Prior Learning Assessment Policy
(college/university name)
Date created / Last revision date

Purpose of Policy:

NOTE: This section is generic and intended to be used by all institutions

To recognize the college level learning that students acquire outside of formal higher education, **college/university** relies on the following policy to ensure practices consistent with academic integrity and responsive to nontraditional learners. Such learning may be derived from various life and work experiences and the term "prior learning assessment" refers to all of the processes the college/university uses to review and evaluate evidence of learning and to award academic credit as indicated by academic and administrative standards. Adherence to this policy is also intended to support transparent transfer of prior learning assessment credit among institutions of higher education.

Policy and Procedures:

This section provides a structure for institutional policy using the headings provided. Notes following each heading describe the intent of that section. Institutions should insert existing policy that applies or use institutional governance to deliberate and write policy for each heading.

Eligibility:

Policy indicates eligibility based on academic standing and/or enrollment.

EXAMPLE: "Students who have earned a minimum of 6 credit hours and are currently in good academic standing are eligible to participate in prior learning assessment."

Number of Credits:

Policy indicates the maximum number of credits a student may earn through prior learning assessment. A recommended standard calls for policy to limit PLA credits consistent with the residency requirement or degree plan.

EXAMPLE: "Students may earn up to 25% of their degree plan through prior learning assessment as long as the residence requirement is satisfied. Credits earned through prior learning assessment are not considered part of the residency requirement."

Validation Methods:

Policy indicates the basis for evaluating prior learning. Most institutions use course equivalencies or competence equivalencies in competence-based curricula.

EXAMPLE: "Prior learning must match existing courses using the course description and course outcomes for guidance."

This section should also list the various methods for presenting prior learning to the college/university.

EXAMPLE: "The following guidelines and methods are acceptable for validating prior learning for awarding credit:"

Suggested Methods: **Institutions should list all that currently apply.**

1.   Degree-relevant prior learning credit awarded and transcripted by other accredited institutions.
2.   Credit demonstrated by successfully passing national for-credit examination programs such as DSST Exams; Excelsior College Examinations, the College Board College Level Examination Program (CLEP) and Advanced Placement (AP) exams. The scores that constitute a passing score are available [in the catalog/at the Testing Center/on the website, etc.]
3.   Credit recommendations listed in the American Council on Education (ACE) National Guide to College Credit for Workforce Training and the ACE Military Guide.
4.   Individual portfolios using Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) guidelines.
5.   Institutionally prepared assessments (i.e., 'challenge exams.')

NOTE: Institutional validation procedures should be objective to the extent that external evaluators would reach the same conclusion given the material reviewed, consistent with CAEL guidelines.

Application:

This section indicates how credits awarded from prior learning assessment will be applied to credential requirements.

 The following are recommended standards for applying such credit:

1.   Prior learning credits shall be applied to meeting degree or program requirements in the same manner as credits earned at the awarding institution.
2.   Institutions may award credit for prior learning only in those courses or program areas for which they have program approval by the state.

3.   Institutions shall award their own course title and number to the credit awarded. Neutral grades of Pass or Fail shall be utilized. Conventional letter grades shall not be used.

Transferability:

NOTE: In some state policy guidelines, this section is used to indicate transferability among institutions. Given #3 under "Validation" there may be no need for this section in institutional policies until there is a state policy addressing transferability among state institutions.

Fees:

This section indicates specific fees related to the entire process of prior learning assessment. This may include fees for specific tests, fees for submitting portfolios and requesting credit, fees for portfolio development workshops or courses. CAEL Standards should be used to determine fees and to clarify that fees are for assessment services rather than assessment results. EXAMPLE: "Students will pay an assessment fee of $50 to submit a portfolio for formal assessment. This fee is not dependent on the results of the assessment."

Portfolio Preparation Support:

This section indicates the institution's requirements or recommendations for a student's participation in workshops, credit courses, or tutorials to support their preparation of a portfolio.

EXAMPLE: "Students who choose to submit a portfolio must attend a free, one-hour orientation session to review basic of portfolio prior to submitting a portfolio for review. An optional portfolio preparation workshop ($125) is available for students seeking additional assistance."

Staff Professional Development:

This section indicates the institution's standard for initial and ongoing professional development for faculty and staff providing prior learning assessment services.

EXAMPLE: "All faculty serving as portfolio assessors must complete a training that conforms to CAEL standards prior to their service as assessors. Periodic professional development will be provided to ensure consistent practice among assessors."

Tracking:

This section indicates the institution's plan for tracking student participation in prior learning assessment and the results of prior learning assessment in terms of credit awarded and fees assessed.

EXAMPLE: "College/University will prepare an annual report reflecting the level of student participation in each form of prior learning assessment and the resulting credit awards in each category."

Review:

This section outlines the intention and process for regular review and updates to the policy. It is recommended that the review process be conducted annually, at a minimum, and that it become a fixed event on the institutional planning calendar.

EXAMPLE: "This policy shall be reviewed on a bi-annual basis and revised to reflect conformity with institutional academic and administrative standards."

Effective Date:

Recommended date for policy approval: mm/dd/yyyy

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