



Community College of Aurora  
Prior Learning Assessment  
Staff Guidebook

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## PLA Credit Definition, Standards, and Methods

Community College of Aurora (CCA) recognizes that many students bring professional skills and experience from military, industry, and prior learning outside of a collegiate experience. One way we recognize these skills and experiences is through prior learning assessment credit (PLA Credit). PLA Credit is awarded for college-level knowledge or skills that have been attained outside of a traditional academic environment and that have not been previously evaluated for or awarded college credit.

In accordance with the Colorado Student Bill of Rights, students should be allowed the opportunity to challenge any course listed in the college catalog (some exceptions may apply) by demonstrating their mastery of the course learning outcomes as established in the Common Course Numbering System.

CCA will award PLA Credit if the student:

- Has been admitted to the college
- Has declared a program (degree or certificate)
- Successfully demonstrates mastery (meets or exceeds “C” level work; some courses require demonstration of “B” level work) of the student learning outcomes outlined for the course in the [Common Course Numbering System](#) (CCNS).

Once the student is admitted and has declared a degree or certificate, they can apply for PLA Credit for any of the courses directly applicable to their declared program: general education courses, elective courses, and/or prerequisite requirements.

These are some important aspects of PLA Credit that should be kept in mind:

- If the student decides to apply for PLA Credit for any of the courses in their program, they don't have to enroll in and pay tuition for that course
- The student cannot be enrolled in the course for which they are applying for PLA Credit
- The student may request PLA Credit for any course (some exceptions apply) listed in the current catalog and provided that the course is part of their declared program
- The student may have to pay for the PLA Credit depending on the type of PLA
- Financial Aid cannot be used to cover PLA expenses
- PLA fees are non-refundable, regardless of the evaluation outcome
- PLA Credit is neither calculated into the student's grade point average (GPA) nor into their semester total enrollment for the purpose of financial aid or any other purpose predicated on total hours of enrollment for a given semester
- If credit is denied, it will not appear on the transcript
- If credit is approved, it will be indicated as PLA on the transcripts
- PLA Credit posted in the transcript cannot be removed
- PLA Credit cannot duplicate any previously awarded credit
- If the student changes their program of study, the credit will remain on the transcript, but may no longer count towards the degree or certificate requirements

- The PLA Credit is guaranteed to transfer amongst CCCS colleges provided that the credits apply to a degree or certificate program at the institution the student is entering
- The student can complete up to 75% of the total number of program credits through PLA, but 25% should be completed at CCA and/or CCCOnline while registered at CCA

CCA recognizes and employs these PLA Credit methods:

- Standardized exams
- Institutional challenge exams
- Recommendations based on published guides
- Faculty-evaluated local industry and workplace certificates and training
- Portfolio assessments

The CCA PLA Credit Crosswalk Matrix reflects all the PLA Credit options available at CCA and the state-level. This matrix is located in the PLA Credit webpage in the college website. It is updated regularly by the Credential Evaluator.

## Standardized Exams

CCA recognizes college credit for certain standardized tests. These exams include, but are not limited to:

- Advanced Placement Test (AP)
- International Baccalaureate (IB)
- College-Level Examination Program (CLEP)
- DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST)
- Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT)
- Excelsior College Exams (UExcel)

Currently, the CCA Testing Center only offers CLEP and DSST tests. However, other tests scores can be submitted to the Credential Evaluator for consideration.

Information on the cut scores and the number of credits that can be awarded based on those scores can be found on the [CCA PLA Credit Crosswalk Matrix](#).

If the student has completed a standardized test (AP, IB), Advisors will assist with the initial evaluation; however, formal evaluation will be completed by the Credential Evaluator.

If the student decides to apply for PLA Credit through one of the standardized tests provided by the CCA Testing Center, they have to register for the selected test and make the necessary payments by going to [www.CCAurora.edu/Testing](http://www.CCAurora.edu/Testing). If the student takes the standardized test in the CCA Testing Center, they will receive an unofficial score report before they leave (with the exception of tests that require a writing component). If the student takes the standardized test outside of CCA, they have to request the score to be sent to the CCA Credential Evaluator. The organizations that administer the CLEP and DSST will submit the official score report directly to the student's selected organization.

If the student scores the necessary number of points to receive PLA Credit, the Credential Evaluator will reflect that in the transcript and notify the student within 30 days after the exam date.

Official test transcripts must be submitted from the official testing agency to the following address:

Credential Evaluator  
Community College of Aurora  
16000 E. CentreTech Pkwy  
Aurora, CO 80011

## Institutional Challenge Exams

Institutional challenge exams, created by the college discipline faculty or a hired subject matter expert, are the equivalent of a comprehensive final exam and may include a skills demonstration.

The student must pass a challenge exam with a grade of “C” or better to receive PLA Credit. The only exception to this grade requirement is that some technical or licensure accrediting bodies, which use course outcomes as part of their assessment/licensure process, may require a “B” grade or better for certification.

The [CCA PLA Credit Crosswalk Matrix](#) provides a comprehensive list of existing challenge exams. However, if that is not the case, the Department Chair will start the process to have one available within 30 business days from the day the PLA Credit Request and Process Form is signed by the student and the Department Chair.

### Steps and Procedures for PLA Credit based on Institutional Challenge Exams

Step 1: The student will contact the Department Chair to schedule a meeting to discuss the possibility of challenging a course via a PLA challenge exam. At the meeting, the Chair will confirm that the course is part of the declared program of study; ensure that the student is not currently enrolled in the course; present the course learning outcomes (CCNS) that the student will have to demonstrate; and share any other information relevant for the student to make an informed decision on whether to proceed.

If the student decides to challenge the course, they will fill out the PLA Credit Request and Process Form provided by the Chair and get the Department Chair’s first signature. The Student’s and Chair’s signatures certify that the initial meeting has taken place and the PLA process is officially starting.

Step 2a: If the student decides to take the challenge exam and a challenge exam **is not yet available**, the Department Chair will have a Content Expert develop a challenge exam and a rubric (or other assessment instrument if applicable) within 30 business days. Once the materials are ready, the department will contact the student to let them know that they are ready to move forward with the process. At the same time, the department will upload the newly created challenge exam in D2L for the Testing Center to make it available to the student.

**IMPORTANT:** If the challenge exam only requires skills demonstrations, the Department will facilitate and proctor the exam instead of the Testing Center.

Step 2b: If the student decides to take the challenge exam and one **is available**, they will proceed to Step 4.

Step 3: The department will email the Testing Center the student's name, S# and course being challenge. They will include any relevant information for the Testing Center to identify the correct challenge exam.

Step 4: The student will pay at the Cashiers' Office the credit hour fee prior to taking the exam at the Testing Center or department. Otherwise, the exam will not be administered.

Step 5: The student will schedule a time with the Testing Center and/or department to take the challenge exam.

Step 6: The student will bring proof of payment and the PLA Credit Request and Process Form to the Testing Center and/or department on the day of the exam.

Step 7: The Testing Center will submit the PLA Credit Request and Process Form and the exam to the department on the day the exam is taken to be evaluated by a Content Expert/Evaluator.

Step 8: The Content Expert/Evaluator will evaluate the exam and submit a PLA Credit Evaluation Form with the results to the department within 20 days from the day the exam is completed. If the student has not passed the challenge exam, the Content Expert/Evaluator will provide enough feedback (based on how the student demonstrated or failed to demonstrate a minimum of 90% of the course learning outcomes at a "C" level or better) on the form to help the Department Chair support the student as they decide whether or not to challenge the course a second and final time, or enroll in it.

Note: The student can challenge the course a second and final time via a challenge exam after 30 business days from the day they meet with the Department Chair to discuss the results of their first attempt. If the student decides to challenge the course a second time, a new PLA Credit Request and Process Form has to be initiated and the student will have to pay the appropriate fee again.

Step 9: Once the PLA Credit Evaluation Form is received, the Department Chair will complete and send the PLA Credit Request and Process Form to the Credential Evaluator, along with a copy of the PLA Credit Evaluation Form(s). The Department will keep a copy of the completed Challenge Exam for one year or in accordance with institutional records retention requirements.

Step 10: The Credential Evaluator will transcribe the PLA Credit in the transcript within 30 days, file a copy in the student's records, and notify the student. The Credential Evaluator will indicate how many times the student has challenged the course since only two times are allowed.

## Published Guides

Across CCCS colleges, faculty have evaluated training in local business and industry credentials to identify PLA opportunities for workers seeking higher-level degrees or certifications. Those business and industry PLA opportunities are collected and recognized within published guides.

CCA recognizes guides such as the following:

- American Council on Education (ACE) [National Guide to College Credit for Workplace Training](#)
- ACE Military Guide – [Guide to the Educational Experiences in the Armed Forces](#)
- National College Credit Recommendation Service (NCCRS) [Credit Recommendations](#)

### Steps and Procedures for PLA Credit based on Published Guides (Non-Military)

Step 1: The student should review the [CCA PLA Credit Crosswalk Matrix](#) to determine if their previous business and industry experience has been mapped to one of the above guides.

The student should provide PLA Credit only for courses listed in their declared program of study.

Step 2: The student should request that the official score reports/certificates be sent directly from the issuer (photo copies or forwarded emails are not official scores) to the following address:

Credential Evaluator  
Community College of Aurora  
16000 E. CentreTech Pkwy  
Aurora, CO 80011

Step 3: The Credential Evaluator will transcribe the PLA Credit in the transcript within 30 days from receiving the documentation, file the documentation in the student's records, and notify the student.

### Steps and Procedures for PLA Credit for Military Service Members and Veterans

Credit for learning gained in the U.S. Military is generally transferred based on the American Council on Education (ACE) credit recommendations found on a Joint Service Transcript (JST) for current or former Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, or Navy personnel or on a Community College of the Air Force transcript (CCAF) for Air Force personnel.

Military learning experience for which credit is awarded must be applicable to the declared degree or certificate. Credit may be transferred from the JST for military training school, occupation/rank, and coursework as recommended in the ACE Military Guide.



Military training determined by ACE to be in the vocational category is not considered to be at the college level and should not be considered independently for college credit. If a student wishes to use military training determined to be in the vocational category to challenge CCNS courses, they may, as appropriate, use these recommendations as part of a portfolio that demonstrates the full array of required skills/competencies. (See Portfolio Assessment section)

If a direct crosswalk to a CCNS course is not appropriate, colleges may award elective credit as it applies to the degree requirements. The student may also use ACE recommendations as part of a larger body of evidence in a portfolio to capture CCNS credit.

To learn more about the ACE/ACP Project, see Appendix D.

NOTE: CCAF is regionally accredited, so credit may be transferred directly for courses shown on the CCAF transcript.

Step 1: The student should request that the official score reports/certificates be sent directly from the issuer (photo copies or forwarded emails are not official scores) to the following address:

Credential Evaluator  
Community College of Aurora  
16000 E. CentreTech Pkwy  
Aurora, CO 80011

Step 2: The Credential Evaluator will transcribe the PLA Credit in the transcript within 30 days from receiving the documentation, file the documentation in the student's records, and notify the student.

## Faculty-Evaluated Local Industry and Workplace Credit

As an employee of an evaluated training program that results in industry certifications, professional licensure, apprenticeship completion, and/or other workplace skills development, a student's experience may be converted to college credit.

### Steps and Procedures for PLA Credit based on Faculty-Evaluated Local Industry and Workplace Credit

Step 1: The student will check if their industry certification, professional licensure, apprenticeship program, or other workplace skills are included in the [CCA PLA Credit Crosswalk Matrix](#).

Step 2a: If the industry certification, professional licensure, or apprenticeship program is included on the [CCA PLA Credit Crosswalk Matrix](#), the student will request that the official score reports/certificates be sent directly from the issuer (photo copies or forwarded emails are not official scores) to the following address:

Credential Evaluator  
Community College of Aurora  
16000 E. CentreTech Pkwy  
Aurora, CO 80011

If official score reports are not issued directly from the issuer (or are cost prohibitive for the student to get re-prints), the PLA Credit Request and Process Form should be submitted with the Department Chair signature certifying the credits as valid. In this case, unofficial/photo copies will be accepted and the Department Chair will email them to the Credential Evaluator along with the PLA Request and Process Form.

Step 2b: If the industry certification, professional licensure, or apprenticeship program is not included on the [CCA PLA Credit Crosswalk Matrix](#), the student should follow up with the appropriate Department Chair to determine if the certification, licensure, apprenticeship program or workplace can be approved by CCA. If the Department Chair considers that PLA credit can be awarded, a PLA Request and Process Form should be initiated. The instructions and steps in the PLA Request and Process Form should be followed.

Step 3: The Credential Evaluator will transcribe the PLA Credit in the transcript within 30 days from receiving the documentation, file the documentation in the student's records, and notify the student.

## Portfolio Assessment

For some courses, a PLA portfolio review may be appropriate for demonstrating student competency. A PLA portfolio is a compilation of verifiable artifacts/evidence that demonstrate student mastery of course competencies as established in the CCNS.

The [CCA PLA Credit Crosswalk Matrix](#) provides a comprehensive list of courses with existing portfolio templates. If that's not the case for the course the student wants to challenge, and the Department Chair considers that a portfolio is the best way to assess the student's knowledge and skills, the Department Chair will start the process to have a portfolio template available within 30 business days from the day the PLA Credit Request and Process Form is signed by the student and the Department Chair.

The student will prepare a portfolio and submit it for evaluation. The student will be awarded PLA Credit for a course if their portfolio demonstrates learning of at least 90% of the course learning outcomes at a "C" level or better. The only exception to this grade requirement is that some technical or licensure accrediting bodies, which use course outcomes as part of their assessment/licensure process, may require a "B" grade or better for certification.

There are two primary types of portfolios:

- 1) Those designed to challenge Major or General Education courses.  
This portfolio type requires the student to demonstrate learning through a narrative prepared by the student and supported by documentation or verifiable artifacts specific to the content.
- 2) Those designed to challenge Applied Sciences or Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses.  
Applied Skills Portfolios are designed to assess workplace learning and require the student to demonstrate mastery (where applicable) of the applied skill(s) in addition to a more abbreviated narrative describing learning and/or department-developed assessment tests. Applied Skills Portfolios may also require employer recommendations or industry certifications as appropriate.

### Steps and Procedures for PLA Credit based on Portfolio Assessment

Step 1: The student will contact the Department Chair to schedule a meeting to discuss the possibility of challenging a course via a PLA portfolio. At the meeting, the Chair will determine if the course is part of the declared program of study; ensure that the student is not currently enrolled in the course; present the course learning outcomes (CCNS) that the student will have to demonstrate; and share any other information relevant for the student to make an informed decision on whether to proceed.

If the student decides to challenge the course, they will fill out a PLA Credit Request and Process Form provided by the Chair and get the Department Chair's signature. The Student's and Chair's signatures certify that the initial meeting has taken place and the PLA process is officially starting.

Step 2a: If the student decides to challenge the course and a portfolio template and assessment rubric **is not yet available**, the Department Chair will have a Content Expert develop one along with an assessment rubric (or other assessment instrument if applicable) within 30 business days. Once these materials are ready, the department will contact the student to let them know that they are ready to move forward with the process and schedule the portfolio orientation.

Step 2b: If the student decides to challenge the course and a portfolio template and rubric **is available**, they will proceed to schedule the portfolio orientation.

Step 3: The student will pay at the Cashiers' Office the credit hour fee and submit proof of payment at the portfolio orientation. The orientation will not be facilitated without proof of payment.

Step 4: The portfolio orientation, as established in SP 9-42, Section 3, D Portfolios, is designed to assist the student in identifying, describing, and documenting skills and knowledge gained through prior learning experiences. The department will provide the student with a portfolio template, clear instructions for how to complete it, a submission timeline, and a copy of the evaluation rubric. The student may be asked to complete a demonstration or oral interview, and that activity will be scheduled at the orientation.

Step 5: Following the instructions provided at the orientation, the student will submit their completed portfolio within 30 days of the portfolio orientation meeting.

Step 6: Within 30 days from the day the portfolio is submitted by the student for evaluation, the Content Expert/Evaluator will complete the PLA Credit Evaluation Form.

The Content Expert/Evaluator will assess the learning claim and evidence against the course's learning outcomes as established in the CCNS and using a scoring rubric.

If a **"PASS"** is determined, the credit will be awarded.

If a **"DENY"** is determined, the student will receive feedback in the completed PLA Credit Evaluation Form, detailing which competency or competencies were not met. The denied grade will not be transcribed.

If a **"PROVISIONAL"** is determined, the student will receive feedback in the Portfolio Evaluation Form, detailing where further evidence is required to

enhance their portfolio prior to the final determination. In this case, the student will have 30 days to submit the requested documentation/evidence and/or complete the additional demonstration of skills indicated at no additional cost. If submitted on time, the Content Expert/Evaluator will re-evaluate the portfolio within a reasonable amount of time as designated by the department and change the determination to a "PASS" or "DENY" after this evaluation period. If the student fails to complete the submission within the allotted time frame, the Content Expert/Evaluator will close the application as "DENY".

Note: The student can challenge the course a second and final time via a portfolio examination after 30 business days from the day they meet with the Department Chair to discuss the results of the first attempt. If the students decide to challenge the course a second time, a new PLA Credit Request and Process Form has to be initiated and the student will have to pay the appropriate fee again.

Step 7: The Department Chair will complete and send the PLA Credit Request and Process Form to the Credential Evaluator, along with a copy of the PLA Credit Evaluation Form and supporting documentation. The Credential Evaluator will transcribe the PLA Credit, if approved, in the transcript within 30 days, file a copy in the student's records, and notify the student.

#### Minimum Requirements for the Content of the Portfolio (Sample Portfolios are Available for Viewing)

- **Cover Page:** Each portfolio should have a cover page identifying the portfolio, the student who prepared it for credit, the degree or certificate, and the course being challenged.
- **Table of Contents:** A table of contents listing the separate parts of the portfolio.
- **Narrative of Intent:** In this narrative, the student should provide to the Content Expert/Evaluator a relevant but brief autobiographical presentation that ties together why they are submitting the portfolio and why the credit should be awarded. It is also a general overview of what will be discussed in detail later in the portfolio.

If general education courses are being requested for credit, the student must show how their life learning relates to the request.

If Applied Science or CTE courses are being requested for credit, the narrative will include the student's relevant work experiences and those life experiences relevant to the request.

- **Resume:** The student should submit a resume if Applied Science or CTE course are being requested for credit. The resume can be optional when credit is requested for Major or General Education courses.

- **Course Request:** This section should list the course's learning outcomes as established in the CCNS. They should be provided by the Department Chair at the orientation. The student will then describe how learning was accomplished for each course's learning outcomes.
- **Documentation:** Verifiable documentation should be presented in the portfolio to support the request for PLA credit. The supporting documents must be of sufficient breadth and depth to validate the stated learning and provide the Content Expert/Evaluator with qualitative evidence for evaluation of the achieved competencies. The documentation will be established at the orientation.

### Types of Documentation

- **Evidence of Training:** If the student has completed training through non-traditional methods, they should provide documentation showing the completion of this training. Useful documentation may include a lesson plan or the training content/competencies (if available), dates of attendance, and/or other information showing evidence of learning. Evidence of evaluation may also be required (e.g., proficiency exam scores).
- **Portfolio of Work:** The student may be required to include a portfolio of work (design samples, writing samples, etc.) to support the request.
- **Demonstration of Competency:** For some course competencies, the student may be asked to complete a performance of the skill(s). The Content Expert/Evaluator associated with the course will determine which skills must be demonstrated and will inform the student of the accepted venues and methods (i.e. via video, on site, or through a third-party evaluator).
- **Oral Interview:** The Content Expert/Evaluator may contact the student for a verbal discussion of their portfolio as a supplement to the written information provided.

## Additional Questions or Concerns

If the student has any questions or concerns about the PLA Credit methods, steps, or procedures, please direct them to an Advisor.

The PLA credit, if approved, will be transcribed in the student's transcripts within 30 days from the day the Credential Evaluator is notified.

Recommendations and scoring by ACE, CLEP, and other external bodies are under the auspices of the evaluation body and cannot be appealed at the college-level. If the student wants to appeal, they should contact the testing agency or credit recommendation service directly and follow their appeal processes.

The student will be able to challenge the same course twice via a challenge exams or portfolio if the first attempt is failed. Prior to making the second attempt, the student will have to meet with the Department Chair or content expert to discuss the results and deficiencies identified in the first attempt. If the student decides to challenge the course a second time, they will have to wait 30 business days from the day of the meeting with the Department Chair or content expert. This time will allow the department to develop a second challenge exam or portfolio template.

The student will have to pay the corresponding fee every time they challenge a course.

The student cannot appeal for PLA Credit to be removed from their academic transcripts.

If a transfer institution outside the Colorado Community College System does not accept the CCA PLA Credit, the appeal process will be with the transfer institution, and not with CCA.

Under no circumstances will the student be eligible for reimbursement of the PLA fees. These fees are charged to cover the cost of the evaluation.

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

### ACE ACP

The American Council on Education Alternative Credit Project is designed to evaluate general education courses delivered by nontraditional education providers and to make recommendations, as appropriate, for college credit for students successfully completing them. <http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Alternative-Credit-Project.aspx>

### ACE IDENTIFIER/ACE ID

A unique number assigned to ACE evaluations of training and/or occupations. The ACE ID can be found on the JST or the ACE Transcript. ACE ID's are used to identify and document learning crosswalks to the CCNS.

### ACE MILITARY GUIDE

The Military Guide is a compilation of ACE credit recommendations for formal courses and occupations offered by all branches of the military. The guide includes all evaluated courses and occupations from 1954 to the present. <http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Military-Guide-Online.aspx>

### ACE NATIONAL GUIDE

The ACE National Guide to College Credit for Workforce Training contains ACE recommendations for formal courses or examinations offered by various organizations including businesses, unions and government entities. <http://www2.acenet.edu/credit/?fuseaction=browse.main>

### ACE RECOMMENDATION

The American Council on Education Credit Recommendation Service uses faculty subject matter teams to review workplace learning and connect the competencies to college level learning. <http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/College-Credit-Recommendation-Service-CREDIT.aspx>

### AP

Advanced Placement college level studies are offered in courses at the high school level. Students who test and successfully meet cut scores are awarded credit in the appropriate subject area. <https://apstudent.collegeboard.org/home>

### CAEL

The Council on Adult and Experiential Learning is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that works with public and private sector partners to enhance learning opportunities for adults around the world. [www.cael.org](http://www.cael.org)



CAEL Mission Statement: As a national leader, we strive to lead the evolving national discussion on unique challenges and opportunities linking adult learners and work. We advocate and innovate on behalf of all adult learners, regardless of their socio-economic circumstances, to increase access to education and economic security and to develop and provide effective services and tools. We work to enhance our thought leadership role through our research and work with adult learners, postsecondary education institutions, employers and government.

#### CCAF

Community College of the Air Force

#### CCNS

The Colorado Common Course Numbering System <https://www.cccs.edu/education-services/common-course-numbering-system/>

The CCNS was developed to facilitate ease of transfer for CCCS community college students from one community college to the other and from the community college to the four-year educational institutions, to improve program planning, to increase communication among all of the colleges, and to facilitate articulation arrangements from high schools to the community colleges. Courses with common content carry the same prefix, number, title, credits, description, competencies and outline. These commonly described courses facilitate transfer and articulation arrangements for Colorado's secondary and community college students and ensure curriculum quality across the colleges.

#### CHALLENGE EXAM

Institutional challenge exams are faculty-developed tests. They assess a student's mastery of the competencies required for the CCNS course being challenged and are the equivalent of a comprehensive final exam and may include a skills demonstration.

#### CLEP

The College Level Exam Program is a credit by examination program that is widely accepted by colleges and universities across the country. CLEP exams test mastery of college level material in five subject areas with 33 tests covering general education courses.

#### COURSE CHALLENGE

By state statute, a student is allowed to challenge any core (gtPathways) course if they feel they already have the requisite knowledge and skills. Colorado Community College System policy expands this opportunity to all courses in the Common Course Numbering System (CCNS).

#### CREDENTIAL

A credential is a document, certification or license that proves a person's qualifications and mastery.

#### CREDIT CROSSWALK

Faculty subject matter experts evaluate a credential such as an ACE recommendation and decide if there is an equivalency between the skills mastered for the credential and the competencies of a CCNS course.

#### DLPT

The Defense Language Proficiency Test is a battery of foreign language tests produced by the Defense Language Institute and used by the US Department of Defense. They are intended to assess the general language proficiency of native English speakers in specific foreign languages, in the skills of reading and listening. <http://www.dliflc.edu/resources/dlpt-guides/>

#### DSST

This test is most often taken by military members and their families. The DSST program offers 30+ exams in college subject areas such as Social Sciences, Math, Applied Technology, Business, Physical Sciences and Humanities. The tests have been evaluated for college credit by ACE. <http://getcollegedcredit.com/>

#### FACULTY-EVALUATED LOCAL INDUSTRY AND WORKPLACE CREDIT

Faculty members evaluate non-collegiate training programs that result in industry certifications, professional licensure, apprenticeship completion, and other workplace skills development.

#### FACULTY EVALUATOR

A faculty subject matter expert who is responsible for evaluating student portfolios for PLA Credit.

#### IB

The International Baccalaureate is a “non-profit educational foundation offering four programs of international education that develop the intellectual, personal, emotional and social skills needed to live, learn and work in a rapidly globalizing world.” [www.ibo.org/](http://www.ibo.org/)

#### JST

The Joint Services Transcript is a synchronized transcript presenting data for the United States Army, Marine Corps, Navy and Coast Guard. The JST contains military course completions, military occupations, college level test scores, and other learning experiences. <http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Documents/Joint-Services-Transcript-Brochure.pdf>

#### LEARNING COUNTS

Learning Counts (CAEL) offers portfolio assessment courses and evaluations to students ready to seek PLA Credit. [www.learningcounts.org](http://www.learningcounts.org)

#### NCCRS

The National College Credit Recommendation service (the University of the State of New York) evaluates training and education programs offered outside of the traditional college classroom setting and recommends college credit equivalencies. [www.nationalccrs.org](http://www.nationalccrs.org)

#### PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

The process of reviewing a compilation of artifacts, narratives and demonstrations, and comparing them against the competencies of a CCNS course(s) for the purpose of awarding PLA Credit as appropriate.

#### PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT

Prior learning assessment is a set of well-established, researched, and validated methods for assessing non-collegiate learning for college credit. It is a process that allows learners to demonstrate knowledge and skills in a particular field or fields and have that learning evaluated for college credit (CAEL).

#### PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT CREDIT

The learning addressed in this manual is defined as college level knowledge or skills that have been attained outside of a traditional academic environment and that have not been previously evaluated for or awarded college credit.

#### PUBLISHED GUIDE

The common term used to describe the compilation of credit recommendations from ACE and NCCRS.

#### RESIDENCY

The courses a student registers for, attends, and completes at CCA and/or CCCOnline while enrolled at CCA. They are the equivalent to 25% of the total number of credit hours of the degree or certificate.

#### STANDARDIZED TEST

Any form of a test which gives all test takers the same test under the same conditions. CCCS routinely accepts the following tests: CLEP, AP, IB, DSST, DLPT, UExcel.

#### THIRD PARTY EVALUATOR/OUTSIDE VENDOR

Businesses that offer portfolio development courses to students and/or evaluate portfolios for college credit.

#### UExcel

The Excelsior College Examination Program offers credit by examination in select subject areas.

## Appendix B: Resources

### Policy and Procedures

- [Higher Learning Commission Policy](#)
- [State Board Policy BP 9-42](#)
- [System Procedure SP 9-42](#)

### Links to More Information

- [Colorado Department of Higher Education](#)
- [Fueling the Race to Postsecondary Success](#)
- [CCCS PLA website](#)
- [PLA Credit Dashboard](#)
- [Council on Adult and Experiential Learning \(CAEL\)](#)
- [The American Council on Education \(ACE\)](#)

### The CAEL PLA Quality Standards

1. Credit or its equivalent should be awarded only for learning, and not for experience.
2. Assessment should be based on standards and criteria for the level of acceptable learning that are both agreed upon and made public.
3. Assessment should be treated as an integral part of learning, not separate from it, and should be based on an understanding of learning processes.
4. The determination of credit awards and competence levels must be made by appropriate subject matter and academic or credentialing experts.
5. Credit or other credentialing should be appropriate to the context in which it is awarded and accepted.
6. If awards are for credit, transcript entries should clearly describe what learning is being recognized and should be monitored to avoid giving credit twice for the same learning.
7. Policies, procedures, and criteria applied to assessment, including provision for appeal, should be fully disclosed and prominently available to all parties involved in the assessment process.
8. Fees charged for assessment should be based on the services performed in the process and not determined by the amount of credit awarded.
9. All personnel involved in the assessment of learning should pursue and receive adequate training and continuing professional development for the functions they perform.
10. Assessment programs should be regularly monitored, reviewed, evaluated, and revised as needed to reflect changes in the needs being served, the purposes being met, and the state of the assessment arts.

## Appendix C: Military and Veteran Services

College Transcript Evaluators or Records staff can create JST accounts and receive electronic copies of the transcripts by signing up at <https://jst.doded.mil>. Service members or veterans can also request a copy of their JST on this DOD site and, if needed, can request updates or corrections to their JST with service-specific support. The JST eliminates the need for the DD Form 295.

Standardized test credit, which is current on the PLA Credit Matrix and meets cut score requirements, may be transferred directly from the JST as long as the JST lists the examination name, score earned on the exam, and the date it was taken. Credit should go on the transcript under the PSTAN institutional code, not the PJST code (See PLA Credit Transcribing Procedures). Credit on the JST is generally transferred for Lower-Division Baccalaureate Degree and Upper-Division Baccalaureate Degree academic levels.

Staff should cross-reference the ACE Identifiers on the JST with the ACE Military Guide (<http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Military-Guide-Online.aspx>). The information needed to compare military training course curriculum and competencies, as well as military occupation (job performance) competencies with CCNS courses is contained in this ACE Guide. The ACE site can be searched by course and by occupation. Using either or both may help to find information related to curriculum and competencies which describe the service member's military learning and will aid in the transfer of appropriate credit for that learning.

If the training, occupation or credential has not been previously cross-walked to a CCNS course, faculty subject matter experts or other qualified staff must evaluate the ACE recommendations to determine appropriate crosswalks to CCNS courses. If there is no ACE credit recommendation made for an entry on the JST, credit should not be awarded and the student should be advised about other PLA Credit options such as challenge tests and portfolios.

Evaluated CCNS credit crosswalks based on ACE recommendations may be submitted for inclusion in the PLA Credit Matrix (see Appendix B: Resources, for instructions in the CCCS PLA Handbook). By including crosswalks in the PLA Credit Matrix, we hope to keep subject matter experts from duplicating their efforts, but inclusion in the PLA Credit Matrix is not a requirement for awarding credit.