



**APPLICATION AND INFORMATION PACKET**

**For**

**PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT (PLA) CREDIT – CREDIT FOR  
NON-TRADITIONAL ACADEMIC WORK**

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**Jefferson State Community College  
Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)**

**(Revised 07/12/23)**

## Introduction

Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is a means for a student to receive college level credit for learning that took place in a non-traditional learning environment, such as on-the-job training, military training, professional development seminars, volunteerism, and experience in-field. PLA relies heavily on aligning learning gained through experience with outcomes found in traditional courses of higher education.

Colleges in the Alabama Community College System (ACCS) have the prerogative to accept transfer credit that has been determined to be acceptable for application to its programs. When making that determination, the college must document that the credit awarded represents collegiate coursework relevant to the associated program in scope, depth, and time consistent with course content and level of instruction. Student competencies must be at least equivalent to those of students enrolled in the college's own programs of instruction, and with coursework taught by faculty members qualified to teach at the appropriate level.

PLA applies only to non-academic transfer courses. Credit awarded through nontraditional means for academic transfer courses may be awarded by examination or nationally recognized guidelines (AP, CLEP, ACT/PEP, DSST, Challenge Exams, ACE PONSI/CREDIT, ACE/MILITARY) or through other statewide programs identified by the Alabama Community College System office.

It is the official policy of Jefferson State Community College, that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, disability, sex, religion, creed, national origin, or age, be excluded from participating in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program, activity, or employment.

## Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)

### Process Overview

To ensure optimum management and student opportunities, please comply with the following:

- The student must be admitted as a full-time or part-time student at Jefferson State Community College and meet all requirements for the program in which course credit for prior learning is being sought.
- The student must make application to Jefferson State Community College for prior learning through the PLA Specialist.
- The PLA Specialist will guide the student through the process and will be the point of contact for all questions concerning PLA.
- Students are referred to an instructor in the area of the student's interest to recommend evaluations necessary to determine the student's level of expertise in the course(s).
- An instructor will evaluate the student's knowledge, skills, and experience in the program field to determine if the student should be considered for PLA credit.
- Upon completion of evaluations, the candidate will be informed of recommendations for award of credit or course work needed.
- All documentation of the PLA process, including evaluation results must be maintained in the student's file by the PLA specialists and other college officials as necessary.

## **Responsibilities**

### **Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Specialist**

The PLA Specialist is the applicant's advocate during assessment and will relay any requests and/or instructions from the evaluator(s). Responsibilities include:

1. Orienting the applicant to the requirements and processes for PLA and completion of the application;
2. Keeping students informed of progress and apprise them of the results;
3. Coordinating with evaluators for all necessary assessments;
4. Ensuring that timely reporting to applicant is maintained; and
5. Maintaining PLA documentation and statistics for reporting purposes.

### **Student**

The student's responsibilities include the following:

1. Meeting with the PLA Specialist;
2. Completing the PLA application;
3. Providing any documentation that supports application for PLA;
4. Taking all knowledge and skill evaluations required; and
5. Paying any associated fees.

### **Evaluators**

The Evaluator's responsibilities include the following:

1. Determining student's knowledge and skills and recommend any required written and/or skill Evaluations;
2. Administering relevant evaluations and recommend course credit based upon the student's evaluations; and
3. Forwarding relevant documentation to PLA Specialist for further processing.

# Jefferson State Community College Prior Learning Assessment Candidate Application

We recognize that learning occurs in a variety of ways such as: employment, training, and other experiences. You may be eligible for college credit for your prior learning; so please fill out this form to begin the process and see how much college credit you may have already earned.

When you have completed this application, submit it to the PLA Specialist for processing.

**NOTE:** Not more than 25 percent of total credit required for any program may be awarded through nontraditional means.

Student's Name:	_____	Date	_____
Student Number:	_____		
Address	_____	Phone #	_____
	_____	Email	_____

High School or GED completion - Yes  No

Veteran - Yes  No

\_\_\_\_\_  
Applicant's Signature

For college use only: NOTES:    
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# Jefferson State Community College Prior Learning Assessment Credit Candidate Requirements

Instructions to candidate: Please review each requirement and initial after each step has been completed. Failure to initial and take the proper steps will result in your application being returned and delaying your PLA request.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ A# \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone 1 \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone 2 \_\_\_\_\_

JSCC Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Major Program of Study \_\_\_\_\_

Major Code \_\_\_\_\_ Catalog Year \_\_\_\_\_

Initial	Student Checklist
	I have read the policies and requirements for requesting a Prior Learning Assessment (PLA).
	I am currently admitted as a full time or part time student at Jefferson State Community College.
	My major is an Associated in Applied Science (AAS), Advanced Certificate (CER), or a Certificate (STC). Transfer majors are not eligible –Associate in Science or Associate in Arts (AS/AA).
	I meet all of the requirements for the program in which course credit is being sought.
	I have included documentation to support my application.
	I have met with the department head who will review my application and accompanying materials to determine my level of expertise in the course.
	I have taken additional evaluations required of me from the department chair to complete the PLA.
	I have requested below the specific course(s) to be substituted for my application.
<b>List all documents that support your PLA Request.</b>	
<b>List class(es) that you are requesting credit for your PLA request.</b>	

I have read and understand my responsibilities for this application. By submitting this application and documentation, I am acknowledging that everything is true.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## Jefferson State Community College Prior Learning Assessment Recommendations

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Evaluator:** Please attach copies of all evaluation documentation and return to the PLA specialist.

**NOTE:** Total hours recommended for PLA credit cannot exceed 25% of the total number of credits required for an award.

Course Number and Title:	Credit Hours

Check here if application for PLA credit not recommended.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Department Chair/ Program Coordinator/Program Director Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean/Associate Dean Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean of Instruction Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Vice President for Academic Affairs Signature Date



## **Credit Awarded Through Non-Traditional Means: General**

1. College credit may be awarded through nontraditional means (i.e., credit awarded for prior learning from which the skills that comprise courses – terminal objectives – are mastered to an acceptable degree of proficiency).
2. Credit awarded through nontraditional means for academic transfer courses may be awarded by examination, nationally recognized guidelines (AP, CLEP, ACT/PEP, DANTEs, Challenge Exams, ACE PONSI/CREDIT, ACE/MILITARY) or through other statewide programs identified by the Department.
3. The College will accept for credit a score of 3 or higher on Advanced Placement subject examinations.
4. Credit awarded through nontraditional means for non-academic transfer courses may be awarded through portfolio review by a prior learning assessment specialist at the college, through statewide articulation agreement for career and technical students or other statewide programs identified by the System Office.
5. Not more than 25 percent of total credit required for any program may be awarded through nontraditional means. Credit awarded through nontraditional means is not applicable toward the minimum of 25 percent of semester credit hours that must be completed at the institution granting the degree.
6. Nontraditional credit is not applicable for the 25 percent semester credit hours that must be completed at the institution granting the degree.

## **GUIDELINES FOR CREDIT AWARDED THROUGH NON-TRADITIONAL MEANS: GENERAL**

1. General
  - A. Jefferson State Community College recognizes that learning occurs in a variety of ways. Individuals can develop mastery of course competencies through employment, training, and other experiences, which is termed "prior learning." Credit can be awarded for prior learning from which the skills that comprise courses (terminal objectives) are mastered to an acceptable degree of proficiency and the individual documents skill mastery.
  - B. The College shall publish in its catalog, website, and other appropriate sites the procedures for students to earn credit for prior learning. The College shall have detailed policies and procedures for prior learning assessment (PLA) and the awarding of credit for prior learning, and shall communicate these procedures in appropriate institution publications. The College shall regularly monitor, evaluate, and, if necessary, revise prior learning assessment activities in response to changes in the needs of individuals and in the state of assessment. The College shall submit its policies, procedures, and other applicable materials (e.g., forms, applications for PLA) to a committee appointed by the Chancellor for review and approval. At a minimum, these procedures should include a listing of the types of documentation acceptable to the institution, the dates of inclusion for which prior learning will be acceptable, and the name and phone number of the PLA specialist.
  - C. These guidelines are not applicable to secondary/postsecondary articulation agreements or dual enrollment.
2. Awarding Credit through Prior Learning Assessment
  - A. Credit for prior learning can be awarded only after the assessment of prior learning experiences and only for documented learning that demonstrates achievement of all terminal objectives for a specific course or courses. A portfolio should be developed for this process. (See Appendix A for Guidelines for Assessing Portfolios for Evidences of Experiential Learning.)
  - B. Course credit earned through prior learning shall be noted on the student's transcript as having been awarded through PLA.
  - C. Credit for academic transfer courses awarded through PLA may only be awarded by examination or nationally recognized guidelines (AP, CLEP, ACT/PEP, DANTES, Challenge Exams, ACE PONSI/CREDIT, ACE/MILITARY). Credit for experiential learning (portfolio review) may not be awarded for academic transfer courses.
  - D. In the process of determining if credit can be awarded for prior learning, institutions shall charge students only for the cost of the PLA services and not for the amount of credit awarded.

- E. There shall be a charge of \$25 for each portfolio review to assess experiential learning for credit. Documentation must be provided for each course for which credit through experiential learning is requested, and the \$25 fee applies to each review of the documentation (e.g., individual is charged \$50 if the person is seeking credit through experiential learning for two courses, and thereby requires portfolio reviews in relation to those two courses). Students seeking credit for academic transfer courses through examination or nationally recognized guidelines are not charged a fee for PLA or for credits awarded through PLA.
- F. Not more than 25 percent of total credit required for any program may be awarded as a result of PLA. Credit awarded through PLA does not count toward the minimum of 25 percent of semester credit hours that must be completed at the institution granting the degree.
- G. Before receiving credit through PLA for a course, an individual must meet enrollment requirements of the course. This enrollment requirement is waived only for prerequisites for which a student is also seeking credit, if, in fact, that credit is being awarded.
- H. Credit may not be awarded twice for the same learning.

### 3. Procedures for Prior Learning Assessment

- A. The student must enroll at the institution and meet all admission requirements for the program in which course credit for prior learning is being sought.
- B. The student must make application to the institution for prior learning assessment and credit for experiential learning.
- C. At least one person from each institution shall be trained in the standards, principles, and procedures of PLA (institution PLA contact). This person must successfully complete PLA training provided by the Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education. This person shall provide related training and technical assistance to other institution personnel having PLA responsibilities.
- D. In the portfolio assessment process, an instructor of a course for which credit for experiential learning is being sought shall evaluate the student's work and training experiences in the program field and determine if the student should be considered for PLA. Evidence of experiential learning may include certifications, licensures, and examples or demonstrations of skills possessed. If the student is deemed a candidate for PLA, the instructor shall recommend the student to the institution PLA contact (or conduct the PLA if the instructor is trained to do so) and specify the course(s) for which the student may be eligible to receive credit for experiential learning.
- E. Portfolio assessment by itself may be used for PLA only when the following methods cannot be used: course challenge exams, College Level Examination Program (CLEP), American College Testing Proficiency Examination Program (ACT/PEP), Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Support (DANTES), American Council on Education's Program on Noncollegiate Sponsored Instruction (ACE/PONSI), College Board Advanced Placement (AP) Program, American Council on Education College Credit Recommendation Services (ACE/CREDIT), or American Council on Education Military Program (ACE/MILITARY).

## **GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSING PORTFOLIOS FOR EVIDENCE OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**

1. A portfolio is a detailed summary of an individual's experiences applicable to college-level learning. The portfolio includes a description of experiences and the skills learned from these experiences. The portfolio includes a brief life history, statement of individual's career goals, description of experiences (work and non-work related) and related learning matched to courses for which credit is being sought, and any supporting documentation (e.g., licensures, certifications, continuing education units, training records, employer statements).
2. Faculty in the applicable program will assist the institution PLA contact in evaluating a portfolio for college equivalent learning and recommend the awarding of appropriate college credit based on demonstrated competencies. The faculty evaluator recommends the appropriate course to be credited and number of credit hours that will appear on the student's transcript.
3. Portfolios/records shall become a permanent part of the student's record.