

PLA WITH A PURPOSE
Military Working Group
Structure, Timeline & Outcomes
DRAFT

PLA with a Purpose Overview

Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) comprises a number of time-tested approaches that evaluate whether learning acquired by adults outside the traditional classroom can count for college credit, certification, or advanced standing toward further education or training, moving them toward completion of their chosen educational path. **PLA with a Purpose** is a statewide initiative aimed at working collaboratively with Ohio's colleges, universities, and adult career-technical centers to promote promising practices and common standards for the assessment and purposeful connection of prior learning to training, certificate, and degree programs.

In addition to developing and advancing best practices and standards, **PLA with a Purpose** seeks to: (1) energize campus and adult career-technical center leaders, administrators, and faculty about the importance of PLA, (2) identify policy levers for and potential barriers to scaling PLA practices across Ohio's schools, and (3) create data elements for tracking PLA use and student outcomes, and (4) launch a statewide campaign to promote PLA to potential learners..

Why pursue this initiative now?

Students who use PLA can save time and money by not having to take courses in subjects where their competence can be documented. Recent PLA research indicates that use of PLA motivates adult learners to continue and ultimately complete their training and degree programs.

From another perspective, PLA also is a strategy for providing Ohio businesses with a ready supply of the skilled workers they need, particularly in high-skill, in-demand jobs in industries that have been identified as strategically important to Ohio's continued economic recovery. In this regard, PLA is part of a larger effort to give Ohio a competitive edge in the fierce competition for business investment and job creation.

A survey conducted of Ohio's public colleges and universities in 2012 found that Ohio's schools are using a shared set of PLA methods, providing a foundation upon which to identify effective practices and common standards statewide. The three most common PLA methods are:

- portfolio-based assessment;
- evaluation of military training and service; and
- credit by examination.

Who is participating in this project?

The **PLA with a Purpose Network** is an advisory group of leaders from Ohio's colleges, universities, adult career-technical centers, and the IUC and OACC.

The **PLA with a Purpose Working Groups** are comprised of administrators and faculty from Ohio's colleges, universities, and adult career-technical centers. Each Working Group examines a variety of assigned PLA topics in the three areas of (1) portfolio-based assessment, (2) evaluation of military training and service for college credit, and (3) credit by exam (e.g., CLEP).

STATEWIDE GUIDE: Best Practices for the Assessment and Purposeful Connection of Prior Learning

The Network and Working Groups will contribute to the creation of a statewide guide that promotes promising practices and common standards for the assessment and purposeful connection of prior learning to training, certificate, and degree programs.

Content for the guide will be developed by three Working Groups. Using a template, the Working Groups will give careful consideration to PLA best practices that could inform a preferred model(s) for use in Ohio. In addition to completion of the template, the Working Groups are encouraged to document other items that could be of value in the creation of the guide, e.g., guiding principles and common definitions. The Tennessee Prior Learning Assessment Task Force included a Prior Learning Assessment Value Statement in its 2012 policy report titled *Recommended standards in prior learning assessment (PLA): Policy and practice for Tennessee public colleges and universities*. For your reference, the Value Statement is provided in Appendix I.

Military Training and Service Working Group

Evaluation of military training, experience, and coursework is a PLA method in which college credit may be awarded by using the American Council on Education's (ACE) credit recommendations and/or local evaluation of the student's military transcripts by institutional faculty and staff. Many University System of Ohio institutions are already awarding credit for learning acquired through the military that have been recognized by the ACE.

During the 2010-2011 Academic Year, all 36 Ohio public colleges and universities became members of the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) Consortium. As members, all institutions are committed to providing friendly academic policies for servicemembers and veterans, which includes the recognition of prior learning through military training, experience, and coursework. In 2011, the Chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents signed the Directive 2011-004 to begin the statewide effort in awarding college credit for military training, experience, and coursework that was recognized by the ACE. The directive instructed University System of Ohio institutions to utilize the ACE Guide Online when evaluating military training, experience, and coursework for a course equivalency and to work with students to apply prior learning toward their degree requirements where applicable.

Furthermore, in June 2013, Governor John R. Kasich signed the Executive Order 2013-05K, directing state departments, boards and commissions to streamline the state licensing process to take into account relevant military education and to direct the Chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents, in collaboration with presidents of the University System of Ohio, to simplify the process for awarding college credit for military education for servicemembers and veterans.

The Military Training and Service Working Group will work collaboratively to:

- (1) examine current practices;
- (2) consider how the identified practices could be developed into a comprehensive model(s) for use in Ohio at the campus level and/or statewide;
- (3) explore implementation of the model(s), including business processes, cost, transferability, communication plans, and policies, as well as the purposeful connection of prior learning credit to training, certificate, and degree programs; and
- (4) make recommendations about implementation for campuses and/or the state.

Questions for Consideration:

- What business processes are in place to meet the needs of prospective students seeking information about receiving college credit for their military training, experience, and coursework?
- What documents are collected in order to assess college credit for prior learning through the military?
- Do the institutions have an institutional policy on awarding of college credit for military training, experience, and coursework?

- If there is a policy, what is the institutional policy statement on awarding of college credit for military training, experience, and coursework?
- What business process is in place to handle documents that are collected to assess college credit for prior learning through the military?
- Who determines course equivalencies?
- What is the business process for evaluating course equivalencies?
- What is the business process for staff to be prepared to review and determine course equivalencies for military training, experience, and coursework?
- What is the business process for faculty to be prepared to review and determine course equivalencies for military training, experience, and coursework?
- How do institutions use the information on the American Council on Education's (ACE) Guide Online and ACE recommendations when evaluating and determining course equivalencies?
- What are the costs for evaluation and posting of military training, experience, and coursework, including any administrative fees?
- What do institutions do with course equivalencies identified by faculty/staff review? Are they entered the data into their system?
- What business process is in place regarding posting of college credit earned via military training, experience, and coursework?
- What federal, state, and other institutional policies affect institutions' business processes?
- What are the assets of individual institutions' business processes for evaluating and posting college credit for military training, experience, and coursework?
- What are challenges of individual institutions' business processes for evaluating and posting college credit for military training, experience, and coursework?
- What is the communication process/plan to notify students about credits earned for their military training, experience, and coursework?
- Which institutions in Ohio (public or private) have best practices in the area of awarding college credit for military training, experience, and coursework?

Key Milestone Dates for Military Training and Service Working Group

(Note: Meetings may be added or subtracted when needed and as determined by Co-Chairs/WG)

July

Co-Chair Meeting Thursday, July 25, 9:30AM – 10:30AM
Network Meeting (template agreement) Thursday, July 25, 11:00AM – 1:00PM

August

Military WG Meeting (at OBR) Friday, August 2, 1:00PM – 3:00PM
Military WG Conference Call Thursday, August 22, 11:00AM – 12:00PM
Co-Chair Conference Call Wednesday, August 28, 9:30AM – 10:30AM

September

Military WG Meeting (at OBR) Wednesday, September 11, 9:30AM – 11:30AM
Military WG Conference Call Monday, September 23, 9:30AM – 10:30AM
Co-Chair Conference Call Thursday, September 26, 9:30AM – 10:30AM

October

Templates submitted to Co-Chairs & OBR Monday, October 7th
Co-Chair Conference Call Friday, October 18, 9:30AM – 10:30AM
Network Meeting (at OBR) Wednesday, October 23, 9:30AM – 11:30AM
Submit final templates Wednesday, October 30th

November

Circulate draft Wednesday, November 13th
Military WG Conference Call Monday, November 18, 9:30AM – 10:30AM
Co-Chair Conference Call Tuesday, November 19, 9:30AM – 10:30AM
Submit final edits to Co-Chairs & OBR Monday, November 25th

December

Co-chair Conference Call Tuesday, December 10, 9:30AM – 10:30AM
Network Conference Call to discuss draft Monday, December 16, 9:30AM – 11:00AM
Final draft to OBR Monday, December 23rd

APPENDIX I: TENNESSEE'S PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT VALUE STATEMENT

The public colleges and universities of Tennessee value the diversity of their students. This diversity includes the unique experiences, interests, and intellectual pursuits that lead to the acquisition of knowledge that may be at the college level. College-level learning is the same, whether acquired in the traditional college classroom or through non-collegiate sources. This equivalency is validated by academically sound and rigorous prior learning assessment methods.

Tennessee's public community colleges and universities employ prior learning assessment aligned with their respective institutional missions, academic integrity, and student educational attainment and success.

The acceptance of PLA credits must be in accordance with the standards detailed in this document. PLA credits awarded by any TBR or UT institution are equivalent to the same credits awarded by any TBR or UT institution for traditional classroom-based college-level learning.

Additionally, the transferability of these credits between public community colleges and universities is consistent with, but not limited to, the Tennessee Transfer Pathways framework.

Further, it is intended that the PLA Value Statement is in alignment with TBR and UT institutional missions; therefore, the standards in this document provide guidelines for the transcription and transfer of PLA credit at public institutions. Minor variance may occur based on an institution's mission statement as revised under the 2010 Complete College Tennessee Act, specialized program accreditation, licensure, or degree requirements.

The use or non-use of PLA credits by an institution or department must be consistent with this value statement and, in accordance with the standards of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), adhere to principles of good educational practice. The identification of the forms of PLA credit used by an institution/department should be documented and available to students, faculty, and other stakeholders "through publications that accurately represent the programs and services of the institution." Institutions (or departments, if their policies differ from or are more specific than those of the institution) must also maintain documentation of the processes and rationale for the use or non-use of PLA credits.