

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN THE PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT (PLA) PROGRAM?

City University of Seattle recognizes that learning occurs in many different ways and under varied circumstances. As a result, the University has designed its PLA program to enable students to earn college credit for documenting learning acquired outside of the traditional classroom. CityU students can earn up to forty-five (45) undergraduate (quarter not semester) credits if they can demonstrate the attainment of knowledge equivalent to that learned in college-level course on the topic.

We have developed a list of questions to help you determine if PLA is an appropriate method for you to earn college credits toward your degree. You may want to answer these questions and then discuss them with your advisor, who can help you determine if PLA is a good option for you.

Before you explore the college-level knowledge you might already have, it is important to determine how many and what types of credit you need to complete your degree. You want to be sure that any credits you earn can be used toward your degree. Therefore, you should take the following steps:

- Declare a degree and complete a program plan with your advisor.
- Make sure all of your transfer credits have been evaluated and posted to your program plan and transcript.
- Now, take a look at what credits/courses you still need to complete your degree. Consider if you have any professional or life experiences that have helped you to gain this knowledge already. For example, if you are seeking a BS in Business Administration, and you need a course in marketing, you might be able to demonstrate through PLA that the knowledge gained as the assistant marketing manager of a department store has provided you with equivalent knowledge. The rest of this document will help you determine the courses you may be eligible to earn credit for through PLA.

How can I determine the course credits I can earn through the PLA process?

Ask yourself the following questions:

- a) Have I gained substantial knowledge through any of the following:
 - Full or part-time jobs
 - Independent reading and study
 - Training programs or in-service courses
 - Volunteer work
 - Cultural and artistic pursuits
 - Hobbies and recreational pastimes
 - Community or religious activities
 - Military service
 - Organizational memberships
 - Travel study
- b) Is my knowledge applicable to other cases outside the specific context in which it was learned?

For example, suppose the father of a five-year-old child believes that he has learned a great deal about child development through the process of raising a child. However, his knowledge only relates to the experiences he has had with his own child; he has not learned about other children in other contexts. He would learn more by taking a course in child development and so he is not a strong candidate for PLA.

c) Is my knowledge current?

If a student worked in accounting 20 years ago, but can no longer solve accounting problems, the student's knowledge is not current and PLA is not a viable option. CityU seeks to impart up-to-date knowledge and does not grant credit for outmoded learning. However, if you recently worked as a sales manager for several companies you may have current knowledge of sales and marketing and could earn college credit through the PLA process.

d) Does my knowledge have a theoretical basis?

Was your learning more than just practical experience? Did it include the application of theoretical principles developed by experts in the field? Did you learn who the recognized experts in the field are? Do you know what they have written or stated concerning your area of knowledge? For example, if you are seeking credit in the area of management, can you identify the principles of management? Are you familiar with what experts say are the current trends in management?

e) Can my knowledge be measured and evaluated?

Can you show an expert how much you know and how well you have learned the subject area? For example, if you are seeking to earn college credit for your knowledge of astronomy (gained as an amateur astronomer), can you discuss the major topics debated in the field of astronomy? Can you describe how astronomers gain new knowledge of the universe? Do you know the history of astronomy, and can you name the individuals who have had the greatest influence on the discipline?

f) Do I have evidence that supports my knowledge of the topic?

As part of the PLA process you need to demonstrate that you understand the topic and can demonstrate the use of that knowledge. You can demonstrate your knowledge through one or more of the following:

- Samples of your work
- Documentation of job skills and knowledge
- Descriptions of requirements for licenses and/or certificates
- Certificates of attendance and notes taken in training courses
- Transcripts
- Annotated bibliography on a topic
- Letters of verification from employers or others who have first-hand knowledge of your abilities
- Proof of membership in professional or trade organizations
- Any other material agreed upon with your PLA mentor that offers proof of your college-level learning.

g) Does my learning fit into my degree program plan?

You should make sure that any credits you earn help you further your progress toward your degree. For example, suppose you have an extensive background in art history and could probably earn a substantial number of credits in that subject. However, you are earning a degree in computer systems and have only CS major courses left to take. Instead of spending the energy to document your prior knowledge of art history, it would be more beneficial for you to focus on your current CS courses.

If you answered "yes" to questions a-g above, you are a potentially strong candidate for earning college credits through the PLA process. The following FAQs can give you more information about the process.

Can I only select City University of Seattle courses for PLA content?

Yes. All Prior Learning Assessments must be tied to courses offered by CityU that match your prior learning,

Are all City University of Seattle courses eligible for PLA?

While graduate level courses are not eligible for PLA, most undergraduate courses are. However, the following are not eligible due to the type of learning required:

Course type	Course numbers	Course names
Capstone/Practicum	BSM 495 COM 490 COM 491 GS 295 GS 495 MG 495 MK 495	Business Strategy Practicum I Practicum II Associate Degree Capstone General Studies Degree Capstone Capstone Capstone
Field experience		
Student teaching	EDE 452 ESP 452	Student Teaching Student Teaching
Cooperative study		
Internship	AC 498 BSM 485 COM 498 CS 498 EDE 360 EDE 351 EDE 352 EDE 450 EDE 451 ESP 360 ESP 351 ESP 352 ESP 450 ESP 461 ESP 498	Internship Internship Mass Communication/Journalism Undergraduate Internship Computer Systems Undergraduate Internship Internship I Internship II Internship III Internship IV Internship V Internship I Internship II Internship III Internship IV Internship V Internship Internship
Senior seminar	BSM 497 BSM 498 PSY 498	Senior Seminar A Senior Seminar B Senior Seminar
Independent study	BSM 499 COM 499 CS 499 ESP 499 MTH 499 PSY 499	Business Major Independent Study Independent Study Independent Study-Computer Systems Independent Study: Special Education Independent Study Independent Study
Lab course not accompanied by related theory course		

Are PLA credits in accounting and business courses accepted for the CPA exam?

No. The CPA exam requires so many credit hours of accounting and business to sit for the exam. PLA credit hours DO NOT count towards those required hours.

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Are PLA credits transferable to another university?

Each university and college determines what credits they will accept as transfer credit. If you are planning on transferring to another institution before you finish your degree you should contact their Registrar's Office prior to entering the PLA program.

How many credits should I be able to earn through PLA to make the process "worth" it?

This is a question that only you can answer. You can attempt to earn as few as five credits or as many as 45 credits. You will earn five credits for successfully completing PLA 200, the PLA preparation course, even if you do not earn any further credits through the PLA process.

If you do move forward after PLA 200, you will pay one of the following amounts for the evaluation of your potential credits:

- 0 - 15 credits evaluated = \$500; or
- 16- 30 credits evaluated = \$1000; or
- 31 - 45 credits evaluated = \$1500.

Please realize that evaluation does not guarantee that you will be granted those credits. You should have only those college credits assessed that you have a reasonable chance of earning through the PLA process. We ask that you choose the number of credits to be assessed before you submit your portfolio and only pay for that level of evaluation.

What are the next steps if I believe I am a good candidate for PLA?

- a) Enroll in PLA 200--the PLA Preparation course.

PLA 200 is a five-credit course and is offered online during the fall and spring quarters. It is graded on a Pass/No Pass basis and can fulfill lower division elective or humanities credit. In PLA 200, your past employment, volunteer activities, hobbies, travel, and other experiences will be analyzed closely for their identifiable skill and knowledge base. You will learn the specific skills needed to identify, articulate, and document your prior learning in the form of a portfolio.

There are no prerequisites for PLA 200 other than having a degree program plan. However, strong writing skills are essential for your success in developing the portfolio. If you feel your writing skills need to be strengthened, it is advisable to take a writing course such as ENG 112 or ENG 211 prior to PLA 200.

- b) Complete your PLA portfolio independently and then register for PLA 300, 301, or 302.

Once you complete PLA 200, you are ready to complete your portfolio. You will be working on your portfolio independently after completing PLA 200. When your portfolio is complete you are ready to have it evaluated for potential college credit and you will then register for the next phase of the PLA process—evaluation of the portfolio.

- PLA 300, 301, or 302—evaluation of the portfolio is required for all students who successfully completed PLA 200 and want to have their finished portfolio reviewed for the potential awarding of PLA credit. PLA 300, 301, and 302 are not courses; they are a means to have your PLA portfolio evaluated by a content expert. There are no instructors, nor are there assignments related to PLA 300, 301 or 302; your only task is to submit the final copy of the PLA portfolio to a content expert, through the PLA Program Manager. The section of PLA that you should enroll in corresponds to the number of credits you are hoping to earn:

- PLA 300: 0 - 15 credits evaluated = \$500; or
- PLA 301: 16- 30 credits evaluated = \$1000; or
- PLA 302: 31 - 45 credits evaluated = \$1500.

Do not register for PLA 300, 301, or 302 until you are ready to submit your portfolio for evaluation. Register for PLA 300, 301 or 302 through your advisor and then submit your completed portfolio to the PLA Program Manager.