



## Policy 3.35 Credit for Prior Learning Policy Approved 12/2010

### Part 1. Purpose of Policy

**Subpart A. Scope of policy.** This policy defines the manner in which Mesabi Range Community & Technical College will address (1) MnSCU Policy 3.35 for evaluating and granting undergraduate credit for successful college-level learning gained in non-credit or experiential settings and (2) Procedure 3.35.1 Credit for Prior Learning.

**Subpart B. Methods of assessing credit for prior learning included in this policy.** Credit for prior learning includes a broad range of nationally recognized and locally developed examinations, portfolio review or competence demonstration.

### Part 2. Prior Learning Assessments Methods and Definitions.

**Subpart A. American Council of Education (ACE).** The American Council of Education is a coordinating body for the nation's higher education institutions. ACE provides recommendations for granting credit for college-level learning obtained in non-college setting.

**Subpart B. College-level learning.** College-level is learning that meets college-level standards and results in credits which can be applied toward the requirements of a certificate, diploma, or degree.

**Subpart C. Credit by examination.** Credit by examination is a method of prior learning assessment that includes standardized or local examinations such as:

- 1.1 Advanced Placement (AP) examinations.
- 1.2 International Baccalaureate (IB) examinations.
- 1.3 College Level Examination Program (CLEP) examinations.
- 1.4 Thomas Edison College Examination Program (TECEP)
- 1.5 Excelsior examinations.
- 1.6 New York University Foreign Language Proficiency (NYUFLP) examinations.
- 1.7 National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI) assessment.
- 1.8 DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST).
- 1.9 ACE endorsed examinations.
- 1.10 Mesabi Range Community & Technical College course-specific examinations designed by college faculty in their assigned program/discipline.

**Subpart D. Credit for prior learning (CPL).** Credit for prior learning is the outcome of a prior learning assessment by which a student earns credit for college-level learning gained in non-credit or experiential setting.

**Subpart E. Portfolio review and competence demonstration.** Portfolio review and competence demonstration are methods of prior learning assessment (PLA) that include, but not limited to, documentation review, candidate interview, performance assessment, product review, a combination of these methods, or other means identified in this policy. Portfolio and competence demonstration will be evaluated by faculty in the assigned program/discipline area of which credit is sought.

**Subpart F. Prior learning assessment (PLA).** Prior learning assessment is the process of faculty evaluation of student learning obtained through sources other than college-level coursework. Faculty will be from the program/discipline area of which credit is sought.

**Subpart G. The Course Equivalence Credit Model.** The Course Equivalence Credit Model is the assignment of credit only for the demonstration of knowledge, specified learning outcomes, and/or competence equivalent to an existing course in a curriculum.

**Part 3. Credit for Prior Learning, Background and Context.** Mesabi Range Community & Technical College (DCTC) is committed to recognizing the educational importance of learning accomplished outside traditional academic settings. Work experience, employment-related training programs and seminars, volunteer work, military service, hobbies, leisure time activities, civic participation, and personal study are examples of areas in which learning for development of personal and career competence can take place. In taking the position that what is learned is educationally more important than where or how it is learned, Mesabi Range Community & Technical College offers the possibility of formally granting credit for prior learning from adult life and work experience. Credit granted for demonstrated prior experiential learning may be applied toward the fulfillment of education objectives of participating Mesabi Range Community & Technical College programs.

Credit is awarded for college level learning that can be demonstrated, articulated, documented, or otherwise communicated. Evidence that the prior learning is comparable to the content of a particular course of study at Mesabi Range Community & Technical College must be provided. In determining credit for prior experiential learning, the amount of time spent in a specific learning activity or job is less significant than the results demonstrated as skills and knowledge acquired.

The most difficult part of the process for a student requesting credit for a class from experiential learning is differentiating between the activity and what has been learned. Evaluators will assess the prior learning against the learning objectives and outcomes of the course for which applied. The degree of documentation provided will indicate or fail to indicate to the evaluator(s) that the competencies learned are equivalent to the objectives taught in the class.

Learning must be described in such a way as to meet the following criteria:

1. It is measurable.
  - 1.1 It is at a level of achievement consistent with college level requirements.
  - 1.2 It is applicable outside the specific job or context in which it was learned.
  - 1.3 It has a knowledge base.
  - 1.4 It implies a conceptual as well as practical understanding.
  - 1.5 It shows a relationship to degree goals and lifelong learning goals.

Not all experiences will meet the above criteria. For instance, a repetitive manual skill may be demonstrable, but may not have a knowledge base or be at a college level using the Course Equivalence Credit Model.

Conversely, persons who have learned skills such as leadership, communication, or organization as a result of experiences, fulfill the other criteria for prior learning even though they are more difficult to demonstrate. These skills have a knowledge base and imply a conceptual, as well as practical understanding.

**Subpart B. Purpose.**

1. To provide credit for past work/life-long learning and/or educational achievement to those who demonstrate evidence of knowledge *and* proficiency, using the Course Equivalence Credit Model.

- 1.1 To eliminate duplication of a student's educational effort, while maintaining a high standard of educational quality, to insure the student's future occupational success.
- 1.2 To maintain the college's integrity and accreditation, as an institution of higher education, through valid and reliable evaluation by appropriate college personnel.

**Subpart C. Administrative Procedures.**

1. Credit for prior learning shall be granted according to the standards and equivalencies of the American Council on Education (ACE) or the equivalent.
2. College programs which qualify for Credit by Examination or Portfolio review are identified on the Participating Academic Departments/Programs form.
3. Courses approved for credit will be notated on the transcript in the transfer section with a "CPL" designation with appropriate subject matter or course designation for Prior learning or other designations approved for other PLA options (example: "CPL" SMGT 1022 Leadership # credits and grade of "P"). These credits will meet graduation requirements, but will not affect students Grade Point Average (GPA).
4. Courses approved for credit through "Credit by Examination" or "Test Out" will be notated in the transfer section of the transcript with "Credit by Examination" designation with appropriate subject matter or course designation
5. The credits earned will meet graduation but may not count toward residency requirements for Mesabi Range Community & Technical College.
6. The number of credits that can be earned through the credit for prior learning model will be determined on a programmatic basis not to exceed **two-thirds** of the program award requirement.
7. Students shall be assessed a fee less 50% of the current per credit tuition rate with the MSCSA fee; no other fees shall apply for each credit requested. The rate charged is allocated with one-half going to the maintenance of the PLA program including the costs of administration, marketing and transcription services. The remaining one-half will be distributed to who reviews and recommends the credit award (Subject Matter Expert (SME), Faculty and or PLA Assessor).
8. All material submitted will be considered the property of the College.
9. Military transfer credit, ACE credit recommendations, Professional Training or Certification Credit may not be subject to the per credit assessment fee; the college may consider these as transfer credits. Students must provide documentation of these licenses, certificates or records. Generally, these documents must show currency either through re-licensure by the original licensure, certification or through demonstration of continuation of the knowledge and skill required.
10. If the evaluation for competency demonstration is unsuccessful, the student may not re-challenge for a time period of 12 months.

**Part 4. Prior Learning Assessment Request Procedure Guidelines:**

1. Students will be made aware of the Prior Learning program overview, availability and minimum criteria (for screening purposes) of this program through marketing efforts and college staff referrals.
  - 1.1 All requests from #1 above should be directed to a(n) PLA Assessor, the Registrar or their designee trained in Prior Learning Assessment.
  - 1.2 Student will prepare a detailed resume.
  - 1.3 Student will meet with the authority listed in number 2 of this section to consider what potential options for PLA are available to the student. These options include but not limited to: direct transfer of Professional Training or Certification Credit, CLEP and ACE recommendation, PLA Portfolio or Credit by Examination.

- 1.4 When credit can be attained through methods other than PLA Portfolio or Credit by Examination, the student will be referred directly to the Registrar.
- 1.5 Credit by Examination will be referred directly to the faculty member from the appropriate program/discipline who will comply with the current college Credit by Examination procedure.
2. Students seeking credit through PLA Portfolio will enroll in a Prior Experience Portfolio (PEP) course. The course is held each semester unless other options are determined by the authority listed in number 2 of this section. The instructor for the course should be trained as a PLA Assessor.
- 2.1 Students will meet the minimum criteria for PLA Portfolio consideration:
  - 2.1.1. Has substantial experiences in the subject area requested
  - 2.1.2. Has recent experience in the last five years or can otherwise demonstrate continuation of knowledge and skills in the subject area requested.
- 2.2 Student will complete the Prior Experiential Learning Portfolio checklist including but not limited to:
  - 2.2.1. An educational and career goal statement to provide the authority with sufficient understanding of the educational and career needs and desires of the student.
  - 2.2.2. Current detailed resume.
  - 2.2.3. A list of courses where credit is requested.
  - 2.2.4. Students will be provided with sufficient course information such as the Course Outline and Course Syllabus which identify course competencies/outcomes. Students will prepare written competency statement(s) of 250 words or less for each course that credit is requested.
  - 2.2.5. Sufficient documentation to support credit request.
3. The student makes payment at the rate of one-half the current tuition rate plus MSCSA fee for each credit requested.
4. The PLA Assessor will identify the appropriate faculty and or subject matter expert (SME) to assign the PEP based on the student's degree program.
5. Faculty and or SME(s) will conduct an assessment of the student's experiential learning activities. Assessment should use two or more assessment methods in order to reach a valid judgment. Faculty and/or SME will work with the student to determine the appropriate assessment methods to be used (note that the Portfolio satisfies the Self-assessment method identified below):

Typical Assessment Methods		
• Performance	• Self assessment	• Standardized exam
• Simulation	• Essay	• Product evaluation
		• Interview/oral exam

6. A determination is made on whether experiential learning demonstrated the expectations of the course (s) competencies at a level of 75% or greater. If the student met a portion but not the required 75% of the competencies, the faculty may consider other PLA options or credit awards (such as partial credit award and or independent study).
7. Faculty/SME may request further information from the student.

8. Faculty/SME will complete the PLA Course Assessment (Attachment 1) form for each course where credit was requested signifying recommending approval or denial of the credit request with a sufficient explanation. The form(s) will be forwarded to the PLA Assessor.
9. The PLA Assessor will review the PLA form(s) and recommend approval or denial of the credit request with sufficient explanation. The form(s) will be forwarded to the Registrar.
10. The Registrar will review the PLA form(s) and approve or deny the request(s) with sufficient explanation. The Registrar will notify the PLA Assessor of the final outcome of the requests.
11. The Assessor or designee will notify the student in writing of the final outcome of their credit requests.
12. When credits are awarded, the Registrar will verify payment of the credits has been made and make appropriate entries to the student permanent transcript.
13. Faculty/advisor will update the student graduation/degree plan.
14. Students have the right to appeal the outcome. The college appeal process is identified in the student handbook.

#### **Part 5. Quality Assurance and Program Review.**

1. This policy will be reviewed by a committee made up of the Registrar, PLA Assessor(s), an appropriate number of faculty & SME, Counselor(s), Dean of Student Services and Dean of Academic Affairs or designees every two years.
2. Documentation through the PLA process will be maintained with the student records to maintain confidentiality.
3. Faculty and /or SME conducting PLA assessment will be first orientated to the PLA assessment process by a/the PLA Assessor.
4. Quality assurance will be evaluated at all levels throughout the PLA review process by the faculty and/or SME, PLA Assessor, Academic Dean and College Registrar.
5. Students have the right to appeal the outcome of the PLA review process.
6. Any parties associated with this policy may make recommendations at any time which will be reviewed separately by members of the committee or by committee review.

#### **Part 6. Related MnSCU Policies.**

- 3.21 Undergraduate Course Credit Transfer.
  - 3.21.1
- 3.29 College and University Transcripts
  - 3.29.1
- 3.35 Credit for Prior Learning
  - 3.35.1
- 3.36 Residency and Graduation Requirements
  - 3.36.1
- 3.37 Minnesota Transfer Curriculum
  - 3.37.1

5.11 Tuitions and Fees

5.11.1

Minnesota Statute 197.775 Credit for Military Training or Service.

*Review/Revision History:*

*Approved through Shared Governance 12/14/2010*