COLLEGE OF MICRONESIA-FSM

BOARD POLICY NO. 3104

Prior Learning Assessment

Date Adopted: 1 April 1993

Date Revised: 11 March 2022

Date Reviewed: 24 March 2014; 11 March 2022

References:
Guam Community College Policy 350, Prior Learning Assessment (https://guamcc.edu/sites/default/files/Policy%2520350.Prior%2520Learning%2520Assessment.pdf)
University of Hawaii Community Colleges 5.302 (http://uhcc.hawaii.edu/ovpcc/policies/UHCCP_5.302)
CAEL Standards (https://www.cael.org/ten-standards-for-assessing-learning)

~~**Definitions:**~~

~~A. **Prior Learning Assessment (PLA**) – Prior learning assessment is defined as the structured process for evaluating learning gained outside the traditional academic environment. Put another way, it is learning and knowledge students acquire while living their lives, such as by working, participating in employer training programs, serving in the military, studying independently, volunteering or doing community service, and studying open-source courseware. In short, PLA is the evaluation and assessment of an individual's life learning for college credit, certification, or advanced standing toward further education or training.~~
~~B. **Advanced Placement (AP) Exams** – A series of tests developed by the College Board initially for AP High School courses. This is also a type of early postsecondary educational opportunity.~~
~~C. **American Council on Education (ACE) Guides** – Published credit recommendations for formal instructional programs and examinations offered by non-collegiate agencies (including civilian employers, the military, professional associations, and other workplace-related training).~~
~~D. **College Level Examination Program (CLEP) Exams** – Tests of college material offered by the College Board. In some circumstances, this is also a type of early postsecondary educational opportunity.~~
~~E. **Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Educational Support (DANTES) Subject Standardized Tests (DSSTs)** – DSSTs are examinations administered by Prometric. While originally being restricted to active and retired military personnel, these tests are now available to civilians.~~
~~F. **Excelsior College Examination Program (ECE)** – Formerly, Regents College Exams or ACT/PEP Exams, these are examinations for college credit offered by Excelsior College, NY.~~

G. **Institutional Credit-by-Examination** – An academic program may allow students to receive credit for a course by taking a credit-by-exam for that course. The student must contact the individual program or division to learn about the availability and cost of credit-by-exam.

H. **International Baccalaureate Programs (IB)** – The IB Programme is an internationally accepted qualification for entry into institutes of higher education, much like the AP program. The Diploma Program is designed for students aged 16-19; it is a demanding two-year curriculum leading to final examinations. Graduates of the IB program must demonstrate competency in languages, social studies, the experimental sciences, and mathematics. In addition, the program has three core requirements that are included to broaden the educational experience and challenge students to apply their knowledge and understanding. To receive a diploma, students must achieve a minimum score of 24 out of a possible 45 points, as well as satisfactory participation in the creativity, action, service requirement. This is also a type of early postsecondary educational opportunity.

I. **Locally Evaluated Industry and Workplace Credit** – Institutions may individually evaluate non-collegiate instructional programs, such as those for industry certifications, professional licensures, apprenticeships, and other local workplace trainings that demonstrate competency required for completion of degree or certificate programs. PLA credit can be awarded based on evaluation of the training or certification by faculty members in the student's program, based on recommendations in the ACE Guide. Not all training that can be possibly assessed for college level credit is incorporated in industry certifications, professional licensures, or apprenticeships:

a. **Apprenticeship:** Apprenticeship is a combination of on-the-job training and related instruction in which workers learn the practical and theoretical aspects of a highly skilled occupation. Apprenticeship programs can be sponsored by individual employers, joint employer and labor groups, and/or employer associations.

b. **Certification:** Certification is a designation earned by a person that ensures the individual is qualified to perform a task or job. Certification differs from licensure in that certification is an employment qualification and not a legal requirement for practicing a profession.

c. **Professional Licensure:** Professional licensure protects the public by enforcing standards that restricts practice to qualified individuals who have met specific qualifications in education, work experience, and exams. Licensure is a means by which "permission to practice" is regulated. Licensure is required by law.

J. **Prior Military Training Credit** – College credit for military training may be awarded through the American Council on Education (ACE) College Credit Recommendation Service or through direct evaluation of the student's service school transcripts. For ACE evaluated credit, students must request and submit to the institution an official transcript from ACE in order to receive PLA credit, and the training must be evaluated by ACE and included in the ACE Guide.

The College of Micronesia-FSM recognizes that all learning does not take place in the class room. Therefore, COM-FSM awards college credit towards certificates and degrees based on assessment of prior learning. COM-FSM awards credit to students for non-traditional learning such as, but not limited to institutional credit-by-exam, external examination, transfer credit, and military education College of Micronesia-FSM Board Policy 3104 Page 3 of 3

~~The college adheres to the following standards for assessing experiences for awarding college credit:~~

- ~~Credit should be awarded only for learning, and not for experience or time spent;~~
- ~~Assessment is based on criteria for outcomes that are clearly articulated and published;~~
- ~~College credit should be awarded only for college-level learning;~~
- ~~Credit should be awarded only for learning that has a balance, is appropriate to the subject, and lies between the theory and practical application of the subject;~~
- ~~The determination of competence levels, and of credit awards must be made by appropriate subject matter and academic experts; and~~
- ~~Credit should be appropriate to the academic context in which it is accepted.~~
- ~~Types of Prior Learning Assessments include, but are not limited to:~~
  - ~~Institutional Credit by Examination~~
  - ~~Standardized Exams (i.e. AP, CLEP, DSST, UExcel, IB)~~
  - ~~ACE and National College Credit Recommendation Services. [Guides – published credit recommendations for formal instructional programs and examinations offered by non-collegiate agencies.]~~
  - ~~Institutional review of external training, licenses, or certifications~~

~~COM-FSM will follow the requirements set forth in the Standards in Credit for Prior Learning. These standards shall be consistent with U.S. Dept. of Education and applicable accreditation standards.~~
~~Assessment programs are regularly monitored, reviewed, evaluated, and revised as needed for currency.~~
~~See AP 3104.~~

I. Purpose and Policy Statement

The College of Micronesia-FSM (COM-FSM) is the credit-awarding authority and recognizes that college-level learning occurs both inside and outside the traditional classroom. COM-FSM shall award college credit toward certificate and degree programs based on the formal assessment of prior learning, including workplace experience, military service, independent study, open-source courseware, and standardized testing. Assessment programs are regularly monitored, evaluated, and revised to ensure currency and alignment with U.S. Department of Education guidelines and regional accreditation standards.

II. Standards for Awarding Credit

In alignment with national standards (including CAEL Guidelines), COM-FSM adheres to the following principles when evaluating prior learning:

1. Learning vs. Experience: Credit is awarded only for demonstrated learning, not for mere time spent or years of experience.

2. College-Level Rigor: Learning must demonstrate a balance of theory and practical application appropriate to college-level standards.

3. Subject Relevance: Awarded credit must directly align with the student's degree requirements and academic context.

4. Expert Evaluation: Assessment of competence and determination of credit awards must be conducted by qualified academic faculty and subject-matter experts.
5. Transparency: Assessment criteria and learning outcomes are clearly defined, published, and accessible to students.

III. Approved PLA Pathways

COM-FSM accepts prior learning credit through four primary pathways:

1. Institutional Credit-by-Examination: Course credit granted via internally developed and administered examinations.

2. Standardized Examinations: Recognized national and international exam programs (e.g., AP, CLEP, DSST, IB, UExcel).

3. National Credit Recommendations: Evaluated workplace or military training documented via the American Council on Education (ACE) or the National College Credit Recommendation Service (NCCRS).

4. Institutional Review of External Training: Direct evaluation by program faculty of non-collegiate training, industry certifications, professional licensures, and registered apprenticeships.

IV. Definitions

- Prior Learning Assessment (PLA): A structured process for evaluating knowledge and competencies gained outside traditional academic environments for the purpose of awarding college credit, advanced standing, or certification.
- Advanced Placement (AP): Standardized college-level examinations developed by the College Board for high school students.
- American Council on Education (ACE) Guides: Standardized credit recommendations for formal non-collegiate training offered by civilian employers, professional associations, and the military.
- College-Level Examination Program (CLEP): Subject-based standardized exams offered by the College Board to demonstrate college-level proficiency.
- DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST): Standardized subject exams administered by Prometric, available to military personnel and civilians.
- International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program: An internationally recognized, high school curriculum requiring comprehensive evaluations across core academic disciplines.
- Institutional Credit-by-Examination: Comprehensive exams created and evaluated by individual COM-FSM academic programs for specific courses.

- Locally Evaluated Industry & Workplace Credit: Direct faculty evaluation of workplace learning, industry certifications (employment qualifications), professional licensures (legal permissions to practice), and apprenticeships (combined on-the-job training and theory).

- Prior Military Training Credit: Credit evaluated directly through ACE transcripts or official service school transcripts.

- UExcel Exams (formerly ECE/ACT/PEP): Standardized college credit examinations administered by Excelsior University.