Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)

The Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Program is defined in University of Hawai‘i Community Colleges Policy 5.302. PLA is the process through which students can earn college credit by identifying and documenting college-level learning that has been acquired through life experiences such as military and/or work experience, training, professional certification, independent study, volunteer activities, and hobbies (e.g., astronomy, history, travel, cultural and/or fine arts).

For all forms of PLA, applicants must be enrolled classified students; must present evidence that they have a mastery of the content of the courses for which credit is sought (but have not already received college credit for those courses); must apply by the specified deadline and pay any required fees. Applications are available on the PLA website, at the Registrar’s Office, and in the Counseling Office. PLA is available during the summer session only if faculty are available for review. Please visit the website for additional details.

The four most common options for requesting PLA credits are the following:

A. **Equivalency Examination** - Standardized national exams may be equated to equivalent courses. The equivalency examination must be approved by appropriate faculty and/or Division Chairperson. Requests for credit by equivalency exam can be submitted at any time during the semester. Examples of such examinations include the following:
   - AP – Advanced Placement Examination
   - CLEP – College-Level Examination Program
   - DSST – DANTES Subject Standardized Tests
   - IB – International Baccalaureate

B. **Non-Collegiate-Sponsored Education Credit (NCSE)** - This evaluates learning from courses completed in non-collegiate settings (e.g., professional licenses, labor union courses, agency training programs, professional workshops, and military courses) whose course content is equivalent to offerings from a college. The non-collegiate-sponsored education credit must be approved by appropriate faculty and/or Division Chairperson. Examples of such education credit include the following:
   1. Military (e.g., Joint Services Transcript)
   2. American Council on Education (ACE) College Credit Recommendation Service
   3. Professional Licenses or Industry Certifications (nationally- or state-certified professionals)

C. **Course Challenge / Credit by Institutional Examination (CBIE)** - Students who feel confident that their background/learning experiences have adequately prepared them in certain subject areas may challenge instructor-prepared examinations. In a Course Challenge/CBIE, students must demonstrate competency in a specific course and meet all Course Student Learning Outcomes (CSLOs) by completing, without instruction or tutorial assistance, a comprehensive written test, performance test, special project, and/or interview in the subject matter. The credit by examination must be approved by appropriate faculty and/or Division Chairperson. Note: Course Challenge option is not available for all courses. Courses for which credit is awarded based on Course Challenge/CBIE do not carry grades or grade points. Request for Exam by Institutional Credit may be submitted until week 12 of instruction (fall/spring).

Credit by examination carries no credit and does not contribute towards full-time student status (required for Veterans’ benefits and Financial Aid).

D. **Portfolio-based Assessment** - Prior learning must be documented with verifiable evidence of the concepts learned, relevant skills acquired, and the achievement level attained. Testimonial statements and/or references are required from qualified individuals (content experts, such as supervisors, co-workers, or personnel staff) who must also provide their credentials and qualifications of expertise. Credit for such prior learning must be approved by appropriate faculty and/or Division Chairperson. Note: Courses for which credit is awarded based on Portfolio-based Assessment do not carry grades or grade points. Students must initiate requests for credit by Portfolio-based Assessment by the end of the add/drop period.