

**Western Michigan University
Faculty Senate
Memorandum of Action**

MOA – 26/01

**Revise Faculty-Driven Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Opportunities for
Undergraduate Programs
(Supersedes MOA-20/02)**

RECOMMENDATION

The Undergraduate Studies Council recommends revisions to the existing catalog language to include an undeniable definition of Prior Learning Assessment, what can and cannot be included in a PLA plan for credit, and clarify responsible parties for each part of the PLA process.

RATIONALE/PURPOSE

In 2020, MOA-20/02: *Revision to Create Faculty-driven Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Opportunities for Undergraduate Programs* laid out the process whereas undergraduate students could be awarded credit for prior learning activities. MOA-20/01 states *“PLA is a process for evaluating prior learning, as acquired through previous work experience, training, course products, and/or other learning experiences.”* However, over the past five years, paperwork submitted by undergraduate students for consideration as PLA credit has included prior coursework completed either at WMU and/or other institution, as well as department chair/director signatures on PLA forms as both an evaluator and the approving department chair/director. Because PLA is becoming increasingly popular at WMU, the USC determined it was in the best interest of the University to revise this policy.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICE(S) AND ENFORCEMENT OFFICIAL(S):

Office of the Registrar

STAKEHOLDERS

WMU students, faculty and staff

HISTORY:

- a) Effective date of current version: April 2020
- b) Date first adopted: unknown
- c) Revision history: April 2020
- d) Proposed date of next review: fall 2029

CURRENT POLICY MODIFICATION

From within the Undergraduate Catalog; Academic Policies; Registration, Records and Academic Regulations: Credit by Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)

Each academic unit responsible for offering a undergraduate program may, with the approval of its dean, establish a procedure for granting credit via PLAs, including the use of examinations, for any undergraduate course. All credit by PLA is subject to the following regulations:

1. PLAs cannot include credit for coursework or other traditional classroom experiences. Current PLAs that include coursework will need to be modified to exclude coursework or other traditional classroom experiences. *Departments may request to have coursework included in PLA through the Faculty Senate Undergraduate Studies Council.*

2. The academic unit which offers a undergraduate program, major, minor or certificate program shall determine if a PLA process may be used to obtain credit for a particular undergraduate-level course required by a degree program, major or minor in that academic unit.

2-3. All PLA applications will be administered, graded and/or reviewed, by no fewer than two faculty members. **The academic unit chair/director may not serve as one of the two faculty evaluators.** If the unit offering a given course for which PLA credit is sought is different than the unit offering the undergraduate major, minor, core curriculum course or certificate program, then faculty from the unit teaching the course should conduct the review of the request for granting prior learning credit for the course. The review of requests for prior learning credit must be completed within one calendar year after the receipt of the request.

3 4. All PLAs shall be graded "Credit" or "No Credit". "Credit" will be posted on the transcript as "Credit earned by PLA" without letter grade or honor points. Such credits will be listed as completed credits for one or more courses within a given program, but not counted in the grade point average. Students who do not achieve a sufficient score to receive "Credit" will have no entry made on their transcripts.

4 5. All credit awarded via PLAs can be used to meet all other University graduation requirements.

5 6. Credit awarded via PLA will be placed on a student's transcripts only after the student is admitted to a specific undergraduate degree program, major, minor or certificate program, although PLA request assessments may occur prior to such admission.

6 7. PLA credit earned at another university, whether awarded by examination or some other form of PLA, may transfer to WMU in accordance with the current policies governing transfer of credit.

7 8. The maximum number of total credits allowed to be granted via all forms of PLA must be a reasonable proportion of the credits or courses required to complete a student's program. This amount may vary per program; however, the number of credits awarded via a WMU PLA assessment process may be no more than 45 undergraduate credits. For certificate programs, the maximum number of PLA credits awarded can be no more than one-half of the required credits (as rounded-up to include all credits for a given course).

8 9. The process to create a PLA opportunity, beyond that of solely examinations for a given undergraduate degree program, major, minor or certificate program must be initiated by faculty from that degree program, major, minor or certificate program. The written procedures for granting credit for prior learning must be approved by the chair, director and college dean of the department and college that offers the degree program, major, minor or certificate program for which prior learning credit is requested.

These written procedures must specify;

- a) the specific courses for which PLA credit can be granted for a given degree program, major, minor or certificate program;
- b) detailed learning outcomes for each of these courses;
- c) rubrics that show how prior learning, as evidenced by an applicant via a portfolio or other means of previous work experience, training, course products, and/or other learning experiences, will be evaluated against the learning outcomes for each specific course;
- d) the overall review process including the number of reviewers and timelines; and
- e) the detailed application processes
 1. including when a PLA application can be made (e.g., before or after admission to a given degree program, major, minor or certificate program or while already taking classes in a specific degree program, major, minor or certificate program);
 2. how such an application is to be submitted (e.g., portfolio, credentials,
 3. demonstrations.
- f) the maximum number of credits, and justification for such number, that an applicant could apply for PLA credit, not to exceed the university maximum amount for undergraduate PLA.

9-10. Each department with program faculty engaged in reviewing and approving credits via any type of PLA process, shall provide uniform data on such activities to the appropriate WMU entity for reporting and Higher Learning Commission (HLC) accreditation purposes. **PLA plans and data will be sent to the WMU HLC liaison to be kept in a repository.**

KEY DEFINITIONS/GLOSSARY

Prior learning assessment

Prior learning assessment is a process for evaluating prior learning, as acquired through previous work experience, training, and/or other learning experiences outside of traditional classroom experiences.

RELATED POLICIES

MOA 20/02: Revision to Create Faculty-driven Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Opportunities for Undergraduate Programs