**Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) FAQs**

***What is Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)?***

PLA measures student learning that has occurred outside the college classroom to determine whether it is appropriate for college credit and awards credit for college-level learning (knowledge, skills, and competencies) that students have obtained as a result of their prior learning experiences.

Examples of PLA methods are:

* Individualized portfolio-based assessments
* Standardized exams, such as College Level Examination Program (CLEP), Advanced Placement (AP) Examination Program, Excelsior College Exams, DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST), and International Baccalaureate (IB)
* Published credit recommendation guides, such as the evaluation of military training and service and industrial and corporate training produced by the American Council on Education (ACE)
* Program evaluations of noncredit instruction done by individual colleges and universities
* Customized exams created by individual colleges and universities
* Evaluation of apprenticeship training (in collaboration with trade associations)

***Who initiates the PLA petition request?***

In the past, the request for PLA credits was initiated by the student. Frequently, students did not really understand the types or amount of credits they were seeking. With the on-line system, PLA requests are initiated by an advisor, program coordinator, or department chairperson, making it clearer as to what credits best apply to the student experience.

***Does YSU have established crosswalks for PLA credit?***

Yes, YSU has many established crosswalks already loaded in the workflow system, thereby leaving the guesswork out of what credits to request.

Follow the link below to see the already established crosswalks for credit:

<https://ysu.edu/prior-learning-assessment/training-certification-crosswalks>

***What if a student is requesting credits outside of an established crosswalk?***

For students who want to request coursework outside of existing crosswalks, the system holds the ability to attach documents such as certifications and professional licensures. The approval process eliminates the need for shuffling paperwork to numerous offices for signatures.

***Who needs to approve the credits requested through the PLA process?***

The process can begin with an advisor, coordinator, or department chairperson. The number of required approvals will depend on the department. Certain departments will have a multilevel approval process if the program has a coordinator and a chairperson. All necessary parties such as program coordinators and chairs will use the workflow process to move the application along to the Office of Degree Audit. The final recording of credits will reside in the Records Office.

***How can a student submit a portfolio for PLA credit approval?***

The Ohio Department of Higher Education provides Youngstown State University with an on-line site called <https://fastpathohio.com/>. Through Fast Path Ohio, students must create an account. YSU faculty from the relevant department will evaluate the student’s portfolio.

The Fast Path Ohio site provides tutorials to the student in developing a portfolio and provides rubrics for the department faculty to evaluate student materials.

***Can PLA credits be used to fulfill the last 30 credit hours of residency for a 4-year degree and the last 20 hours leading to a 2-year degree?***

* According to the YSU Academic Senate’s Prior Learning Assessment Policy Manual, PLA credit does **not** count toward Youngstown State University’s residency requirements:

Final hours – The last 20 semester hours leading to an associate degree and the last 30 semester hours leading to a baccalaureate degree must be completed at YSU. (In the pre-forestry, pre-law, and pre-medical curricula, which allow the student to earn final hours in absentia, the last 30 semester hours prior to the period of absence must be spent at YSU.)

Concentration area/Major hours – A minimum of 16 semester hours in the concentration area for the associate degree and a minimum of 16 semester hours of credits within the major in a baccalaureate degree must be earned in residence.

Upper-division hours – A minimum of 21 semester hours of upper-division credit for the baccalaureate degree must be earned in residence.

Additional college requirements – Additional residency requirements may be specified by individual colleges.

Should you need assistance with the process, please contact Kimberly Verdone, Manager of Degree Audit at kjverdone@ysu.edu.