

EFFECTIVE PLA POLICIES AND PRACTICES COMPONENTS AND BENCHMARKS

DEFINITION OF PLA

Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is a process that enables learners to demonstrate what they have learned and translate that learning into college credit. PLA validates knowledge acquired through life experience, work experience, military experience, civic engagement, individual study and reading, and participation in classes or training sponsored by business and industry, professional organizations or government agencies. Credit is awarded for college-level knowledge gained from experience and not for the experience itself. **College-level learning** is validated through PLA when learners prove their mastery of the knowledge, skills, competencies, and abilities in a specific area of study offered by the college. Each college must have policies and procedures in place to validate college-level knowledge acquired through experiential learning that are aligned with state policy and regional accreditation standards.

SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS (SACS) ACCREDITATION AND PLA

The institution publishes policies that include criteria for evaluating, awarding, and accepting credit for transfer, experiential learning, credit by examination, Advanced Placement, and professional certificates that is consistent with its mission and ensures that course work and learning outcomes are at the collegiate level and comparable to the institution's own degree programs. The institution assumes responsibility for the academic quality of any course work or credit recorded on the institution's transcript.¹

All credits awarded for PLA, must be in accordance with SACS Standard 3.4. Current SACS policy also requires that students must earn 25 percent or more of credits applied toward the degree through the SACS accredited member's own direct instruction.²

Because PLA credit is awarded when faculty assess for college-level learning, where the student obtained the learning, say in a nontraditional setting or institution or through the college's workforce education division, is not a criterion. If the college-level learning is evaluated and assessed by a college faculty member who meets SACS requirements, then PLA credit can be awarded based on such faculty evaluation.³

To ensure transparency and truth in advertising, the college's PLA policy and procedures must be clearly identified and readily accessible in the college catalog and on the website. According to SACS, the identification of the forms of PLA credit used by an institution should be documented and available to students, faculty, and other stakeholders "through publications that accurately represent the programs and services of the institution."⁴ College faculty and staff must be aware of the policy and follow the policy to ensure compliance with SACS.

COUNCIL ON OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION AND PLA

Although the Council on Occupational Education (COE) does not have any direct statements on PLA or credit by examination in the accreditation handbook, the Council does place emphasis on

¹ Southern Association of Colleges and Schools – The Commission on Colleges. Policy 3.4.4 Principles of Accreditation.

² Southern Association of Colleges and Schools – Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards: Policy and Procedures, page 2.

³ Southern Association of Colleges and Schools – The Commission on Colleges. Policy 3.4.8 from "Comprehensive Standards." Principles of Accreditation.

⁴ Southern Association of Colleges and Schools – The Commission on Colleges. Policy 3.4.5 from "Comprehensive Standards." Principles of Accreditation.

ensuring that “instruction is competency-based including current knowledge, skills and work ethics.”

Each occupational education course and/or program has clearly stated objectives, defined content relevant to these objectives and the current needs of business and industry, and a method of student evaluation that aligns to the course and/or program objectives.⁵

Thus, if PLA credit is awarded when faculty assess for learning based on course objective utilizing a method of evaluation in which the learning is aligned to the course or program objectives, then where the learning is obtained is irrelevant.

STANDARDS FOR AWARDING CREDIT THROUGH PLA

In addition to following SACs and COE policy, there are a number of standards colleges need to follow when developing their PLA policy:

1. Faculty is responsible for the academic integrity of the curriculum.⁶ Thus, the determination of credit awards or competency levels must be made by faculty or a subject matter expert whose experience and credentials are appropriate to a faculty position. It is recommended that faculty be fully engaged in the development of PLA policy and procedures.
2. Academic credit must only be awarded for those courses directly applicable to curriculum requirements in the student’s declared certificate or degree program as outlined in college publications (including website).
3. Assessment must be directly related to the course identified and publicized learning outcomes.
4. All work assessed for PLA must meet a minimum of 75% or ”C” level proficiency for all of the course learning outcomes and/or technical competencies. This “C” level must be determined by the faculty to maintain academic integrity and rigor.
5. PLA credits must not be treated differently in their application and use than their course equivalencies. PLA credits satisfy prerequisite requirements in the same manner that their course equivalencies do at the institution.
6. Colleges may choose to set a limit of credits earned through PLA at a higher standard than SACs. Although we do not recommend this, if the college does implement a higher standard, we recommend articulating this limit as a percentage and not a specific number of credits. This will allow the limit to be applied appropriately to both degree and certification attainment.
7. PLA policy must coincide with the college’s residency requirement. For example, if the college requires that the last 15 credits of a degree be earned while in residency at the college, then PLA credit must be awarded prior to registering for those last 15 credits.
8. Students requesting PLA should be enrolled in a specific degree or certificate program at the college. Many colleges require that a student has received at least one college credit from the institution before allowing a student to apply for PLA.
9. All documentation, including portfolio materials submitted for evaluation, challenge examinations, and or other materials utilized in the PLA process become property of, and are maintained by, the college. It is a part of the student’s academic record.
10. The PLA process must be initiated by the student requesting credit.

⁵ Council on Occupational Education. Objective 2-B-2. Handbook of Accreditation: 2013 Edition.

⁶ Southern Association of Colleges and Schools – The Commission on Colleges. Policy 3.4.10 from “Comprehensive Standards.” Principles of Accreditation.

11. The college needs to make visible and accessible the appeal process of a PLA assessment decision. This process needs to follow the college's standard formal appeal process and be easily accessible to students.
12. A student may not request PLA credit for a course in which they are currently enrolled or for a course that they have previously taken with a failing grade.
13. A student may not request PLA credit for a course that they have audited.

ASSESSMENT AND/OR TESTING FEES

Colleges should institute a nominal assessment fee that is fair and equitable to the learner and is not cost-prohibitive. Fees for services at each college should be set according to their current policies and practices if available. We recognize and understand that it might not always be feasible to have the same rate at each college we hope there is some have alignment where possible. Nonetheless, we **highly recommend** that colleges not charge full tuition for the assessment. This practice is cost-prohibitive and oftentimes serves as a barrier to adult learners.

To establish the assessment fee, the college should, at a minimum, determine the following:

1. Will faculty need to be compensated to develop the challenge exam?
2. Will faculty need to be compensated for evaluating the challenge exam?
3. Will faculty and/or a team of faculty need to be compensated for a portfolio assessment?
4. If the portfolio is assessed by the college administration, has the college determined an overhead rate to cover administrative costs?
5. Has the college determined an overhead rate for its student services area to cover costs of the paperwork processing, the inputting of data into the college's SMS, and transcribing of credit by the college's Registrar?

Among the colleges participating in the Mississippi/Louisiana TAACCCT Consortium, assessment fees are different ranging from:

- \$50-75 no matter the number of credits in the course for a challenge exam
- \$15-20 per course credit for a challenge exam
- \$10-20 fee per credit for a portfolio assessment
- No assessment fee for a professional certification crosswalk

It is important for there to be consistency in this fee within the Consortium.

THE ROLE OF THE REGISTRAR

The College Registrar plays a critical role in PLA given their responsibility to a) maintain college records and b) oversee the transcription processes and procedures. This means that the Registrar plays two important roles: He/she must be the gatekeeper ensuring compliance with policies and procedures and in ensuring the integrity of all academic records and he/she must be a very strong supporter of PLA. Thus, the Registrar must play an active role in developing the colleges' PLA policies and the procedures for applying for and awarding PLA. It is important that the Registrar helps to ensure that learners gain credit where credit is due. Therefore, the Registrar needs to be the first point of contact when students begin the PLA process. The Registrar must ensure that the student is fully enrolled in the academic program in which they are requesting PLA, that they meet the residency requirements, and that the number of credits requested for PLA do not exceed the college limit as set forth in policy.

Additionally, because all documentation, including portfolio materials submitted for evaluation, challenge examinations, and or other materials utilized in the PLA process become property of the college, the Registrar's Office must maintain all documentation because such documentation is part of the student's academic record.

PLA TRANSPARENCY

Student learning transparency is a core value of The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges and of the Council on Occupational Education. As such, every effort must be made to ensure transparency in the PLA process. Policies, procedures, practices, and criteria for assessment, including a provision for appeal, should be fully disclosed and widely available. All printed and electronic materials associated with the college's PLA processes must be readily accessible to potential students, current students, faculty, administration, and the general public. These documents include but are not limited to: description of PLA; catalog language; web pages and other forms of social media; program definitions; student qualifications; processes for student participation; fees; limitations of PLA credit; transferability of PLA credit; transcription of PLA credit; appeals processes and procedures; qualifications of faculty or subject matter experts engaged in assessing PLA; and student advising.

WAYS TO AWARD PLA CREDIT

Credit by Examination

College Level Examination Program (CLEP)

CLEP assesses proficiency in general education through 33 tests in five subject areas including mathematics, writing, communications and science. Most CLEP examinations cover lower level and introductory knowledge in these subject areas. The awarding of CLEP credit should be based on two criteria: standard scores recommended by the Commission on Educational Credit for the American Council of Education, and minimum test score achievement as determined by the faculty. Cost is typically \$80-90 per test. For more information, visit: <http://clep.collegeboard.org>

DSST

Formerly known as the DAN TES program and now owned and administered by Prometric, DSST examinations test knowledge in both lower- and upper-level college material through 38 tests in 6 subject areas. Originally made available to military personnel, the DSST exams are now available to the general public for a fee of \$80 per test. The awarding of DSST credit should be based on two criteria: standard scores recommended by the Commission on Educational Credit for the American Council of Education, and minimum test score achievement as determined by the faculty. For more information, visit: <http://www.getcollegecredit.com>

Advanced Placement (AP)

AP exams are a series of examinations developed by the College Board for AP High School classes in 19 subject areas. For more information, contact:

<http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/subjects>

International Baccalaureate (IB)

The IB is an internationally accepted qualification for entry into institutions of higher education. Graduates of an IB program must demonstrate competency in languages, social studies, the experimental sciences and mathematics. For more information visit: <http://www.ibo.org>

American Council on Education (ACE) for Military Training and Experience

Military educational and training credit can be transcribed through a number of resources: the Army/American Council on Education Registry Transcript System (AARTS), the Sailor/Marine American Council on Education Registry Transcript (SMART), or via a veteran's DD 214. Following ACE guidelines for articulation and transcription credit is recommended. See Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services or

<http://www.militaryguides.acenet.edu>

For credit awarded at the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF), transfer credit should be awarded just like transfer credit awarded at any other accredited institution.

Professional Certification/Industry Credentials

Colleges that utilize professional certifications as an assessment tool in courses should create a **Certification Crosswalk**. To challenge a course based on possessing a professional certificate, the student must provide the college with the appropriate documentation to validate the industry certification award. Colleges may place a time limit. For example, the industry certification must have been received within the past three years. Most colleges do not charge for PLA credit based on professional certification or industry credentials.

In some cases, faculty may not feel that a professional certification exam sufficiently proves mastery of course learning outcomes. For example, A+ is a paper examination. If in the course in which A+ is utilized learners are required to show mastery on a hands-on or practical examination, the college may require that students complete a practical challenge examination in tandem with the professional certification crosswalk.

Challenge Examination

Challenge examination development and assessment is the responsibility of the faculty! If an administrator or subject matter expert is utilized in the proctoring and assessment of the challenge exam, they must strictly follow the guidelines and answer keys developed by the faculty. This ensures academic integrity and rigor. The assessment may include both a written examination and a practical examination of technical competency. No matter the type of assessment tool used, the challenge examination must be aligned with the approved and published course learning outcomes.

Portfolio Assessment

A PLA portfolio is a detailed documentation illustrating college-level learning. The documentation varies by course and may include: examples of documents developed or materials made (like a machined part) at work or during some civic engagement, a self-assessment, an essay or oral interview explaining knowledge and experience, awards and honors, and certifications showing completion of workshops or seminars offered by professional organizations, business and industry or government agencies. Preparation and content of the portfolio are the responsibility of the student and must be of sufficient in breadth and depth to validate the student's stated learning and provide the evaluator(s) with qualitative evidence for evaluation. College advisors, designated faculty, staff member or subject matter experts may assist the student in the portfolio processes and procedures.

Once the portfolio is submitted it is evaluated by designated faculty member, a subject matter expert or a college designated Portfolio Assessment Team to determine if the student has submitted sufficient documentation to demonstrate attainment and mastery of the specific course learning outcomes and/or technical competencies. Best practices in portfolio assessment typically utilize a rubric or matrix that includes: identification of course learning outcomes, techniques for assessing each learning outcome, and a scoring technique for validating mastery.

TRANSCRIPTION OF PLA CREDIT

It is recommended that colleges determine methods to award a letter grade for PLA credit. Additionally, we recommend that PLA courses not be designated on the transcript as being "nontraditional credit." Both of these practices raise a red flag for employers and for receiving institutions, if a student needs to transfer.

Whether in a portfolio process or during a challenge examination, when the PLA assessment tool has been developed to carefully assess a learner's mastery of course learning outcomes, then determining and awarding a letter grade can be straightforward. For example, CIT 102 has 12 identified course learning outcomes. If a student takes a challenge exam or submits a portfolio that shows a mastery of nine of those learning outcomes, this translates to 75% mastery and a letter grade of a "C". Or, when the learner shows mastery at the 80% level of all 12 learning outcomes, then the learner should earn a letter grade of a B. We recommend that colleges develop a matrix or rubric that clearly identifies the learning outcomes and techniques for assessing mastery at the 100, 90, 80, and 75% levels.

For certification crosswalk, it may not be possible to determine a grade unless the student can produce documentation that shows the test score achieved.

PROCESS FOR REQUESTING PLA

Colleges must develop PLA processes and procedures that are clear and accessible to the students. Faculty, advisors, and other college staff should be aware of the policy and process for requesting PLA credit. The policy must be in the college catalog, website and student handbook. We recommend that each college in the Consortium develop a PLA website that includes at a minimum: a definition of PLA, college policy, ways to obtain PLA credit, FAQs about PLA, and a single-point of contact on campus that will assist the student in obtaining the appropriate paperwork to begin the PLA process.

We also recommend that the college develop a self-assessment tool for students to utilize to determine if they have attained college-level learning through life experience. All college advisors and faculty should be able to provide students with the tool and it should be downloadable from the college's website. A sample tool is attached.

Additionally, we recommend that the college application include questions to help advisors, faculty or other college staff ascertain whether or not the student may be eligible to apply for PLA credits. Because the college application is determined and developed by LCTCS and MCCB, we recommend that at least one college in the Consortium develops a pilot college application that includes questions to ascertain the potential for PLA. If the college can show success then the Consortium can work with the system office to institute a system-wide change.

Respectfully resubmitted on November 1, 2013 by:

The National College Transition Network at World Education – PLA Technical Assistance Team

Dr. Darlene Miller, lead writer
Ellen Hewett
Priyanka Sharma

APPENDIX A
LCTCS PLA POLICY

LOUISIANA COMMUNITY & TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM

Policy # 1.023

Title: LCTCS POLICY ON NON-TRADITIONAL CREDIT

Authority: Board Action Original Adoption: 12/12/01

Effective Date: 12/12/01

Last Revision: Initial

Each LCTCS institution shall adopt and publish its policies and procedures pertaining to the awarding of credit to students by non-traditional means. Such non-traditional credit may include - but is not limited to - CLEP, AP, DANTEs, and other extra-institutional examination programs; the institution's faculty-developed credit by examinations; credit for past learning and/or life experiences; military and industry-based training; and others as approved by the institution's chief academic officer. Students may be assessed a fee for the administration of examinations and for the evaluation of credentials when non-traditional credit is being requested.

Each LCTCS institution must establish its non-traditional credit policies in accordance with the criteria of its accrediting agency(ies). Relative to the awarding of non-traditional credit, the appropriate faculty of each institution shall determine the level of student performance necessary to demonstrate satisfactory mastery of course content. Students must be enrolled at the institution from which they are requesting non-traditional credit, and may only request credit for courses that are offered by the home institution.

A student's transcript shall clearly indicate that credit was granted through non-traditional means, and shall specify the method by which the credit was granted (i.e. examination, portfolio, military, etc.).

Derrick Manns, PhD
Vice President for Academics
Louisiana Community and Technical College System
265 S. Foster Dr.
Baton Rouge, LA 7080
Phone: 225-308-4422
Cell: 225-241-9536

APPENDIX B

MISSISSIPPI WORKFORCE ADVANTAGE

ALL TRAINING COUNTS



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INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Workforce Education (WE) is to prepare present and future workers for high-wage, high-skill, and high-demand occupations in current or emerging professions. Additionally, CTE and WE programs aim to offer Mississippians opportunities that correspond to labor-market demands with multiple entrance and exit requirements that result in portable and stackable credentials for industry, certification-based training and coursework. A **stackable credential** is a career or college certificate program that builds, or “stacks,” with other certificate programs with the purpose of reengaging adults in school in order to prepare them for college and “next step”-level employment.

Through this collaborative initiative, CTE and WE curricula are developed in credit-bearing course hours and in WE modules to provide statewide standards for awarding college credit for technical, industry-recognized certificates. The designated WE curriculum module’s content articulates a specific number of college credits and aligns to all credit-bearing course competencies.

A secondary goal of MS Workforce Advantage is to increase student and participant enrollment, participation, and completion of credit-bearing programs. Strategies to promote transition to and success within the credit-bearing program are essential to the goal of helping students earn credentials, certificates, and degrees. Ongoing professional development for all stakeholders will be offered to ensure success.

DEFINITION OF CREDIT BY EXAMINATION

Credit by Examination (CBE) incorporates multiple national certification exams and state-level exams. CBE is designed to help students demonstrate competence attained through workforce training and/or on the job experience. MS Community College students may attempt to earn CTE credit-by-examination in certain courses. A student may complete a nationally recognized industry certification or a state-level CBE exam as a substitute for completing the usual requirements of a course.

CBE programs provide multiple entrance and exit points for WE participants. CBE programs provide participants with a nonduplicative sequence of technical-skill-proficiency training opportunities that are aligned to a nationally recognized, credit-bearing credential. CBE programs also provide participants a career path into a credit-bearing, postsecondary CTE program and an industry-recognized credential, certificate, diploma, or degree.

CBE supports CTE and WE collaboration by including the following:

- Competency-based, nationally portable and customized education and training for
- Mississippi’s workforce
- Technology-infused, more industry-recognized education
- Increased access to postsecondary certificates, diplomas, and degrees, and industry-recognized credentials
- Clear career pathways aligned to competency-based education and certification programs

In a statewide-approved CBE program, faculty members from CTE and WE programs must develop integrated program outcomes, jointly plan the curricula, and agree on the national certification that will assess student learning and skill development. Additionally, the CBE program must be supported by industry demand in the local area.

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY-RECOGNIZED CERTIFICATIONS

A skilled, educated workforce is perceived as the single most critical element of success and the hardest to acquire. The difficulty of finding high-quality talent is a major barrier due to the lack of skilled workers at both the professional and basic skill levels. Business and industry-recognized certifications:

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- Are portable credentials that benchmark multiple skill levels for specific industries through standardized assessments of critical workplace traits and occupational skills needed to operate in a workforce driven by productivity and flexibility
- Assess knowledge and skill level using traditional and performance-based assessment methodologies
- Are meaningful to all sectors of Mississippi's business and industry and usually correlate to increased employee wages.

Some national assessments may require a fee for the exam. Managing the cost of the assessment will be a local-college decision.

STATE LEVEL CBE ASSESSMENTS

To meet the need for business and industry-recognized, stackable, portable credentials, the Mississippi Community College Board (MCCB) and local colleges will use current resources to implement state-level CBE assessments. These state-level CBE assessments will:

- Provide local control of on-demand assessments using the Mississippi Virtual Community College (MSVCC) Blackboard and/or Desire2Learn Course Management System
- Allow for grant transferability of CBE credit with all 15 community and junior colleges throughout the state
- Increase the acquisition of recognized credentials

GUIDELINES FOR CREDIT BY EXAMINATION CREDIT

MISSISSIPPI WORKFORCE ADVANTAGE: ALL TRAINING COUNTS CORE VALUES

1. Jump-starting the skilled workforce pipeline

MS Workforce Advantage will produce faster results for employees because participants will have the opportunity to complete flexible WE training.

2. Collaborative effort among employers and community colleges

The MS Workforce Advantage curricula will be developed and delivered by CTE and WE departments and between community college districts to address specific skilled- workforce needs identified by local industry professionals.

3. All training counts

MS Workforce Advantage provides the opportunity to earn college credit for CTE coursework delivered across all institutions and systems. A series of technical certificates will "stack" on top of one another, building to a 2-year degree.

4. Build career pathways

MS Workforce Advantage will provide adults with an education road map to higher paid and higher skilled occupations.

5. Contextualized, integrated academics

MS Workforce Advantage will integrate basic academic-skills instruction into the curricula to academically prepare adults to succeed in higher education while learning workplace skills.

6. Competency-based education

MS Workforce Advantage will require a mastery of technical competencies, and clock-hour requirements will be eliminated upon the completion of CBE-approved industry certifications.

7. Industry recognized

MS Workforce Advantage provides opportunities for adults to obtain core competencies needed by employers for in-demand, skilled jobs by aligning curricula to portable, national credentials.

TARGET AUDIENCE

- Participants who have attended the noncredit training and want to matriculate into a credit-bearing program without being required to repeat training
- Participants who have gained valuable work experience and want to obtain college credit for the skills they have mastered
- Participants who are underemployed and desire complete modules to gain college credit for a pay increase
- Participants who currently have a national certification and want to gain credit for mastering technical skills in credit-bearing programs
- Participants who are current CTE students

CURRICULUM

Postsecondary CTE and WE development guidelines were approved by the Chief Career– Technical Officers and Deans Association (CCTODA). All CTE courses aligned to industry certification standards will be developed in modules and be aligned to national certification. Local colleges are encouraged to articulate up to 15 scheduled semester hours; however, this is a local-college decision.

PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY

In order for CBE participants to gain college credit, they must meet college-admission standards for the career or technical program in which they are entering.

PROCEDURES FOR GAINING CBE CREDIT

Participants who complete the national credential must:

1. Provide documented proof that they possess the valid and current aligned national certification or credential
2. Meet all of the college and program entrance requirements
3. Enroll in the articulated program at the college and request the articulated credit

Participants who complete the MS CBE must:

1. Complete the related MS CBE Workforce Education module and CBE exam or complete the CBE exam. Participants will be able to take the exam without completing the module only one time. If unsuccessful, they will have to complete the module and then retake the CBE exam. Participants must demonstrate at least 80% competency to pass each module.
2. Upon the successful completion of the articulated course's related modules, participants may receive CBE credit upon enrolling in a college and meeting all of the college and program entrance requirements.

TRANSCRIPTING CBE CREDIT

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Each participant will enroll in the modules using the designated online-event-management system provided by the MCCB. CBE credit will be transcribed immediately to the online event-management system upon the successful completion of all modules aligned to course requirements.

The participant will present the online-event-management-system transcript to the college so that the credit can be transcribed when he or she enrolls in the college-credit program.

Each student is responsible for presenting his or her verification of national certification or licensure or the MS CBE assessment.

TIME LIMIT FOR CBE CREDIT

If a student is articulating credit by examination via the national certification or license, the student must possess a current, valid national license at the point of articulation.

If a student chooses to articulate credit via the MS CBE assessment, the student's scores will be accepted to demonstrate competencies for up to **18 months** on the statewide CBE assessment.

COST

- Amount of credit awarded is a local college decision based upon program requirements.
- If any fees related to CBE incur, the cost of college credit is a **local-college decision**.
- Participants who choose to complete the industry certification will incur the cost of the certification. Participants who choose to complete the state-level CBE exam will not incur cost for the exam.

IMPACT ON LOCAL CBE AGREEMENTS

Statewide CBE credits are supplemental to any local CBE agreements established between a college's CTE and WE entities. Statewide CBE agreements provide additional avenues for students to obtain articulated credit. Existing local CBE agreements may be utilized in lieu of any state CBE agreement.

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SAMPLE STATEWIDE CBE ARTICULATION TABLE

CBE agreements are subject to change as postsecondary curricula revisions occur. All articulations listed in this document are effective as of October 1, 2011, unless otherwise noted.

Program Name:	Welding		
Program CIP Code:	12.123456		
Industry Partner(s):	NCCER Web Site:		
	AWS Web Site:		
CTE Course	NCCER Standards	American Welding Society Standards	MS CBE
WLV 1116	Module 1: name	AWS Module 1: name	CBE Module 1: name
(This is just an example, the actual cost of certifications depends upon the module)	(\$20.00)	(\$20.00)	
	Module 2: name	AWS Module 2: name	CBE Module 2: name
	(\$20.00)	(\$20.00)	
	Module 3: name		CBE Module 3: name
	(\$20.00)		

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ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Mike Blankenship
Director of Workforce Development
Holmes Community College

Matthew Calhoun
Registrar
Southwest MS Community College

Denise Gillespie
Workforce Director
Itawamba Community College

Dexter Holloway
Director of Workforce Education
Mississippi Community College Board

Julie Jordan
Director
Research and Curriculum Unit

LaNell Kellum
Director of Career and Technical
Education
Mississippi Community College Board

Wayne Kuntz
Director of Workforce Development
MS Gulf Coast Community College

Shawn Mackey
Associate Executive Director for
Workforce, Career and Technical
Education
Mississippi Community College Board

Sean Owen
Assessment Manager
Research and Curriculum Unit

Robin Parker
Curriculum and Assessment Manager
Research and Curriculum Unit

Betsey Smith
Curriculum Manager
Research and Curriculum Unit

Tony Tice
Dean, Career and Technical Education
Itawamba Community College

Candace Weaver
Dean, Career and Technical Education
Jones County Junior College

Roger Whitlock
Dean of Workforce Education and
Development
East Central Community College

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Why Use Credit-By-Examination Programs?

There are a number of reasons why people take exams for credit, but the three major reasons are as follows:

- **Time.** Most adult students have job and family responsibilities that preclude taking more than one or two courses per term. Trying to get any college degree at that rate seems like it would take forever! Using exams to gain as many as 15 -credits towards a degree would considerably shorten the time required to finish a degree program.
- **Money.** Credit-by-examination programs are very economical. The cost of the national certification and the college Transcribing fee is still lower than most community colleges tuition fees.
- **Confidence.** Many adults who think about returning to school may lack the confidence in their ability to do college-level work. Taking examinations for credit can help students determine whether or not they are ready to start a degree program.

2. How will programs with training that is not online-friendly and that may be performed strictly in person, such as in welding, have their participants enrolled in the Blackboard or Desire2Learn (D2L) system?

All participants will be enrolled in the correct online course-management system (Blackboard or D2L) when the participants sign up for training using the online event-management system (GoSignMeUp).

3. If instructors need to enter that data into the Blackboard system, how will schools that use other online systems, such as D2L, input their trainees into the system?

The online event-management system (GoSignMeUp) will automatically enroll trainees into the Blackboard and D2L systems.

4. Will everyone need to be enrolled via GoSignMeUp?

Yes, this is the database that is capturing the data for this initiative and is the method of documentation for the registrars. This could be a better system for nSPARC to use for data collection and could make reporting workforce participation easier on local colleges.

5. Who will be responsible for keeping up with modules that students complete if the course is strictly in person?

All participants will be enrolled using the GoSignMeUp system; therefore, the online database will track this information for students. The students will be responsible for showing the transcript during the enrollment process to gain credit by examination.

Local colleges will decide how the successful completion of national certifications or MS CBE will be processed in GoSignMeUp.

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6. How will CBE affect my full-time equivalent data?

The system is developed so that the college will not lose any FTE numbers, but they will gain FTEs because CBE students will be credit bearing once they enroll in CTE programs. Ultimately, this will increase FTE numbers. Additionally, this system maintains the integrity of MS's Community College funding system because it will not allow "double dipping."

7. Who will give the assessment and how will he or she be paid?

It is a local college decision as to who will assess participants.

8. What if the colleges do not want to use Blackboard or D2L as an assessment?

They can use the national certification and input the participant completion information into GoSignMeUp in order for the student to gain CBE.

9. Does the MCCB recommend only awarding national certifications instead of state certifications?

Ultimately, the MCCB is moving toward national certifications in the curriculum-development process. At this point, however, no funding source is available; therefore, state assessments are a valid alternative.

APPENDIX C
SAMPLE STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT

CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING - STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (home): _____

(work): _____

Cell phone: _____

College of Enrollment:

Degree / Certification Program: _____

List courses for which you are requesting prior learning credit:

	Title	Prefix	Credits	Number
1.	_____			
2.	_____			
3.	_____			
4.	_____			
5.	_____			
6.	_____			

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES

(This section should be as detailed as possible. Feel free to attached additional sheets to this form.)

TRAINING: May include correspondence, seminars, conferences, workshops, continuing education, formal military training, clinics, television/radio courses, etc.

1. _____

2. _____
3. _____

JOB/WORK EXPERIENCE: Include position or title, length of time in position, acquired skills.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE: Church, Community, Politics, and Schools, include length of time and duties/skills acquired.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

INDEPENDENT LEARNING: Independent research, projects (e.g. self-taught computer skills, extensive reading, public writing and/or speaking, foreign languages, business owner/operator) include length of time and skills acquired.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES: (e.g. acting, theater production, music performance, travel/tours including acquired knowledge.)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

RELATED LICENSES OR CERTIFICATES:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

MEMBERSHIP IN RELATED ORGANIZATIONS:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

NOTE: Adopted from the Missouri Credit for Prior Learning State Proposal

APPENDIX D

Summary of PLA Policies and Practices in the Gulf Coast Consortium

Bossier Parish Community College

Credit Policies	Ways PLA Credit is Assessed	Transcripting Credits	Accept Non-Traditional Credits for Transfer?	Military Credit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twenty-five percent (25%) of the associate degree must be earned at BPCC. • Credits through challenge examination are limited to twenty-one (21) semester hours on a student's degree or certificate plan. • Assessment fee is \$30/credit hour for portfolio. • Challenge Exam is \$24 flat fee. • Prior Learning Assessment Matrix – LINK. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge Exams, College Level Examination Program (CLEP), and DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST) • Challenge Examinations are administered in some subject areas by the appropriate academic department • Tech Prep students may register for challenge examinations in any approved course. • Students have the option of completing a portfolio to be evaluated for credit for specific courses. • Student is required to take a non-credited portfolio class to be eligible to complete a portfolio. • Faculty is compensated with a flat fee to evaluate portfolio. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After earning 12 hours of BPCC resident credit, credit for coursework awarded through portfolio assessment will be placed on the transcript under Prior Learning Experience category with "S" grade. • Course number and then "S" and "Challenge Exam". • No quality points awarded. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (See military credit) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit for military educational experiences is given to honorably discharged veterans. • BPCC may allow credit for courses based on documented military experiences. Fee is \$50 plus a portfolio showing body of work. • BPCC does not give credit for First Aid (HLPE 221) based on military service. • A copy of the veteran's DD214 and other military records should be taken to the Office of the Registrar for evaluation to determine the credit allowed. • The maximum number of credit hours that may be granted from the military as college equivalent course work is 21. • Students must be pursuing a BPCC associate degree or academic certificate. The student receives a grade of "S," which goes towards earned hours on the official BPCC transcript.

Copiah-Lincoln Community College (Co-Lin)

APPENDIX D

Summary of PLA Policies and Practices in the Gulf Coast Consortium

Credit Policies	Ways PLA Credit is Assessed	Transcripting Credits	Accept Non-Traditional Credits for Transfer?	Military Credit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must complete at least 25% (16 hrs.) of semester hour's credit and the last regular semester at Co-Lin in order to graduate. • A student can count only four (4) hours of HPR activity courses (varsity sports/general activities) toward graduation. • The total credit that may be earned by Challenge Examinations for any individual program of study may not exceed 15 semester credit hours. • A student may only challenge a given course one time. • A standard fee of \$50 (plus materials for skills component, if needed) per course assessed. If student receives prior learning credit, no additional fee (i.e. charge per credit) is charged to him/her, no matter the number of credits awarded. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge examinations are based on the student learning outcomes established for the course. • If the course being challenges has a laboratory or skill component, the challenge exam must have a performance component. • Faculty are compensated for the assessment as part of their current workload. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcripted with a letter grade "P" (pass-fail basis only). • Minimum passing score is 75%. 	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veterans are admitted on the same basis as other students. Published calendars, policies and regulations apply to those students enrolled in non-accredited clock-hour courses in receipt of educational assistance from the Veterans Administration and to those students enrolled in academic programs unless otherwise specified. • The school maintains a record of the previous education and training of veterans or eligible persons and clearly indicates that appropriate credit has been given with the training period shortened proportionally, when applicable, and the veteran or eligible person and the VA are also notified.

Delgado Community College

Credit Policies	Ways PLA Credit is Assessed	Transcripting Credits	Accept Non-Traditional Credits for Transfer?	Military Credit

APPENDIX D

Summary of PLA Policies and Practices in the Gulf Coast Consortium

Credit Policies	Ways PLA Credit is Assessed	Transcribing Credits	Accept Non-Traditional Credits for Transfer?	Military Credit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twelve (12) of the final fifteen (15) hours of required coursework must be earned in courses taken at Delgado. • A maximum of 24 semester credit hours may be awarded from non-traditional sources. • A student may apply for credit by examination only twice in the same course. • Evaluation fee is \$20 per credit hour for LEAP. • Credit Examination fee is \$10 per credit hour. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For Credit Examinations - Administration of Credit Examinations must be completed by midterm. • For LEAP - For each applicant a review committee is established to verify that the student can demonstrate knowledge and skills in the requested area comparable to the knowledge and skills of a college-trained student in the same area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit is transcribed with a “P” grade. • Minimum passing score is 75% or “C”. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delgado Community College accepts non-traditional credits that have been awarded by other regionally accredited institutions. • CLEP crosswalk is available (link). • These credits have the same limitations in their use in meeting graduation requirements as do non-traditional credit earned at Delgado Community College and will be used in computing the total hours of non-traditional credit for which a student is eligible. 	<p>Students who have earned credit through courses taken while in the Armed Services may apply for acceptance of these credits in the Admissions or Registrar’s Office. Details.</p>

APPENDIX D

Summary of PLA Policies and Practices in the Gulf Coast Consortium

Credit Policies	Ways PLA Credit is Assessed	Transcripting Credits	Accept Non-Traditional Credits for Transfer?	Military Credit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum of 25% of the total hours can be earned through non-traditional credit to apply to a degree program. • Application of credit to meet degree program requirements will be determined by the Department Chair, Program Coordinator, and Dean of Instruction. • Students must be enrolled at Delta in order to have non-traditional credits posted to their academic record. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College Level Examination Program (CLEP), Credit Based on ACT/SAT Scores, Advanced Placement Exam Credit. • A challenge examination is given to students who wish to seek credit for a course through a procedure other than normal class instruction or transfer of credit from another post-secondary institution. • Challenge examinations will be given only in exceptional situations when a student meets eligibility requirements. • Not all courses are eligible for challenge exam. Students are encouraged to consider CLEP subject exams. 	<p>Credits will be posted to the student's academic record with the grade "P" indicating that the credit has been earned, but does not impact semester or cumulative GPA.</p>	<p>Military credit, correspondence courses, professional certificates, departmental challenge exams, and advanced placement credit awarded through the Advanced Placement Test, ACT, SAT, and CLEP scores.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student must provide a Form 295 Application for the Evaluation of Learning Experiences during Military Services, or ARRTS Transcript. • The Dean of Enrollment Services may not actually complete the evaluation, but may submit the student's request to the appropriate agency for evaluation. • Upon receipt of the official evaluation reports from the appropriate agencies, the Dean of Enrollment Services will post the American Council on Education credit recommendations to the student's transcript. • Such credits are not counted as hours attempted; they only count as hours earned. • The student should meet with the academic advisor to discuss the applicability of military credit to fulfill degree requirements.

APPENDIX D

Summary of PLA Policies and Practices in the Gulf Coast Consortium

Mississippi Delta Community College

Credit Policies	Ways PLA Credit is Assessed	Transcripting Credits	Accept Non-Traditional Credits for Transfer?	Military Credit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minimum of sixty of the required sixty-two hours must be academic credit hours. • Credit awarded for CLEP or Advanced Placement does not count toward meeting residency requirements. 	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Meridian Community College (MCC)

Credit Policies	Ways PLA Credit is Assessed	Transcripting Credits	Accept Non-Traditional Credits for Transfer?	Military Credit

APPENDIX D

Summary of PLA Policies and Practices in the Gulf Coast Consortium

Credit Policies	Ways PLA Credit is Assessed	Transcripting Credits	Accept Non-Traditional Credits for Transfer?	Military Credit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A student may apply for forty-six (46) transfer credits toward the completion of an MCC Associate degree program provided the credits correspond to those of the MCC curriculum. • Transfer students seeking a degree from MCC must complete a minimum of 16 semester hours (25% of a degree) in residency at MCC and must be enrolled during the academic year in which the degree will be awarded. • To earn credit through the Advanced Standing (Challenge) Examination, the student must be admitted to MCC in good standing. • A standard challenge exam fee of \$75 per course assessed. If student receives prior learning credit, no additional fee (i.e. charge per credit) is charged to him/her, no matter the number of credits awarded. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally, the assessments are aligned with the course learning outcomes. • Faculty is compensated for the assessment as part of their current workload. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcripted with a letter grade. • Passing grade is "C". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students must supply an official copy of CLEP or AP test scores to MCC. • The transferring institution's score requirements should be equivalent to MCC's. • Students may be granted a maximum of 18 semester hours of AP credit toward an MCC degree or certificate. Only eight semester hours (two courses) may be granted in a single subject area. The granted credit will appear as "P" on the transcript. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For four months of active duty, students receive two credit hours in physical education. • For six months of active duty, students receive four credit hours in physical education. • For a year or longer of active duty, students receive four semester hours of physical education and three semester hours for Personal and Community Hygiene (HPR 1213) for a maximum of seven semester hours. • For military service schools, students may earn credit as recommended in the American Council on Education (ACE) Guide. • Credit is awarded based on the relevancy of the military training to the degree that is being pursued.

Northeast Mississippi Community College

APPENDIX D

Summary of PLA Policies and Practices in the Gulf Coast Consortium

Credit Policies	Ways PLA Credit is Assessed	Transcripting Credits	Accept Non-Traditional Credits for Transfer?	Military Credit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit earned by CLEP subject examination is limited to 18 hours. • The student will be required to earn 12 semester hours of credit in a regular fall or spring semester at Northeast before CLEP credit earned at Northeast will be recorded or transfer CLEP credit recognized and recorded on the student's transcript. • Fee is \$117 per credit hour if assessment is passed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 challenge exams. • Student must pass written challenge exam before attempting skillset challenge. • Currently developing 9 hybrid courses starting next semester. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Z” credit on transcript indicating passed course but does not have letter grade. It is shown as “attained credit”. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northeast Mississippi Community will award credit on the CLEP subject area examinations only to matriculated Northeast students. • It is the responsibility of the student to determine transferability of CLEP credit to the senior college of his/her choice. • NEMCC does not certify the applicability of CLEP credit to other post-secondary institutions. • All courses excluding English 1113 and 1123, listed in the Northeast Catalog are eligible for credit if CLEP has an examination in that subject. • No credit is given for CLEP general examinations. • Credit on the CLEP subject examinations will be awarded to students who received a scaled score of 50 or more. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When a student requests that military credits be evaluated for transfer credit, the student will provide the original Army/American Council on Education Registry Transcript System (AARTS) form to the college. • This form/transcript lists the military education and experiences with the course descriptions along with recommendation for college course credit. • Upon review of the AARTS by the registrar, Northeast credit may or may not be awarded. • The AARTS will be placed in the student's file and remain part of their permanent record.

Pearl River Community College

Credit Policies	Ways PLA Credit is Assessed	Transcripting Credits	Accept Non-Traditional Credits for Transfer?	Military Credit

APPENDIX D

Summary of PLA Policies and Practices in the Gulf Coast Consortium

Credit Policies	Ways PLA Credit is Assessed	Transcripting Credits	Accept Non-Traditional Credits for Transfer?	Military Credit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are restricted to a maximum of thirty (30) semester hours with not more than six (6) hours of two (2) courses in one subject area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A student who has not earned college-level credit in the subject area may take a CLEP subject-area examination. • A student may receive credit for a college course upon passing a comprehensive final examination in the subject. • The process is initiated with a student making a written request with the Vice President for Instruction. The Vice President may consult with an instructor in the subject area to arrange for a meeting with the student to discuss the level of knowledge and the administration of an examination. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “P” or “F” grade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit may be awarded for successful completion of College Level Examination Program (CLEP) examinations and of challenge examinations administered by College faculty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For four months of active duty, a veteran is exempted from the physical education requirement for graduation and is awarded two hours of credit for HPR 1111 and HPR 1121. • For six months of active duty, a veteran is exempted from the physical education requirement for graduation and is awarded five hours of credit for HPR 1111, HPR 1121, and HPR 1213. • For a year or more of active duty, a veteran is exempted from the physical education requirement for graduation and is awarded seven hours of credit for HPR 1111, HPR 1121, HPR 1551, HPR 1561, and HPR 1213.

South Louisiana Community College

Credit Policies	Ways PLA Credit is Assessed	Transcripting Credits	Accept Non-Traditional Credits for Transfer?	Military Credit

APPENDIX D

Summary of PLA Policies and Practices in the Gulf Coast Consortium

Credit Policies	Ways PLA Credit is Assessed	Transcripting Credits	Accept Non-Traditional Credits for Transfer?	Military Credit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A maximum of 25% of a program's credit hours may be awarded, unless required by a specific program of study. • Students may earn no more than 33% of the credits required for the major courses, unless required by a specific program of study. 	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accepts non-traditional credits that have been awarded by other regionally accredited institutions. • These credits have the same limitations in their use in meeting graduation requirements as do non-traditional credit earned at SLCC and will be used in computing the total hours of non-traditional credit for which a student is eligible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who have taken courses as part of armed services training or police academies may apply at the Registrar's office for acceptance of these courses. • The credit recommendations from the American Council on Education are used to help determine equivalent credit awards. • The academic dean will determine which credits earned through military or police academy training are applicable towards graduation and forward to the Registrar. • These hours count as part of the hours of non-traditional credit applicable toward a degree or certificate.