

What is the Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) program?

Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is a process that enables learners to demonstrate what they have learned, usually through life and work experiences, and have that learning assessed for college credit. PLA is a program administered by the Distance Learning department of BBC&S.

What is the student's role in PLA?

It is the student's responsibility to identify/determine which learning experiences they wish to have evaluated for credit. The student must show how each experience meets the learning outcomes for a particular course or courses that are part of a program leading to the degree they are seeking.

Your first step should be to contact the Office of Distance Learning to make an appointment to speak to us, email us, or phone us to find out more information.

When can I begin the PLA process?

A student can begin the PLA process once they are accepted at BBC&S and have completed 6 credit hours at BBC&S. By completing these 6 credit hours, a student will demonstrate the creditability to finish the PLA process and to achieve their goal of obtaining a BBC&S degree.

What is BBC&S's role in PLA?

BBC&S's role is to review requests and determine if the learning outcomes are comparable to the course(s) in question, and that the necessary balance of theory and practice is present.

What kind of learning is appropriate?

Current knowledge which corresponds to courses taught at an approved school may be assessed for college credit. Your level of competence should be comparable to that of students in regular courses. This includes both theoretical and practical knowledge of the subject. It must be possible to evaluate what you know and can do.

Is currency of knowledge important?

Currency is important in most academic areas. The time frame of accepted experiences is dependent upon course(s) of study. Campus courses are updated on a regular basis, and prior learning must be reasonably comparable.

Can I use PLA for any BBC&S degree?

PLA credits can be used for any BBC&S degree except the doctoral degrees.

Is there a limit to the number of credit hours gained through a portfolio assessment that can be applied to my degree?

Yes. To ensure institutional integrity and quality control and a blend of traditional and experiential learning, Baptist Bible College & Seminary has determined that only a portion the required credits for a degree will be granted through transfer, portfolio, military, and testing. Undergraduate degrees require 30 semester hours be completed through Baptist Bible College & Seminary. Students interested in graduate degrees should contact the program director of the degree in which they are interested for specific requirements.

How do I demonstrate what I've learned?

Students demonstrate what they have learned by creating a portfolio. A prior learning portfolio is a document in which learning from various life experiences is organized into a manageable form for academic assessment. It is a way to express what is known by the student in a clear and concise manner and permits accurate and efficient faculty assessment. In the portfolio the following questions should be asked:

- What are the life experiences, and what is the learning?
- How is the learning equivalent to college-level learning?
- How can the college-level learning be documented?
- What documentation indicates college-level learning?

Do I submit all my learning experiences in a single portfolio?

No. Each course for which you are seeking credit must be submitted as a separate portfolio. Some sections of the portfolio, such as your autobiography, may be used in more than one portfolio.

Can I get credit for more than one class for the same learning experience?

Yes, if particular learning experiences meet the requirements for more than one course, you may request assessment for multiple courses and submit a portfolio for each. You may not, however, receive credit twice for the same course. For example: If you received test or transfer credit for General Psychology, you may not submit a portfolio requesting credit for General Psychology as a result of prior learning.

Is there help for students preparing a portfolio?

One text that is very helpful is Earn College Credit For What You Know by Janet Colvin (4th Edition, ISBN 0-7575-2750-7 available through Kendall Hunt Publishing). The Prior Learning Coordinator will provide guidance and bibliographic information on other texts about portfolio development and can provide critiques of the drafts of the various portfolio elements. The length of time will vary depending on workload of the coordinator. The Prior Learning Coordinator will not serve as the portfolio assessor.

How much time can be taken to prepare the portfolio?

Once students determine that they would like to have a Prior Learning Assessment, they will register for PA 800, a course which guides them through the process of preparing a portfolio. Their registration in this class will remain current for six months. The time frame for three credits for a portfolio is generally one-to-three months' preparation time.

If the student fails to submit the portfolio in that six-month period, the student will forfeit the fees and will be required to register for PA800 again, should credit still be sought.

What are the deadlines for portfolio submissions?

If you need portfolio credits to complete your degree, the following deadlines apply: For example, a **spring** commencement, we must receive your portfolio by the last business day of the first full week of **November**. Should you need portfolio credits for **fall** commencement, we must have your portfolio by the last business day in **May**.

Do I need to register for PA800 for each portfolio that I would like to submit?

No, you may submit as many portfolios as you desire within the six-month period that your PA800 registration is current.

Who will evaluate my portfolio?

A faculty member who has credentials (education and experience) in the discipline(s) of your portfolio submission will assess the suitability of your portfolio for college credit. If you submit portfolios from multiple disciplines, each one will be evaluated by a faculty member from that discipline.

How long does the portfolio assessment evaluation take?

The amount of time needed to complete the portfolio evaluation varies, but is usually completed within **six weeks** after the portfolio has been submitted to the faculty assessor. The length of time may increase if the portfolio is submitted just prior to scheduled campus vacation such as Christmas or Spring Break and will depend on the number of credits being submitted. Every effort will be made to complete the evaluation in a timely manner. The process may take longer if more information is needed from the applicant or if a faculty consultant is not available immediately for assessment.

What kind of life and work experiences would be worth college-level credit?

Many adults have had a variety of experiences from which they have acquired college-level knowledge and skills. For example:

- **Work Experiences** - Credit in this category refers to job-related experiences resulting in college-level learning. Credit is awarded for competencies demonstrated through good self-assessment and documentation of the learning described.
- **Training Experiences** - Credit in this category refers to credit for professional development experiences, such as workshops, a work-related apprenticeship program, or other corporate-sponsored training programs. Applicants who have taken courses or examinations that carry ACE (American Council on Education) credit recommendations can order transcripts from <http://www.acenet.edu/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Learners> to use as documentation of prior learning.
- **Life Experiences** - Credit in this category refers primarily to personal experiences resulting in college-level learning. Factors considered in evaluating life experiences include depth of participation, duration of involvement, and type of activity. Life experiences may include, but are not limited to, experiences in community service, volunteerism, extensive hobbies, in-depth home projects, and intensive life experiences.

How are grades posted on transcripts?

Portfolio credit is recorded on the official transcript with a grade of **P** (or "Pass").

Can credits earned for prior learning be transferred to other colleges or universities?

If a student wishes to use prior learning credit in degree programs outside BBC&S, there is no assurance or guarantee that these credits will be transferable. Students should ask this question of colleges or universities they plan to attend.

What if something is missing from the portfolio?

A faculty evaluator may request additional information from a student to complete the evaluation if it appears that the student is missing important learning concepts and outcomes to receive the petitioned credit.

What if the portfolio does not earn the credit that the student expected?

If the student is notified that the faculty evaluator has denied credit for their portfolio, they have the right to appeal this decision. The student will have 30 days from the date of denial to submit a **written** appeal to the director of Distance Learning. This appeal is reviewed by a committee which makes the final decision on disputes over the awarding of credit.

Is there help for someone with learning disabilities ?

Yes. Carol King is the coordinator for Learning Support Services. You may contact her at 570.585.9316 or cking@bbc.edu to discuss your concerns.

Why is an autobiography and personal educational goals statement necessary?

This essay allows you to communicate to the assessor who you are, what your learning experiences have been, your areas of personal and professional growth, competencies, your educational goals, and reasons for seeking prior learning assessment through portfolio development.

What will this cost?

- A. The PA800 course will cost a registration fee of \$200.00. This will enable the student to have access to all of the paperwork and resources for the portfolio course. (eLearn, PLA Procedure, PLA Policy, and etc.) The registration fee is non-refundable and is payable prior to receiving any documentation.
- B. Evaluation of Experiential Learning Credits
 - a. There is an additional fee of \$100 per credit hour petitioned for the evaluation process. The fee is used to cover the costs of the evaluation process only and does not in any way indicate that the experiential learning credits which are to be evaluated will be accepted by Baptist Bible College & Seminary. The evaluation fee is non-refundable and is payable prior to any documentation being evaluated.
- C. Granting of Experiential Learning Credits
 - a. At the completion of the evaluation process, the student will be assessed at a rate of an additional \$100 per credit hour for all prior learning credits granted. At this time the prior learning credits will become part of the student's permanent transcript. This fee is non-refundable and is payable prior to any credits being posted on the transcript.

3 credits would cost \$800.00
6 credits would cost \$1400.00
9 credits would cost \$2000.00