

**TITLE 133**  
**PROCEDURAL RULE**  
**WEST VIRGINIA HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY COMMISSION**

**SERIES 59**  
**AWARDING UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING**

**§133-59-1. General.**

1.1. Scope. -- This rule establishes guidelines for West Virginia public colleges and universities for the awarding of college credit for prior college-level learning through prior learning assessment.

1.2. Authority. -- West Virginia Code §§18B-1-1A, 18B-1-6.

1.3. Filing Date. --

1.4. Effective Date. --

**§133-59-2. Purpose.**

2.1. Legislative goals established for West Virginia state colleges and universities provide that higher education in West Virginia should contribute fully to the growth, development, and quality of life of the state and its citizens. This policy details the responsibilities of the state higher education institutions regarding the awarding of college credit for prior college-level learning gained outside the higher education academic environment.

2.2. The West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (Commission)/West Virginia Council for Community and Technical College Education (Council) recognizes that some students, particularly adults and non-traditional students, may have acquired prior college-level learning through the development of skills or knowledge that closely parallel those outcomes taught in college-level courses. It is important that colleges and universities have the opportunity to evaluate learning that has taken place outside the higher education academic environment and to award academic credit when appropriate.

2.3. The purpose of this rule is to outline the terms and conditions under which West Virginia public colleges and universities award and/or transfer credits toward a degree or certificate based upon Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) and to provide consistent and accessible methods for students to earn these credits.

2.4. It is the intent of the Commission/Council to permit the awarding of undergraduate academic credit for prior learning through a variety of assessment methodologies that will ensure the academic credibility of such credit. Under these guidelines, in accordance with institutional policies and procedures, each institution shall award academic credit for prior learning that is equivalent to coursework which satisfies the requirements for the degree program in which the student is enrolled.

2.5. The Board of Governors Associate of Applied Science degree program and the Regents Bachelor of Arts degree program maintain specific guidelines and requirements for the use of credit for prior learning. This policy does not replace existing guidelines.

### **§133-59-3. Definitions.**

3.1. Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is defined as the assessment of college-level learning for college credit gained outside the higher education academic environment. For example, individuals may acquire college-level knowledge or skills through work, employee training programs, military service, independent study, non-credit courses, or community service. Only documented and demonstrated college-level learning will be awarded college credit.

3.2. In support of providing opportunities for students to earn college-level credit for college-level learning that has been acquired outside the higher education academic environment, the assessment of prior college-level learning can be accomplished through a variety of assessment methods including, but not limited to the following:

3.2.a. Advanced Placement Exams

3.2.b. American Council on Education (ACE) Guides

3.2.c. College Level Examination Program (CLEP) Exams

3.2.d. DANTES Subject Standardized Test (DSST)

3.2.e. Excelsior College Examination Program (ECE)

3.2.f. Institutional Course Challenge Examination Credit

3.2.g. International Baccalaureate Program (IB)

3.2.h. Institutional Evaluation of Industry and Workforce Training such as apprenticeships, certifications, and licensure

3.2.i. Portfolio Assessment/Review Credit

3.2.j. Prior Military Training Credit

### **133-59-4. Principles.**

4.1. West Virginia public colleges and universities value the diversity of their students. This diversity includes the unique experiences, interests, and intellectual pursuits that may lead to the acquisition of college-level learning. The acquisition of college-level learning is validated by assessment methods that are academically sound and rigorous.

4.2. West Virginia public colleges and universities shall employ prior learning assessment aligned with their respective missions, the principles of academic integrity, resources, and student educational attainment and success.

### **133-59-5. Institutional Policies Regarding Awarding Credit for Prior Learning.**

5.1. State colleges and universities shall develop institutional policies for evaluating prior learning and for awarding credit consistent with this policy.

5.1.a. Each institution shall develop appropriate policies and procedures for awarding credit for a student's prior college-level learning in accordance with this policy, accrediting bodies' guidelines for prior learning assessment, and principles of good educational practice.

5.1.b. Institutional policy will apply to all academic programs.

5.1.c. The institutional policy on Credit for Prior Learning must be filed with the Council for Community and Technical College Education and the Higher Education Policy Commission.

5.2. Institutions shall identify the forms of PLA credits that the institution will award, the processes for acquiring such credit, and make that information publicly available to students, faculty, and other stakeholders.

5.3. Institutions shall have discretionary authority to award academic credit for prior learning that is equivalent to coursework which meets the requirements for the degree program in which the student is enrolled.

5.4. Credit for prior learning can apply toward majors, minors, general education requirements, and electives that count toward the student's chosen degree or certificate. Prior Learning Assessment credit may also satisfy prerequisite requirements. College credit awarded through PLA shall not be treated differently in its application and use than its course equivalencies or appropriate block credit.

5.5. Credit for prior learning shall only be awarded to students who are admitted to the institution and have declared a major field of study.

5.6. Credit awarded through PLA shall not count toward institutional residency requirements.

5.7. The evaluation of a portfolio must be completed by faculty with appropriate professional credentials. Course-specific examinations must be designed and evaluated by faculty with appropriate professional credentials. A recommendation for credit shall be made to the appropriate academic officer at the institution and in accordance with the institution's PLA guidelines.

~~5.8. Institutions may set a maximum limit of credits that can be earned through PLA. This limit must be at least 60 credits for a bachelor's degree, 30 credits for an associate's degree and 15 credits for a certificate program. If a program accrediting body has a specific maximum for PLA credit, then that maximum should be honored for that particular program. Institutions must accept PLA credit up to 30 credits for bachelor's degrees, up to 15 credits for associate's degrees, and up to 6 credits for certificate programs.~~

5.8.a. Institutions may set a higher limit not to exceed 60 credits for bachelor's degrees, not to exceed 30 credits for associate's degrees, and not to exceed 15 credits for certificate programs.

5.8.b. If a program accrediting body has a specific maximum for PLA credit, then that maximum should be honored by that particular program.

5.9. Credit awarded through Prior Learning Assessment must be clearly identified as such on a student's official transcript according to institutional PLA guidelines, but it should be evident that the credits are PLA. Such credit shall not be used to determine a student's grade point average or used in the calculation of graduation honors. The credit should be recorded as "Credit" only.

5.10. Student requests for awards of academic credit for prior learning shall be submitted in accordance with the guidelines established by the institution. Institutions must establish a written record

of their decisions and the basis for that decision in accepting or declining a Prior Learning Assessment (whether it is portfolio evaluation or other type of assessment) for academic credit. Institutional policies should ensure the transparency of the award or denial of PLA credit. Additionally, institutions must develop and communicate a process for appealing PLA decisions.

5.11. Prior Learning Assessment fees may vary based upon the type of assessment performed. Prior Learning Assessment credit and transcripting fees to students must be clearly published and made available to the student.

5.12. Institutions will regularly review their PLA policies to ensure that they are consistent with accreditation PLA guidelines and state, regional, and national practices.

### **133-59-6. Transferability of Prior Learning Assessment Credits.**

6.1. Credits earned through PLA will be transferable in accordance with Series 17: *Transferability of Credits and Grades at West Virginia Colleges and Universities*. Once on a student's transcript, credits earned through prior learning shall be treated no differently than other credit coursework on a student's transcript.

6.2. PLA credit awarded at one institution, which meets the West Virginia Core Coursework Transfer Agreement or other statewide articulation agreements, must be accepted as transfer credit toward the degree if the student transfers to another West Virginia public college or university in accordance with the guidelines of that particular policy or agreement.

### **133-59-7. Reporting the Awarding of Prior Learning Assessment Credits.**

7.1. Each institution shall maintain records of the number of students awarded credit for prior learning, number of credits for prior learning awarded, type of assessment method(s) used, and other recipient data, which will be reported to the Higher Education Policy Commission/Council for Community and Technical College Education on an annual basis. Commission/Council staff will develop specific reporting guidelines and advise each institution of those guidelines.