Texas Woman's University
Undergraduate Education Policy
Division of Curriculum and Strategic Initiatives
Office of the Executive VP for Academic Affairs and Provost

Awarding Undergraduate Credit for Prior Learning
Business, Industry, Government-Certifications and Examinations

INTRODUCTION

For over 50 years, Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) has provided a means for undergraduate students to earn college, accelerating their path to degree completion. According to Travers (2012), CPL is the granting of college credit for college-level learning acquired through various experiences, including, but not limited to, workplace training, military training and experience, civic activities, and volunteer service. This process acknowledges that valuable learning can occur in diverse contexts beyond the classroom, making higher education more accessible and efficient. CPL encompasses various assessment methods tailored to different types of prior learning, allowing institutions to award credit for incoming students' existing competencies. Texas Woman's University (TWU) is not a stranger to CPL, and it recognizes that undergraduate students may acquire college-level knowledge and skills through various experiences outside the traditional classroom setting. It also awards undergraduate CPL via credit by examination and military credit. TWU also has a graduate policy toward CPLA.

Nowadays, awarding undergraduate academic credit via CPL for business, industry, and government- certifications and examinations (i.e., FAA-Private Pilot, AWS, CompTIA, etc.) is often considered a strategic approach toward higher education and has become increasingly crucial in the current educational landscape. This practice bridges the gap between academia and industry, recognizing the value of learning outside traditional classrooms (Klein-Collins & Wertheim, 2013). It aligns higher education more closely with workforce needs, improving graduate employability and addressing skills gaps (Travers, 2012). For students, it can accelerate degree completion, reduce educational costs, and increase motivation, particularly for adult learners (Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, 2010). Institutions benefit from increased enrollment and improved retention rates, especially among non-traditional students (Hayward & Williams, 2015). It also enhances the relevance and currency of academic programs, as business, industry, and government certifications and examinations often reflect the latest technological advancements and industry practices (Lekes et al., 2007). From an equity perspective, recognizing business, industry, and government certifications and

examinations can provide alternative pathways to higher education, potentially increasing access for underrepresented groups (Klein-Collins et al., 2020).

POLICY STATEMENT

This policy is optional for academic components and their programs; it is their prerogative to adopt or implement it. The policy establishes the framework and guidelines for awarding undergraduate students CPL for business, industry, and government certification and examinations. It aims to recognize valuable learning acquired outside traditional academic settings while maintaining the integrity and standards of TWU's academic programs. Most importantly, it enhances TWU's ability to meet the needs of modern learners and support economic development, thereby potentially reducing time to degree completion and avoiding unnecessary duplication of learning. This policy aligns with SACSCOC principles, particularly Standard 10.8 on evaluating and awarding academic credit for extracurricular coursework and training, and its policy for non-degree credentials (SACSCOC, 2024).

APPLICABILITY

This policy applies only to TWU academic components that decide to accept and award CPL for business, industry, and government certifications and examinations and to TWU undergraduate students seeking CPL. The academic component has the prerogative to accept and award CPL for business, industry, and government certifications and examinations.

DEFINITIONS

1. "Credit for Prior Learning" (CPL) is the process of evaluating and recognizing learning gained outside a traditional academic environment for academic credit.

2. "CPL for Business, Industry, and Government Certifications and Examinations" refers to the process of awarding college-level credit for knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired through professional certifications, industry-standard examinations, and governmental credentials determined to be equivalent to the learning outcomes of specific college courses.

REGULATION AND PROCEDURE

I.   This form of CPL recognizes and validates the academic value of achievements and expertise gained in professional, industrial, and governmental contexts outside the traditional academic classroom.

   A. TWU will consider awarding undergraduate credit for eligible business, industry, and government certifications and examinations through a structured CPL process, subject to evaluation and approval by the relevant academic components and subject matter experts.

   B. Students must be admitted to TWU and enrolled as degree-seeking students in a program that decided to award CPL for business, industry, and government certifications and examinations to be eligible.

   C. TWU may award a maximum of 30 credit hours, or 25% of the degree program (whichever is less) through CPL for Business, Industry, and Government Certifications and Examinations, following the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) guidelines.

      1. These credits will be recorded as transfer credits direct equivalencies (title course included) on the student's transcript as and will not impact their GPA.

      2. Must apply directly to the student's degree program and may not transfer if the student changes majors.

         a. The student's academic advisor will notify the Registrar's Office and the Office of Student Records to remove CPL credits when a degree program change is outside the approved major.

      3. These credits cannot be used to meet TWU's residency requirements and must not duplicate credit earned through traditional coursework.

      4. These credits cannot transfer or be counted as part of the "core curriculum." These credits earned may not be transferable to other institutions.

   D. Students seeking CPL must email their academic component administrator (ACA) and submit a formal evaluation request, along with

the official TWU CPL application form and official documentation of the certification or examination.

1.   The official TWU CPL application form for business, industry, and government certifications and examinations will be housed in the Registrar's Office and available on the Registrar's and the Office of Curriculum and Strategic Initiatives webpage.

E. The certifications and examinations under consideration must be current and valid at the student's enrollment and the evaluation by the relevant academic component. These credentials must be issued by recognized industry organizations or companies approved by the appropriate academic component at TWU. The certification or examination's learning outcomes must align with TWU course outcomes or program requirements. The final determination of eligibility and credit award is at the discretion of the relevant academic component. Meeting these eligibility criteria does not guarantee the credit award, as each certification or examination will be evaluated on its merits and aligned with TWU's academic standards and curriculum.

F. The academic component will evaluate the submitted materials, with the authority to award credit resting solely with the academic component and its subject matter experts. This process aligns with SACSCOC Standard 10.8, emphasizing institutional responsibility in evaluating and awarding credit.

G. The academic component will assess factors such as the alignment with program learning outcomes, depth of knowledge, rigor of the certification process, the certifying body's reputation, and the certification's currency.

1.   They will determine the equivalent TWU course(s) and the number of credits to award, if any.

2.   After evaluation, the academic unit will notify the Office of the Registrar and the Office of Student Records.

H. Each academic component must maintain an updated list of recognized certifications and examinations, including their TWU program, course equivalencies, number of credits, and the date of the last review. This list must be reviewed annually to ensure it remains relevant. It must be published in the TWU Catalog and on the CPL webpage supported by the Office of Curriculum and Strategic Initiatives.
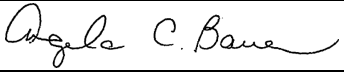
POLICY OWNER AND PUBLICATION

The policy owner will be Academic Affairs and housed in the division of Curriculum and Strategic Initiatives. The undergraduate policy will be published and available for the public on the Office of Curriculum and Strategic Initiatives webpage.

REVIEW

This undergraduate policy will remain in effect and published until it is reviewed, updated, or archived. This policy is to be reviewed once every **six** years. Interim review and administrative changes may be required due to updates to federal and state law or regulations, business, industry, and government changes, Board of Regents policies, or internal processes or procedures.

Approvals	Dates
TWU Undergraduate Council	12/04/2024
Executive VP for Academic Affairs and Provost	*Angela C. Bauer*
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Effective	January 2, 2025

REFERENCES

Council for Adult and Experiential Learning. (2010). *Fueling the race to postsecondary success: A 48-institution study of prior learning assessment and adult student outcomes.*
https://www.cael.org/pla/publication/fueling-the-race-to-postsecondary-success

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Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. (2024). *Resource manual for the principles of accreditation: Foundations for quality enhancement* (2024ed.).
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Travers, N. L. (2012). What is next after 40 years? Part 1: Prior learning assessment: 1970–2011.*The Journal of Continuing Higher Education, 60*(1), 43-47. https://doi.org/10.1080/07377363.2012.650571

LINKS

TWU Graduate CPLA policy
TWU Transfer Coursework Catalog Page
TWU Other Types of Undergraduate Admissions Catalog Page
TWU Credit by Examination Catalog Page
UNT Evaluating, Awarding, and Accepting Credit Policy
UNT Guidelines for Awarding Transfer and Non-traditional Learning Credit
Stephen F. Austin Credit for Prior Learning Policies
University of Central Florida Awarding Academic Credit Policy
Alabama State University Prior Learning Assessment Policy
University of Maryland-Global Campus Academic Credit for Prior Learning and Military Experience Policy
University of Arizona CPL policy (catalog)
Regis University Credit for Prior Learning Policy
Purdue Global-Prior Learning Guidelines
Texas State University CPL via PLA webpage
Sul Ross State University Transfer and Award of Academic Credit Policy
University System of Maryland Policy on Credit for Competency Based Education and Prior Learning
Houston Community College Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) webpage
Sam Houston State University Academic Credit for Experiential Learning Policy
San Jacinto College Credit for Prior Learning webpage
Alvin Community College Prior Learning Assessment webpage
Brazosport College Credit for Prior Learning
College of the Mainland Earning Credit Through Prior Learning Experiences webpage
Lone State College Prior Learning Assessment webpage
Texas Southern University PLA Catalog Page
Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL)