with all MSUB and Montana University System Policies.
- All submitted materials and documents become part of the students' academic record and will not be returned. The student is responsible for providing the appropriate documentation as required by the guidelines and/or criteria established by the faculty member, program director, or department chair for the award of credit for PLA.
- No PLA credit is guaranteed.

Review & Grievance

- A student who disagrees with the result of a prior learning assessment performed at MSUB may ask to have the assessment reviewed. A student who believes that an error has been made in the process of an assessment may file a petition to academic standards.

Fees

- Fees are based on the type of assessment method and may be set by an external agency (i.e. the cost of CLEP exams is not set by MSUB.)
- MSUB may add an administrative fee to the cost imposed by an external agency
- Fees are based on the type of assessment and the number of credits to be assessed (i.e. portfolio, challenge exams, other faculty-determined assessment methods), not the credits awarded.
- MSUB makes no assurances to students regarding the number of credits to be awarded prior to the completion of the assessment process.