

**BLUEFIELD STATE COLLEGE
BOARD OF GOVERNORS
POLICY NO. 60**

TITLE: AWARDING UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING

SECTION 1. GENERAL

- 1.1 Scope: This rule establishes guidelines for West Virginia public colleges and universities for the awarding of college credit for prior college-level learning through prior learning assessment.
- 1.2 Authority: West Virginia Code §§18B-1-1A, 18B-1-6. West Virginia HEPC Title 133; Series 59
- 1.3 Filing Date: March 2, 2017
- 1.4 Effective Date: January 10, 2017
- 1.5 BSC Policy Monitor: Vice President for Academic Affairs

SECTION 2. PURPOSE

- 2.1 Legislative goals established for West Virginia state colleges and universities provide that higher education in West Virginia should contribute fully to the growth, development, and quality of life of the state and its citizens. This policy details the responsibilities of Bluefield State College regarding the awarding of college credit for prior college-level learning gained outside the higher education academic environment.
- 2.2 Bluefield State College recognizes that some students, particularly adults and non-traditional students, may have acquired prior college-level learning through the development of skills or knowledge that closely parallel those outcomes taught in college-level courses. It is important that colleges and universities have the opportunity to evaluate learning that has taken place outside the higher education academic environment and to award academic credit when appropriate.
- 2.3 The purpose of this rule is to outline the terms and conditions under which Bluefield State College awards and/or transfers credits toward a degree or certificate based upon Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) and to provide consistent and accessible methods for students to earn these credits.
- 2.4 It is the intent of Bluefield State College to permit the awarding of undergraduate academic credit for prior learning through a variety of assessment methodologies that will ensure the academic credibility of such credit. Under these guidelines, in accordance with

institutional policies and procedures, Bluefield State College shall award academic credit for prior learning that is equivalent to coursework which satisfies the requirements for the degree program in which the student is enrolled.

- 2.5 The Regents Bachelor of Arts degree program maintain specific guidelines and requirements for the use of credit for prior learning. This policy does not replace existing guidelines.

SECTION 3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is defined as the assessment of college-level learning for college credit gained outside the higher education academic environment. For example, individuals may acquire college-level knowledge or skills through work, employee training programs, military service, independent study, non-credit courses, or community service. Only documented and demonstrated college-level learning will be awarded college credit.
- 3.2 In support of providing opportunities for students to earn college-level credit for college-level learning that has been acquired outside the higher education academic environment, the assessment of prior college-level learning can be accomplished through a variety of assessment methods including, but not limited to the following:
 - 3.2.1 Advanced Placement Exams
 - 3.2.2 American Council on Education (ACE) Guides
 - 3.2.3 College Level Examination Program (CLEP) Exams
 - 3.2.4 DANTES Subject Standardized Test (DSST)
 - 3.2.5 Excelsior College Examination Program (ECE)
 - 3.2.6 Institutional Course Challenge Examination Credit
 - 3.2.7 International Baccalaureate Program (IB)
 - 3.2.8 Institutional Evaluation of Industry and Workforce Training such as apprenticeships, certifications, and licensure
 - 3.2.9 Portfolio Assessment/Review Credit
 - 3.2.10 Prior Military Training Credit
 - 3.2.11 National certification exams
 - 3.2.12 Manufacturing Skills Standards Council (MSSC) certification completion
 - 3.2.13 Certification in Early Childhood education
 - 3.2.14 Federal and State law enforcement certification
 - 3.2.15 International Association for Continuing Education and Training.

SECTION 4. PRINCIPLES

- 4.1 Bluefield State College values the diversity of its students. This diversity includes the unique experiences, interests, and intellectual pursuits that may lead to the acquisition of college-level learning. The acquisition of college-level learning is validated by assessment methods that are academically sound and rigorous.

- 4.2 Bluefield State College shall employ prior learning assessment aligned with its mission, principles of academic integrity, resources, and student educational attainment and success.

SECTION 5. INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES REGARDING AWARDING CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING

- 5.1 Bluefield State College in accordance with the WV – HEPC policy shall develop institutional policies for evaluating prior learning and for awarding credit consistent with this policy.
- 5.1.1 Bluefield State College has developed appropriate procedures for awarding credit for a student’s prior college-level learning in accordance with this policy, accrediting bodies’ guidelines for prior learning assessment, and principles of good educational practice.
- 5.1.2 Institutional policy will apply to all academic programs.
- 5.2 Bluefield State College has identified the forms of PLA credits it will award, the processes for acquiring such credit, and that information shall be publicly available to students, faculty, and other stakeholders.
- 5.3 Bluefield State College has discretionary authority to award academic credit for prior learning that is equivalent to coursework which meets the requirements for the degree program in which the student is enrolled.
- 5.4 Credit for prior learning can apply toward majors, minors, general education requirements, and electives that count toward the student’s chosen degree or certificate. Prior Learning Assessment credit may also satisfy prerequisite requirements. College credit awarded through PLA shall not be treated differently in its application and use than its course equivalencies or appropriate block credit.
- 5.5 Credit for prior learning shall only be awarded to students who are admitted to Bluefield State College and have declared a major field of study.
- 5.6 Credit awarded through PLA shall not count toward Bluefield State College residency requirements.
- 5.7 The evaluation of a portfolio must be completed by faculty with appropriate professional credentials. Course-specific examinations must be designed and evaluated by faculty with appropriate professional credentials. A recommendation for credit shall be made to the Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs or designee and in accordance with Bluefield State College’s PLA guidelines. Portfolio evaluation will not be a standard for award of PLA credit. This assessment primarily pertains to those students selecting this option in pursuit of the RBA degree.

- 5.8 Bluefield State College will accept PLA credit up to 30 credits for bachelor's degrees, up to 15 credits for associate's degrees, and up to 6 credits for certificate programs.
- 5.8.1 If a program accrediting body has a specific maximum for PLA credit, then that maximum will be honored by that particular program.
- 5.9 Credit awarded through Prior Learning Assessment will be clearly identified as such on a student's official transcript according to institutional PLA guidelines, and will be evident that the credits are PLA. Such credit will not be used to determine a student's grade point average or used in the calculation of graduation honors. The credit will be recorded as "Credit" only.
- 5.10 Student requests for awards of academic credit for prior learning will be submitted in accordance with the guidelines established by Bluefield State College. The College will establish a written record of decisions and the basis for that decision in accepting or declining a Prior Learning Assessment for academic credit. Bluefield State College ensures the transparency of the award or denial of PLA credit. Additionally, Bluefield State College has developed and communicates a process for appealing PLA decisions.
- 5.11 Prior Learning Assessment fees may vary based upon the type of assessment performed. Prior Learning Assessment credit and transcripting fees to students are stated in the institutional fee schedule. Fees will be assessed for students requesting review of greater than three assessments for award of credit.
- 5.12 Bluefield State College will regularly review the PLA policy to ensure that it is consistent with accreditation PLA guidelines and state, regional, and national practices.
- 5.13 Award of PLA credit will be based on the approval of a subject matter expert, the dean of the school for which the credit may be applied, the registrar and the Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs. Credit for PLA is not guaranteed.

SECTION 6. TRANSFERABILITY OF PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT CREDITS

- 6.1 Credits earned through PLA are transferable in accordance with Series 17: *Transferability of Credits and Grades at West Virginia Colleges and Universities*. Once on a student's transcript, credits earned through prior learning shall be treated no differently than other credit coursework on a student's transcript.
- 6.2 PLA credit awarded at one institution, which meets the West Virginia Core Coursework Transfer Agreement or other statewide articulation agreements, must be accepted as transfer credit toward the degree if the student transfers to another West Virginia public college or university in accordance with the guidelines of that particular policy or agreement.

SECTION 7. REPORTING THE AWARDING OF PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT CREDITS

- 7.1 The Registrar at Bluefield State College will maintain records of the number of students awarded credit for prior learning, number of credits for prior learning awarded, type of assessment method(s) used, and other recipient data, which will be reported to the Higher Education Policy Commission on an annual basis.

SECTION 8. EVALUATION AND AWARD OF ASSESSMENTS PRESENTED FOR CREDITS

- 8.1 Bluefield State College in accordance with the HEPC policy for prior learning will evaluate each request for credit based on prior learning assessment on an individual basis. Students seeking to obtain credit through such assessments must meet with the dean of the respective school in which their major is contained. The student must provide the approved PLA form requesting credit as well as all documentation related to the request. The dean will meet with the department chair and faculty experts in the subject matter pertaining to the request. This meeting will take place within 10 working days of the student submission of materials. A decision on the request will be provided to the student within 21 working days of the submission and the registrar notified of any credits to be awarded.
- 8.2 Should credit be denied based on the assessment review the student shall have 30 days from the date of receipt of the denial to file an appeal of credit to the academic appeals committee. Proof must be provided that the denial was based on an arbitrary, capricious, or prejudicial decision. The process for appeal should follow that as set forth in the college catalog for academic appeals.