



2013-2014
Prior Learning Assessment
(PLA) Student Manual

University System of Georgia

Center for Adult Learners and Military (CALM)
University of North Georgia

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Preface

This handbook is designed to provide students with information needed when seeking credit for prior learning related to specific courses at University of North Georgia. The handbook, also available online via <http://ung.edu/adult-learners-military>, will be revised as new courses become available for PLA by portfolio credit.

For more information about PLA at UNG, contact:

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PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT

AT UNIVERSITY OF NORTH GEORGIA

Definition of Prior Learning

Prior learning is learning gained through life or work outside of structured higher educational courses. Many people learn through their experiences in life such as those in professional endeavors (through business, the military, or other work/training experiences) or through other educational experiences (through community work, family, travel, or personal study).

Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)

PLA is a process through which students **identify** areas of relevant learning from their past experiences, **demonstrate** that learning through appropriate documentation, and **submit** their materials so that they can be assessed and possibly awarded academic credit relative to specific course objectives at UNG.

Earning College Credit for Prior Learning

Broadly speaking, one of the goals of college level education is to prepare responsible, reflective citizens who adapt constructively to change. College level education also helps students become critical thinkers and problem solvers in an ever-changing world.

Students can acquire learning from a variety of sources outside the traditional classroom, and they can earn appropriate credit in their work towards a degree for verifiable college level learning acquired through life or work experience, not for the experience itself. Students who acquire the level of knowledge that meets the expectations and the learning outcomes of a specific course may get credit for that course, provided the students can demonstrate proficiency in that specific course.

A total of forty-five (45) semester hours may be earned through any combination of credit by departmental examination, national standardized examinations, correspondence courses, extension work, advanced placement, International Baccalaureate credit and PLA by portfolio. (For more information consult the [UNG website](#).)

Methods of Assessing Prior Learning for College Credit

1. **Departmental Examination.** Students currently enrolled who present satisfactory evidence that they are qualified in a particular subject may receive credit by an approved departmental examination developed and administered by the appropriate instructional department. Satisfactory evidence may be, but is not limited to, work experience, non-credit courses, course work taken at non-accredited institutions, or military courses. Permission must be obtained from the head of the instructional department offering the course; however, exams will not be permitted in courses for which a student has previously taken an exam for credit or was previously enrolled at UNG as a regular or audit student. (For more information consult the

[UNG Catalog](#).) For a list of courses for which credit is available by departmental examination please see page 17 of this handbook.

2. **National Standardized Examination.** Credit for prior learning may be awarded through College Level Examination Program (CLEP), Advanced Placement (AP) credit, Dantes Subject Standardized Tests (DSST), Foreign Language Achievement Testing Service (FLATS) and International Baccalaureate Program (IB) (further explanation is available in the [UNG Catalog](#)).

- **CLEP (College Level Examination Program) Credit**

Criteria for credit awarded for CLEP subject examinations, minimum scores, and credit given may be found on page 15 of this handbook or for more detailed information go to the UNG Testing website at: <http://ung.edu/testing/index.php>

CLEP credit will be indicated by a “K” grade on the student’s transcript.

- **AP (Advanced Placement) Credit**

University of North Georgia provides the opportunity for qualified beginning students to obtain credit for certain courses. The granting of advanced placement is usually based on the College Entrance Examination Board Advanced Placement Test scores, as approved by departments of instruction. Students may contact the Admissions Office for more details and credit available. Scores of less than 3 will not be considered. The course and credit hours will be posted to the student’s academic transcript; however, the grade received will not calculate in the student’s semester or cumulative grade point average. Advanced Placement credit will be indicated by a “K” grade on the student’s transcript.

Information about UNG Advanced Placement Equivalencies is available at <http://ung.edu/testing/index.php>

DSST (Dantes Subject Standardized Tests) Credit

The Dantes Subject Standardized Tests (DSST), formerly DAN TES, is a national credit by examination program recognized by the American Council on Education. For more information on the DSST program, study guides, and practice exams, please visit the official website at getcollegecredit.com. UNG is an open DSST Testing Center. Criteria for credit awarded for DSST subject examinations, minimum scores, and credit given may be found at <http://ung.edu/testing/index.php>. DSST credit will be indicated by a “K” grade on the student’s transcript. For a list of courses for which credit is available by DSST Credit please see page 16 of this handbook.

- **International Baccalaureate (IB) Program**

IB is a two-year pre-college diploma program. Students who complete IB tests in high school may submit official score reports for evaluation for University of North Georgia academic credit. IB credit may be awarded for certain classes in which an equivalent is offered and for which the required test score is achieved. A maximum of 24 semester hours of academic credit may be awarded for IB classes. IB credit will be indicated by a “K” grade on the student’s transcript. Please visit UNG’s IB program website at: www.ung.edu

- **Foreign Language Achievement Testing Services (FLATS)**

Students may earn academic credit in select foreign languages through the Foreign Language Achievement Testing Service (FLATS) offered by Brigham Young University (BYU). FLATS credit may not be earned for languages that are currently offered through the UNG Department of English and Foreign Languages. However, the list of FLATS testing options is extensive. Student must contact the UNG Testing Office by telephone or e-mail before registering for a FLATS test via the BYU website. The UNG Testing Office will provide the FLATS Registration Guide outlining how to proceed with the testing process. FLATS credit will be indicated by a “K” grade on the student’s transcript. For more information please visit UNG’s FLATS website at: <http://ung.edu/testing/index.php>

3. **American Council on Education (ACE).** The American Council on Education (ACE) is an organization that provides evaluation of programs and transcripts for training taken through specific employers, a specialized training provider or during a military career. ACE evaluations provide guidance to colleges and universities on the acceptance of credit. UNG evaluates these transcripts and honors ACE credit as appropriate for the program of study for students.

A list of employers that participate in the ACE College Credit Recommendation Service can be found at: <http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/College-Credit-Recommendation-Service-%28CREDIT%29.aspx>

Transcripts for military personnel can be requested through the Joint Services Transcript at: <https://jst.doded.mil/smart/signIn.do>

4. **Portfolio Assessment.** Students use the PLA portfolio development process to document their prior learning when credit by examination for a relevant course is not available. This process requires students to prepare and submit a collection of documents that establish and support their claim that they have specific relevant skills, knowledge, values, attitudes, understandings, achievements, experiences, competencies, training, and certifications that align with specific course objectives. Upon the recommendation of the PLA coordinator, a student seeking credit for prior learning through portfolio assessment will enroll in the PLAC 2000 course. In this course, the student will learn how to prepare a portfolio for submission. The portfolio developed in the documentation course should not only describe the relevant experience but should also identify the particular learning outcomes ([PLA Documentation Course](#)).

PLA PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

If prospective students have learning experiences that may be applicable for course credit, and departmental or standardized examinations are not an option, they may be advised to consider prior learning assessment by portfolio. Students will then be advised to sign up for the PLA Documentation course ([PLAC 2000](#)). This course is the method by which students will develop documentation for the courses for which they hope to earn PLA credit. The PLA Documentation Course is a two credit hour course offered face to face or online and is taught by a PLA Counselor. In this course, students will learn how to develop the appropriate documentation sets for the classes for which they wish to seek credit. By the end of the semester, they should have materials ready to submit to faculty assessors from the program in which they are seeking credit.

Courses available for PLA Portfolio credit

A student may request consideration for PLA Portfolio credit for any course in the UNG Catalog, but the eligibility for portfolio credit is not guaranteed. Traditional instructional methods are deemed more appropriate for certain courses, and portfolio credit is not optimal for all courses. The following chart lists courses available for PLA credit by portfolio at time of publication. The most current list is available on the PLA website at <http://ung.edu/adult-learners-military/>.

UNG DIVISIONS OR COURSES THAT OFFER POSSIBLE PLA PORTFOLIO CREDIT

COURSES

SPAN 2021 - Heritage Language Spanish II
SPAN 2122 - Readings for Oral and Written Proficiency
SPAN 3121 - Spanish Conversation
SPAN 3125 - Spanish Composition
SPAN 3230 - Introduction to Cultures of Spain
SPAN 3240 - Introduction to Latin American Culture
SPAN 3270 - Introduction to Literature
SPAN 3450 - Commercial Spanish
SPAN3460 - Medical Spanish
ENGL 2111 - World Literature I
ENGL 2112 - World Literature II

DIVISIONS

Business Administration
Criminal Justice
Early Childhood Education
Humanities and Fine Arts

Courses NOT available for PLA Portfolio credit

Courses that are available for completion through CLEP, departmental examination, IB, FLATS, AP and DSST methods of earning credit will not be eligible for credit through the portfolio process. In addition, courses for which the student has already registered are not eligible.

PLA Portfolio Development

Students use the PLA portfolio development process to document their prior learning. This process requires students to prepare and submit a collection of documents that establish and support their claim that they have specific relevant skills, knowledge, values, attitudes, understandings, achievements, experiences, competencies, training, and certifications that align with specific course objectives. The portfolio developed in the documentation course should not only describe the relevant experience but should also identify the particular learning outcomes.

Students must also offer a critical self-assessment of what college-level learning has been acquired through selected non-traditional experience. This experience might include a variety of work, training, reading and research, civil and military service, or life learning.

Once students complete and submit the PLA portfolio, assessors will evaluate it to determine if the portfolio provides evidence which ties those skills to a specific course objective. If the portfolio does so, credit may be awarded when assessors determine that the prior learning is acceptable for credit. A separate portfolio must be prepared for each course for which a student is seeking credit.

Registering for the PLAC 2000 Documentation Course

Students register for the PLA Documentation Course in consultation with the PLA Counselor. For more information about PLA, contact:

Christy Orr

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VETERANS AND CURRENT MILITARY SERVICE MEMBERS

University of North Georgia is committed to helping veterans and current military personnel take full advantage of their eligible benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs (<http://www.va.gov/>). Students seeking VA educational benefits should contact the UNG Financial Aid Department (<http://ung.edu/financial-aid/apply-for-aid/va.php>).

In addition to UNG resources, veterans and military service members are encouraged to explore the educational opportunities available through the University System of Georgia (http://www.usg.edu/student_affairs/military).

Veterans and current military personnel may take advantage of the Military Evaluations Program conducted through the American Council on Education (ACE) for service school courses. For further information, see ACE Military Programs (<http://www.acenet.edu/Content/NavigationMenu/ProgramsServices/MilitaryPrograms/index.htm>) and the Defense Activity for Nontraditional Educational Support or DANTES (http://www.dantes.doded.mil/Dantes_web/DANTESHOME.asp).

Additional Resources:

- Veterans may be eligible for military-funded CLEP exams (<http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/clep/military.html>)
- For a list of military benefits by state go to http://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/Home/Benefit_Library/State_Territory_Benefits.html
- UNG is a member of the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges Consortium. For information see the SOC website at <http://www.soc.aascu.org/>.

PLAC 2000 PRIOR LEARNING DOCUMENTATION COURSE

Two (2) Semester Hours

This course provides an opportunity for guided practice in preparing portfolio-based documentation to support application for academic credit based on prior learning. Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is a process through which students **identify** areas of learning from their past experiences, **demonstrate** that learning through appropriate documentation, and **submit** their materials related to specific course objectives of a designated target course so that they can be assessed by a trained faculty assessor in the relevant discipline and possibly awarded academic credit. A target course is an existing course that has been designated by the institution as eligible for PLA Assessment by portfolio (see page 7 in this handbook).

The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) defines PLA as:

“The recognition of learning gained from experiences that may be granted credit or otherwise certified...the assessment of learning attained through experiences irrespective of the time and place in which they occurred.”

Fiddler, M., Marienau, C., & Whitaker, U. 2006. *Assessing Learning*, p.12

PLA can reduce the repetition of relevant, course-related material for students with prior learning (or with prior degrees). This documentation course can also help prepare students who have not been in college before or who have not been in college recently to reacquaint themselves with college learning and expectations. PLA can help reduce the time required to earn a degree.

Prior Learning Portfolio Development is a process used by students to document their prior learning. This process requires students to prepare and submit a collection of documents that establish and support a claim that applicants have the particular skills, knowledge, values, attitudes, understandings, achievements, experiences, competencies, training, and certifications that will align with specific course objectives of a target course. The portfolio developed in the documentation course should not only describe the relevant experience but should also link the documentation with particular learning outcomes designated for the target course. Students will also offer a critical self-assessment of what college-level learning has been acquired through selected non-traditional experience. This experience might include a variety of work, training, reading and research, civil and military service, or life learning.

Once the prior learning documentation is completed and submitted, the resulting portfolio must be evaluated by a qualified faculty assessor. Sufficient evidence linking knowledge and skills obtained through prior learning to objectives of the target course must be provided before credit may be granted. Faculty assessors will determine if the prior learning is acceptable for credit. PLA provides a method to help encourage non-traditional students to pursue a degree; it will help them make the transition to higher education and will shorten their time to graduation. This course has been designed in accordance with the principles established by CAEL (Council for Adult and Experiential Learning).

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH GEORGIA PLA PORTFOLIO POLICIES

1. Prospective students who fit the following criteria may be eligible to earn course credit via PLA by Portfolio:
 - i. They are adult learners (over the age of 23).
 - ii. They have other learning experiences outside a traditional college curriculum.
2. Course credit via PLA by portfolio may not replace existing credit assessments available through CLEP, departmental examination, DSST, AP, IB or FLATS.
3. Students are required to complete PLAC 2000 Prior Learning Documentation in preparation for developing portfolio(s) for credit evaluation, preferably prior to their last semester.
4. Courses for which a student has already earned a grade (including a grade of “K” or “V” (audit)) or for which a student is currently registered are not eligible for PLA credit.
5. For the PLAC 2000 Prior Learning Documentation course, students will earn a grade of satisfactory (S) or unsatisfactory (U) which will be noted on the academic transcript with a letter grade of “S” or “U”. These “S” and “U” grades will not be calculated into the student’s grade point average (GPA). However, the credit hours may be counted as attempted hours for financial aid purposes. For more information concerning financial aid please contact the [Financial Aid Office](#).
6. The departments responsible for grading particular portfolios determine the grading timeline for the portfolios. Portfolios are due three weeks prior to the end of the semester for consideration of receipt of credit by PLA. Faculty assessors will assign grades by the end of the semester unless otherwise notified.
7. Students may submit the portfolio assessment while currently enrolled in PLAC 2000. However, if students are seeking PLA credit for more than one course, one portfolio may be evaluated while enrolled in PLAC 2000, but the additional portfolio will be evaluated only after successful completion of PLAC 2000.
8. Credit may be awarded after the first submission of the portfolio, in which case the student will be notified that credit has been granted. The assessor will submit a signed and completed PLA Credit Approval Form to the PLA Counselor (see page 14 in this handbook). This form must be approved and signed by the assessor, the assessor’s department chair and dean, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs before being sent to the Registrar’s Office for processing on the student’s academic record. The course or courses for which students have successfully earned PLA by Portfolio credit will be noted on the transcript with a letter grade of “K”. These “K” grades will not be calculated into the student’s grade point average (GPA). However, credit hours earned through examination may be counted as attempted hours for financial aid purposes. For more information concerning financial aid please contact the [Financial Aid Office](#).

9. A qualified faculty assessor will evaluate the PLA portfolio submission to determine if the portfolio provides evidence which ties those skills to a specific course objective. If the assessor deems a portfolio “unsatisfactory”, the assessor may specifically outline areas for improvement and encourage students to resubmit their documentation one time during the next semester. The assessors will provide a report giving specific feedback to students. Students are permitted to resubmit their portfolio only one time for any given course.

10. A maximum of 30 semester hours may be earned through any combination of CLEP, IB, DSST, FLATS, AP, departmental examination, or PLA by portfolio credit. Students should also work with the PLA coordinator and their academic advisor to determine any additional requirements they may need to consider.

11. Individual departments determine how many, if any, PLA credits may be awarded toward a degree program.

12. Appeal Process: Students may appeal an unsatisfactory grade on a resubmitted portfolio. Students wishing to appeal an assigned grade should contact the Vice President for Academic Affairs. (www.ung.edu)

13. Time Limit Policy: Students have up to two semesters to complete PLA by portfolio for a particular course. Students may have one additional semester if it becomes necessary to resubmit an unsatisfactory portfolio.

ROLE EXPECTATIONS: PLA COUNSELOR, FACULTY ASSESSOR AND STUDENT

Role of the PLA Counselor

Students who believe that they may have prior learning that can be used for academic credit should schedule an appointment with the PLA Counselor who will work with them to determine if the portfolio documentation process is appropriate. If a student decides to pursue this route, the PLA Counselor will enroll him or her in PLAC 2000 Prior Learning Documentation. To schedule an appointment with Christy Orr, PLA Counselor, please see her contact information on page 3 of this document.

Role of the Faculty Assessor

Faculty assessors help determine appropriate courses based on backgrounds of students in concert with the PLA Counselor. Faculty develop assessment methods appropriate for the course, provide syllabus and assessment guidelines, and evaluate student portfolios.

Faculty assessors should develop course syllabi and course instructions that allow students to complete PLA by portfolio as a self-directed study. Faculty should be available to provide clarification of course expectations or instructions. However, faculty members are not expected to teach the course in the manner of an independent study.

Role of the Student in the PLA process

Students must provide evidence to the Faculty Assessor and the PLA Counselor that they have relevant learning experiences that are aligned with learning outcomes for the target course. Obtaining course credit through the PLA process is not equivalent to a faculty directed independent study. Rather, PLA by portfolio is a process by which students evaluate prior learning experiences and demonstrate appropriate learning outcomes relevant to specific courses. Thus, students must meet the expectations of the course syllabus with a minimum of supervision by the faculty assessor.

FEEES FOR PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENTS

PLA by portfolio fees are based on the number of credit hours assigned each course.

# Credit Hours	Fee
4	\$275
3	\$250
2	\$200
1	\$150

DEPARTMENTAL EXAMS AVAILABLE:

<u>UNG Course</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Required Score</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
ACCT 2101	Principles of Accounting I	70	Eligibility: A student who has earned an Accounting Diploma from Lanier Technical College may enroll in ACCT 2102. If the student earns a "C" or higher in ACCT 2102 he or she will also receive credit for ACCT 2101
BUS A 1120	Business Mathematics	Pass the Certified Professional Secretary or Certified Legal Assistant Exam	Will receive credit for BUS A 1120, BUS A 3105 and ECON 1100
BUS A 3105	Survey of Legal Environment of Business	Pass the Certified Professional Secretary or Certified Legal Assistant Exam	Will receive credit for BUS A 1120, BUS A 3105 and ECON 1100
ECDV 1101	Introduction to Child Development	70	Eligibility: A student who has earned an AAS degree in Early Childhood Care and Education at a University System of Georgia State Technical College
ECDV 2040	Family Systems and Parental Involvement	70	Eligibility: A student who has earned an AAS degree in Early Childhood Care and Education at a University System of Georgia State Technical College
ECDV 2100	Childhood Health and Wellness	70	Eligibility: A student who has earned an AAS degree in Early Childhood Care and Education at a University System of Georgia State Technical College
ECON 1100	Survey of Economic Principles	Pass the Certified Professional Secretary or Certified Legal Assistant Exam	Will receive credit for BUS A 1120, BUS A 3105 and ECON 1100
EDUC 2110	Integrating Critical and Contemporary Issues in Education	70	Eligibility: A student who has earned an AAS degree in Early Childhood Care and Education at a University System of Georgia State Technical College
EDUC 2120	Exploring Socio-Cultural Perspectives in Diversity	70	Eligibility: A student who has earned an AAS degree in Early Childhood Care and Education at a University System of Georgia State Technical College

NOTES