



2024 Oregon Credit for Prior Learning Standards

Preamble

In early 2022, a need was identified to revise the 2017 Oregon Credit for Prior Learning Standards to align with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) 2020 Accreditation Standards. In 2023, the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) solicited nominations for membership on the Credit for Prior Learning Advisory Committee. From those nominations, members were appointed to represent all four sectors of higher education, higher education students, business and industry, labor, and other interested parties. The Advisory Committee convened in early 2023, and members worked collaboratively to revise the Oregon Credit for Prior Learning Standards for adoption by the Higher Education Coordinating Commission in 2024.

In pursuit of academic excellence and a commitment to fostering inclusive and accessible education, the Higher Education Coordinating Commission adopted these revised Credit for Prior Learning Standards. Acknowledging the diverse pathways through which individuals acquire knowledge and skills, these Standards aim to provide a systematic framework for recognizing, assessing, and granting credit for prior learning experiences. Equitable education and training are fundamental to sustaining the ability of Oregon communities to thrive. We believe that one of our most critical responsibilities is to implement a set of guidelines to deliver a learner-centric education and training system that improves outcomes and opportunities for Oregonians statewide. Credit for Prior Learning is a strategy that supports learner-centric education and values the experiences and learning Oregonians bring with them to higher education.

At the heart of these standards is the conviction that learning is a lifelong journey, often undertaken through formal and informal avenues. By formalizing a process for the evaluation of prior learning, the Higher Education Coordinating Commission seeks to empower learners from all walks of life, embracing the richness of their experiences and expertise. This commitment reflects our dedication to creating an inclusive educational environment that values and respects the diverse ways in which individuals gain mastery over subject matter.

[Oregon Revised Statute 350.110](#) establishes the goals for the Higher Education Coordinating Commission and higher education institutions related to Credit for Prior Learning:

- (a) Increase the number of students who receive academic credit for prior learning and the number of students who receive academic credit for prior learning that counts toward their major or toward earning their degree, certificate, or credential, while ensuring that credit is awarded only for high-quality course-level competencies;
- (b) Increase the number and type of academic credits accepted for prior learning in institutions of higher education, while ensuring that credit is awarded only for high-quality course-level competencies;
- (c) Develop transparent policies and practices in awarding academic credit for prior learning to be adopted by the governing boards of public universities, community colleges, and independent institutions of higher education;
- (d) Improve prior learning assessment practices across all institutions of higher education;
- (e) Create tools to develop faculty and staff knowledge and expertise in awarding academic credit for prior learning and to share exemplary policies and practices among institutions of higher education;
- (f) Develop articulation agreements when patterns of academic credit for prior learning are identified for particular programs and pathways; and
- (g) Develop outcome measures to track progress on the goals outlined in this section.

The 2024 Credit for Prior Learning Standards are guided by the following principles:

Access: Credit for Prior Learning opportunity is accessible to all students without restriction on minimum age, work experience, and student background such as (but not limited to) race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, or sexual orientation.

Equity and Inclusion: We are committed to providing equal opportunities to all learners, irrespective of their learning journey, background, or educational history.

Rigorous Assessment: Credit for Prior Learning processes uphold the academic integrity, rigor, and student achievements ensuring that credits awarded are based on thoughtful and consistent evaluation and alignment with established learning outcomes.

Transparency: We promote transparent communications, policies, procedures, and decision-making throughout the Credit for Prior Learning process.

A driving force behind the revision of these standards was the alignment to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities 2020 Accreditation Standards regarding Credit for Prior Learning.

Adoption and Implementation

The Higher Education Coordinating Commission invites all academic institutions in Oregon and their community partners to adopt the Credit for Prior Learning Standards recommended here and actively participate in the implementation and evolution of this framework. We recognize that Credit for Prior Learning work is an ongoing process of continuous improvement and that each institution will accomplish this work to its distinct mission and internal processes. While these Standards are not required, we know that Oregon students are best served when we work together to promote Credit for Prior Learning through standards that are equitable, transparent, and accessible to our students and in support of our partners in the workforce, our communities, and other institutions of higher education, without limitations. Together, we aspire to build a learning community that celebrates the diverse paths to knowledge and success and advances the opportunities for all Oregonians.

2023 Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) Advisory Committee Members

The Higher Education Coordinating Commission would like to acknowledge the work of the Credit for Prior Learning Advisory Committee. This group of higher education practitioners, students, industry, and labor representatives dedicated their time and expertise to ensure these revised Standards are inclusive of partner voices, support the needs of students, and are meaningful guidelines that create a framework ongoing Credit for Prior Learning implementation and expansion. The list of members is included here.

ORS 350.110 requires the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to appoint members to the Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) Advisory Committee representing the sectors below.

ORS 350.110 Requirement	Name	Affiliation
A member recommended for appointment by the State Board of Higher Education representing public universities in this state.	Cindy Baccar	Portland State University
A member recommended for appointment by the State Board of Education representing community colleges in this state.	Cindy Lenhart	Central Oregon Community College

ORS 350.110 Requirement	Name	Affiliation
A member representing independent not-for-profit institutions of higher education located in this state.	Richard Weber	Corban University
A member representing for-profit institutions of higher education offering degree programs to students in this state.	Ravinder Dayal	Carrington College
A member representing the business community.	Debbie Radie	Boardman Foods
A member representing the labor community.	Josh Hall	Oregon AFL-CIO
A member who is a student at a two-year or four-year institution of higher education located in this state.	Erin Malanchee*	Southern Oregon University
Other members appointed by the Higher Education Coordinating Commission based upon a demonstrated interest in and knowledge of prior learning programs.	Laurie Michaels	Umpqua Community College
	Jennifer Hills	Blue Mountain Community College
	Amy Burbee	Linn Benton Community College
	Linda Samek	George Fox University
	Bonnie Gutierrez	University of Oregon
	Rebecca Schwartz*	Blue Mountain Community College
	Wendy Ivie	Oregon Tech
	Moneeka Settles	Southern Oregon University
	Emily Sharratt	Eastern Oregon University
	Judith Sylva	Western Oregon University
	Rebecca Mathern	Oregon State University
Higher Education Coordinating Commission Staff	Shalee Hodgson	Office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development
	Jennifer Markey	

* Advisory Committee Co-Chairs

Adopted 4/11/24.

2024 Oregon Credit for Prior Learning Standards

Standard 1 - Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) Requisites

- 1.1 For those areas in which CPL is awarded, each institution should develop institutional policies and procedures for awarding credit in response to the CPL Standards. Institutional policies and procedures should be designed to maintain the integrity of the academic credential. These policies and procedures should be transparent to all students, faculty, staff, and external partners.
- 1.2 Institutional policies and procedures should ensure credit is granted for documented learning and awarded only for demonstrated college-level learning outcomes. To ensure consistent quality, each institution should create an oversight process to monitor a CPL policy and process informed by a cross-functional set of relevant administrators and faculty.
- 1.3 CPL credit recorded on the official institutional transcript should be notated as CPL. The notation should be aligned amongst schools in Oregon. CPL credit should be awarded only for those courses formally approved by the institution's curriculum approval process within the approved academic disciplines of the institution.
- 1.4 Institutional policies may address any overarching limits on how much CPL programs can use toward degree requirements. Any institutional limits on CPL credit accumulation set by an institution or program should be made explicit and transparent to students. Such limits should be carefully considered and based on institutional, and program needs and requirements, connected closely to student academic success outcomes. Institutions should maintain the goal of maximizing appropriate CPL credit awards to support student credential attainment through lower costs and time-to-degree/credential.
- 1.5 Credit awarded through CPL should be directly applicable to meet requirements for academic credentials (general education, major, minor, electives, etc.) as outlined in college publications. Awarding excessive credit, unrelated to the academic pathway, may negatively impact student progress.

Credit may be awarded through these types of CPL as noted below.

Credit based on third-party assessment.

- Credit by Exam (CLEP, DANTES, AP, IB, etc.)
- Industry Certifications
- Professional Licensure
- Military Credit (ACE Credit Recommendation Service)
- Other forms of transfer

Credit based on institutional faculty and/or subject matter expert assessment.

- Institutional Challenge Exams – Challenge exams must be driven by institutional policy with the expectation of involving faculty in awarding credit and developing exams for their respective areas of expertise. These exams should be based on valid and reliable instruments.
- Prior Experiential Learning/Prior Learning Assessments (PLA) e.g., portfolios – Assessment methods are designed to identify what a student has learned through one’s life and work experience outside the classroom that is equivalent to learning gained through formal collegiate instruction. These prior learning assessments are separate from third-party testing such as ACE or institutional challenge examinations.
- Portfolios must be reviewed by qualified content experts. Credit is awarded based on the faculty/content expert review of the portfolio at the institution.
- Other forms of authentic assessment to award CPL credit.

Resources: Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) [2020 Standards](#)

NWCCU 2.C.1

The institution’s transfer-of-credit policy maintains the integrity of its programs and facilitates the efficient mobility of students desirous of the completion of their educational credits, credentials, or degrees in furtherance of their academic goals¹.

NWCCU 1.C.8

Transfer credit and credit for prior learning is accepted according to clearly defined, widely published, and easily accessible policies that provide adequate safeguards to ensure academic quality. In accepting transfer credit, the receiving institution ensures that such credit accepted is appropriate for its programs and comparable in nature, content, academic rigor, and quality.

Standard 2 - Evidence-Based Assessment

2.1 Assessment should be based on standards and criteria for the level of acceptable learning. The institution should consult its content experts in determining such standards and criteria. Course learning outcomes are central to CPL assessments. Courses, programs, and other learning experiences will be judged on their learning outcomes, using valid evaluation measures, including third-party review by appropriately qualified reviewers and recommendations from organizations experienced with such evaluations (e.g., ACE, CAEL). Seventy percent of demonstrated

¹ NWCCU 2020 Accreditation Standards do not impose caps on Credit for Prior Learning, individual institutions will need to determine caps, if any, that they will impose.

outcomes should match between CPL source and college-level course learning outcomes or its equivalent.

- 2.2 For portfolio assessment, each institution should provide students with a clear, guided process to assess student learning. The student must document the connection between what they have learned in another setting and the theoretical foundation, knowledge, and/or skills as defined by the course-specific learner outcomes of the credit to be awarded.
- 2.3 Institutional faculty provides oversight for determining what qualifies as CPL credit. Faculty must have content expertise and be teaching in the field associated with credit to be assessed and awarded. Non-faculty content experts can be used as evaluators as long as there is institutional faculty oversight in the field associated with the credit to be awarded.

Standard 3 - Tuition and Fee Structure

- 3.1 Each institution should develop and consistently apply a fee structure for CPL that is transparent and accessible to all students, faculty, staff, and community partners.
- 3.2 Since CPL is not covered by federal Financial Aid, institutions should consider identifying other resources to waive the assessment fee for students who are unable to pay (based on Pell-eligibility status, for example).
- 3.3 Institutions should endeavor to charge fees for CPL assessments that are based on the services provided in the process, rather than the credit awarded. Service costs may include things related to supporting students through the assessment process, faculty workload around evaluation, training, and portfolio/exam infrastructure and assessments.

Standard 4 - Transferability and Transcription

- 4.1 Institutions should work collaboratively to promote the transferability of courses/credits awarded through CPL.
- 4.2 Each receiving institution determines the transferability and applicability of credit granted from other institutions. Schools should not categorically discount a course awarded through CPL including all types under that umbrella. If the transferring CPL is based on an assessment by third-party agencies, then the receiving schools should require the original documentation from the agencies issuing the results. In these cases, the receiving institution will treat the award of credit following their internal standard policies.
- 4.3 Documentation used to support credits awarded should be maintained as part of the student's academic record in accordance with institutional records retention standards.
- 4.4 The expectation for all institutions is that CPL awarded by the institution on its official institutional transcript should be noted as such.

4.5 CPL credit accepted in transfer based on third-party assessment (CLEP, DANTES, AP, IB, MIL, Certifications, Licensure, etc.) may be transferred as the receiving institution's direct equivalent or general elective credit.

Standard 5 - Data Collection & Reporting

Institutions should collect and report data on the types of CPL awarded. The HECC will provide direction on the data needed and how it will be reported, for HECC to summarize the number of credits granted by the institution and the number of unduplicated students who receive credit through each of the types of CPL identified in Standard 1. To ensure accurate data collection, credit for prior learning should be defined and easily accessible.

Data and reporting codes

AP – Credit for Prior Learning: Advanced Placement Exam

CE – Challenge Exam: Credit granted for courses passed through Challenge Exam

CP – Other Credit for Prior Learning: Credit granted for other prior learning experiences

IB – Credit for Prior Learning: International Baccalaureate

MI – Military Credit for Prior Learning: Credit granted for Military experience or ACE Transcripts

PO – Portfolio Credit for Prior Learning: Credit granted for portfolio evaluation

Standard 6 - Faculty and Staff Development

Each institution shall be transparent in its processes/practices for faculty and staff development for CPL. All faculty and staff should have knowledge of institutional opportunities for developing, assessing, and recommending CPL, and receive adequate training and continuing professional development for the functions they perform.

Standard 7 - Quality Assurance in Response to ORS 350.110 (HB 4059)

7.1 Assessment should be conducted by the institution, reviewed periodically, and based on standards and criteria for the level of acceptable learning. The institution should consult its appropriate partners in determining such standards and criteria. CPL assessments are driven by course student learning outcomes. Courses, programs, and other learning experiences will be judged on learning outcomes, using valid evaluation measures, such as third-party review by appropriately qualified reviewers and recommendations from organizations experienced with such evaluations (e.g., ACE, CAEL).

7.2 Institutions should regularly monitor, review, evaluate, and revise CPL assessments and services as needed to ensure academic integrity.

7.3 Credit is not awarded for experience but rather for college-level learning, which entails knowledge, skills, and competencies that students have obtained as a result of their prior learning. In the case of courses that have experiential learning as part of their course learning outcomes, CPL may be awarded. CPL is rooted in the notion that legitimate, college-level learning can be achieved outside the traditional classroom setting, such that the learning is equivalent to college-level courses.

Standard 8 - Transparency/Access

8.1 Institutional CPL policies and expectations should be clearly communicated to students, faculty, staff, and community partners. CPL information should be in the college catalog, be available electronically on the institution's website, and be searchable using the term "Credit for Prior Learning." The following information should be included:

- Institutional CPL contacts
- Available CPL opportunities and preparation requirements
- Process for students or faculty to request additional or alternative CPL offerings
- Fee Structure(s)
- Risks to students and the cost of assessment where credit may not be awarded
- Information about financial aid, resources, grants, and scholarships
- Information regarding the applicability of CPL towards certificate or degree programs including the number of CPL credits that can be used for a certificate or degree and the number of required residency credits.
- Information regarding transferability
- Risk of credit overload for non-program-related credit
- Appeals process information
- CPL applicability towards academic residency requirements
- Any other related CPL institutional information

8.2 All information about CPL should be made available in languages that are relevant to the local service area.

Glossary

This information is included to define the general usage of certain terms throughout the document and in recognition of the fact that these specific terms may vary from institution to institution.

Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) (ORS 350.110) – The knowledge and skills gained through work and life experience, through military training and experience, and through formal and informal education and training from institutions of higher education in the United States and other nations. Also, at times referred to as **Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)**.

Assessment – A systematic process of evaluating and measuring the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other relevant characteristics of students or participants within an educational context.

CPL by 3rd party assessment – Certain types of CPL, such as standardized exams (CLEP, AP, IB) and Military Credit (awarded based on ACE recommendation), are awarded based on accepting third-party administered tests and evaluation/assessments rather than relying on direct institutional faculty assessment instruments. Also referred to as **Externally Conducted Assessment**.

Crosswalk – A systematic alignment or mapping process that establishes consistent equivalencies between the knowledge, skills, and competencies gained through prior learning experiences and the specific learning outcomes or requirements of academic courses or programs. The purpose of a crosswalk is to provide a clear connection between what an individual has learned through non-traditional means and what is expected in a formal educational setting. For example, being a licensed childcare provider in the state of Washington could crosswalk into specific ECE courses. The specific transferability should be established within the institution.

Equivalency – For CPL-related work, equivalency is defined as seventy percent of course learning outcomes matching between the CPL source and the college-level course learning outcomes.

Externally Conducted Assessment – Acknowledgement of accomplishments created, administered, and maintained by third-party entities outside of the accredited academic institution. Also referred to as **CPL by Third Party Assessment**

External Partner – CPL partners outside of the institution, including businesses, industry, labor, community-based organizations, workforce development, and others who support or partner with institutions on CPL.

Institutional/Challenge Exams – Institutionally developed and administered exams, sometimes called 'challenge' exams or 'institutional exam credit.

Institutional Credit – Credit that is issued directly by the institution, assessed by institutional faculty, and recorded on its official transcript, as opposed to credit an institution might accept in transfer from another institution.

Policies and Procedures – Standards by which schools implement the CPL guidelines, recognizing these are called different things at different institutions, such as standards, regulations, board policy, administrative rules, etc.

Portfolio Assessment – A method used to evaluate and document an individual's prior learning experiences, knowledge, and skills. Instead of relying solely on traditional exams or coursework, a portfolio serves as a comprehensive collection of evidence that demonstrates a person's proficiency in specific subject areas.

Prior Experiential Learning (PEL) – Credit granted toward the award of a certificate or degree for prior learning experiences that can be shown through various means of assessment to be the equivalent of learning gained through formal collegiate instruction. Also known as **Credit for Prior Learning (CPL)**.

Acronym List

ACE	American Council on Education
AP	Advanced Placement
CAEL	Council for Adult and Experiential Learning
CLEP	College Level Examination Program
CPL	Credit for Prior Learning
DANTES	Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Educational Support
DSST	DANTES Subject Standardized Tests
HB	House Bill
IB	International Baccalaureate
JST	Joint Services Transcript
HECC	Higher Education Coordinating Commission
NWCCU	Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
OAR	Oregon Administrative Rule
ODE	Oregon Department of Education
ORS	Oregon Revised Statute
PLA	Prior Learning Assessment is synonymous with CPL
PEL	Prior Experiential Learning
SB	Senate Bill