



Prior Learning Assessment Kansas Survey Results

Goals for the Kansas Prior Learning Assessment Project supported by Jobs for the Future include:

- Increase use of Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) as a proven tool to increase numbers of degrees and credentials earned by Kansans (Board of Regents Foresight 2020 goal)
- Encourage appropriate PLA use to award credit for college-level learning with supportive standards, principles and procedures
- Improve access to PLA and transparency of information for students and families
- Promote consistent use of PLA among institutions

To obtain basic information about current use of PLA, the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR) staff adapted a survey from the *College Productivity Resource Guide* and information provided by Jobs for the Future. In August, 2013 all public universities, community and technical colleges were invited to participate in the survey, with 21 surveys completed. The questions and a summary of the responses are presented below. Copies of the complete comments are available from KBOR staff. Details from a similar survey conducted by KBOR Academic Affairs in February 2013 are also incorporated here.

Note: These survey responses provide a snap shot picture of current practices of PLA use in public institutions as reported by those responding to the survey. To develop a more complete understanding of current use, further clarification and follow-up is indicated.

Q1 Are Prior Learning Assessments (PLA) utilized by your institution?

Yes	90%	19 responses
No	10%	2

One college uses the term “Credit for Work Experience” rather than the comprehensive PLA term.

Q2 What PLA methods does your institution use to evaluate prior learning and award credit?

Individualized student portfolios or portfolio assessments	38%	8 responses
Evaluation of corporate and military training	90%	19
Program evaluations	19%	4
Challenge exams (course final exams or department level tests)	48%	10
Standardized exams (e.g., AP, CLEP, DANTES, DSST exams)	76%	16
We don't offer prior learning	10%	2

Colleges highlighted the use of American Council on Education (ACE) recommendations for military credit, Advanced Placement (AP), College Level Exam Placement (CLEP), International

Baccalaureate (IB), and credit for technical training/competencies. One college reported that AP and CLEP exams for lab science courses must be accompanied by the student enrolling in the lab portion to get full credit.

Q3 What are the costs for PLA at your institution? (Costs may include fees for the assessment itself, evaluation of prior learning skills, transcription or posting fees, and other administrative costs.) Please describe:

Fees assessed range from no fees charged to evaluate PLA credits to the full cost of tuition for the course, plus evaluation fees. Some colleges charge only for the exam, e.g., \$25, some do not charge to evaluate a military transcript or corporate training, some charge fees only after the evaluated portfolio is approved and then a fee per credit hour is charged. Tuition charged for transcribing PLA coursework ranges from no charge to full tuition. Others report a tuition charge of one half the course cost or a \$25 fee for transcribing. One college reported charging 50% of tuition at PLA application and 50% due to transcript the course. Fees to evaluate a Prior Learning Portfolio range from \$0 to \$75 for the portfolio to \$50 per credit hour. Survey results are summarized in the chart below but caution should be exercised in drawing conclusions on the small sample.

Type of fees	Number of institutions reporting use of this fee	Examples of fee
No fee	10 institutions	
Exam fee only	4 institutions	\$25 for challenge exams
Portfolio evaluation fees	4 institutions	½ of course cost, \$75 for review, \$50 per credit hour
Full or partial tuition	5 institutions	Partial fees, full fees
Transcribing fee	1 institution	\$25 fee
Administration fees	1 institution	\$15 plus standardized exam fee

Q4 How are credits earned through PLA reflected on the student transcript? Is the PLA data stored electronically? Please describe:

Most colleges report PLA credit on the transcript similar to a transfer credit and indicate a P, CR, or similar notation for credit; a few colleges offer grades for sufficient scores on standardized exams (AP or CLEP). Tests such as AP or CLEP may be noted and military training may be credited to the branch of service. Some PLA department challenge exams are recorded by department and not on the transcript. Several colleges reported using a PLA or Advanced Standing Credit denotation on the transcript. Most institutions record PLA data electronically or are in transition to an electronic system.

Q5 How does your institution apply your PLA policies and practices...

across all divisions and departments	76%	16 responses
policies vary among departments at your institution	19%	4
N/A	10%	2

Most colleges report they have consistency in policies but variation by department due to subject exams, evaluations, CTE accreditations, etc. Some colleges report varying practices across the institution because of “dynamics and differences of each venue.” Others report that standardized exam results (e.g., CLEP) must be reviewed by the academic department faculty and chairperson.

Q6 Do you have a Prior Learning Center or single point of contact for providing PLA services at your institution?

Yes	65%	13 responses
No	25%	5
NA	10%	1

Most institutions are providing PLA services with a single point of contact in the Registrar’s office while others direct students to various offices within Academic Affairs including the Office of Enrollment Management, Office of Testing, or Student Services/Advising center. Some reported there is no centralized contact and students’ access information through the program while one college is in the process of designating a single contact as they expand their PLA services. While the survey results are inconclusive, it appears that no institution has a PLA Center per se.

Q7 Is information for PLA posted on your website? If so, please provide URL.

Yes	65%	13 responses
No	25%	5
N/A	10%	2

Many colleges include PLA information on their website, usually in their college catalog or on the admissions page.

Q8 Do applicable PLA credits fulfill degree/major requirements? (PLA credits may not be applied because of institutional and system policies limiting their application to general education and elective requirements only.)

Yes	90%	19 responses
No	0%	0
NA	10%	2

Generally, colleges report that PLA credits apply to equivalent coursework with some limitations (reported in next question). Courses requiring a “C” or better must be evaluated by the department. One university awards advanced standing (37 credit hours) for nursing students who have passed the NCLEX-RN exam.

Q9 Does your institution cap the number of PLA credits that can be earned by the student?

Yes	70%	16 responses
No	14%	3
NA	10%	2

Colleges reported the following descriptions:

No cap on credits earned but do cap the number of credits applied toward degree;
Maximum PLA hours cap: 15 hrs, 24 hrs, 30 hrs of 125 total, 37 hrs maximum;
up to 50% of program of study requirement,

CLEP limit – 12 hrs, 16 hrs, 17 courses

AP limits – 12 hrs

Military credit – 10 hrs, 15 hrs maximum, 4 hrs of P.E., rest is elective

Degree limits – 6 CR hrs for Technical Certificate; 12 CR hrs for AAS

Q10 If your institution has residency requirements; do you allow PLA credits to fulfill these requirements? (Some colleges have a requirement that a student must take a certain number of credits at the degree granting institution.)

Yes	5%	1 response
No	62%	13
No residency requirements	24%	5
NA	10%	2

Residency requirements vary from none to “student must have earned credit and have a transcript at our institution” to “15 of the last 24 credit hours from our institution.”

Q11 Do you accept transfer PLA credits granted by other institutions? (Because of accreditation requirements and internal policies, institutions may have a cap on the number of PLA credits accepted for transfer from other institutions, or they may not accept any PLA credits in transfer.)

Yes	42%	8 responses
No	56%	11

While 42% of institutions reported accepting appropriate PLA credit from an accredited institution, many require evidence and original documentation be sent to the college for re-evaluation (official military transcripts or national examination documents). Institutions have differences on PLA policy limits (e.g., up to 17 courses for CLEP). Some may require an evaluation of the competency requirements at the institution.