PennState
Undergraduate Education

UE Impact:
Prior Learning Assessment

Undergraduate Education's (UE) fourteen units are diverse, yet ultimately work toward the same goal—enhancing teaching, learning, and overall student success. UE serves the entire University and views issues on a broad, University-wide level, identifying and working to improve policy items that impact teaching and learning on a large scale. We are an effective strategic partner.

Penn State has a rich history of awarding college credit for learning experiences that occur outside of the classroom. Defined as prior learning assessment (PLA), this learning often comes from life, work, and military experiences. PLA often impacts adult learners, transfer students, and veteran or active duty military students. Undergraduate Education's Prior Learning Assessment office has been leading efforts since 2014 to help students earn college credit for knowledge, training, and professional skills they already possess.

Undergraduate Education Units

Division of Undergraduate Studies

Morgan Academic Center | Penn State Learning

Office for General Education

Student Success Center | Student Engagement Network

Undergraduate Research and Fellowships Mentoring

Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence

Sokolov-Miller Family Financial and Life Skills Center

Center for Penn State Student Entrepreneurship

Reserve Officers' Training Corps

Prior Learning Assessment

Student Orientation and Transition Programs

Office for Summer Session

FIVE WAYS TO EARN CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING

TRANSFER   TESTING   MILITARY   WORK   PORTFOLIO
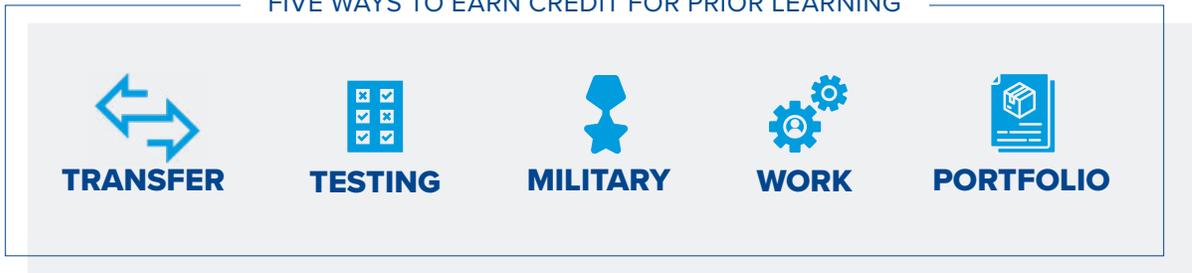
Prior learning helps make a college degree **accessible and affordable** to students and can help **decrease time to graduation**

1/3 of first-time college students **begin their college careers** with credits previously earned

Here's what we know about transfer credits at Penn State.
All course data as of October 1, 2023.

224,804 courses with Penn State credits

50% of these courses are **direct equivalents**

Includes **27,985 courses** awarded discipline **general credit**

Includes **35,845 general education** courses

Includes **48,112** 100/200/300/400 level **discipline electives**

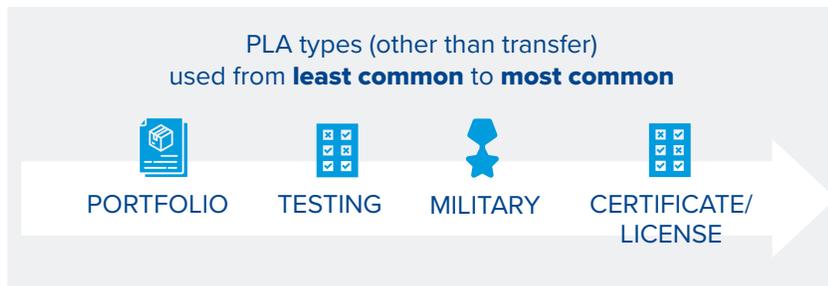Over **250 faculty** on **200 committees** evaluate transfer courses

On average, faculty review between **300–700 courses a week**

PLA partners with **Admissions** on the online **Transfer Credit Tool**

Here's what we know about the impact of PLA on Penn State adult learners.

Penn State was included in a national study on PLA's impact on adult learners conducted by the Council for Adults and Experiential Learning (CAEL) and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). Results based on 2011–2018 data.

PLA types (other than transfer) used from **least common** to **most common**

PORTFOLIO   TESTING   MILITARY   CERTIFICATE/ LICENSE

67% age 25–34
21% age 35–44
8% age 45–54
3% age 55–64

21% Asian
16% Hispanic
12% Black
11% White
10% Multiracial

56% Pell Grant Recipients

74% of Penn State adult learners **with PLA** finished their degrees

vs 48% **without PLA**

Penn State adult learners earned an average of **21.2 credits** for prior learning

Nationwide, adult degree earners with **12+ PLA credits** saved an estimated **$1,500 to $10,200** in tuition and **9 to 14 months** of schooling.

Here's what we know about the average PLA credits received for military experiences.

Data from fall 2018 through September 8, 2023 was analyzed by Undergraduate Education's Office of Institutional Research.

Not from military schools
Students averaged **10.2 courses** and **29.1 credits**

Military service schools
Students averaged **5 courses** and **16.3 credits**

Basic training
Students averaged **1.8 courses** and **5.4 credits**

3,159 students received credit for military experiences, averaging **17.1 courses** and **51.1 credits** of PLA.

Average from all military experiences, including courses, basic training, military schools/institutes. Students include both veterans and active-duty service.

Office of Prior Learning Assessment Timeline

A decade of improving processes, integrating systems, and updating policies to help students receive credit for prior learning experiences.

2013
Office created by PLA Taskforce

2014
Office opened October 13, 2014

Participated in building the Course Substitution and Review System (CSRS) Admissions course review side; received IT award 2016

SPRING 2016
Began Transfer Course Evaluation Process in CSRS; over 250 faculty in 200 groups

FALL 2018
Revised Faculty Senate Acquisition of Credit Policies

SPRING 2019
Revised ACUE AAPPM Policy E-8: Evaluation of Military Educational Experiences to improve how military experiences are evaluated.

SUMMER-FALL 2019
Piloted and rolled out of American Council on Education (ACE) military credit recommendation reviews with faculty in CSRS; over 3,100 completed; added summer 2021 to the Undergraduate Transfer Evaluation letters

FALL 2019
Faculty re-evaluated AP, CLEP, DSST, IB, and A-Level exam equivalencies

FALL 2020
Revised ACUE AAPPM Policy E-6 and E-7; combined to include all exams as some were missing

Revised ACUE E-9; Admissions will send American Council on Education transcripts to faculty for any transcript with associated credit recommendations

SPRING 2021
Revised ACUE A-2 and E-5 for the Transfer 2022 Project (transfer course re-reviews to begin spring 2023) to prevent implosion of the transfer database; PLA, Admissions, CSRS, LionPATH Development and Maintenance Office met every other week to keep the project moving to fruition

SPRING 2022
Revised ACUE E-2 and E-10 to allow for a digital workflow for exams and portfolios; began work in the credit for prior learning application in LionPATH

FALL 2022
LionPATH updated to include student billing for the credit for prior learning application

SPRING 2023
Transfer course re-reviews began for the disciplines who wanted to see the courses every 5 years

Completed a series of training videos for the faculty to highlight the changes to CSRS

Worked with LionPATH Development and Maintenance Office to create the billing functionality in LionPATH for the credit for prior learning application

SUMMER 2023
Worked with users in the colleges/on campuses to refine the credit for prior learning application