



Prior Learning Assessment Student Handbook

Including equivalency tables for:

Advanced Placement

CLEP

DSST Exams

Military Equivalencies

International Baccalaureate

Idaho Seal of Biliteracy

Vertical Credit

2026 – 2027

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PLA Definition

Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) enables individuals to earn credit and recognition for the skills and knowledge they have already acquired outside credit awarded by accredited postsecondary education institutions. Prior learning includes learning acquired from work and life experiences; community and volunteer extension courses; individual study and reading; civic, community, and volunteer work; and participation in informal courses and in-service training sponsored by associations, businesses, government, and industry. PLA credit is not awarded for EXPERIENCE rather for college-level LEARNING that entails knowledge, skills, and competencies a student has obtained as a result of their prior learning experience.

There are two broad categories of PLA:

- Instructional-based PLA includes learning that has taken place in an instructional setting but not at a regionally accredited institution.
- Experiential-based PLA describes learning that has occurred outside of a traditional classroom setting.

Credit for prior Experiential Learning (CPEL) may be awarded for demonstration of knowledge acquired from work and life experiences, independent reading, and study, and/or approved military education or experience. This work is most evaluated through portfolio review; however, it might also be captured through SkillStack Idaho or challenge exams. Learning achieved through experiential means is limited to 15 credits.

A combined total up to 80% of the credits required for a degree or certificate may be earned through these categories of PLA. More information about PLA can be found at:

- [CWI Policy](#)
- [CWI Catalog](#)
- [CWI PLA Website](#)

Philosophy

CWI values the work and life learning that students bring with them to higher education. CWI's degrees and certificates are based upon clearly defined outcomes and competencies as designed, approved, and assessed by faculty. We use PLA to assess **college-level learning** that students have gained through independent intellectual pursuits, training, and education programs from work, and through life experiences. We award students college credit based on their ability to demonstrate prior college-level learning as applicable toward satisfying CWI degree or certificate requirements for the student's declared major; this way, students can enter the appropriate phase of their program of study at CWI. Not all courses provide a PLA option.

PLA research has shown that students who earn academic credit through PLA are more likely to persist, take more courses over a longer period, and are more likely to graduate with credentials and degrees¹. CWI promotes accessibility by providing a pathway that accelerates a learner's progress towards a desired degree or certificate. CWI follows the principles below to create an academically sound PLA process that maintains the integrity of college-level learning outcomes.

- CWI strives for **consistency** in the administration of PLA programs and for this method to be viewed as an integral part of the instructional process.
- Encourages **flexible practices** adapted to meet the needs of today's students by providing faculty who hold a major role and responsibility in the design and development of quality assessment practices with flexible options to assess students.
- Values **efficiency and accuracy** in assessing prior college-level learning.

Transfer students earning PLA should contact the college to which they intend to transfer to understand the receiving institution's PLA transfer policy.

¹ Fueling the Race to Postsecondary Success: a 48-Institution Study of Prior Learning Assessment and Adult Student Outcomes, March 2010, Council for Adult & Experiential Learning <<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED524752>>

Methods of Assessment

Regardless of the category, PLA is frequently assessed through an exam, skills demonstration, and/or portfolio. The following established, researched, and validated methods for assessing learning are used by CWI in awarding PLA. The process sections of this document provide further explanation of each method.

1. Standardized Assessments, including but not limited to:
 - a. College Level Examination Program (CLEP)
 - b. DANTES Subject Standardized Test (DSST)
 - c. Advanced Placement (AP)
 - d. International Baccalaureate (IB)
 - e. Idaho Seal of Biliteracy (ISB)
2. Credit Recommenders, such as American Council on Education (ACE)
3. Course-specific Challenge Exams or Skills Demonstrations developed by faculty, including but not limited to:
 - a. Technical Competency Credit
 - b. Course specific challenge exams
 - c. Locally evaluated industry and workplace education/training programs
 - d. Portfolio Review
4. Vertical Credit
5. Credit for Prior Experiential Learning (CPEL):
 - a. Includes demonstration of learning outcomes for knowledge acquired from work and life experiences, independent reading, and study, and/or approved military education or experience.
 - b. This work is most evaluated through portfolio review; however, it might also be captured through SkillStack Idaho or challenge exams.

STANDARDIZED ASSESSMENTS

CWI recognizes several formal assessment options including Advanced Placement (AP), College Level Examination Program (CLEP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Idaho Seal of Biliteracy (ISB), and Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES also known as DSST) exams. A current list of Standardized Assessments accepted by CWI is an appendix in this document.

Process:

1. To learn more about standardized assessment options, students must meet with an Advisor.
2. The Advisor will review the list of approved assessments and the minimum required scores to determine if this option is appropriate for the student.
3. If the student has not already taken the standardized assessment, the student schedules the test. Any related fees will be paid to the testing center where the assessment is being taken.
4. If the required score is achieved, the student requests that official exam scores be sent to CWI Registrar's office.
5. The student submits the Request for Prior Learning Credit form, provided by the Advisor, during a semester in which they are enrolled in CWI courses.

ACE CREDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

CWI utilizes the recommendations of the American Council on Education (ACE) to inform decision around prior learning credit. This includes credit for military experience. The most commonly accepted credits based on military experience are outlined in a table at the end of this document. Additional information about military credit can be found in the [ACE Military Guide](#).

Process:

1. To learn more about PLA based on an ACE recommendation, students must meet with an Advisor.
2. The Advisor will review the student's prior learning, the ACE recommendation, and the courses needed by the student to complete degree requirements. If appropriate, the Advisor will refer the student to the appropriate faculty for review of prior learning. If there is a fee for the faculty review, as noted on the PLA website, the student pays that fee before additional review is completed. Fees are paid online through the PLA website unless the student cannot pay electronically in which case the student will pay at a One Stop office.
3. The faculty will review the completed work that ACE recommends for credit and then complete the Prior Learning Assessment Approval form.
4. If credit is approved, the student turns in the Request for Prior Learning Credit form, the PLA Approval form, and any required supporting documents to a One Stop office or Advisor during a semester in which they are enrolled in CWI courses.

5. If credit is denied, the department chair submits the paperwork to the registrar's office for record keeping.

COURSE-SPECIFIC CHALLENGE EXAMS

A challenge exam is an opportunity for an individual to receive credit by successfully demonstrating mastery of course objectives. In some instances, examinations can be very similar to a comprehensive final exam. Assessments may be written, verbal, and/or demonstrations that evaluate whether the student has achieved the course objectives.

Faculty may identify relevant industry-based or national certification exams as challenge exams. Faculty who teaches the course may also develop other challenge exams. These are specifically designed as holistic assessments of student knowledge of course content. Exams will be approved and maintained through the appropriate department and reviewed regularly to assure continued alignment with course goals and outcomes. A list of expanded learning outcomes will be provided for students in preparation for the exam.

The student must meet a certain scoring threshold to pass each challenge examination. Faculty set the threshold score for each examination. Threshold scores are vetted through the appropriate department and reviewed regularly to assure continuing alignment with course goals and outcomes.

The college is required to provide reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. If students have already established accommodations with Student Disability Services (SDS), they should communicate the approved accommodations to the PLA faculty at the earliest convenience so those needs can be discussed.

If accommodations are not yet established, students are welcome to contact SDS at 208-562-2447 (Nampa) 208-562-2496 (Ada), or accessibility@cw.edu. Students with temporary health conditions or permanent disability (conditions include but not limited to; mental health, learning, attention-related, hearing, vision, non-visible, and health impairments), are encouraged to reach out to Student Disability Services at their earliest convenience. Accommodations are not retroactive, so students will want to establish accommodations as soon as possible.

Process:

1. To learn more about challenge exam options, students must meet with an Advisor where they will discuss PLA options, degree applicability, and transferability. Information is also available on the PLA website at: <http://cwi.edu/current-students/prior-learning-assessment>.
2. If a student wants to pursue challenge testing, the Advisor will refer the student to the designated faculty identified for the challenge exam. Through an interview process, the faculty will gather sufficient information to determine if the student has a reasonable opportunity to be successful in challenging the examination.
3. The student will schedule the test or demonstration. Any related fees will be paid prior to the assessment being taken.
Please note: The PLA Website <<http://cwi.edu/current-students/prior-learning-assessment>> notes testing times and fees. There may be more than one type of fee for the assessment, and all fees must be paid prior to the start of the assessment. Fees are paid online through the PLA website unless the student cannot pay electronically in which case the student will pay at a One Stop office.
4. The student completes the assessment. Fees are non-refundable once the exam is completed.
5. Faculty render a decision of Pass or No Credit within 10 business days of the completion of the assessment. If the student is successful, the faculty will complete the Prior Learning Assessment Approval form.
6. Where appropriate, a faculty member may allow for a resubmission of exam materials. Students are given ten (10) business days to provide a revised copy. There is no additional assessment fee. Within ten (10) business days of resubmission, a Pass or No Credit decision must be rendered.
7. If credit is approved, the student turns in the Request for Prior Learning Credit form, the PLA Approval form, and any required supporting documents to a One Stop office or Advisor during a semester in which they are enrolled in CWI courses.
8. If credit is denied, the department chair submits the paperwork to the registrar's office for record keeping.

PORTFOLIO

When other methods of PLA are not available, or the learning outcomes of the course cannot be assessed through the exams and assessment tools listed above, students may receive credit by producing a portfolio providing evidence that the student has achieved each of the learning objectives for the course. This evidence may be in the form of certificates, written work, photographs of projects, affidavits from employers, sound recordings, videos, etc. The portfolio requires strong articulation of prior learning as it relates to specific course competencies. SDS accommodations may apply in a portfolio review so please view that section under Challenge Exams if appropriate.

Process:

1. To learn more about challenge exam options, students must meet with an Advisor where they will discuss PLA options, degree applicability, and transferability. Information is also available on the PLA website at <http://cwi.edu/current-students/prior-learning-assessment>
2. If a student wants to move forward with portfolio review, the Advisor will refer the student to the designated faculty identified for course. Through an interview process, the faculty will gather sufficient information to determine if the student has a reasonable opportunity to be successful.
3. Following the guidance provided by the faculty, the student builds the portfolio. Portfolios must be completed within the catalog year. The faculty member who will sign the Portfolio Credit form outlines specific due dates and expectations.
4. Any related fees must be paid prior to the portfolio being reviewed. Fees are paid online through the PLA website unless the student cannot pay electronically in which case the student will pay at a One Stop office. Fees are non-refundable.
5. The student submits the portfolio to the designated faculty for review.
6. The faculty renders a decision of Pass, No Credit, or Resubmit (based on requested elaboration or evidence) within twenty (20) business days.
7. If minor clarifications are needed, prompting a decision of Resubmit, the student has twenty (20) business days to resubmit their work for evaluation. There is no additional assessment fee. Upon resubmission, a Pass or No Credit decision must be rendered within twenty (20) business days.

8. If the portfolio is successful, the student turns in the Request for Prior Learning Credit form and the Portfolio Credit Form to a One Stop or Advisor, during a semester in which they are enrolled in CWI courses.
9. If credit is denied, the department chair submits the paperwork to the registrar's office for record keeping.

VERTICAL CREDIT

Sequential courses within the same discipline may offer an additional means of PLA. Students who gain permission to enter a higher-level starting point in sequential courses (as identified by prerequisites and noted on the list of eligible courses in this handbook) and successfully pass the enrolled course with a C or better may apply

for vertical credit for the prerequisite course(s). A current list of Vertical Credit accepted by CWI is an appendix in this document.

Process:

1. To learn more about vertical credit options, students must meet with an Advisor. A list of courses that provide a vertical credit option is included at the end of this document.
2. Upon successful completion of the higher-level course, and with approval from the Advisor for relevancy and appropriateness for degree completion, the student turns in the Request for Prior Learning Credit form.

Equivalencies

Equivalencies describe how PLA compares to college course offerings. Equivalencies are used to grant a student course completion based on prior learning. CWI makes no assurances regarding the number of credits to be awarded prior to the completion of the review process. When equivalency is noted related to the completion of a General Education Matriculation (GEM) course for which CWI does not have a specific matching course in the catalog, the notation of 000C will be used with the corresponding course prefix or GEM designator to note this approval. Course equivalencies and credit recommendations are located on the CWI website. As a reminder, transfer students earning PLA should contact the college to which they intend to transfer to understand receiving institution's PLA transfer policy. One resource available to students is the [Course Transfer](#) site maintained by the Idaho State Board of Education.

Standardized Assessment Appendix

AP Exams

AP Exam	CWI Course	Required Score
Arts		
AP Art History	ARTS 101 or ARTS 102	3
AP Studio Art: 2-D Design	ARTS 105	3
AP Studio Art: 3-D Design	ARTS 106	3
AP Studio Art: Drawing	ARTS 109	3
English		
AP English Language and Composition	ENGL 101 (3 or 4); ENGL 101 and 102 (5)	3 (5 for both)
AP English Literature and Composition	ENGL 175	3
History & Social Science		
AP Comparative Government and	POLS 210	3
AP Human Geography	GEOG 102	3
AP Macroeconomics	ECON 201	3
AP Microeconomics	ECON 202	3
AP Psychology	PSYC 101	3
AP United States Government and Politics	POLS 101	3
AP World History: Modern	HIST 101 and/or HIST 102	3
AP United States History	HIST 111 and/or HIST 112	3
Math & Computer Science		
AP Precalculus	MATH 143 and 144 or MATH 147	3
AP Calculus AB	MATH 160 or MATH 170 (not both)	3
AP Calculus BC	MATH 170	3
AP Computer Science A	CPSC 121 (if MATH 170 is met)	4 w/MATH 170
AP Statistics	MATH 153	3

AP Exam	CWI Course	Required Score
Sciences		
AP Biology	BIOL 100 (lecture only)	3
AP Biology	BIOL 111 and 111L	4
AP Chemistry	CHEM 111 and 111L (3); CHEM 112 and 112L (4)	3 (4 for CHEM 112 and 122L)
AP Environmental Science	ENVI 100 (lecture only)	3
AP Physics C: Mechanics	PHYS 211 and 211L	3
AP Physics 1: Algebra-Based	PHYS 111 and 111L	3
AP Physics 2: Algebra-Based	PHYS 112 and 112L	3
World Languages & Cultures		
AP Chinese Language and Culture	HUMA 000C	3
AP French Language and Culture	FREN 101 and 102 (3), FREN 201 (4)	3 (4 for FREN 201)
AP German Language and Culture	HUMA 000C	3
AP Italian Language and Culture	HUMA 000C	3
AP Japanese Language and Culture	JAPN 101 and 102 (3)	3
AP Latin	HUMA 000C	3
AP Spanish Language and Culture	SPAN 101 and 102 (3); add SPAN 201 (4) and add SPAN 202 (5)	3 (4 and 5 add more credit)

CLEP Exams

CLEP Exam	CWI Course	Required Score
Business		
Financial Accounting	ACCT 201	50
Introductory Business Law	BUSA 265	50
Principles of Marketing	BUSA 250	50
Composition and Literature		
American Literature	ENGL 277	50
Analyzing and Interpreting Literature	ENGL 175	50
College Composition	ENGL 101	50
English Literature	ENGL 267	50
Humanities	HUMA 101 and/or 102	50

CLEP Exam	CWI Course	Required Score
Foreign Languages		
French Language Level 1	FREN 101 and/or 102	50
French Language Level 2	FREN 101, 102 and/or 201	59
German Language Level 1	HUMA 000C	50
German Language Level 2	HUMA 000C	60
Spanish Language Level 1	SPAN 101 and/or 102	50
Spanish Language Level 2	SPAN 101, 102 and/or 201	63
Spanish with Writing Level 1	SPAN 101, 102, 201, and/or 202	50
Spanish with Writing Level 2	SPAN 101, 102, 201, and/or 202	50
History and Social Sciences		
American Government	POLS 101	50
United States History I	HIST 111	50
United States History II	HIST 112	50
Human Growth and Development	PSYC 201	50
Introductory Psychology	PSYC 101	50
Introductory Sociology	SOCY 101	50
Principles of Macroeconomics	ECON 201	50
Principles of Microeconomics	ECON 202	50
Western Civilization I	HIST 103	50
Western Civilization II	HIST 104	50
Science and Mathematics		
Biology	BIOL 100	50
Calculus	MATH 160 or MATH 170 (not both)	50
Chemistry	CHEM 101 and 101L	50
College Algebra	MATH 143	50
College Mathematics	MATH 123	50
Natural Sciences	SCIE 000C (no lab)	50
Precalculus	MATH 147	50

DSST Exams

DSST Exam	CWI Course	Required Score
Business		
Business Ethics and Society	Please see Department Chair	
Business Mathematics	Please see Department Chair	
Human Resource Management	No Equivalent Course	NA
Introduction to Business	Please see Department Chair	
Management Information Systems	Please see Department Chair	
Money and Banking	Please see Department Chair	
Organizational Behavior	No Equivalent Course	NA
Personal Finance	Please see Department Chair	
Principles of Finance	Please see Department Chair	
Principles of Supervision	Please see Department Chair	
Humanities		
Ethics in America	Please see Department Chair	
Introduction to World Religions	Please see Department Chair	
Principles of Advanced English Composition	No Equivalent Course	NA
Principles of Public Speaking	Please see Department Chair	
Math		
Fundamentals of College Algebra	MATH 143	400
Math for Liberal Arts	MATH 123	400
Principles of Statistics	MATH 153	400
Science		
Astronomy	PHYS 101	400

DSST Exam	CWI Course	Required Score
Environmental Science	ENVI 100	400
Health & Human Development	No Equivalent Course	NA
Introduction to Geology	GEOG 101	400
Social Science		
A History of the Vietnam War	HIST 230	400
Art of the Western World	No Equivalent Course	NA
Criminal Justice	CRIJ 101	400
Foundations of Education	Please see Department Chair	
Fundamentals of Counseling	No Equivalent Course	NA
General Anthropology	ANTH 102	400
History of the Soviet Union	HIST 240	400
Human/Cultural Geography	GEOG 102	400
Introduction to Law Enforcement	Please see Department Chair	
Lifespan Developmental Psychology	PSYC 201	400
Substance Abuse	No Equivalent Course	NA
The Civil War and Reconstruction	HIST 230	400
Technology		
Ethics in Technology	Please see Department Chair	
Fundamentals of Cybersecurity	Please see Department Chair	
Technical Writing	ENGL 202	400

Military Experience

Military Experience	ACE ID	CWI Course
Information Officer	NV-0504-0001	ENGL 101
Mass Communication Specialist	NER-MC-002	COMM 101
Aviation Structural Mechanic, Safety Equipment	NER-AME-005	COMM 101
Musician	NER-MU-004	COMM 101
Army Musician	MOS-42R-002	COMM 101

Military Experience	ACE ID	CWI Course
French Special Operations Language Training	AR-0602-0010	FREN 101
French Basic	DD-0602-0107	FREN 101 and/or 102
French Special Operations Language Training	AR-0602-0010	FREN 102
German Special Operations Language Training	AR-0602-0009	HUMA 000C
German Special Operations Language Training	AR-0602-0009	HUMA 000C
Spanish Special Operations Language Training	AR-0602-0008	SPAN 101
Spanish Basic	DD-0602-0133	SPAN 101
Spanish short basic	DD-0602-0162	SPAN 101
Spanish Basic	DD-0602-0222	SPAN 101 and/or 102
Spanish Special Operations Language Training	AR-0602-0008	SPAN 102
Spanish Basic	DD-0602-0133	SPAN 102
Civil Affairs	AR-1511-0045	PSYC 101

International Baccalaureate

IB Exam	CWI Course	Required Score
Studies in language and literature		
Language A: literature (SL/HL)	ENGL 175	4
Language A: language and literature (SL/HL)	ENGL 102	5 + Completion of IB Diploma Program
Literature and performance (SL)	No Equivalent Course	NA
IB Diploma Program	ENGL 101	Completion
Language acquisition		

IB Exam	CWI Course	Required Score
Language ab initio	SPAN 101	4
Language B (SL and HL)	SPAN 102	5
Language B (SL and HL)	SPAN 201	6
Language B (SL and HL)	SPAN 202	7
Language ab initio	FREN 101	4
Language B (SL and HL)	FREN 102	5
Individuals and Societies		
Biology (SL or HL)	BIOL 100 / BIOL 100L	4
Biology SL or HL)	BIOL 111/ BIOL 111L	5
Biology (SL or HL)	BIOL 112 / BIOL 112L	6
Business management	Please see Department Chair	
Economics	Please see Department Chair	
Geography	Please see Department Chair	
History	Please see Department Chair	
Information technology in a global society	Please see Department Chair	
Philosophy	Please see Department Chair	
Psychology	Please see Department Chair	
Social and Cultural Anthropology	Please see Department Chair	
World religions (SL only)	Please see Department Chair	
Mathematics		
Mathematics Applications and Interpretations SL	Please see Department Chair	
Mathematics Applications and Interpretations HL	Please see Department Chair	

IB Exam	CWI Course	Required Score
Mathematics Analysis and approaches SL	Please see Department Chair	
Mathematics Analysis and Approaches HL	Please see Department Chair	
The Arts		
Music (SL and SH)	MUSI 100	4
Film (SL)	HUMA 110	4
Theatre (SL or HL)	THEA 101	4
Visual arts	ARTS (TBD based on portfolio)	4

Idaho Seal of Biliteracy

Idaho Seal of Biliteracy	CWI Course	Required Score
Spanish	SPAN 101 and 102	Noted on High School Diploma
French	FREN 101 and 102	Noted on High School Diploma

Vertical Credit

Vertical Credit Course	CWI Completed Course	Required Grade
CNST127	CNST 129	C
CSEC 115	CSEC 119	C
CSEC 127	CSEC 246	C
ENGL 101	ENGL 102	C
JAPN 101	JAPN 102	C
MATH 170	MATH 175	C
SIGL 101	SIGL 102	C
SIGL 102	SIGL 201	C
SIGL 201	SIGL 202	C
SPAN 101	SPAN 102	C

Vertical Credit Course	CWI Completed Course	Required Grade
CNST127	CNST 129	C
SPAN 102	SPAN 201	C
SPAN 201	SPAN 202	C

GED Credit

GED Exam	CWI Course	Required Score
Mathematics		
The 2014 GED® Test: Mathematical Reasoning College Ready + Credit	No equivalent course	NA
Humanities		
The 2014 GED® Test: Reasoning through Language Arts College Ready +Credit	HUMA 000C (1 credit)	175
GED Exam	CWI Course	Required Score
Science		
The 2014 GED® Test: Science College Ready + Credit	SCIE 000C (3 credits no lab)	175
Social Science		
The 2014 GED® Test: Social Studies College Ready + Credit	SOC 000C (3 credits)	175