

<b>Policy #:</b>	E-2016-002	<b>Approved By:</b>	Board of Governors
<b>Policy Name:</b>	Prior Learning Assessment	<b>Approved By:</b>	Education Council
<b>Approval Date:</b>	April 15, 2016	<b>Amendment Date:</b>	
		<b>Policy Holder:</b>	Registrar

## PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT

### 1.00 PURPOSE

Northwest Community College recognizes that knowledge and skills are acquired through a variety of learning, life and work experiences. Opportunities for flexible assessment and recognition of the knowledge and skills gained through prior learning will be offered to learners wishing to acquire credit in a course or program at NWCC.

Flexible assessment will be used to enhance an individual’s access to education and training and accelerate his or her progress towards a desired credential or other goals.

### 2.00 DEFINITIONS

**Transfer Credit**— Refers to the granting of credit for a course successfully completed at another post-secondary institution or through a professional organization or other agency with which an articulation agreement has been reached. The course may be equivalent to a course offered by Northwest Community College (assigned credit) or at an appropriate year level in a subject or program areas (unassigned credit).

**Prior Learning Assessment** — An assessment of informal learning by a subject matter expert (i.e., NWCC Faculty member in appropriate discipline) of what an individual has learned outside of courses and programs at Northwest Community College for which the granting of transfer credit is inappropriate. Assessment will normally result in credit (assigned or unassigned) granted to satisfy the graduation requirements of a program offered by Northwest Community College.

### 3.00 POLICY

Students admitted to NWCC may request formal recognition for prior learning. The discipline or program will determine which of these processes is appropriate.

Evidence may be generated from but not limited to:

- Written challenge examinations or course examinations
- Oral assessment or interview
- Performance tests
- Demonstrations in laboratory (simulation/role play)



- Standardized tests
  - Projects/assignments
  - Portfolio assessment
- 3.01 Each program shall identify on official course outlines eligibility for PLA.
- 3.02 Credits earned through PLA will be recorded as such on the student's transcripts.
- 3.03 NWCC will not grant a student more than 75% PLA towards any of their credentials
- 3.04 The student has the responsibility for preparing the evidence that college credit learning has taken place.
- 3.05 Prior Learning Assessment should be linked to established learning outcomes or other criteria as defined by a program/course and at a level of achievement equivalent to that of other learners engaged in studies at that level in that program/course or subject area.
- 3.06 Northwest Community College recognizes the following methods of Prior Learning Assessment:
1. Challenge Exam: A test or exam (written or oral) that is designed to validate the knowledge of the candidate as it relates to course requirements. A challenge exam may be the same test or exam given to students who formally attend the course. It is limited to questions that are directly related to the learning objectives/outcomes of the course.
  2. Standardized Tests: Similar to a Challenge Exam. However, this test or exam is usually developed by someone other than the assessor. It is focused around widely recognized standards (as set by a department or professional/sectorial organization) that are equivalent to the course objectives.
  3. Products/Portfolio: Documents or objects that have been produced by the candidate and demonstrate tangible proof of accomplishment. These may include, but are not limited to, reports, computer printouts, videos, illustrations, prototype models, or an artist's portfolio. Students may be asked to demonstrate abilities or answer questions about the portfolio by the assessor.
  4. Demonstration: Simulation or actual presentation of candidate's abilities, which may be live, recorded, or videotaped. The demonstration may include, but is not limited to, such activities as presenting a speech, role-playing a situation, creating a document on computer, giving a musical performance, performing a lab experiment, interviewing a client, operating equipment, or completing a procedure.



5. Interview: Oral questioning. The PLA interview is focused around course objectives and may include techniques such as open-ended questions, case studies, and prepared analyses. The interview is used to clarify areas of learning, and may be used in parallel with other methods, as a sole method of assessment, and/or as a means to ensure authenticity of products.
6. Worksite Assessment: The candidate is observed in the workplace performing tasks as part of a normal work routine, or as a specifically assigned, task. Assessment is normally made by faculty assigned to a candidate, but may also be made by a work supervisor or field expert. If performed by an external assessor, it may be followed up by a self-assessment and/or interview with a faculty assessor.
7. Self-Assessment: Assessment performed by the candidate, usually with the aid of an established form or questionnaire. Normally requires a parallel assessment by a field expert and/or faculty assessor.
8. External Evaluation: Assessment provided by an expert other than Northwest faculty. Assessment method may include, but is not limited to, performance evaluation, letter of validation, or worksite assessment, and may require follow-up by faculty.
9. Other forms of assessment: As agreed on by the assessor and applicant and relevant to the course/program outcomes or objectives.

3.07 Students who wish to appeal a PLA decision will have access to the Academic Appeals Policy. [\(Reference Academic Appeals Policy Number here\)](#)

#### **4.00 RESPONSIBILITY**

The Prior Learning Assessment Policy is the responsibility of Education Council.

4.01 The Prior Learning Assessment Process is the responsibility of the faculty and the Office of the Registrar.

*Processes are attached as addendums*

