

Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Guidelines

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References:	Montana Board of Regents of Higher Education Policy 301.19 Montana University System Prior Learning Assessment PLA MUS Prior Learning Assessment Expanded Policy Recommendations MUS Faculty & Staff Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Guide for Serving Student
Approved by:	ASCRC, Faculty Senate

Intent of Document

This document applies Montana University System (MUS) Board of Regents (BOR) Policy 301.19 to the University of Montana (UM; including Missoula College) to assess and award PLA credits, as equivalent to credits earned at the institution, for academic programs. PLA shall be offered in the UM course catalog and conducted in a timely, clear and concise manner according to UM policies and BOR 301.19. Detailed PLA information, potential opportunities for PLA credit (e.g. military service, apprenticeships, IB or AP exams, portfolio assessments, etc.), policies and procedures should be conspicuously posted, including applicable PLA fees and financial aid policies that are set by the administration.

Definition of PLA

PLA represents validated methods for students to demonstrate knowledge, competencies and skills acquired outside of the traditional college setting to be evaluated as college-level learning that could earn college credit. PLA credits may be earned by either learning in a classroom that is not within an accredited two- or four-year institution or experiential “learning-based” PLA that occurred outside of a traditional classroom setting.

Guidelines for Implementation of BOR 301.19 at UM

The Provost is the chief administrative officer responsible for PLA at UM. PLA academic governance shall be consistent with CBA 7.100 as shared governance using procedures, practices and precedents for UM Faculty Senate. Through this venue, UM shall ensure provision of sufficient resources, policies and information (including personnel training) to assure a high quality, transparent, and consistent process for evaluating and awarding PLA credit.

1. ASCRC should periodically review, through a subcommittee, PLA policy, standards and learning outcomes to ensure academic rigor and student success; including but not limited to: International Baccalaureate (IB), Advanced Placement (AP), College Level Examination Program (CLEP), Dual enrollment, etc.
2. Students shall be informed of PLA opportunities at orientation and through advising. PLA is developed and applied by the department/unit administering and awarding the terminal degree for the academic program where the PLA credits are applied toward the degree. The policy must ensure that the student

successfully pass an appropriate assessment. The assessors shall be UM faculty with subject matter expertise in the content area or discipline where the PLA is being conducted and the policies applied.

3. PLA credits do not count toward the minimum number of credits that must be completed at UM to earn a degree from UM and UM PLA must comply with Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) and UM policies directing the quantitative limits for application of experiential and instructional PLA credits required for a degree or certificate.
4. Students must be admitted and enrolled at UM to receive PLA credit at UM. All transfer credits and transcripts must be official, evaluated and current. The student must be in good academic standing, not on academic probation. No PLA credits shall be awarded for a course when the student is currently enrolled in, or has previously audited or completed, the course.
5. PLA testing and grading policies must comply with existing UM policies (in the applicable UM catalog) and be consistent with the applicable academic program requirements, the UM catalog course description and the current syllabus where the PLA credit application is pending and being assessed. A student application may request a specific type of grade (CR/NCR or letter grade) and specific application of the PLA credits toward the degree requirements.
6. Transcription of PLA credits
 - a. PLA credits shall be identifiable on the student's transcript using MUS/UM codes. They are fully transferable and are not calculated into the student's grade point average (GPA).
 - b. If PLA credit is denied, the attempted PLA credit is not recorded on the transcript.
 - c. PLA credits earned shall be entered into the "Transfer Credit" portion of the transcript and do not count toward the credit load for the current semester. However, the codes used to record the PLA credit shall reflect the course rubric and the semester and year in which the credit was awarded.
 - d. Credits earned via portfolio assessment for prior learning shall count toward the calculation of a student's Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP). However, if a student attempts to earn PLA credits, but credit is not awarded, these credits are not counted as "credits attempted" for that semester.
7. Should a student be denied PLA credit after assessment, the student shall have the right to appeal the decision consistent with policies and procedures regularly available to a student: a. to contest a grade, or b. to appeal credits/courses counted toward a degree or graduation.