

Title: Prior Learning Credit

Category: Academic Affairs

Responsible Cabinet Member: Provost

Purpose: To affirm the University's commitment to recognizing college-level learning achieved outside traditional academic coursework while maintaining the highest standards of academic integrity, rigor and alignment with institutional and accreditation requirements. Credits for prior learning will only be awarded for documented and demonstrated college-level learning equivalents.

This policy applies to undergraduate, graduate and professional programs and governs the evaluation and awarding of credit for prior or external learning, including, but not limited to, learning demonstrated through:

- Advanced Placement (AP) examinations
- International Baccalaureate (IB)
- Advance (AS and A) Levels
- College-Level Examination Program (CLEP)
- Military
- Credit-by-examinations
- Portfolio review or other documented experiential learning

Definitions:

- Credits for Prior Learning (CPL): College-level credit awarded for learning acquired outside of the standard coursework at the institution (e.g., AP, CLEP, credit-by-examination, portfolio assessment)
- Credit-by-Examination/Challenge Exam: An institution-approved exam that allows a student to demonstrate mastery of a course's learning outcomes in lieu of enrolling in that course.
- Portfolio Assessment: A systematic process in which a student documents prior learning (through work, training, military service, certification) and that documentation is evaluated by academically qualified faculty to determine equivalence to specific course learning outcomes. In disciplines where knowledge evolves rapidly, additional evidence of currency may be required.
- Equivalency: The determination that the student's prior learning is substantially equivalent in content, rigor, scope and credit hours to a course offered at UK.
- Residency Requirement: UK's policy requiring a portion of credit hours for a program to be earned at UK.

Policy: This policy is guided by several principles designed to ensure that credits awarded for learning that originated from work outside of the institution are compliant with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Principles of Accreditation and maintain the academic quality of degrees and credentials awarded by the institution. Students' requests for CPL must be submitted in accordance with published institutional procedures and within established timelines.

- **Transparency and Access:** The University publishes its CPL policy, including permissible credit, maximum allowable credits, associated fees and how CPL count toward a University credential. Credit is awarded only once for equivalent learning; duplicate credit will not be granted for overlapping coursework, AP, IB or other examination-based credit.
- **Academic Integrity and Rigor:** CPL shall be granted only when the student demonstrates achievement of learning outcomes equivalent to those of the UK course. The review shall be conducted by academically qualified faculty or designated committees. This aligns with SACSCOC Standard 10.8: "The Institution publishes policies for evaluating, awarding, and accepting credit not originating from the institution. The institution ensures (a) the academic quality of any credit or coursework recorded on its transcript...(b) an approval process with oversight by persons academically qualified...and (c) the credit awarded is comparable to a designated credit experience and is consistent with the institution's mission." Credit for prior learning awarded by another institution will be evaluated in accordance with institutional transfer credit policies. Acceptance of such credit is not automatic and is subject to review equivalency, currency, and alignment with program requirements.
- **Equitable Application and Articulation:** All students are eligible to pursue CPL if they meet the stated threshold and conditions. CPL decisions are made consistently and equitably across students and departments.
- **Residency Requirements:** CPL are considered credits that are awarded for work accomplished outside of the institution and therefore do not count toward residency requirements. All residency requirements must be reviewed and upheld for all credentials awarded by the institution.
- **Transfer Policy:** This policy applies directly to CPL and should be implemented in alignment with all existing University transfer policies. For undergraduate students, CPL do not count toward the 24 credit hours required for transfer of admission.
- **Faculty Oversight and Review:** Departments and colleges retain responsibility for approving CPL for courses within their discipline and shall periodically review CPL methods, equivalencies and outcomes to ensure continuing currency or learning outcomes and institutional quality assurance.
- **Documentation and Transcript Notation:** Credit awarded via CPL shall be clearly documented on the academic transcript, identifying the method (e.g., "Credits by Exam", "Portfolio Review") and the credit hours assigned to this work according to University practice. The transcript shall include sufficient information for another institution or employer to interpret the student's accomplishment.
- **Alignment with Accreditation and Credit Hour Policies:** The use of CPL aligns with UK's credit hour definition, program length and other regulatory obligations.

Limitations on CPL: CPL may not be applied toward a degree or credential in the following circumstances:

- **Accreditation or Licensure Restrictions:** Where specialized accreditation, state regulation or licensure requirements mandate that coursework be completed through direct instruction at the University through supervised clinical, laboratory or practicum experiences.
- **Residency and Upper-Division Requirements:** CPL may not be used to reduce required residency hours or minimum upper-division credit requirements established by the University or the

academic program. CPL may make up no more than 25% of the required credit hours for an undergraduate program and no more than one-third of the required credit hours for a graduate program.

- Capstone or Culminating Experiences: CPL shall not replace capstone courses, culminating experiences, theses, dissertations or required integrative learning experiences unless explicitly approved through established curricular review processes.

Types of Prior Learning Credit

Advanced Placement (AP): The University recognizes examinations of the College Board Advanced Placement Program.

- Students should have AP results sent to the Office of Undergraduate Admission (Code: 1837).
- In line with KRS 164.098, course credit (general, elective or program) is awarded for scores of 3 or higher, based on review by the academic department.
- Credits may be applied the same as credit earned through coursework.
- UK does not award duplicate credit for repeated exams or equivalent coursework.
- The Office of the Registrar will maintain the credit hour chart, which will be in effect during the student's year of admission and governs eligibility.

International Baccalaureate (IB): The University awards credit for IB exam scores of 5,6 or 7 on either Standard Level or Higher Level exams.

- Credit applies toward degree requirements as CR (Credit) and does not affect GPA.
- Some departments may require additional curriculum information before awarding credit.

Advanced Level (AS and A-Level) Examinations: The University recognizes select international AS and A-Level examinations as forms of prior learning credit.

- Credit may be awarded for completed AS and A-Level examinations, based on subject, grade earned and alignment with University of Kentucky course learning outcomes.
- Credit determinations are made using faculty-approved equivalency standards and maintained.
- Students must pass the exam for the award of credit; higher grade thresholds may be required by specific academic departments or programs.
- Official examination results must be submitted to the University for evaluation.

College Level Examination Program (CLEP)

- Credit is awarded based on published minimum scores determined by UK faculty.
- The Office of the Registrar posts official CLEP credit to student records.
- For exam details, visit www.collegeboard.com/clep.
- UK's CLEP policies ensure that each exam corresponds to a specific UK course with faculty-approved equivalency standards.

Military Credits: The University follows the American Council on Education (ACE) guidelines regarding military credit when possible.

- Students must request their Joint Service Transcripts (JST).
- All military work supported by ACE is equated and added to the student's academic record.
- Credits from the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) are processed as traditional coursework from a regionally accredited institution.

Credits-by-Examination/Challenge Exam: Undergraduate students may request a special departmental examination by applying in writing to the department chair, and graduate students to the Director of Graduate Studies.

- Examinations are equivalent to a final course exam and prepared by UK faculty.
- Students must be enrolled in good standing.
- No charge is assessed for these exams.
- All course offerings, except certain elementary/intermediate language courses, are eligible.
- The results are posted as CR (credit) on transcript if passed.

Portfolio-Based Learning Assessment

Students may earn academic credit for prior college-level learning through a portfolio assessment process. Portfolio assessment may be used to evaluate learning acquired through professional experience, military service, industry training, community engagement or other experiential learning. Portfolio credit may be awarded for undergraduate- or graduate-level coursework, as appropriate.

- Students must be admitted to the University, enrolled in a degree or certificate program and in good academic standing at the time of the portfolio review.
- Portfolios should normally be submitted prior to, or during, the student's first year of enrollment at the University. Academic units may establish earlier deadlines when necessary to support timely degree planning.
- Portfolios must document achievement of the learning outcomes for specific University of Kentucky courses through verifiable evidence (e.g., work products, professional certifications, licensure, military training, publications or reflective analyses demonstrating learning).
- Academic credit is awarded only for documented, demonstrated, college-level learning that is equivalent to the learning outcomes of the course being assessed. Credit shall not be awarded solely for experience, length of employment, job title or participation in activities.
- Academic units may require students to complete a Portfolio Development Workshop or similar preparatory experience. When required, the portfolio should normally be completed within two (2) semesters of enrollment in the workshop unless an extension is approved by the academic unit.
- A reasonable assessment fee may be charged for evaluation of a portfolio; however, students shall not be charged tuition or fees for academic credit awarded through successful portfolio assessment. All assessment fees must be published.
- Portfolio assessments shall be conducted by qualified faculty within the discipline using published evaluation criteria and standardized rubrics designed to ensure consistency,

academic rigor and alignment with approved course learning outcomes. Rubrics shall be reviewed periodically through the college's curriculum governance process.

- Any proposal to establish, substantially revise, or discontinue portfolio-based assessment for academic credit shall follow the University's established curriculum approval processes and receive final approval by the Office of the Provost, when required by University policy.
- Credit awarded through portfolio assessment shall not exceed 25% of the credit hours required for an undergraduate degree or one-third of the credit hours required for a graduate degree, unless otherwise authorized by University policy or required for accreditation. Individual programs may establish more restrictive limits with approval of the dean.
- Final portfolio credit recommendations shall be made by qualified faculty in the discipline and approved in accordance with the academic unit's established governance procedures.

Portfolio evidence must demonstrate learning that remains current and appropriate to the learning outcomes being assessed. Academic units may require students to update portfolio materials or provide additional evidence when prior learning no longer reflects current disciplinary knowledge, professional practice or program expectations.

Graduate-level portfolio assessments must demonstrate learning equivalent to graduate-level expectations, including advanced analysis, synthesis, application or scholarly inquiry appropriate to the discipline.

Non-credit to Credit Articulation

The University may award CPL through pre-approved academic agreements that formally articulate non-collegiate learning to specific University courses. These agreements establish equivalencies between external learning experiences (e.g., industry certifications, licensure, employer-based training or other structured professional learning) and University course learning outcomes.

In accordance with institutional policy, faculty subject matter experts evaluate non-collegiate learning to determine whether the knowledge and skills demonstrated are equivalent in content, rigor and scope to a specific course. When equivalency is established, academic agreement is developed and approved through appropriate departmental and college-level processes.

Academic agreements must:

- Clearly document the alignment between the external credential or learning experience and the corresponding course learning outcomes.
- Specify the course equivalency, credit hour awarded and any applicable limitations (e.g., recency, minimum performance thresholds or program applicability).
- Identify required student documentation needed to verify completion of the credential or learning experience.
- Once an academic agreement is approved, eligible students may be awarded credit through a streamlined process without the need for additional individualized faculty evaluation (e.g., portfolio review), provided that all agreement criteria are met and documentation is verified.

All CPL awarded through academic agreements must:

- Be reviewed and verified by appropriate academic units, including disciplinary faculty and relevant college leadership.
- Be recorded by the Registrar in accordance with institutional transcript notation policies.
- Adhere to all institutional limitations, including residency requirements, maximum CPL limits and program-specific restrictions.

The applicability of credit awarded through academic agreements is program-specific and contingent upon alignment with the requirements of the student's declared program of study.

Appeal Process

The University shall maintain a written record of all CPL decisions, including the rationale and evidence used in awarding or denying credit. This applies to all forms of assessment, including portfolio evaluation, non-credit to credit articulation and credit-by-examination.

Students may appeal CPL decisions through a formal, published appeals process. The appeal must be submitted in writing and will be reviewed by a designated academic authority or committee not involved in the original decision. Final determinations will be documented and communicated to the student.

If a student's request for CPL is denied, the student may appeal the decision by submitting a written appeal to the college or program contact for CPL review. CPL decisions may only be appealed based on missing, incomplete or new information provided with the appeal.

Monitoring and Review

The University will work with the departments/colleges to record the credits awarded through CPL, the type of evaluation and to periodically review the success of students who use CPL, including subsequent course performance, retention and graduation rates.

References and Related Information:

- University of Kentucky Substantive Change Policy
- SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy
- KRS164.098
- <https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/SubstantiveChange.pdf>
<https://sacscoc.org/accrediting-standards/substantive-changes/>
- American Council on Education (ACE)- Credits for Prior Learning Policy Guide
- Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) - Ten Quality Standards for Assessing Prior Learning