# PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT RESOURCE MANUAL

## Academic Affairs

Effective June 2015

# Introduction

Lone Star College (LSC) recognizes the vast knowledge and skills of its diverse student population through prior learning assessment. The Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Program gives students an opportunity to petition course credit for experiential learning, non-credit course completion, professional development, licensure/certification and challenge exams. Course credit is awarded when content mastered through an experience is comparable to the student learning outcomes of a LSC course. Participants benefit from reduced program costs and time toward degree completion.

Processing assessment requests is a collaborative effort between Academic Affairs and Student Success. The Office of Academic Affairs ensures prior learning assessments adhere to institutional policies, maintains academic integrity, and follows current business processes. The Office of Student Success provides direct support to PLA applicants through academic advising, application assistance and posting credit. PLA Stakeholders meetings comprised of campus and system representatives from both divisions are held to discuss program status. Proposed policy and procedural changes that derive from these meetings are approved by Vice Presidents of Instruction (VPI) through the LSC curriculum development process.

The integrity of PLA is maintained by utilizing faculty to determine the award of credit. Each LSC academic program has a Curriculum Team that consist of faculty dedicated to developing and modifying curriculum. These teams establish and modify assessment opportunities. Additionally, participating faculty may be petitioned to conduct credit evaluations on a case-by-case basis. The Lone Star College PLA website provides a comprehensive list of available course credit by assessment. New assessments and modifications proposed by Curriculum Teams are approved by Vice Presidents of Instruction through the LSC curriculum development process.

This resource manual contains PLA program policies, procedures and assessment types. Staff that utilize this document will be able to

- Determine Student Eligibility
- Understand PLA Credit Evaluation
- Identify Assessment Options

As changes occur, revisions to this document will be made accessible via the Lone Star College PLA website: LoneStar.edu/pla.

# Student Eligibility

1. Enrolled in a LSC academic program past official day of the current semester.

2. Provide official documentation of prior learning experience (transcripts, licensure/certification, etc.).

3. If applicable, meet eligibility requirements specific to the assessment option.

# Guidelines

## *Application*

1. Acceptance of PLA credit toward the Honors College degree is at the discretion of the campus Honors College director.

2. Other academic institutions are not obligated to accept credit earned through Lone Star College PLA. It is the student's responsibility to check with the transfer institution before pursuing the assessment process.

3. Student receiving benefits from Veterans Affairs (VA) must comply with VA rules and regulations. To avoid overpayment, all transcripts must be evaluated and credit(s) applied prior to certification of courses for benefits. Students are highly encouraged to have their military transcript evaluated prior to registering for classes.

4. Students that do not meet an eligibility requirement specific to a PLA option may request an exception. In these instances, the campus Vice President of Instruction (VPI) reviews all documentation to determine credit eligibility.

5. PLA by Exam does not require an application unless stipulated that an additional faculty assessment must be completed to receive credit.

## *Course Credit*

1. Course credit is awarded only when faculty determine the prior learning experience to be comparable to a Lone Star College academic course.

2. PLA credit may not exceed 50% of a student's certificate or associate degree coursework.

3. Credit is posted after official day of the current, academic semester. The date of official day is published in the catalog on the LSC academic calendar (LoneStar.edu/academic-calendar).

4. Credit awarded for challenge exams is not transferable and will not appear on an official transcript. Test credit is visible on the unofficial transcript and Academic Advisement Report (AAR) in iStar for application

to Lone Star College graduation requirements. **Exception:** Course credit for foreign language placement exams is transferable and appears on the official transcript.

5.  Course credit is documented as "TCR" on a LSC transcript and contributes to fulfillment of LSC graduation requirements. Letter grades cannot be given for course credit earned through PLA.

6.  Credit earned through PLA cannot be removed from a student's record or transcript once it has been awarded.

## *Fees*

Fees are non-refundable and must be paid to the campus business office prior to submitting an application for evaluation.

| Prior Learning Assessment Options | Fee |
|---|---|
| **American Council on Education (ACE)** | |
| Military | No Fee |
| Workplace Training | No Fee |
| **Articulated Credit from a Non-Regionally Accredited College or University** | $25 per college transcript |
| **Challenge Exams** | |
| External | $25 per faculty assessment* |
| Internal | $25 per exam |
| **College Prep** | No Fee |
| **Continuing Education Articulation** | No Fee |
| **High School Articulation** | No Fee |
| **Portfolio** | $60 per assessment |
| **Additional Faculty Assessment** | $25 |

*Only for exam scores requiring additional faculty assessment. Visit LoneStar.edu/pla to identify exams with this requirement.

# Credit Evaluation Paths

After confirming student eligibility and compliance with guidelines, applications are ready for credit evaluation. There are two evaluation paths: approved and faculty evaluation. The type of prior learning being assessed determines the appropriate path. Before submitting an application for evaluation, an advisor must post the Service Indicator Code 21 (S21) in iStar with comments identifying the evaluation path.

## *Approved*

The Approved Evaluation path is utilized for prior learning experiences with a LSC course equivalency established. The course match must be listed in the catalog and/or on the PLA website. Advisors complete the following steps:

1. Review the LSC catalog and/or PLA website to verify the appropriate LSC course equivalence is documented on the application.

2. Forward application and supporting documents directly to System Office – Student Records, unless otherwise stated.

3. If Vice President of Instruction (VPI) exception or additional faculty assessment is required, the application must go through the Faculty Evaluation path.

## *Faculty Evaluation*

This Credit Evaluation path is required for certain assessment options (ACE, portfolio, etc.), as well as prior learning experiences without an established LSC course equivalency. Credit is awarded when a student demonstrates that knowledge and skills acquired through an experience are comparable to the student learning outcomes of a LSC course. Advisors complete the following:

1. If applicable, verify assessment fee is paid.

2. Redact all confidential information (social security numbers, birth dates, addresses, etc.) on the supporting documentation.

3. Forward all documentation to SO-PLAFacultyEval@LoneStar.edu with the following in the subject line:

    a. **New Evaluation Request:**
        i. **Subject Line:**  New Eval Request Student ID#
        ii. **Message:**  Student ID# is requesting evaluation of their [Enter Type of Prior Learning Documentation]

    b. **Military Transcript Review:** Evaluation results are returned to Veteran Affairs (VA) advisors for verification that assessment results will not duplicate credit on the student's record. Applications will not move forward to System Office – Student Record until an email response is received. If duplication is determined, please reply to SO-PLAFacultyEval@LoneStar.edu with the following:

       i. **Subject Line:**     VA Student – Duplicate Credit

      ii. **Message:**         Student ID# assessment results will produce duplicate credit in the following course(s):

  c. **VPI Exception:**

       i. **Subject Line:**     VPI Exception Request – Student ID#

      ii. **Message:**         [Enter Rationale for Exception]

Art portfolios and other documentation that cannot be sent electronically should be sent via interoffice mail. Please address to the attention of PLA Faculty Eval. in the SO – Academic Affairs department.

# Prior Learning Assessment Options

## *External Challenge Exam*

Lone Star College has established equivalent course credit for minimum passing scores on nationally-recognized, college entrance and subject exams. Students are responsible for test arrangements and making sure official score reports are sent to Lone Star College. Examination scores must be entered into iStar for all students regardless of whether or not the student earned the required score.

### *Credit Evaluation Path: Approved*
**Exception:** AP Design – Studio Art, AP Drawing – Studio Art, and CLEP Introduction to Educational Psychology require an additional assessment before students are eligible for credit. There is a fee of $25 for the additional faculty assessment.

### *Required Documentation: Official Score Report or IB transcript/diploma*
As of April 14th, 2015, PLA by Exam credit has been automated for challenge exams that do not require addition assessment. Students must have an official score report sent to Lone Star College directly from the testing organization. With the exception of AVANT Placement exams, credit awarded through PLA by Exam applies to LSC graduation requirements only and will not transfer.

### *Testing Organizations*

#### *Advanced Placement (AP)*

Rigorously developed by committees of college and AP high school faculty, the AP Exams test students' ability to perform at a college level.

- Advanced Placement exams are offered at area high schools. For specific information on high schools offering this exam, call 888-225-5427 or 609-771-7300, or send an email to apexams@info.collegeboard.org. For more information go to http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/about.html

- Students requesting credit for the Design – Studio Art and Drawing – Studio Art examinations must provide a portfolio for faculty to assessment of skills.

#### *American College Testing (ACT)*

The ACT is a national college admissions examination that consists of subject area tests in English, mathematics, reading and science. Visit www.act.org for information on testing opportunities.

#### *AVANT Placement*

Avant Placement is an initial measurement of real-world language ability in reading, writing and speaking. This exam is suitable for students that have studied a language or had exposure to a

language. Students must take the placement exam *before* registering for a language class. After successfully completing the designated placement course, the student is eligible for PLA credit towards the prerequisite language courses. Example: Students that place into SPAN 2311 and complete the course successfully may request credit for SPAN 1411 and 1412 through PLA.

### *Specific Eligibility Requirement:*

- ✓ AVANT scores must be in iStar **BEFORE** the student enrolls in the placement course to receive credit.

- ✓ Complete placement course with a "C" or better

### College Level Examination Program (CLEP)

Developed by College Board, the College Level Examination Program® (CLEP) is the most widely accepted credit-by-examination program. CLEP exams may be taken at select LSC testing centers or area universities. Lone Star College testing centers charge a $15 administration fee in addition to the CLEP exam fee charged by College Board. Visit http://clep.collegeboard.org/exam for more information about the CLEP exams. Students may resubmit new CLEP scores for PLA every 6 months.

### DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST)

Developed by the Department of Defense, the DDST program helps students receive college credits by examination. Visit www.getcollegecredit.com for information on available subject exams and test administration. Active duty military, veterans and their spouses may receive funding to cover examination fees. For more details, review the DSST Funding Guide at www.getcollegecredit.com/test_takers.

### International Baccalaureate (IB)

The International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme is a rigorous two-year high school program. It leads to a qualification that is widely recognized by the world's leading universities and colleges. Students completing the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma may receive at least 24 hours of college credit for a minimum score of 4 on all exams.

- Diploma exams are given at specific high schools. For more information on IB Diplomas go to http://www.ibo.org/

- The policy for ordering IB transcripts in North America is available at http://www.ibo.org/graduates/transcripts/index.cfm

# Internal Challenge Exam

Internal challenge exams are developed by LSC curriculum teams and administered through campus testing centers or academic departments. Curriculum teams determine which courses can be challenged; the minimum

passing score; and exit competencies based on learning outcomes of a course. Visit LoneStar.edu/challenge-courses for a current list of available LSC challenge exams.

Students should consult with a faculty in the department to discuss course content and feasibility of taking a course challenge exam. The same challenge exams are used at all LSC campuses and may only be taken once. Advisors must ensure scores are in iStar regardless of whether or not the student earned the minimum passing score.

### *Credit Evaluation Path: Approved*

### *Required Documentation: Scores in iStar*
As of April 14th, 2015, PLA by Exam credit has been automated. Students must meet with an advisor to ensure internal exam scores are entered into iStar. Test credit awarded through PLA by Exam applies to LSC graduation requirements only and will not transfer.

# High School Articulation

High School Articulation is an agreement between Lone Star College and an Independent School District (ISD) to award college credit for rigorous secondary coursework. Articulated credit is awarded for credit workforce (WECM) courses only. Students who intend to transfer to a 4-year institution are responsible for verifying acceptance of articulated course credits with the transferring institution. Visit LoneStar.edu/hsa for course articulation crosswalks by ISD.

### *Credit Evaluation Path: Approved*

### *Required Documentation: Official, high school transcript*

### *Specific Eligibility Criteria*
- ✓ Student graduated from an ISD that has a high school articulation agreement with Lone Star College or an ISD that participates in the Advanced Technical Credit (ATC) program.

- ✓ Advisors must locate the following items on the high school transcript
  - **"A" in course type column**. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) and Advanced Technical Credit (ATC) require independent school districts to include the course type code "A" beside courses eligible for articulated credit. Course credit cannot be awarded without the "A".
  - **Date of graduation.** Students must submit their application within 15 months of high school graduation.
  - **Grade average of 80 or above.** Students must demonstrate successful completion of the articulating high school course.
  - **Completed an articulating course junior or senior year of high school.** Credit may be awarded for freshman and sophomore level articulating courses as long as the student requests articulated credit for a Junior or Senior level course.

# Continuing Education (CE) Articulation

Lone Star College continuing education (CE) students have an opportunity to earn semester credit hours (sch) for completing certain non-credit courses. Students completing an eligible CE courses are held to the same standards on course prerequisites, projects, class activities, exams, and all other aspects of learning as credit students. If a CE to Credit articulation agreement exists during the semester the CE course is taken, students who have earned continuing education units (CEU) with a grade of "S" may apply for articulated credit.

In most cases, CE students who register for articulated courses are required to meet the same prerequisites as credit students (this includes reading, writing, and math prerequisites). Articulated courses that are the exception can be found at LoneStar.edu/ce-articulation. If a student decides to apply for CE to Credit Articulation for an exception course, prerequisite courses must be met by the time the student submits the PLA application.
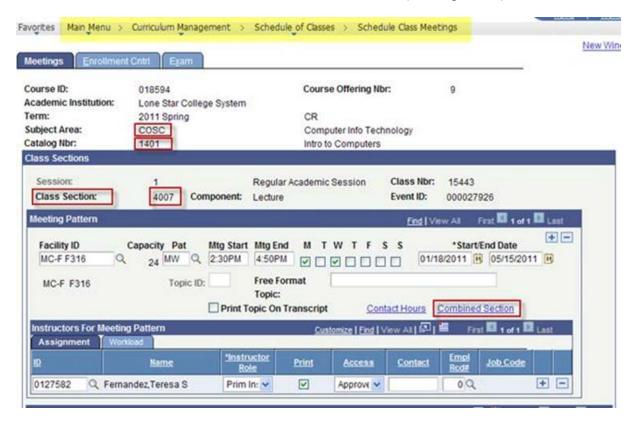
### Credit Evaluation Path: *Approved*

### Required Documentation: *Copy of CE course history*

### CE to Credit Articulation Agreement Types

#### Linked CE Courses

Linked Continuing Education courses have learning experiences *identical* to credit courses. Since 2005, linked courses have been identified as "combined" sections in the class search (see image below).

Non-linked continuing education courses have learning experiences *comparable* to a credit course. In addition to completing the CE course(s), students may be required to demonstrate technical skills and/or provide industry certification. Visit LoneStar.edu/ce-articulation for a complete list of agreements that permit articulation of Continuing Education Units (CEU) to semester credit hours.

### *Specific Eligibility Criteria*

- ✓ CE course is linked or part of an articulation agreement at the time the student completed the course.
- ✓ Student passed the CE course satisfactorily.
- ✓ Student met all credit course prerequisites at the time he/she took the CE course.

# *Portfolio*

Portfolio allows students to request course credit for knowledge and skills acquired through employment, workplace education and professional development. Experiences must be verifiable and demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes for an LSC course. Lone Star College will not award credit based solely on years of employment. In addition to documentation, students may be asked to display specific skills and/or complete an interview to assess content knowledge.

Students must interact closely with a program contact (department chair or dean) to determine whether portfolio is a suitable assessment for demonstrating content mastery. PLA credit is generally awarded only for introductory level courses. Examples of course credit previously awarded through this assessment option are available at LoneStar.edu/pla-portfolio.

### *Credit Evaluation Path: Faculty Evaluation*

### *Required Documentation: To Be Determined By Program Contact*
Resumes may not act as documentation, however, they can contribute to a collection of documented evidence.

# *Licensure and Professional Certification*

Lone Star College faculty has determined equivalent course credit for professional certifications and state licensures. Course credit is based on competencies demonstrated through successful completion of the certification or state licensure assessment. Visit LoneStar.edu/pla-licensure for a list of approved credit opportunities.

### *Credit Evaluation Path: Approved*

### *Required Documentation: Copy of Current, Texas License or Professional Certification*
**Exception:** The TCOLE Peace Officer License is not required to be active/current.

# *American Council on Education (ACE)*

The American Council on Education (ACE) uses content matter experts to evaluate workplace training, military experiences and national exams for potential college credit matches. The organization produces a transcript with credit recommendations for employers and post-secondary institutions to review. ACE transcripts must be evaluated by LSC faculty to determine the award of credit.

Recommendations from ACE do not guarantee credit. It is the prerogative of an institution to accept ACE recommendations for course credit. LSC may accept, deny or modify ACE recommendations in accordance with academic curriculum and institutional policies.

**Credit Evaluation Path:**     *Faculty Evaluation*

**Required Documentation:**  *Official ACE Transcript for Workplace Training*
                                                  *Official Military Transcript for Military Experience*

## *Assessment Types*

### *Military Training*

Students receiving education benefits as active duty or prior military are required by the United States Department of Veteran Affairs to have their military transcript assessed for credit. This process must be initiated by a LSC veteran affairs advisor. Community College of the Air Force is an accredited, post-secondary institution; therefore, transcripts from the institution undergo traditional evaluation processes and not PLA.

 Lone Star College VA advisors specialize in assisting with the assessment process by

a.  Conducting a preliminary assessment of the military transcript using the LSC Course Crosswalk of Military Experience for approved PLA credit. The crosswalk is accessible at [LoneStar.edu/military-experience](LoneStar.edu/military-experience).

b.  Documenting course matches identified by the crosswalk.

c.  Reviewing faculty evaluation results to ensure PLA credit will not duplicate credit previously earned, including course credit earned at other institutions. If duplication is determined, please reply to [SO-PLAFacultyEval@LoneStar.edu](SO-PLAFacultyEval@LoneStar.edu) with the following:

  i.  **Subject Line:**   VA Student – Duplicate Credit

  ii.  **Message:**          Student ID# assessment results will produce duplicate credit in the following course(s):

### *Workplace Training*

Students that have completed workplace education/training and professional examinations evaluated by ACE must pursue prior learning assessment to request credit. ACE evaluated training is verifiable through the [National Guide to College Credit for Workforce Training](National Guide to College Credit for Workforce Training).

# Non-Regionally Accredited Colleges or University

Students who transfer from an institution not accredited by one of the seven (7) regional accreditors must pursue PLA for transcript evaluation. Students must meet eligibility criteria specific to this assessment to have their transcript evaluated.

*Credit Evaluation Path:*  *Faculty Evaluation*

*Required Documentation:*  *Official Transcript from Non-Regionally Accredited College or University*

*Syllabi for courses completed at Non-Regionally Accredited College or University*

## Specific Eligibility Criteria

- ✓ **Accreditation of the Source Institution is Acceptable -** One of the following must apply
  a. The source institution is identified as a Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) recognized accreditor. Verify at [www.thecb.state.tx.us/index.cfm?objectid=106BD76B-C2C9-1CED-D9AEAF20A2CEB4C3](www.thecb.state.tx.us/index.cfm?objectid=106BD76B-C2C9-1CED-D9AEAF20A2CEB4C3).
  b. The source institution is from outside Texas but is approved to operate in Texas. Verify this by checking [http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/index.cfm?objectid=64BDCE51- D636-526E-DA30D84E3D623495](http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/index.cfm?objectid=64BDCE51-D636-526E-DA30D84E3D623495)
  c. The source institution is outside Texas but is nationally accredited by one of the agencies that the THECB recognizes
      i. The THECB List of Recognized Accreditors [http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/index.cfm?objectid=106BD76B-C2C9-1CED-D9AEAF20A2CEB4C3](http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/index.cfm?objectid=106BD76B-C2C9-1CED-D9AEAF20A2CEB4C3).
      ii. Database of Accredited U.S. Colleges and Universities [http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/search.aspx](http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/search.aspx)

- ✓ **Degree Program**
  Students must have been pursuing an associate degree program at the source institution. The degree must be noted on the official transcript and listed on one of the following inventories:

  a. The THECB Degree Program Search [http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/apps/programinventory/ProgSearch.cfm](http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/apps/programinventory/ProgSearch.cfm)

  b. The Database of Accredited U.S. Colleges and Universities [http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/search.aspx](http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/search.aspx)

Once eligibility is determined, students may move forward with the assessment process. There is a $25 faculty assessment fee for each transcript submitted for evaluation. LSC course credit is awarded when faculty evaluators identify the following:

- Student earned a grade of C or above in the course.
- Course is equivalent to a LSC course.
- All prerequisites for the LSC course equivalent are met.
- Quarter hour conversions must be close to semester credit hours for the equivalent LSC course. See the Quarter Hour Conversion Chart below.

| Quarter Conversion Chart | |
| --- | --- |
| **Quarter Hours** | Credit Hours |
| **1** | 0.67 |
| **2** | 1.34 |
| **3** | 2.01 |
| **4** | 2.68 |
| **5** | 3.35 |
| **6** | 4.02 |
| **7** | 4.69 |
| **8** | 5.36 |

# Resources

## *Contacts*

Prior Learning Assessment Liaisons are content matter experts and catalysts for program changes. These student services staff assist students and colleagues through the application process. Contact your campus PLA liaison to address application and business process questions.

| | |
|---|---|
| LSC-CyFair | Shirley Giese/Veronica Mayfield |
| LSC-Kingwood | Sagan McClure |
| LSC-North Harris | Gina Espitia |
| LSC-Tomball | Natalie Starks |
| LSC-University Park | Nathan Lynn |

Please contact Lakisha McDowell-Bates (lakisha@lonestar.edu) in Academic Affairs for assistance with policies, procedures, training sessions, website updates and expansion of assessment options.

## *Email Addresses*

| | |
|---|---|
| Faculty Evaluation | SO-PLAFacultyEval@LoneStar.edu |
| LSC-System Office Student Records | StudentRecords@LoneStar.edu |
| Compliance Initiatives Program Manager (Academic Affairs) | Lakisha@LoneStar.edu |

## *Websites*

| | |
|---|---|
| Lone Star College Prior Learning Assessment | www.LoneStar.edu/pla |
| LSC Academic Calendar | www.lonestar.edu/academic-calendar.htm |
| LSC Catalog | www.lonestar.edu/lscs-catalog.htm |
| American Council on Education (ACE) Military Guide | www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Military-Guide-Online.aspx |
| ACE National Guide to College Credit for Workforce Training | www2.acenet.edu/credit/?fuseaction=browse.main |