

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

MOA – 26/03

**Revise Faculty-Driven Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Opportunities for Graduate Programs
(Supersedes MOA-20/01)**

RECOMMENDATION

The Graduate Studies Council recommends revisions to the existing catalog language to include an undeniable definition Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), 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-20/01: *Revision to Create Faculty-driven Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Opportunities for Graduate Programs* laid out the process whereas graduate 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 graduate students for consideration as PLA credit has included prior coursework completed either at WMU and/or other institution, as well as department chairs/directors signature on PLA forms as both an evaluator and the approving department chair/director. Because PLA is becoming increasingly popular at WMU, the GSC 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 Graduate Catalog: Academic Standards:

Graduate Credit by Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)

Each academic unit responsible for offering a graduate program may, with the approval of its dean, establish a procedure for granting credit via PLAs, including the use of examinations, for any graduate 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.

2. The academic unit which offers a graduate program shall determine if a PLA may be used to obtain credit for a particular graduate level course in that academic unit.

2-3. All PLAs will be administered and graded, and/or reviewed, by no fewer than two faculty members. If the unit offering a given course for which PLA credit is sought is different than the unit offering the overall program, then faculty from both units need to be engaged in the assessment of such courses. **The academic unit chair/director may not serve as one of the two faculty evaluators.**

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. 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, except the residency requirement.

5 6. Credit awarded via PLAs will be placed on a student's transcripts only after being admitted to a specific graduate degree or certificate program, although the assessments may occur prior to such admission. 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.

6 7. PLA credit as awarded by examination earned at another university may transfer in accordance with the current policies of the Graduate College governing the transfer of credit.

7 8. The maximum number of credits allowed to be granted via PLAs 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 may be no more than one-half of the total credits required to complete a student's program (as rounded-up to include all credits for a given course). For certificate programs that are less than 15 credits, this amount can be no more than one-third.

8 9. The process to create a PLA opportunity for a given graduate program must be initiated by faculty from that program, and the written procedures must be approved by their unit chair or director, and college dean. These written procedures for a PLA plan must detail at least the following framework items:

- a) the specific courses for which PLA credits can be earned within a given 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 process, including when a PLA application can be made (e.g., before or after admission to a given program, or while a student is currently enrolled in the program), how such an application is to be submitted (e.g., portfolio, credentials, 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.

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 20/01: Revision to Create Faculty-driven Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Opportunities for Graduate Programs.