



**Credit for Prior Learning: CPL Student Manual
(Prior Learning Assessment)**
(Revised July 19, 2021)

Office of Academic Affairs
Dalton State College

Our Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) (also known as Prior Learning Assessment or PLA) program provides an opportunity to prove that you have already mastered certain skills or knowledge. If you are able to demonstrate competency in CPL areas, you could earn college credit. For example, have you been working in accounting for years? Perhaps you can demonstrate competency in accounting enough to meet the requirements of an accounting course. Dalton State College adheres to the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning's (CAEL) Ten Standards of Assessment for PLA. CAEL defines PLA as follows: "The recognition of learning gained from experiences that may be granted credit or otherwise certified. . . .The assessment of learning attained through experiences irrespective of the time and place in which they occurred" (*Assessing Learning*, 2nd edition, by Morry Fiddler, Catherine Marienau, and Urban Whitaker, p.12).

Dalton State College recognizes and respects the learning that can take place outside the formal classroom. We see the value in reflecting on experiences and thoughtful consideration of events that enhance our lives and our learning. To this end, DSC offers various means of earning course credit outside of the traditional classroom setting. Learning that comes through this reflection on experiences may be referred to as experiential learning. These experiences may either come through a more formalized program such as continuing education credits or employer-sponsored programs, or less formal means such as starting a business on your own or exploring the world of computing and web design on your own. If you can demonstrate college-level learning by meeting the published objectives and student learning outcomes for a course, then we can help you by giving you credit for that course. If you are interested in exploring CPL options, please contact the Office of Academic Affairs to find out what options might work best for you.

**Council for Adult and Experiential Learning's (CAEL) Ten Standards of Assessment for
Prior Learning Assessment**

Standard 1 Credit or competencies are awarded only for learning and not for experience or time spent.

Standard 2: Assessment is integral to learning because it leads to and enables future learning.

Standard 3: Assessment is based on criteria for outcomes that are clearly articulated and shared among constituencies.

Standard 4: The determination of credit awards and competence levels are made by appropriate subject matter and credentialing experts.

Standard 5: Assessment advances the broader purpose of equity and access for diverse individuals and groups.

Standard 6: Institutions proactively provide guidance and support for learners' full engagement in the assessment process.

Standard 7: Assessment policies and procedures are the result of inclusive deliberation and are shared with all constituencies.

Standard 8: Fees charged for assessment are based on the services performed in the process rather than the credit awarded.

Standard 9: All practitioners involved in the assessment process pursue and receive adequate training and continuing professional development for the functions they perform.

Standard 10: Assessment programs are regularly monitored, evaluated, and revised to respond to institutional and learner needs.

Benefits of Credit for Prior Learning

CPL can help you reduce your time to earning a degree, reduce the cost of your degree program, reduce repetitive learning, and keep you from taking courses in areas you may already be an expert in or have mastered.

We would like to work with you in order to help you receive college-level credits for things you have learned through your experiences and your reflections upon those experiences. We have a team of assessors who are experts in their disciplines who have been trained in helping students reflect upon their experiential learning and determine which learning would allow students to demonstrate that they meet the course objectives for specific DSC courses. Our trained assessors can help you with business, math, biology, education, computer science, criminal justice, communication, nursing, and electronics. We are also part of a larger consortium of USG schools that have assessors trained in other fields.

Ways to Earn Prior Learning Credit

There are several ways to gain credit for your prior learning. We recognize a number of nationally accepted standardized tests such as AP, CLEP, ACE, and DSST. We also have a number of departmental challenge exams. Your job training certifications may also reflect college-level learning. Another option is portfolio development. In this option you can create a portfolio that may show your mastery of a course's objectives and learning outcomes and receive course credit.

Once you are admitted as a Dalton State student, the Registrar's Office will evaluate any previous transcripts and award transfer credits where appropriate. Once you have this information, contact the Office of Academic Affairs for a referral to the CPL advisor in your discipline. Your CPL advisor will discuss the options available for you to receive course credit for prior learning. All CPL credit is tied to specific course objectives, and credit hours awarded will be identical to the credit hours

awarded in the traditional class. Students should also work with their academic advisor to determine any additional requirements they may need to consider. Individual departments with unique accreditation requirements may determine how many, if any, CPL credits may be awarded.

Please see the section on Fees for a listing of costs associated with prior learning assessment.

Nationally Accepted Standardized Tests

The majority of students taking standardized tests will take CLEP tests. These tests, offered through the College Entrance Examination Board, involve the completion of a standardized exam prepared by CLEP. Other exams include DANTES (Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support) exams. DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST) are college subject tests available to all learners as a means of potentially earning credit for knowledge acquired outside the classroom. The CLEP and DANTES/DSST exams are available through the college's Testing Center.

A total of 30 semester hours of upper-level coursework may be earned through any combination of credit by departmental examination, national standardized examinations, correspondence courses, extension work, advanced placement, and PLA by portfolio for bachelor's programs. Such credit is recorded on the student's record in the same manner as transfer credit with the symbol "K" assigned. A student may take a proficiency examination for a course only once. Credit will be given for courses for which a pre-requisite is a requirement only after such pre-requisite(s) have been satisfied. A listing of courses for which Dalton State currently awards CLEP credit can be found on the Testing Center's webpage at https://www.daltonstate.edu/campus_life/test-exams.cms.

Departmental Challenge Exams

Departmental Challenge Exams can be taken for some courses with the approval of the department chair and appropriate instructors. These exams allow you to demonstrate your mastery of the course objectives. If you meet the course objectives, you will be awarded course credit. Please talk to the department chair to discuss if a challenge exam is available for your course of interest. The departments responsible for grading particular departmental challenge examinations determine the grading timeline for the examinations. Click [Here](#) for a link to the dynamic Credit-by-Examination form.

Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST)

For the 120 hours required to obtain a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice, 39 identified hours from Georgia POST training are potentially eligible for CPL through Dalton State. The complete listing is available at the eMajor website: <https://emajor.usg.edu/current-students/credit-for-prior-learning.php#post>. However, a maximum of 30 upper-level credits may be earned through all forms of prior learning credits. For more information and to request a CPL evaluation for your POST training, contact Dr. James Wright at jwright11@daltonstate.edu. As per Dalton State's agreement with eMajor, the *first* assessment and alignment of POST certifications is free, no matter how many certifications are submitted. There is a fee for subsequent evaluations, so students with multiple certifications should submit their paperwork for all certifications at the initial assessment request.

Portfolios

If prospective students have other learning experiences that may fit courses not served by departmental examination or by national standardized examinations, they may be advised to consider prior learning assessment by portfolio. These experiences might include a variety of work, training, reading, and research; civil and military service; or life learning. Students use the portfolio development process to document how their prior experience has resulted in college-level learning.

As a part of this process, students meet with a trained advisor to identify areas of prior learning that apply to specific course objectives, document that learning, and then submit their materials for assessment by a trained assessor. Portfolios should demonstrate that the student has the specific skills, knowledge, values, attitudes, achievements, experiences, competencies, training, and certifications that align with specific course objectives. The portfolio should not only describe the relevant experience but should also identify how reflection upon these experiences resulted in significant learning.

Once students complete and submit the CPL portfolio, assessors evaluate it to determine if the portfolio provides evidence of achieving the course objectives for a specific course. Assessors at Dalton State are experts in their discipline who have undergone training to be effective assessors of prior learning. Dalton State faculty must successfully complete CAEL's workshops 1 and 2 through DePaul University or through CAEL and are expected to maintain scholarly activity in both their discipline and assessment of prior learning. Assessed portfolios must demonstrate learning that reflects mastery of the course objectives equivalent to someone receiving credit in the traditional class. If the portfolio does so, credit can be awarded when assessors determine that the prior learning is acceptable for credit.

Portfolio Preparation and Development

Students enrolled in our eMajor programs in Organizational Leadership and Criminal Justice will first be enrolled in eMajor's CPL Workshop to assist them in preparing their portfolios. To be eligible, students must be currently enrolled and in good standing at Dalton State and be a declared ORGL or CJ major. Students cannot attempt CPL if they have previously attempted the course, and students are allowed only one attempt for each CPL course. Please see eMajor's CPL policies at <https://emajor.usg.edu/current-students/credit-for-prior-learning.php>, and contact Dr. James Wright (jwright11@daltonstate.edu) for additional information about the eMajor in Criminal Justice.

Students in other degree programs interested in creating a portfolio should first review the college's portfolio-building guide and then work with their CPL advisor, a Dalton State faculty member who has completed prior learning assessment training who will help guide them through the process.

Students have one semester to complete CPL by portfolio for a particular course. Portfolios are due three weeks prior to the end of the semester for consideration of receipt of credit by CPL. Faculty assessors will assign portfolios grades of S or U by the final examination period. Along with the determination of credit, the assessor will also provide feedback regarding the portfolio, whether credit was awarded or not. The assessors may specifically outline areas for improvement and encourage students to resubmit their documentation one time during the next semester. Students may resubmit the portfolio for re-assessment, with a revision of the documentation set and

inclusion of any noted areas for improvement, in the semester immediately after the original assessment of that particular documentation set. Students may resubmit only one time for any given course.

Portfolio credit may be awarded after the first submission, in which case the student will be notified that credit has been granted. If the assessors deem a portfolio “satisfactory,” they will submit a [CPL Credit Approval Form](#). This form must be approved by the assessor and reviewed by the assessor’s department head and dean before being sent to the Registrar’s Office.

Courses Available for CPL Credit by Portfolio

While in theory, any course in the Dalton State curriculum could be eligible for CPL credit, students should be aware that some courses are more or less relevant to their learning experiences and to their degree program. Individual departments determine which courses, if any, are available for CPL credit by portfolio.

Courses NOT Available for CPL Credit by Portfolio

Due to the amount of work involved in portfolio development, the courses covered by CLEP, DANTES/DSST, departmental examination, and courses for which the student has already registered or has previously taken are not eligible.

Policies Specific to the PLA Program

- Students may not seek prior learning credit by departmental examination, standardized test, or portfolio for any courses for which they have previously or currently registered at Dalton State as a regular or audit student.
- A maximum of 30 semester hours of upper-level credit can be earned through any combination of CLEP, credit by departmental examination, ACE credits, advanced placement (AP), or CPL by portfolio credit. This limit is necessitated by the College’s bachelor’s-degree graduation requirement that at least “30 semester hours of upper-level course work must be completed at Dalton State College, excluding credit-by-examination.”
- Students are only allowed one attempt per CPL course.
- The number of credit hours awarded will be the same as the traditional class credits.
- Students awarded prior learning credit receive a grade of K, and such credit is not factored into a student’s grade point average. The symbol K indicates that a student was awarded credit for the course by Examination (CLEP, AP, SAT II, or institutional examination).
- Students interested in portfolio development should complete the process during their first year of enrollment at Dalton State.
- Due to the amount of work involved in both creating and assessing a portfolio, credit via portfolio may not replace existing credit assessments available through CLEP, departmental examination, DSST, or ACE.
- Concerns about the portfolio process or assessment should be addressed through the dean of the school for which credit is sought.
- Deans should evaluate the PLA program every three years, evaluating student interest, impact on graduation rates, and student satisfaction.

Fees

Portfolio Assessment Fee: When students submit a portfolio for assessment, they must pay a \$250 assessment fee. Students then submit their receipt for this fee to their CPL advisor with their portfolio. Students must pay this fee for each assessment (including resubmits) submitted.

CLEP Exam: There are two fees associated with the CLEP exam: an \$89.00 exam fee and a \$28.50 proctor fee. The \$89.00 exam fee is paid to College Board prior to scheduling to take your exam in the Testing Center. You must visit the College Board website and create an account in order to purchase a CLEP exam. The \$28.50 proctor fee is paid on the Dalton State Testing Center website when you schedule to take your CLEP exam. The \$28.50 proctor fee is nonrefundable.

DANTES/DSST Exams: Please consult the Testing Center's web page for a listing of fees associated with DANTES/DSST exams: https://www.daltonstate.edu/campus_life/testing-center-overview.cms

Departmental Challenge Exams: Departmental Challenge Exams are administered by the individual departments. There is a fee for the Biology, Spanish, and Medical Terminology credit-by-exams. That fee is currently \$50.

POST Assessment: As per Dalton State's agreement with eMajor, there are no fees charged for the *first* assessment and alignment of POST certifications for Dalton State's criminal justice courses, regardless of the number of alignments. Students are advised to seek credit for multiple certifications at the time of the first request. The fee for subsequent requests is \$200.

Since fees are subject to change, please check the Testing Center's [website](#) for fees associated with CLEP, DANTES, and departmental challenge exams.

CPL – Credit for Prior Learning PLA – Prior Learning Assessment Approval Form

The Credit for Prior Learning (PLA) Approval Form is available on the Academic Affairs web page in the Roadrunner Portal:

<https://roadrunner.daltonstate.edu/skins/userfiles/files/CPLPLA.pdf>.