

Prior Learning Credits

Students with life and work experience can shorten the road to attaining a college degree by applying for Prior Learning Assessment (PLA). PLA is a process through which students can earn college credit by identifying and documenting college-level learning that has been acquired through life experiences. Students with such life experiences may choose to validate their expertise through a number of evaluation procedures. Awarding of credits at Windward Community College applies ONLY to degrees and/or certificates student is enrolled in at this institution. Other colleges and community colleges, even within the University of Hawai'i System, may have slightly different policies for accepting transfer credits. The granting of credits at Windward CC in no way obligates another institution to accept the same credits or apply those credits in the same manner.

There are many forms of Prior Learning Assessment (PLA). Please work with your PLA representative in the counseling office to determine what options best fit your experience.

Credit by Examination/Course Challenge

Windward Community College students who present evidence of having achieved student learning outcomes through prior experience may apply for credit by exam or course challenge. These options are not available for all courses so students are advised to check with individual instructors and the department chairperson on a course-by-course basis. Assessment could include a competency-based exam or project, as determined by the academic experts. Students must be officially enrolled in at least one course (other than the course the student is attempting to receive credit by exam for) during the semester in which credit by exam/course challenge is attempted. Credit by examination forms must be filed with the Admissions & Records Office prior to the end of the late registration period. Students will be charged 50% of the tuition for the course credit.

Equivalency Examinations

Students may apply for credits by having official transcripts from examination institutions sent to Windward Community College. Students must meet qualifying scores set by the campus to be awarded credit. These examination programs include the following:

- Advanced Placement (AP) Examinations: The Advanced Placement Examinations are administered at high schools by the Educational Testing Service for the College Entrance Examination Board for students who have completed specific college-level courses in high school. For program details, see <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org>. For the University's credit policy, students should consult the Student Affairs Office.
- College Level Examination Program (CLEP): The College Board also offers tests of basic entry-level college material through its College Level Examination Program (CLEP). For program details, see <http://www.collegeboard.com/highered/clep/index.html>. Students must achieve CLEP examination scores at or above specified levels of achievement in order to be awarded credits.
- Excelsior College Equivalency Exams (ECE or UExcel): Administered by PearsonVue. The student is advised to discuss test scores with their counselor for consideration of transferring in credits.
- International Baccalaureate (IB): Credits earned from institutions of higher education outside the U.S. may be transferred in some cases. Transcripts and related documents are to include course descriptions and MUST have certified English translations attached. The College will grant credits and/or waivers on the basis of IB higher-level examinations.

Non-Collegiate-Sponsored Education Credit

This option evaluates learning from courses completed in non-collegiate settings (e.g. professional license, labor union courses, agency training programs, professional workshops, and military courses). Examples of such education credit include Army ACE Registry Transcript System (AARTS), Sailor Marine ACE Registry Transcript (SMART), American Council on Education (ACE), College Credit Recommendation Service, and Professional Licenses or Industry Certifications (nationally- or state-certified professionals). Documentation of non-collegiate training must be provided to the program that would be accepting credit in transfer. Course credit recommendations provided by the ACE in the National Guide to Educational Credit for Training Programs may be used by programs in deciding on the type and amount of credit that may be granted. AARTS/SMARTS transcripts sent directly to the College will be evaluated and appropriate credits granted toward a specific degree and/or certificate. Windward Community College reserves the right to reject recommendations made by the American Council on Education (ACE) guidelines. For questions on awarding credits for various licensing, please see the PLA representative in the Counseling office.

Portfolio-Based Assessment

A portfolio-based review is one of the newest options for awarding Prior Learning (PL) credits. Using portfolio-based assessments, students prepare documentation and provide evidence of learning from outside the traditional classroom. The documentation and evidence are reviewed by a panel of subject matter experts who use course Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) as the basis to compare the portfolio documentation and evidence. Based on this review process, recommendations will be made to award the appropriate number of college credits and a grade of “PBA,” Portfolio Based Assessment, which does not give grade points but only course credits. Students pay equal to 60% of tuition for the course credit requested portfolio assessment fee. More information can be obtained from the PLA representative. Portfolio-based assessment is recommended for students who have substantial professional or community experience and college-level writing skills (i.e. qualify for ENG 100).