



**COLLEGE & CAREER  
PATHWAYS**

**PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT MANUAL  
(PLA)**

**PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT MANUAL**  
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## **I. Introduction to Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)**

As a premiere college that provides high-quality academic, technical, and cultural programs, Alvin Community College's mission is to promote student success, enhance quality of life, and support economic development. By the year 2030, it is the goal of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) that 60 percent of Texas Residents, ages 25-34, will have earned a certificate or degree. In alignment with the THECB, Alvin Community College recognizes the benefits of Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) in helping students reach this goal in a more time-efficient way. In addition, ACC is cognizant of the diverse ways in which students obtain knowledge and skills outside of the traditional classroom setting. The primary goal of Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is to evaluate a student's knowledge and skillset for the awarding of college credit through alternative pathways such as - national and local exams, industry certifications and work experience, military training, articulation agreements and non-credit mirror course conversion. In addition, the PLA pathways accelerate certificate and degree completion for students who have met the learning objectives prior to entry into their program.

The purpose of this manual is to provide an overview of all ACC PLA Pathways, student and faculty responsibilities and processes for approval. This manual will serve as a road map to assisting students towards accelerated certificate and degree completion. Eligibility requirements, processes, and fees associated with each pathway are outlined in this manual. If there are any questions about what is in this manual, contact the College and Career Pathways office for assistance.



## **II. Responsibilities**

### **A. Student Responsibilities**

#### **a. PLA Procedures**

Students are responsible for researching eligibility requirements, completing the necessary application, and providing the required documentation for review. Students must adhere to all deadlines.

#### **b. Appeal Process**

1. A student shall have one semester (fall or spring) immediately following the PLA decision to appeal the denial of credit.
2. To initiate an appeal, the student is required to first inform the Office of College & Career Pathways via email of the desire to appeal for record keeping purposes.
3. The student will then meet with the Department Chair for discussion and to seek a resolution. If resolution does not occur at the Department Chair level, the student must first appeal to the Dean and then the Vice President of Instruction (VPI) for further consideration. The VPI may schedule a conference with the student to render a final decision. \*Disclaimer: the VPI decision is irrevocable.

### **B. College & Career Pathways Office**

#### **a. Procedures Review**

The ACC College and Career Pathways office responsibilities include but are not limited to:

1. Informing faculty and staff about PLA pathway options. Students will be able to ask any ACC Faculty or staff member about ways to accelerate the completion of their certificate or degree through PLA and receive an informed response.
2. Publicize PLA pathways to students. The CCP office will be responsible for advertising PLA through the course catalog, semester schedule, social media, college website, and postings around campus.
3. Approval of PLA criteria for students applying for credit.

4. Coordinating PLA Task Group meetings to consistently review and keep current all PLA policies and procedures. The PLA Task Group shall meet a minimum of 2 times per semester.
5. Work directly with Deans, Department Chairs and faculty to ensure that PLA standards meet SACSCOC Learning Outcomes and Objectives and curricular standards for awarding credit.
6. Ensure that ACC is abiding by all Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), Texas Education Agency (TEA), and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools – Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) rules related to awarding college credit through PLA pathways.
7. Maintain official copies of all internal departmental exams offered for PLA credit by each department.
8. Update and keep current the PLA Manual.

**b. PLA Records**

The CCP Office will be responsible for keeping record of:

1. Students who have applied for PLA
2. PLA Proposal Forms
3. PLA Approved Departmental Exams
4. PLA Appeal Cases
5. PLA Task Group Meeting Minutes, to be stored under the My Teams site located in the POD.

**C. Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), Department Chairs, and Faculty**

**a. PLA Department/Program Approval Process**

Changes should be submitted to the CCP office

1. Department Chair/Director shall meet with the College & Career Pathways Office to identify PLA opportunities annually.
2. Department Chair/Director to present options to Dean and/or Advisory Committee (when applicable) for approval.
3. Department Chair/Director to complete PLA Proposal and submit to the ILT/VPI for approval.

The VPI office will return submissions to the CCP office with a rendered decision.

#### **b. PLA Departmental Exam and Military Approval Process**

Changes should be submitted to the CCP office.

1. Department Chair to create Departmental Exam and complete PLA Approval Form.
2. Copy of exam with Dean Approval shall be presented by the Dean to ILT/VPI for approval.
3. The VPI office will route the form with rendered decision and appropriate documentation attached to the CCP office.
4. The CCP office will inform the Department/Program of the approval or denial.
5. If approved, the CCP office will inform the Registrar's office, Advising Services, Admissions, and the Curriculum Specialist to update the corresponding catalog.
6. If approved, it will be the responsibility of the Department/Program to add the PLA opportunity to their program webpage, and CCP will add to the POD page for student awareness.

#### **c. Advance Placement, IB, and DSST Approval Process**

1. November – CCP Office to send Advance Placement, IB, and DSST lists to Deans/Department Chairs to review.
2. December– Deans/Department Chairs to submit updates to ILT/VPI utilizing the PLA Proposal form.
3. The VPI office will route the form with rendered decision, attaching appropriate documentation, to the CCP office by January 31.
4. The CCP office will inform the Department/Program of the approval or denial.
5. If approved, the CCP office will inform the Registrar's office, Advising Services, Admissions, and the Curriculum Specialist to update the corresponding catalog. The CCP office will also report changes to agencies as applicable.
6. If approved, it will be the responsibility of the Department/Program to add the PLA opportunity to their program webpage and POD page for student awareness.

#### **D. Student Services**

ACC Student Services Department responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- a. Informing and explaining to students the benefits of PLA pathways during advising sessions.
- b. Providing students with the PLA application and explaining the eligibility criteria.
- c. Ensuring that approved credit is properly transcribed on the student's official ACC transcript.

## E. Business Office

ACC Business office is responsible for:

- a. Collecting fees associated with the PLA pathways.
- b. Providing students with proof of payment to submit with PLA application.
- c. Working with the CCP Office and PLA Task Group to review and make PLA fee recommendations each academic year.

## III. General ACC Guidelines and Criteria for PLA

- a. Students may only request PLA after having completed a minimum of 3hrs of coursework with Alvin Community College and is currently enrolled after the census date of the requesting semester.  
Exception: Military Credit/AP/CLEP may be applied when a student has successfully completed the ACC admissions process and has submitted the National Exam with required score and/or all Military documentation.
- b. PLA credit will only be awarded as it applies to a current ACC program of study.
- c. A maximum of 24 hours of PLA can be awarded for PLA. These hours will not be counted toward resident credit, with the exception of ACC Continuing Education Mirror Courses.
- d. PLA is noted on the transcript with a grade of 'S' for the semester hour value *with the exception of Departmental Exams (A, B, or C is awarded and posted)* and are not calculated in the institution's grade point average (GPA).
- e. Award of PLA at ACC does not guarantee transfer of such credit to other colleges and universities. Students should discuss transferability with the intended university for their transfer policy.
- f. There is no charge for the transcription of AP, CLEP, IB, DSST, or Military PLA credit. There is a \$10 per credit hour charge for all other forms of PLA (departmental exams, industry certification review and/or portfolio credit).  
Skills assessments that require demonstration of knowledge and skillset are \$100.00.  
All PLA fees must be paid prior to taking the exam or having documentation reviewed.  
PLA fees are non-refundable  
Payment does not ensure approval of credit.

## **IV. PLA Pathways**

### **A. PLA Credit by National Examination**

Credit by examination offers students an opportunity to earn credit for previous knowledge. Types of national exams considered for credit by Alvin Community College include Advance Placement (AP), College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), DANTES (DSST) and the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program (IB). Content of any examination must be equivalent to a course in the current course catalog of the college and the student's program of study.

Alvin Community College has reviewed and established specific equivalencies for each of the above-mentioned national exams. Students should refer to the ACC Catalog to review score requirements for each (Appendix of this manual).

#### **1. Eligibility**

- a. Students must meet ACC standard PLA guidelines (section III).

#### **2. Process**

- a. Student should visit with an ACC advisor or the CCP office if they have any questions about the score requirements available in the ACC catalog.
- b. Complete ACC Admission process (if not currently an ACC student).
- c. Student must submit official test scores to Alvin Community College directly from the providing testing center. Scores will not be accepted from the student.
- d. Student should complete AP/CLEP/IB PLA form and submit directly to the Registrar's office to have credit applied to the ACC transcript. The Registrar's office will notify the student of applied credit or if denied.

#### **3. Fees**

- a. There is no fee for the transcription of AP, CLEP, IB, DSST, or Military PLA.

### **B. PLA Credit by Internal Departmental Examination**

Internal Departmental Exams are developed and reviewed by Alvin Community College faculty. A grade of A, B, or C will be awarded and posted to the student's transcript upon successful completion of the exam. Courses completed by internal department examination are noted as Credit by Exam on the transcript but are not calculated in the ACC GPA.

Students requesting review of coursework from non-accredited colleges should follow the process outlined for Departmental Examination review. A course syllabus, sample assignments, and instructor credentials (if applicable) should be attached to the PLA form.

#### **1. Eligibility**

- a. Students must meet ACC standard PLA guidelines (section III).

## **2. Process**

- a. Meet with Department Chair to discuss applying for PLA.
- b. Complete PLA Application and submit to the CCP office for approval.
- c. Pay \$10 per credit hour for the course being replaced by the Internal Departmental Exam. If a skills assessment is needed, \$100.00 must be paid.
- d. Submit approved application to the Dean/Department Chair to show proof of payment and schedule to take the exam. Exams may be taken with the Department Chair, Program Director, or in the ACC testing center.
- e. Exam will be reviewed by the Department Chair/Program Director. Score results should be recorded on the PLA Application and submitted to the CCP office for review of all documentation. The CCP Office will submit to the Vice President of Instruction's (VPI) office for final approval. Approved forms will be routed to the Registrar's office, denied forms will be routed to the CCP office.
- f. The Registrar's office will post credit if applicable and notify the student of the applied credit. If the credit has been denied, the student will be informed by the CCP office and will have an opportunity to appeal the decisions by following the appeal process.

## **3. Fees**

- a. \$10.00 per credit hour/ \$100 skillset assessment. Fees must be paid prior to taking the exam.

### **C. ACE – Evaluated Military Training**

Students with credentials and experience gained through service may qualify for PLA credit. Students should complete the PLA form required and submit documentation necessary to prove knowledge and skills. In some cases, students may still need to take a Skills Assessment exam or a Departmental Exam. The college will automatically award the following upon the student's request:

- Two hours of physical activity credit from the DD214;
- Academic course credit directly equivalent and applicable to the student's major from the military transcript (AARTS, SMART, CCAF), based on ACE Guide recommendations.

Students are eligible for a minimum of 12 hours of college elective credit to satisfy elective course requirements in the student's degree program.

#### **1. Eligibility**

- a. Students must meet ACC standard PLA guidelines (section III).
- b. PLA credit may be awarded when the student has successfully completed the ACC Admissions process and has submitted all Military documentation.
- c. Graduated from an accredited public or private high school or a school operated by the US Department of Defense.
- d. Honorably discharged with a minimum two years of service in the armed forces or was discharged because of a disability.

## **2. Process**

- a. Meet with Department Chair to discuss applying for PLA.
- b. Complete PLA Application and submit to the CCP office for approval.
- c. Meet with Veterans Student Advisor.
- d. ACE Credit Recommendation.
- e. Submit approved applications and supporting documentation to the Department Chair for approval and Dean signature.
- f. PLA Application and supporting documentation should be submitted to the CCP office for review of all documentation. The CCP Office will submit to the Vice President of Instruction's (VPI) office for final approval. Approved forms will be routed to the Registrar's office, denied forms will be routed to the CCP office.
- g. The Registrar's office will post credit if applicable and notify the student of the applied credit. If the credit has been denied, the student will be informed by the CCP office and will have an opportunity to appeal the decisions by following the appeal process.

## **3. Fees:**

- a. There is no fee for the transcription of AP, CLEP, IB, DSST, or Military PLA.

## **D. ACE/NCCRS – Evaluated Industry Certification and Training Programs/Career Portfolios**

### **1. Eligibility**

- a. Students must meet ACC standard PLA guidelines (section III).

### **2. Process**

- a. Meet with Department Chair to discuss applying for PLA.
- b. Complete PLA Application and submit to the CCP office for approval.
- c. Pay \$10 per credit hour for the course being replaced by the Industry Certification. If a skills assessment is needed, \$100.00 must be paid.
- d. Submit approved application to the Dean/Department Chair to show proof of payment along with copies of your certification and/or any supporting documentation.
- e. Industry Certifications will be reviewed by the Department Chair/Program Director. Approval or denial will be indicated on the application and submitted to the CCP office for review of all documentation. The CCP Office will submit to the Vice President of Instruction's (VPI) office for final approval. Approved forms will be routed to the Registrar's office, denied forms will be routed to the CCP office.
- f. Registrar's office will post credit if applicable and notify the student of applied credit. If the credit has been denied, the student will be informed by the CCP office and will have an opportunity to appeal the decision by following the appeal process.

### **3. Fees**

- a. \$10.00 per credit hour/ \$100 skillset assessment. Fees must be paid prior to having your certification reviewed.

## **E. Continuing Education/WECM to Credit (Mirror Courses)**

### **1. Eligibility**

- a. Students must meet ACC standard PLA guidelines (section III).

### **2. Process**

- a. Meet with Department Chair to discuss applying for PLA.
- b. Complete PLA Application and submit to the CCP office for approval.
- c. Pay \$10 per credit hour for the course being replaced by the Industry Certification. If a skills assessment is needed, \$100.00 must be paid.
- d. Submit approved application to the Dean/Department Chair to show proof of payment along with copies of your certification and/or any supporting documentation.
- e. Documentation will be reviewed by the Department Chair/Program Director. Approval or denial will be indicated on the application and submitted to the CCP office for review of all documentation. The CCP Office will submit to the Vice President of Instruction's (VPI) office for final approval. Approved forms will be routed to the Registrar's office, denied forms will be routed to the CCP office.
- f. Registrar's office will post credit if applicable and notify the student of the applied credit. If the credit has been denied, the student will be informed by the CCP office and will have an opportunity to appeal the decision by following the appeal process.

### **3. Fees**

- a. \$10.00 per credit hour/ \$100 skillset assessment (if applicable). Fees must be paid prior to having your certification reviewed.

## **F. Articulated High School Credit**

Alvin Community College no longer enters into local High School Articulation agreements. However, ACC will award credit according to 2016-2017 agreements on file through the 2019-2020 academic year.

Students must:

### **1. Eligibility**

- a. Must be enrolled in an ACC technical program that corresponds to the courses.

- b. Must enroll within 15 months of high school graduation.
- c. Must have a grade of at least 80% in the course for review.

**2. Process**

- a. Meet with College & Career Pathways Specialist to discuss options.
- b. Complete High School Articulation PLA Form.
- c. Provide official high school transcript denoting the course.
- d. If approved by the CCP Specialist, the form and supporting documents will be routed to the Registrar’s office. The Registrar’s office will post credit if applicable and notify the student of the applied credit.

**3. Fees**

- a. There is no fee for the transcription of High School Articulation Credit.

If verified, the articulated credit will be posted to the student’s ACC transcript after successful completion of the student’s first semester in the degree or certificate program.

**V. PLA Fee Chart**

PLA Fees must be paid prior to the review of the application and/or any testing.

<b>PLA Format</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Advanced Placement	\$0 to transcribe
CLEP Exam	\$0 to transcribe; \$20 to have ACC Proctor
Departmental Exam	\$10 per credit hour
Skills Assessment Exam	\$100 flat rate
Industry Certification Review	\$10 per credit hour
Portfolio	TBD
Non-Accredited Course Review	\$10 per credit hour

## Glossary

**ACE:** American Council on Education.

**ACGM:** Academic Course Guide Manual. <http://board.theccb.state.tx.us/apps/WorkforceEd/acgm/acgm.htm>

**AARTS:** ACE Army Registry Transcript System

**CCAF:** The Community College of the Air Force is a regionally accredited degree granting institution for enlisted airmen.

**CCP:** College and Career Pathways. The Office responsible for the promotion and support of the PLA.

**CLEP:** College Level Examination Program. With a passing score, students can earn three or more college credits. <https://clep.collegeboard.org/>

**DANTES/DSST:** Subject Standardized Tests are credit-by-examination tests originated by the United States Department of Defense's Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES) program. <https://www.getcollegecredit.com/>

**IB:** International Baccalaureate <https://www.ibo.org/about-the-ib/>

**JST:** The JST is the Joint Services Transcript. It is an academically accepted document that validates a service member's occupational experience and formal military training along with the corresponding American Council on Education (ACE) college credit recommendations.

**NCCRS:** National College Credit Recommendation Service. Provides evaluation for training and education programs offered outside of the traditional college classroom setting and translating them into college credit equivalencies. <http://www.nationalccrs.org/>

**PLA:** Prior Learning Assessment. The PLA evaluates a student's knowledge and skillset for the awarding of college credit. Options include national and local exams, industry certifications and work experience, military training, articulation agreements and non-credit mirror course conversion.

**SMART:** Sailor/Marine American Council on Education Registry Transcript (SMART),

**VPI:** Vice President of Instruction. Provides final approval for all PLA decisions if there are any discrepancies.

**WECM:** Workforce Education Course Manual. It is a web-based inventory of current workforce evaluation courses available for use by public two-year colleges. It provides community and technical colleges with an inventory of pre-approved courses developed in close partnership with Instructional Specialists representing a wide variety of technical fields, developed to meet the need of the local community.

<http://board.theccb.state.tx.us/apps/WorkforceEd/wecm/>

**VI. Forms** (All PLA forms are stored in the ACC POD and PLA webpage for review)

- A. PLA Proposal Form
- B. PLA Application: National Exam - AP, CLEP, IB, DSST, Military Basic Training
- C. PLA Application: Internal Departmental Exam, Mirror Coursework, Industry Certifications/Career Portfolios
- D. PLA Application: ACE – Evaluated Military Training