



To: SUNY Cortland Faculty/Staff

From: Educational Policy Committee

Date: April 5, 2024

RE: Prior Learning Assessment

Rationale

“Higher education has a key role to play in driving upward social mobility and boosting individual well-being and economic prosperity. But transfer of credit policies and practices that hinder students’ ability to achieve success will worsen existing inequities that have already been exacerbated by the recent pandemic. For many students, sensible transfer and award of credit policies that recognize a student’s prior learning are essential to making a college degree accessible and affordable. Failure to award credit for learning already acquired doesn’t just increase the cost of a degree in terms of time and money, but it can also end the student’s pursuit of postsecondary education entirely, with lifelong ramifications.”

Joint Statement on Prior Learning from the American Council on Education, Commission on Higher Education Accreditation, and the American Association of College Registrars and Admissions Officers. 2021,
<https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/2021-Joint-Statement-Award-of-Credit.pdf>

The State University of New York Board of Trustees passed the Credit by Evaluation resolution in February of 2023 that stated the importance of recognizing the different pathways to knowledge and competency beyond traditional higher education experiences. This was followed by a February 2024 Memorandum to Presidents (MTP) from the SUNY Chancellor outlining the implementation for the BOT policy. The purpose of the policy and MTP is to ensure that campuses have a formalized and transparent policy that recognizes prior learning and its role in educational mobility and access. [The BOT Resolution on Credit by Evaluation](#) is available on the [SUNY Award of Academic Credit by Evaluation online](#).

A SUNY Cortland working group has worked through the policy documents, explored other campuses’ practices, and drafted the following policy that reflects the requirements and spirit of awarding credit by evaluation. The local term, which is widely used, is Prior Learning Assessment, and a draft section has been added to the SUNY Cortland undergraduate catalog with the other transfer credit policies. We have made edits to the [E.01 Sources of Transfer](#)

[Credit](#) policy found in the undergraduate catalog and have included section [E.08 Sources of Additional Credit](#) to reduce redundancy.

The intent is to have clear, foundational policies that will help SUNY Cortland explore prior learning assessment and we anticipate this, as well as all policy, will evolve over time and with our institutional experience. The scope of the policy now is for undergraduate students and includes parameters and general steps for evaluation. This policy will be in concert with a professional development initiative for faculty and professionals involved with evaluation that is funded by a SUNY Transformation award.

We look forward to supporting this proposal and expanding opportunities and access for students to achieve their academic goals.

[E. Transfer Credit](#) and Prior Learning Evaluation

All policies below apply only to undergraduate students matriculated in a program at SUNY Cortland.

Advisement and Transition

Memorial Library, Room A-111

Phone: 607-753-4726 | Fax: 607-753-5593

transfercredit@cortland.edu | cortland.edu/transfer-credit

- [E.01 Sources of Transfer Credit](#)
- [E.02 Transfer Credit Limits and Residency Requirement](#)
- [E.03 General Education Requirement and Waivers for Transfer Students](#)
- [E.04 Time Toward Graduation for Transfer Students](#)
- [E.05 Retaking Transfer Courses](#)
- [E.06 Evaluation Process for New Students](#)
- [E.07 Permission to Transfer Credit from Another Institution for Continuing Students](#)
- [E.08 Sources of Additional Credit](#)

E.01 Sources of Transfer Credit

SUNY Cortland equivalent course information is available on the [Transfer Equivalencies](#) webpage.

Coursework from Other Colleges or Universities

Transfer credit is accepted from institutions granted regional accreditation by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), such as the Middle States Association, Southern Association, Higher Learning Commission, New England Association, Northwest Association or Western Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges. Credit for courses from institutions with accreditation other than regional accreditation is evaluated for transfer purposes on a case-by-case basis.

Credit is allowed only for those courses in which a grade of C- or better has been earned. Students who at the time of first admission to SUNY Cortland have an associate of arts (A.A.), associate of science (A.S.), associate of applied science (A.A.S.) or any bachelor's degree will be granted credit for D grades earned in courses completed prior to matriculation at SUNY Cortland. Accepted transfer credit will be counted as meeting the necessary minimum grade for Cortland courses or the required prerequisite course.

Grades of Pass (P) and Satisfactory (S) awarded at another institution may be accepted at the discretion of the student's associate dean. Students contact their associate dean to petition for credit. The associate dean will make one or more of the following determinations — in consultation with the department chair when appropriate:

- Decline to accept the course.
- Waive a requirement on the basis of a Pass (P) and Satisfactory (S) grade without granting course credit.
- Award credit under the General Elective (GEN) or Liberal Arts (LAS) labels.
- Award credit as course equivalent.

While credit hours are transferable, grades earned at other colleges are not calculated in the Cortland grade point average. Grade point averages that qualify students for honors and recognition at Commencement are based exclusively on coursework at Cortland.

SUNY Cortland has a credit-hour system. Credits completed at institutions with a quarter-hour system are converted according to university policy. One-quarter hour equals two-thirds of a credit hour.

If a student proposes to transfer credit from a distance learning course, SUNY Cortland will consider only credits offered by an institution that has recognized regional accreditation. These courses will be treated as regular transfer courses. No other distance learning courses will be accepted for credit.

Credit by Examination

Advanced Placement (AP)

Credit granted for a score of three or higher within the scale of five points used for this program.

College-Level Examination Program (CLEP)

Credit is granted for Subject Examinations based on the American Council on Education (ACE) recommended score for awarding credit. No credit is given for CLEP General Examinations. At this time, Cortland is not a test center for the College-Level Examination Program. Information regarding test centers can be obtained by contacting the College Board.

International Baccalaureate (IB)

Students enrolling at SUNY Cortland who have completed International Baccalaureate coursework will receive credit toward their bachelor's degree at Cortland as follows:

- Students who have completed the International Baccalaureate diploma will receive up to a maximum of 30 credit hours, which is one year's advanced standing.
- Students who have not completed the International Baccalaureate diploma will receive equivalent credit for up to two introductory courses for each higher-level examination in which a grade of four or better has been earned.
- Subsidiary/standard level subjects will be evaluated on an individual basis.

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI)

Credit is granted for OPI ratings based on the American Council on Education (ACE) recommended score of awarding credit. Credit will be granted for a rating of novice high to superior.

Cambridge International A Level and AS Exams

Academic credit is granted with satisfactory Advanced (A Level) and Advanced Subsidiary (AS) exam results of C or better. Students can earn three credit hours for each AS Level exam and up to six credit hours for each A Level exam.

Department Credit by Examination

~~E. 08 Challenge Examinations~~

At the discretion of individual departments, students may arrange examinations to demonstrate proficiency in the content areas of specific courses for academic credit. Faculty may arrange written, oral or performance exercises to establish competency, and the appropriate number of credit hours will be awarded for satisfactory performance with a grade of P. Interested students should contact the department chair responsible for the content area they wish to earn credit. If the department agrees to supervise the examination, the student is referred to the office of the associate dean to complete the appropriate form and pay a fee, if appropriate.

No grades are awarded for the Department Credit by Examination, but credit hours will be reflected on the transcript.

In order to give an exam, the department must provide an assessment tool for review by the Dean and Provost.

~~Military Service Courses~~

~~Credit for and/or waiver of courses or programs taken while in the military service may be granted by the associate dean of the school in which the student majors with the consultation of the appropriate department chair if these courses or programs are parallel to courses offered at Cortland.~~

~~E.08 Sources of Additional Credit~~

~~Programs Sponsored by Non-collegiate Organizations and the Armed Forces (note: from E.08 Sources of Additional Credit)~~

~~SUNY Cortland observes the recommendations of the American Council on Education's Office on Educational Credit and of the National College Credit Recommendation Service (the University of the State of New York's Program in Non-collegiate Sponsored Instruction) in the evaluation of education experiences sponsored by non-collegiate organizations and the military when the content is considered appropriate as transfer credit.~~

~~Credit for and/or waiver of courses or programs taken under the auspices of a non-collegiate organization or the armed forces may be granted by the associate dean of the student's major with the consultation of the appropriate department chair.~~

Credit for Prior Learning

If a student has gained significant knowledge and skills and it cannot be assessed by one of the methods above, they may be eligible to petition for Credit for Prior Learning. This may be applicable for prior employment, military experience, volunteer work, training, or other experiences where substantial learning occurs. This includes possible credit for training by organizations such as businesses, labor unions, professional associations, government agencies, and non-profit or volunteer organizations.

Students will need to work with the appropriate associate dean and department chair to petition for Credit for Prior Learning. Students should consult with these offices before putting together a petition and the portfolio described below.

Guidelines for Awarded Credit for Prior Learning

- Credit for Prior Learning will be reflected on the transcript noting the credit hours awarded for the prior learning.
- No letter grades will be assigned for prior learning, and it will not be counted in any GPA calculation
- Prior learning credit may apply to undergraduate degrees and microcredentials
- A maximum of 15 credits of prior learning credit may apply to an undergraduate degree

- Prior learning credits do not apply to any residency requirements
- There may be restrictions on certain required coursework or prerequisites that may be met through prior learning assessment as determined by the academic department.
- We will accept prior learning credits from a transfer institution. If we do not have the equivalent courses, we may reevaluate the prior learning.

Request for Review of Credit for Prior Learning

Any request for review of prior learning must be submitted within one calendar year of the start of the student's first semester of matriculation. It is recommended that prior learning assessment be done as soon as possible to assist in academic planning.

Credit for Prior Learning requires the student to articulate details of the prior experience and how it translates into learning outcomes. This should be presented in a portfolio that provides:

1. Credit for Prior Learning Petition Form
2. Description of the experience including:
 - a. Organization and organization address
 - b. Contact person from the organization
 - c. Dates of experience and estimated hours of experience
3. Written statement detailing
 - a. Learning outcomes achieved through the experience, such as skills and knowledge gained
 - b. How the experience led to the learning
 - c. How this relates to their degree at SUNY Cortland
 - d. Evidence of learning provided by work samples, tests, or letters of support
4. Faculty reviewers may request additional information or documentation as a part of the review.
5. The course(s) or category of requirement that the student is petitioning to receive credit.

The portfolio will be reviewed by the faculty of the relevant discipline with consultation from support offices as needed (e.g., Associate Deans). The student may be asked to give a presentation or participate in a discussion or interview regarding the petition. The faculty will review the petition and assess if credit will be awarded and how it will articulate as a course (e.g., direct equivalency or 2XX). Students will receive notification via email of the decision.

In the case that there is not a faculty member available with relevant expertise, a subject matter expert or established third-party validation may be used for the review with final approval from an associate dean.

Fees for Assessment of Credit for Prior Learning
(actual amount will be completed through fee request with SUNY)

There are two fees assessed with prior learning

1. Administrative fee: one-time fee for all assessment at the time of application for PLA.
2. Per credit hour fee for all awarded credit at the time awarded.

Waiver of the assessment fee is approved by the university president or designee.

Fees may be re-examined and adjusted each academic year in accordance with SUNY Policy.