



COLLEGE & CAREER PATHWAYS

PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT MANUAL (PLA)

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I. Introduction to Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)

As a premiere college that provides high-quality academic, technical, and cultural programs, Alvin Community College's mission is to promote student success, enhance quality of life, and support economic development. By the year 2030, it is the goal of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) that 60 percent of Texas Residents, ages 25-34, will have earned a certificate or degree. In alignment with the THECB, Alvin Community College recognizes the benefits of Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) in helping students reach this goal in a more time-efficient way. In addition, ACC is cognizant of the diverse ways in which students obtain knowledge and skills outside of the traditional classroom setting. The primary goal of Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is to evaluate a student's knowledge and skillset for the awarding of college credit through alternative pathways such as - national and local exams, industry certifications and work experience, military training, articulation agreements and non-credit mirror course conversion. In addition, the PLA pathways accelerate certificate and degree completion for students who have met the learning objectives prior to entry into their program.

The purpose of this manual is to provide an overview of all ACC PLA Pathways, student and faculty responsibilities and processes for approval. This manual will serve as a road map to assist students towards accelerated certificate and degree completion. Eligibility requirements, processes, and fees associated with each pathway are outlined in this manual. If there are any questions about what is in this manual, contact the College and Career Pathways office for assistance.



Important Facts to Know About PLA

1. Students must complete the ACC admissions process and all required testing prior to applying for PLA.
2. Student has successfully completed a minimum of 3 hours of ACC course work or is currently enrolled after the census date of the requesting semester.
3. College-level learning must be demonstrated by the prior learning experience. ACC utilizes various methods to determine the level of learning as outlined for each PLA pathway.
4. PLA credit is recorded on an unofficial transcript as credit only and does not receive a course grade or impact a student's GPA.
5. Credit awarded through PLA by ACC will count towards ACC graduation.
6. Students may earn up to 75% of required program/certificate credits through PLA. However, a minimum of 25% of the credits for the ACC certificate or degree must be completed at ACC (in fulfillment of the residency requirement). Hours awarded by PLA will not be counted toward resident credit, with the exception of ACC Continuing Education Mirror Courses.
7. Prior learning credit cannot duplicate courses that have been completed or attempted.
8. PLA credit is not considered coursework and will not satisfy requirements for financial aid.
9. Each educational institution establishes their own requirements for PLA credit and therefore may not accept PLA credit awarded by ACC as transfer credit. Additionally, credit awarded by other institutions may not be eligible for PLA credit at ACC. Students should review PLA requirements at each institution when considering transfer.
10. Some PLA options require a fee for assessment.

II. Responsibilities

A. Student Responsibilities

a. PLA Procedures

Students are responsible for researching [eligibility requirements](#), completing the necessary application, and providing the required documentation for review. All aforementioned information can be found on ACC's [Prior Learning Assessment](#) website or the current ACC catalog. Students must adhere to all deadlines.

b. Appeal Process

1. A student shall have one semester (fall or spring) immediately following the PLA decision to appeal the denial of credit.
2. To initiate an appeal, the student is required to first inform the Office of College & Career Pathways via email of the desire to appeal for record keeping purposes and provide supporting rationale.
3. The student will then meet with the Department Chair or Program Director for discussion and to seek a resolution. The chair may respond to the student's appeal in writing, unless the student provides additional information. If resolution does not occur at the Department/Program Chair level, the student can appeal to the Dean for further consideration. The dean may schedule a conference with the student to render a final decision. *Disclaimer: the dean's decision is irrevocable.

B. College & Career Pathways Office

a. Procedures Review

The ACC College and Career Pathways office responsibilities include:

1. Informing faculty and staff about PLA pathway options. The Pathways Coordinator will meet with Department/Program annually to discuss current opportunities for adding PLA options. Students will be able to ask any ACC Faculty or staff member about ways to accelerate the completion of their certificate or degree through PLA and receive an informed response.
2. Publicize PLA pathways to students. The CCP office will be responsible for advertising PLA through the course catalog, semester schedule, social media, college website, and postings around campus.
3. Review of PLA criteria for students applying for credit so that all required pieces are included in application before moving forward for approval.

4. Work directly with Deans, Department/Program Chairs, and faculty to ensure that PLA standards meet SACSCOC curricular standards for awarding credit. The faculty needs to assess the sources for PLA credit and the extent to which these sources' competencies align with the course learning outcomes of those courses being considered for credit.
5. Ensure that ACC is abiding by all Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), Texas Education Agency (TEA), and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools – Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) rules related to awarding college credit through PLA pathways.
6. Maintain official copies of all internal departmental exams offered for PLA credit by each department.
7. Ensure the PLA Manual is regularly updated and maintained.

b. PLA Records

The CCP Office will be responsible for keeping record of:

1. Students who have applied for PLA
2. PLA Proposal Forms
3. PLA Approved Departmental Exams
4. PLA Appeal Cases

C. Deans, Department Chairs, Program Directors, and Faculty

a. PLA Department/Program Approval Process

Changes should be submitted to the CCP office.

1. Department/Program Chair shall meet with the College & Career Pathways Office to identify PLA opportunities annually.
2. Department/Program Chair to present options to Dean and/or Advisory Committee (when applicable) for approval.
3. Department/Program Chair will complete the PLA Proposal and submit it to the College & Career Pathways Office. The CCP Office will forward the proposal to Dean and VPI for review and approval. Once a decision is made, the VPI will return the completed proposal to the CCP Office.
4. The CCP office will inform Advising, Testing, Instructional Support Specialist, and Registrar's office of any approved PLA updates.

b. PLA Departmental Exam and Military Approval Process

Changes should be submitted to the CCP office.

1. Department/Program Chair to create Departmental Exam and complete PLA Approval Form.
2. Copy of exam and PLA Approval Form shall be presented to the Dean and VPI for approval.
3. The dean will route the form with their decision and appropriate documentation attached to the CCP office.
4. If approved, the CCP office will inform the Registrar's office, Advising Services, Admissions, and the Curriculum Specialist to update the corresponding catalog.
5. If approved, it will be the responsibility of the Department/Program to add the PLA opportunity to their program webpage, and CCP will add to the POD page for student awareness.

c. National Examination Process

1. January – The CCP Office will send lists of Advanced Placement (AP), CLEP, IB, DSST, and other national examinations to the Deans and designated divisions for review.
2. February– Deans and specific divisions to submit updates to CCP office.
3. After review, the CCP office will inform the Registrar's office, Advising Services, Admissions, and the Curriculum Specialist to update the corresponding catalog. The CCP office will also report changes to agencies as applicable.
4. It will be the responsibility of the Department/Program to add the PLA Opportunity to their program webpage and POD page for student awareness.

D. Student Services

ACC Student Services Department responsibilities include:

- a. Informing and explaining to students the benefits of PLA pathways during advising sessions.
- b. Providing students with the PLA application and explaining the eligibility criteria.
- c. Ensuring that approved credit is properly transcribed on the student's official ACC transcript.

E. Business Office

ACC Business office is responsible for:

- a. Collecting fees associated with the PLA pathways.
- b. Providing students with proof of payment to submit with PLA application.

III. General ACC Guidelines and

Criteria for PLA

- a. Students may only request PLA after having completed a minimum of 3hrs of coursework with Alvin Community College or are currently enrolled after the census date of the requesting semester.
- b. Military Credit/AP/CLEP, and other national exams may be applied when a student has successfully completed the ACC admissions process and has submitted the National Exam with required score and/or all Military documentation.
- c. PLA credit will only be awarded by appropriate faculty as it applies to a current ACC program of study.
- d. Up to 75% of credits can be awarded for PLA. However, a minimum of 25% of the credits for the ACC certificate or degree must be completed at ACC (in fulfillment of the residency requirement). Hours awarded by PLA will not be counted toward resident credit, with the exception of ACC Continuing Education Mirror Courses.
- e. PLA is noted on the transcript with a grade of 'S' for the semester hour value and is not calculated in the institution's grade point average (GPA).
- f. Award of PLA at ACC does not guarantee transfer of such credit to other colleges and universities. Students should discuss transferability with the intended university for their transfer policy.
- g. There is no charge for the transcription of National Exams (AP/CLEP ect) or Military PLA credit. There is a \$10 per credit hour charge for all other forms of PLA (departmental exams, industry certification review and/or portfolio credit).
- h. Skills assessments, such as a written exam or lab assessment, that require demonstration of knowledge and skillset are \$100.00. All PLA fees must be paid prior to taking the exam or having documentation reviewed. PLA fees are non-refundable.
- i. **Routing of Unapproved PLA Opportunities**
 - 1. If a PLA Approved Opportunity is **not approved** at the departmental level, the form and supporting documentation must be **routed to the VPI Office** for final review and determination.
 - 2. The VPI may consult with academic deans or subject-matter experts as needed.
 - 3. The decision of the VPI is final for all exception requests and unapproved Pla opportunities.

Payment does not ensure approval of credit

IV. PLA Pathways

A. PLA Credit by National Examination

Credit by examination offers students an opportunity to earn credit for previous knowledge. Types of national exams considered for credit by Alvin Community College include Advance Placement (AP), College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), DANTES (DSST), the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program (IB), and many more. Content of any examination must be equivalent to a course in the current course catalog of the college and the student's program of study.

Alvin Community College has reviewed and established specific equivalencies for each of the above-mentioned national exams. Students should refer to the ACC Catalog to review score requirements for each.

1. Eligibility

- a. Students must meet ACC standard PLA guidelines (section III).

2. Process

- a. Complete ACC Admission process (if not currently an ACC student).
- b. Student should visit with an ACC advisor or the CCP office if they have any questions about the score requirements available in the ACC catalog.
- c. Student must submit official test scores to Alvin Community College directly from the providing testing center. Scores will not be accepted from the student.
- d. Student should complete the National Examinations form and submit directly to the Registrar's office to have credit applied to the ACC transcript. The Registrar's office will notify the student of applied credit or if denied.

3. Fees

- a. There is no fee for the transcription of National Examinations.

B. PLA Credit by Internal Departmental Examination

Internal Departmental Exams are developed and reviewed by Alvin Community College faculty. Courses completed by internal department examination are noted as Credit by Exam on the transcript but are not calculated in the ACC GPA.

Students requesting review of coursework from non-accredited colleges should follow the process outlined for Departmental Examination review. A course syllabus, sample assignments, and instructor credentials (if applicable) should be attached to the PLA form.

1. Eligibility

- a. Students must meet ACC standard PLA guidelines (section III).

2. Process

- a. Meet with Department/Program Chair to discuss applying for PLA.
- b. Complete PLA Application and submit to the CCP office for approval.

- c. If approved by the CCP office, pay \$10 per credit hour for the course being replaced by the Internal Departmental Exam. If a skills assessment, written exam or lab assessment, is needed, \$100.00 must be paid.
- d. Submit approved application to the Department Chair/Program Director to show proof of payment and schedule to take the exam. Exams may be taken with the Department Chair, Program Director, or in the ACC testing center.
- e. Exam will be reviewed by the Department Chair/Program Director. Score results should be recorded on the PLA Application and submitted to the CCP office for review of all documentation. Approved forms will be routed to the Registrar's office, denied forms will be routed to the CCP office.
- f. The Registrar's office will post credit if applicable and notify the student of the applied credit. If the credit has been denied, the student will be informed by the CCP office and will have an opportunity to appeal the decisions by following the appeal process.

3. Fees

- a. \$10.00 per credit hour/ \$100 skillset assessment. Fees must be paid prior to taking the exam.
- b. All PLA fees must be paid prior to taking the exam or having documentation reviewed. PLA fees are non-refundable. Payment does not ensure approval of credit.

C. ACE – Evaluated Military Training

Students with credentials and experience gained through service may qualify for PLA credit. Students should complete the PLA form required and submit documentation necessary to prove knowledge and skills. In some cases, students may still need to take a Skills Assessment exam or a Departmental Exam.

- Two hours of physical activity credit from the DD214;
- Academic course credit directly equivalent and applicable to the student's major from the military transcript (AARTS, SMART, CCAF), based on ACE Guide recommendations.

Students are eligible for a minimum of 12 hours of college elective credit to satisfy elective course requirements in the student's degree program.

1. Eligibility

- a. Students must meet ACC standard PLA guidelines (section III).
- b. PLA credit may be awarded when the student has successfully completed the ACC Admissions process and has submitted all Military documentation.
- c. Graduated from an accredited public or private high school, home school, or a school operated by the US Department of Defense.
- d. Honorably discharged with a minimum of two years of service in the armed forces or was discharged because of a disability.

2. Process

- a. Meet with Department Chair to discuss applying for PLA.
- b. Complete PLA Application and submit to the CCP office for approval.
- c. Meet with Veterans Student Advisor.
- d. ACE Credit Recommendation.

- e. Submit approved applications and supporting documentation to the Department Chair for approval and Dean signature.
- f. PLA Application and supporting documentation should be submitted to the CCP office for review of all documentation. The CCP Office will submit to the appropriate dean for final approval. Approved forms will be routed to the Registrar's office, denied forms will be routed to the CCP office.
- g. The Registrar's office will post credit if applicable and notify the student of the applied credit. If the credit has been denied, the student will be informed by the CCP office and will have an opportunity to appeal the decisions by following the appeal process.

3. Fees:

- a. There is no fee for the transcription of Military PLA. However, students may still need to take a Skills Assessment exam or a Departmental Exam
- b. Skillset Assessments are \$100. Fees must be paid prior to having your certification reviewed.
- c. All PLA fees must be paid prior to taking the exam. PLA fees are non-refundable. Payment does not ensure approval of credit.

D. ACE/NCCRS – Evaluated Industry Certification and Training Programs/Career Portfolios

1. Eligibility

- a. Students must meet ACC standard PLA guidelines (section III).

2. Process

- a. Meet with Department Chair to discuss applying for PLA.
- b. Complete PLA Application and submit to the CCP office for approval.
- c. If approved by the CCP office, pay \$10 per credit hour for the course being replaced by the Industry Certification. If a skills assessment is needed, \$100.00 must be paid.
- d. Submit approved application to the Dean/Department Chair to show proof of payment along with copies of your certification and/or any supporting documentation.
- e. Industry Certifications will be reviewed by the Department Chair/Program Director. Approval or denial will be indicated on the application and submitted to the CCP office for review of all documentation. The CCP Office will submit to the dean's office for final approval. Approved forms will be routed to the Registrar's office, denied forms will be routed to the CCP office.
- f. Registrar's office will post credit if applicable and notify the student of applied credit. If the credit has been denied, the student will be informed by the CCP office and will have an opportunity to appeal the decision by following the appeal process.

3. Fees

- a. \$10.00 per credit hour/ \$100 skillset assessment. Fees must be paid prior to having certification reviewed.

E. Continuing Education/WECM to Credit (Mirror Courses)

1. Eligibility

- a. Students must meet ACC standard PLA guidelines (section III).

2. Process

- a. Meet with Department Chair to discuss applying for PLA.
- b. Complete PLA Application and submit to the CCP office for approval.
- c. If approved by the CCP office, pay \$10 per credit hour for the course being replaced by the Industry Certification. If a skills assessment is needed, \$100.00 must be paid.
- d. Submit approved application to the Dean/Department Chair to show proof of payment along with copies of your certification and/or any supporting documentation.
- e. Documentation will be reviewed by the Department Chair/Program Director. Approval or denial will be indicated on the application and submitted to the CCP office for review of all documentation. The CCP Office will submit to the dean's office for final approval. Approved forms will be routed to the Registrar's office, denied forms will be routed to the CCP office.
- f. Registrar's office will post credit if applicable and notify the student of the applied credit. If the credit has been denied, the student will be informed by the CCP office and will have an opportunity to appeal the decision by following the appeal process.

3. Fees

- a. \$10.00 per credit hour/ \$100 skillset assessment (if applicable). Fees must be paid prior to having certification reviewed

V. PLA Fee Chart

PLA Fees must be paid prior to the review of the application and/or any testing.

PLA Format	Amount
Military	\$0 to transcribe
Advanced Placement	\$0 to transcribe
CLEP Exam	\$0 to transcribe; \$20 to have ACC Proctor
Departmental Exam	\$10 per credit hour
Skills Assessment Exam	\$100 flat rate

Industry Certification Review	\$10 per credit hour
Portfolio	TBD

Non-Accredited Course Review	\$10 per credit hour
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VI. Forms (All PLA forms are stored in the ACC POD and PLA webpage for review)

A. PLA Proposal Form

B. PLA Application: National Examinations

C. PLA Application: Internal Departmental Exam, Mirror Coursework, Industry Certifications/Career Portfolios

D. PLA Application: ACE – Evaluated Military Training

VII. Glossary

ACE: American Council on Education.

ACGM: Academic Course Guide Manual. <http://board.theccb.state.tx.us/apps/WorkforceEd/acgm/acgm.htm>

AARTS: ACE Army Registry Transcript System.

CCAF: The Community College of the Air Force. A regionally accredited degree granting institution for enlisted airmen.

CCP: College and Career Pathways. The Office responsible for the promotion and support of the PLA.

CLEP: College Level Examination Program. With a passing score, students can earn three or more college credits. <https://clep.collegeboard.org/>

DANTES/DSST: The United States Department of Defense's Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support program/DANTES Subject Standardized Tests. Credit-by-examination tests. <https://www.getcollegecredit.com/>

IB: International Baccalaureate. <https://www.ibo.org/about-the-ib/>

JST: Joint Services Transcript. Is an academically accepted document that validates a service member's occupational experience and formal military training along with the corresponding (ACE) college credit recommendations.

NCCRS: National College Credit Recommendation Service. Provides evaluation for training and education programs offered outside of the traditional college classroom setting and translates them into college credit equivalencies. <http://www.nationalccrs.org/>

PLA: Prior Learning Assessment. The PLA evaluates a student's knowledge and skillset for the awarding of college credit. Options include national and local exams, industry certifications and work experience, military training, articulation agreements, and non-credit mirror course conversion.

SMART: Sailor/Marine American Council on Education Registry Transcript.

VPI: Vice President of Instruction. Provides final approval for all PLA decisions if there are any discrepancies.

WECM: Workforce Education Course Manual. It is a web-based inventory of current workforce evaluation courses available for use by public two-year colleges. It provides community and technical colleges with an inventory of pre-approved courses developed in close partnership with Instructional Specialists representing a wide variety of technical fields, developed to meet the needs of the local community. <http://board.theccb.state.tx.us/apps/WorkforceEd/wecm/>