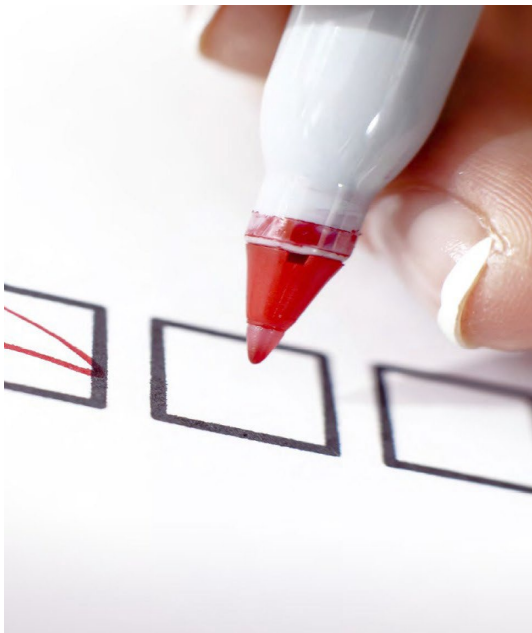


Bunker Hill Community College

PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT INFORMATION PACKET



Introduction to the Prior Learning Assessment Program

Since learning occurs in many places, much of your learning has been and continues to be acquired outside of a traditional college classroom. BHCC believes in awarding credits for appropriate prior learning. Therefore, we would like to assist you in examining your outside learning experiences to identify the experiences that might be considered for college credits.

For this purpose, the Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) program provides assistance to learners of all ages especially the working adult. The program helps learners further their education by granting BHCC credits for college-level knowledge and skills and by condensing the students' time of study. Common sources for this kind of learning are jobs, volunteer work, skills training, workshops or study groups, and community involvement. In some instances, it may be relatively easy to translate your prior learning into BHCC credits; in others, we may have to evaluate your competencies, skills or talents more carefully.

Options to receive college credit for assessing learning are:

1. Portfolio Evaluation
2. College-level Examination Program (CLEP)
3. Departmental Examinations
4. Credential Evaluation
5. Military Training Evaluation
6. Advanced Placement Program (AP)

There is a \$15.00 non-refundable application fee plus \$15.00 per assessed credit for Portfolio Evaluation, Credential Evaluation, and Departmental Examinations.

This packet will provide you with the information and forms needed for each one of these options. We hope you use this program not only for your education, but also as a learning process.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES FOR PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT

- Bunker Hill Community College adheres to the Council for Adult Experiential Learning (CAEL) National Standards for Prior Learning Assessment (For additional information please see page 13)
- Up to 45 credits may be awarded and applied to the student's degree program through the PLA process.
- The subject matter must be equivalent to the course work described in the BHCC Catalogue.
- PLA credits listed on the students' transcript are equivalent to credits earned for completing similar courses at BHCC. When new course numbers or titles are assigned, the process will be consistent with regard to academic policy, procedures and discipline.
- Credits earned through PLA are not approved for Financial Aid.
- Because not all colleges recognize PLA credits, it is the student's responsibility to determine the transferability of PLA credits.
- PLA credits cannot duplicate previously completed courses(ie. Previously failed courses)
- A grade of "P" (pass) will appear on the student's transcript for successfully completed PLA credits.
- PLA credits can be applied toward core or elective courses.
- Students who are interested in receiving credits for their portfolio must be matriculated into a degree program.
- All incoming students must contact the PLA Office to receive a general description of the PLA program.
- All PLA requests must be submitted before week 12 of the semester in order to be evaluated for the current semester.
- For portfolio evaluation, subject-matter specialists are chosen primarily from the faculty and staff of Bunker Hill Community College. The coordinator/advisor has the option of consulting more than one specialist in the same subject-matter for evaluation or clarification.
- In the event that credit is not approved, the student may contact the appropriate chairperson for further explanation regarding credit denial. All appeals must be requested within 30 days of award/denied notification.

Portfolio Evaluation

The process of examining prior learning and its relevance to a particular program or goal can be a learning experience in itself. We hope that you will use the opportunity to learn from this process. It does require hard work, patience and skill. The PLA Coordinator will work with you during the entire process. Your portfolio, the finished product of this process, should provide the basis for assessing and awarding college credits for appropriate learning experience. You will be able to integrate these earned credits into your program of study at BHCC. Students who wish to participate in the portfolio evaluation must fill out and return an application form along with a \$15 non-refundable application fee. Students meet with the coordinator, as needed, to complete a portfolio.

IDENTIFYING YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

It is very important that you begin to list what you know and do. If you have already prepared a resume that will be helpful, but a resume does not always tell the whole story. Be sure to look at all of your learning experiences. Keep in mind that these experiences take place in a variety of different settings, sometimes overlap, and very often enhance one another.

You have probably learned a great deal from a variety of prior work experiences. It is possible you have learned things simply out of necessity or as a result of responsibilities you have been given or assumed. At the same time, you undoubtedly have had a variety of learning experiences unrelated to your work. Perhaps you have hobbies that require expert skills.

How do you begin to identify learning experiences that satisfy college-level criteria? You may find one or more of the following activities helpful:

- Develop a chronological list of jobs you have held, including part time and volunteer work.
- Conduct a "remember when" session with a family member, friend, or others who have known you over a significant length of time.
- List key events, markers or milestones in your life.
- Develop a list of courses and programs you have participated in.
you may wish to begin with a specific set of questions for yourself.


WHAT IS MY JOB?

What do I have to know to do my job?

What have I learned that makes me unique at my job?

What would I have to do to teach someone else my job?

What training programs have I attended/authored?

WHAT SPECIAL SKILLS DO I HAVE?

Have I given public presentations?

Am I certified or licensed in a specific field?

Do I consider myself an expert in something?

Do I have special knowledge in technical areas?

A completed portfolio consists of:

- A detailed narrative of learning acquired and /or applied;
- An application;
- An assessment request form;
- Resume;
- Job description;
- Statement from supervisor testifying to the student's competencies. Please see page 7 for instructions;
- College transcript (if applicable);
- Certificates, Diploma, Military records, etc.

Please note that any documents submitted to the PLA office will be part of the PLA's permanent record.

1. The coordinator receives the portfolio when completed and reviews it in order to:
 - Ascertain that the competencies described and documented, agree with the title and credits requested.
 - Determine if the information in the portfolio suggest additional competencies that the student may have.
 - Ensure the validity of all documentation described and submitted by the student.
 - Evaluate whether the request is reasonable in terms of the student's academic goals at BHCC and long-term goal.
2. When the portfolio is judged to be in order, the coordinator consults a subject-matter specialist for evaluation. The subject-matter specialists provide a written evaluation regarding criteria on which credit award is based.
3. The coordinator has the option of consulting more than one specialist in the same subject-matter for evaluation or clarification.
4. If additional documentation is required, the student will be instructed and assisted by the coordinator/ advisor or subject-matter specialist in obtaining or providing additional information.
5. **In the event that credit is not approved, the student may contact the appropriate chairperson for further explanation regarding credit denial. All appeals must be requested within 30 days of award/denied notification.**

For additional information, contact the PLA Office at (617) 228-2350, or by email at pla@bhcc.edu, or stop by in room D-2211.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR DOCUMENTATION OF COMPETENCIES

BHCC students who request PLA credits are often requested to submit statements from qualified people testifying to the students' competencies. These statements usually are written by supervisors or other qualified people who have had a chance to observe the students' performance over a period of time. The kind of information that should be included in such a statement is very much the same regardless of whether the activity is paid employment, volunteer work, or recreational.

A letter of recommendation is inappropriate for this purpose.

The person providing the information will find it useful to know that their statement should indicate the breadth and depth of the competencies you have. This is for the purpose of helping us to evaluate the students' prior learning. We will do the actual evaluation, but in order to assess students' competencies and accomplishments, we need:

- A detailed explanation of work, duties, and responsibilities (If there is an official job description, it is useful to include it).
- An indication of the length of time involved.
- A brief statement about the quality of the work-how it is was performed.
- A description of any changes in the person's activities: different type of work, over time, promotions, etc.
- A brief statement about the person's relevant activities.

Students preparing a PLA request should show these instructions to the person who will write the statement.

COLLEGE LEVEL EXAMINATION PROGRAM **CLEP TESTS**

The College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) is a standardized nation-wide examination program that offers examinations in English, foreign languages, social science, history, business, mathematics, and science. CLEP exams cover the equivalent of the first year of a college's liberal arts program. Students can select one or more examinations from the series. In addition to general area examinations, there are also over 30 specific subject examinations. Please check the following page for the Bunker Hill Community College's CLEP required scores and granted credit hours. You must already be a student at BHCC to process CLEP Exams credits.

CLEP ACADEMIC GUIDELINES

PLEASE NOTE THAT CLEP POLICIES FOR CREDIT AWARD/TRANSFER ARE UNIQUE TO EACH COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY.

- CLEP credit policies are subject to change upon reevaluation of CLEP examinations as determined by the academic departments of Bunker Hill Community College.
- The award of CLEP credits is also subject to the academic policies in effect at the college.
- CLEP credits may be used to satisfy general education requirements as well as degree or certificate requirements. A maximum of 45 credits can be used towards a degree.
- An official CLEP transcript must be sent to BHCC, CLEP CODE #**3123**, in order to process the credits.

For additional information, contact the PLA Office at (617) 228-2350, or by email at pla@bhcc.edu, or stop by in room D-221I.

DEPARTMENTAL EXAMINATIONS

In addition to the College-Level Examinations Program (CLEP), the Prior Learning Assessment program offers credit by Departmental Examinations. This gives students an opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in selected courses listed in the Bunker Hill Community College catalogue. For each examination passed, the student is granted credits. Departmental Examinations are graded on a pass/fail basis. Currently, the following departments offer examinations: Business Administration, Medical Information Management, Computer Information Technology and Computer Science. All examinations offered are subject to change. **THE EXAM MUST BE COMPLETED IN ONE SITTING OR AS SPECIFIED BY THE FACULTY.** Subject-matter specialists are chosen primarily from the faculty. For additional information, contact the PLA office at (617) 228-2350, or by email at pla@bhcc.edu, or stop by in room D-221I.

DEPARTMENTAL EXAMINATIONS PROCESS

- Meet with the PLA coordinator to discuss your skills and experience.
- Complete the application form for Departmental Examination with PLA Coordinator.
- Schedule an appointment for testing.
- Pay the non-refundable \$15.00 application fee.
- Complete the examination.
- The student will be notified of the result of the exam.
- A credit award letter will be sent to the student after the approval by the appropriate department.

CREDENTIAL EVALUATION

Do you possess a certificate or diploma through a training program, non-accredited institution, or an educational program? Bunker Hill Community College recognizes some of the specific profession credentials and licenses. Many of these credentials and licenses are based upon a combination of work experience and examinations. These certificate and licenses must present what is regarded as college-level material. All the submitted certificates or licenses will be evaluated by a subject-matter specialist. Student should contact the PLA coordinator to discuss the license or certificate. The coordinator is also available to help students with their educational plan. After careful evaluation of the credentials, the student will receive a letter regarding the awarded credits.

PROCESS FOR EVALUATION

Students should submit the following along with the PLA application:

- Original copy of the certificate or license to be examined.
- A copy of their certificate or license.
- A detailed program description.
- A detailed course outline/course description.

For additional information, contact the PLA office at (617) 228-2350, or by email at pla@bhcc.edu, or stop by in room D-221I.

MILITARY EVALUATION PROCESS

Bunker Hill Community College acknowledges service members' unique learning experiences acquired during military service. In congruence with the BHCC mission, our college recognizes the Valor Academic Credit Evaluation Policy for service members and student veterans that qualify them to receive academic credit for their military educational experiences and courses. The Prior Learning Assessment Program will provide service members with information to assist them to obtain credit for their military training and experience and to achieve their educational goals. As a member of SOC (Service Members Opportunity Colleges), Bunker Hill Community college utilizes ACE (American Council on Education) guidelines, CLEP, DANTES, and/or thorough use of portfolio evaluation to assess aforementioned training and experience. Military course work, training, and experience shall be evaluated and awarded credit on a course-by-course basis.

STEPS IN EVALUATING MILITARY EXPERIENCE:

- Students will meet with PLA coordinator to obtain information regarding the PLA Program.

Students may submit:

- Official JST (Joint Services Transcript) which is an academically accepted document approved by the American Council on Education (ACE) to validate a service member's military occupational experience and training along with the corresponding ACE college credit recommendations.
- The transcript will be evaluated by utilizing the American Council on Education Guidelines, and if required faculty approval. Please be advised that many of the courses offered by the military service can't be translated into college credits.
- Students will be notified of the credits awarded.
- Credits will be posted to students' transcripts.
- No fee is required for military experience evaluation.

For additional information, contact the PLA Office at (617) 228-2350, or by email at pla@bhcc.edu, or stop by in room D-221I.



ADVANCED PLACEMENT EXAMINATIONS

The Advanced Placement program offers college-level courses and examinations in different academic areas. AP courses are offered in high schools nation-wide, and are recognized by the majority of U.S. colleges and universities. The score report is sent to the colleges and university of the student's choice. Students may receive college credits based on the result of these examinations. Bunker Hill Community College has policies in place for several examinations, and grants credits based on the policy set by the appropriate departments.

PROCESS

Students must submit an official copy of their score report prior to their enrollment in the classes. After receiving the report, if the policy is in place for the subject, the granted credits will be processed and posted to the student's transcript.

For additional information, contact the PLA Office at (617) 228-2350, or by email at pla@bhcc.edu, or stop by in room D-221I.

Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) Standards

1. Credit or its equivalent should be awarded only for learning, and not for experience.
2. Assessment should be based on standards and criteria for the level of acceptable learning that are both agreed upon and made public.
3. Assessment should be treated as an integral part of learning, not separate from it, and should be based on an understanding of learning processes.
4. The determination of credit awards and competence levels must be made by appropriate subject matter and academic or credentialing experts.
5. Credit or other credentialing should be appropriate to the context in which it is awarded and accepted.
6. If awards are for credit, transcript entries should clearly describe what learning is being recognized and should be monitored to avoid giving credit twice for the same learning.
7. Policies, procedures, and criteria applied to assessment, including provision for appeal, should be fully disclosed and prominently available to all parties involved in the assessment process.
8. Fees charged for assessment should be based on the services performed in the process and not determined by the amount of credit awarded.
9. All personnel involved in the assessment of learning should pursue and receive adequate training and continuing professional development for the functions they perform.
10. Assessment programs should be regularly monitored, reviewed, evaluated, and revised as needed to reflect changes in the needs being served, the purposes being met, and the state of the assessment arts.

Taken from *Assessing Learning: Standards, Principles, and Procedures (Second Edition)*
By Morry Fiddler, Catherine Marienau, and Urban Whitaker, 2006. Chicago, Kendall Hunt Publishing Company. - See more at: <http://www.cael.org/pla#sthash.s6z7qT32.dpuf>