

PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT

Many students entering the College of Western Idaho (CWI) bring a depth of knowledge in specific subjects that has been gained through life experiences or a variety of instructional means. Students who have been accepted and are currently enrolled as CWI students in credit-bearing courses may convert this learning into alternative credit through Prior Learning Assessment (PLA). PLA credit is only awarded when the credit(s) advance a student toward completion of the intended degree or certificate.

Visit the [Prior Learning Assessment](#) webpage for more information about opportunities, cost, eligibility, limitations, and procedures. Students seeking PLA opportunities must meet with their advisor.

Credit for Prior Experiential Learning (CPEL)

CWI realizes that learning is not limited to a classroom environment. Students who believe they have mastered the student learning outcomes for a course through life experience may challenge that course through any of the methods identified below. *PLA that is awarded for experiential learning is limited to 25% (15 credits of a 60-credit degree) of the credits required for a degree in the student's declared major.*

Credit for Instructional-based Learning (IL)

CWI realizes that learning is sometimes gained through a non-credit-bearing instructional environment. Students who believe they have mastered the student learning outcomes for a course through instructional experience may challenge that course through any of the methods identified below. Students earning PLA credit for instructional-based learning must still meet the [residency requirement for graduation](#).

Standardized Exams (SE)

CWI recognizes several standardized exams as options for demonstrating learning through PLA for admitted and enrolled CWI students who have achieved the required scores. When PLA credit is accepted for standardized exams, the credit appears on the student transcript. For information on required scores and alignment of tests with courses, an equivalency table is included in the PLA Student Handbook available on the [Prior Learning Assessment](#) webpage.

Methods of SE include:

Advanced Placement (AP)

Advanced Placement exams are used by high school students who are advanced enough in a specific subject area to place them in more-advanced study in that subject matter. Certain AP score-level benchmarks allow students to gain PLA credit.

Please visit the [College Board AP Students website](#) to learn more about Advanced Placement options.

College-Level Examination Program (CLEP)

CWI accepts Subject Matter CLEP scores for equivalent courses.

Please visit the [College Board CLEP website](#) to learn about applicable testing fees and how to register for CLEP testing.

DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST)

CWI accepts DSST scores for equivalent courses.

Please visit the [DSST website](#) to learn about applicable testing fees and how to register for DSST testing.

General Education Development (GED)

CWI accepts GED College Ready + scores for equivalent courses.

Please visit the [GED website](#) to learn about applicable testing fees and how to register for GED testing.

International Baccalaureate (IB)

CWI accepts IB scores for equivalent courses.

Please visit the [International Baccalaureate website](#) to learn about the IB program.

Credit Recommenders

American Council on Education (ACE)

American Council on Education guides are evaluations of instruction performed in the private sector or the military. A table of commonly accepted military experiences is included in the PLA Student Handbook available on the [Prior Learning Assessment](#) webpage. Certain ACE score-level benchmarks allow students to gain PLA credits.

Please visit the [ACE College Credit Recommendation Service website](#) to learn about ACE credit recommendations.

Challenge Exams and Portfolios (CEP)

A student may challenge a course with the permission of their advisor and the content area instructor or department chair by passing a comprehensive assessment for that course with a minimum grade of "C." The assessment might consist of an exam, a written paper, a skills demonstration, the development of a portfolio, or various combinations of these. Not all courses have challenge options, and many assessments have limited dates of availability. Please consult with the advisor for more information on challenge options and visit the [Prior Learning Assessment](#) webpage.

Vertical Credit (VC)

Sequential courses within the same discipline may offer an additional means of PLA. Students who gain permission to enter a higher-level starting point in sequential courses (as identified by prerequisites and noted on the [Prior Learning Assessment](#) webpage) and successfully pass the enrolled course with a "C" or better may apply for vertical credit for the prerequisite course(s). In some cases, substituting the higher-level course is a better option for degree completion. Please consult with the advisor for more information on vertical credit options.