

System-wide Policy: GE0007 - Awarding Credit for Prior Learning	
Version: 1	Effective Date: 08/10/2026

SECTION 1. Policy Statement

I. Introduction

- A. The University's primary education delivery occurs via traditional academic methods; however, UT universities recognize that many current and prospective students can demonstrate college-level knowledge and competencies acquired outside of the traditional university setting.
- B. In recognition of the value of non-traditional learning methods, the University maintains a Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) policy, also known as Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), to evaluate a student's body of knowledge on a given subject, where the student has learned the material outside of a traditional university setting.
- C. Formal and informal experiences that may present the opportunity for learning that would qualify for CPL include work experience; employer training programs, certifications; professional skills workshops and seminars; volunteer work; military service; self-directed study; foreign language proficiency; and college-level coursework completed outside of the college setting.
- D. CPL is most beneficial when it is applied to fulfill a specific degree or credential requirement, not electives.

II. Technology

Campuses in the UT System must adopt a systemwide technology solution to streamline CPL administration, ensure consistency and transparency in credit evaluation, and enhance access for students.

III. Evaluation Methods and Standardization

- A. Campuses in the UT System must adopt methods and appropriately train personnel for evaluating CPL in these categories:
 - 1. **Military Occupational Specialties and Training:** Veterans and active military personnel may have their transcripts evaluated to determine if CPL may be granted for military education, training, and/or occupations.
 - 2. **Pre-assessed Experiences:** Students who have completed professional or standardized training, licensure, micro-credentials or non-credit coursework, certifications, workplace training, and exams (e.g., AP, CLEP, IB, DSST, challenge exams), or credit recommendations from third-party evaluators (e.g., American Council on Education) may

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have their experiences and credentials evaluated by a faculty member or other subject matter expert to determine if CPL may be granted.

3. **Portfolio Assessment:** Students who have completed other learning experiences outside the classroom setting may demonstrate their knowledge and skills by compiling a portfolio of their applicable learning experiences and providing supporting documentation. Portfolios shall be evaluated by a faculty member or other subject matter expert to determine if CPL may be granted.
- B. Campuses in the UT System must adopt these practices to ensure standardization of CPL evaluation methods:
 1. The standards for evaluating and awarding CPL must be uniform within campuses and consistent across the system, regardless of where the prior learning took place and independent of the learning modality by which it was acquired. Exceptions to the standards should be evaluated by a system-led advisory committee and documented.
 2. The process for evaluating and awarding CPL must be uniform within campuses and consistent across the system, to the maximum extent practicable, regardless of the particular college, department, school, or program of study.
 3. The procedure for allowing students to request CPL must be transparent and clearly communicated. All student requests for CPL must be evaluated in a timely and efficient manner.
 4. The CPL policies and procedures must be clearly and consistently communicated in admissions and advising practices.
 5. The faculty or designated subject matter experts, or both, who conduct prior learning assessment must be appropriately credentialed and have adequate resources and training to conduct those assessments.
 6. Consider incentivizing or compensating faculty and designated subject matter experts for their time to evaluate CPL.
 7. Portfolio assessment and evaluation must be a focused, efficient process that validates prior learning in a way that is more meaningful and less burdensome than retaking coursework. The process must remain manageable and not overly cumbersome for students and faculty.
 8. When awarding credit to students who are veterans or military service members, the institution will reference the Joint Services Transcript (JST), DD-214 and/or transcripts

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from the Army/American Council on Education Registry Transcript System (AARTS), Community College of Air Force (CCAF), and the Coast Guard Institute (CGI).

9. Maintain a record of previously evaluated industry- or employer-recognized credentials within the selected systemwide technology to avoid reevaluating the same credentials year after year.

IV. Awarding Practices

Campuses must aim to prioritize the application of credit to fulfill requirements on the path to a student's chosen degree or credential as opposed to defaulting CPL to elective credit. The following practices could be superseded by regional accreditation standards, a particular consortia arrangement or articulation agreement.

A. Credit Caps and Limits

1. Depending on the level or mastery of the learning achieved, CPL may count as lower- or upper-division or graduate credit.
2. CPL shall not count toward the 25 percent residency requirement.
3. CPL policies at each campus shall at a minimum allow for 30 CPL credits to be applied toward undergraduate degree completion.

B. Transcripts

1. Credit earned from CPL will be noted on the student's transcript with a designated code and identified as pass/fail.
2. The subject and course number of the course for which the credit is being given will be posted on the transcript if there is a direct course match. This might be the case for military transcripts and some pre-assessed examinations.
3. Pre-assessed examinations and portfolios that do not align with a direct course match may be awarded as a unique field of study designated by a special CPL subject and course number, at the discretion of each campus.

C. Transferability

1. CPL that has been evaluated and awarded by one UT campus must be honored by all other UT campuses upon a student's transfer and must not be subject to reevaluation by faculty or departments.

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2. Campuses must share evaluations with other UT campuses to facilitate awarding of CPL in a timely and efficient manner.
3. The receiving UT campus may evaluate previously awarded CPL credit for students transferring from a non-UT campus.

D. Affordability

1. CPL is not an eligible expense under most federal financial aid programs. Each campus must establish processes to keep CPL fees low or provide other support to ensure this type of credit is affordable for current and prospective students.
2. Each campus must establish procedures to minimize CPL fees. Fees must be based on the services performed in the process and not determined by the number of credit awarded; however, fee structure may vary depending on the assessment method and the institution.
3. The total cost of CPL assessed and awarded must not exceed the tuition cost that would have been charged for equivalent coursework delivered through traditional instruction.

V. University Websites

The UT System Office of Academic Affairs, Research, and Student Success must maintain a centralized CPL landing page outlining CPL opportunities systemwide with links to campus-specific resources. CPL policies and opportunities are to be clearly stated and published on individual campus websites. Where applicable, the campus website will link to relevant academic unit websites that offer CPL options.

VI. Data Tracking and Reporting

- A. Each campus must utilize uniform data collection and reporting methods to facilitate systemwide alignment.
- B. At minimum, each campus must establish procedures to track the number of students requesting CPL, the number of students being awarded CPL, the number of CPL credits awarded, each category of CPL the campus provides, and other related metrics that demonstrate effectiveness.
- C. Designated campus offices will report data to the system office annually.

SECTION 2. Reason for the Policy

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The purpose of this policy is to establish uniformity and consistency regarding the awarding of credit for prior learning (CPL) for the University of Tennessee. Through this policy, the University provides a general structure under which campuses should administer and deliver CPL opportunities to students and support the transfer of CPL credits across the UT System.

Improved CPL processes across the UT System have the potential to address challenges with recruiting adult learners in the state of Tennessee. UT campuses report inconsistent evaluation and reporting of CPL, with no established process to ensure the transferability of these credits across campuses. Current and prospective UT students face inconsistent access to and limited knowledge of CPL opportunities.

By implementing a systemwide policy we aim to increase CPL offerings at universities of the UT System, normalize its use and encourage more students to take advantage of CPL, and develop sustainable and scalable practices that support CPL growth while maintaining consistent quality.

SECTION 3. Scope and Application

This policy applies to all University employees.

SECTION 4. Procedures

The University System has not adopted systemwide procedures for this policy. The System Office of Academic Affairs, Research, and Student Success may issue process guidance to facilitate compliance with this policy and applicable state laws.

Academic units at each university shall determine the specific procedures they wish to utilize to grant and deny CPL, in collaboration with the campus leadership and System Office of Academic Affairs, Research, and Student Success.

It is incumbent on universities to provide quality advising relative to CPL. Therefore, university procedures will ensure that advisors are well-versed in CPL opportunities and are trained to provide clear guidance to students.

SECTION 5. Definitions

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Credit for Prior Learning (CPL): The University of Tennessee System will adopt the American Council on Education's (ACE) definition of CPL: Academic credit granted for demonstrated college-level equivalencies gained through learning experiences outside of the college classroom, using one of the well-established methods for assessing extra-institutional learning, including third-party validation of formal training or individualized assessment, such as portfolios.

Non-credit Education or Non-degree Credit: Includes any course or program that did not go through the process to count as credit toward a degree at a community college or university.

Portfolio Assessment: A collection of a student's work, experiences, exhibitions, and self-reflections that serve as a showcase and documentation of their learning.

Procedure: A step-by-step set of instructions for how to carry out a specific task or policy to ensure consistency and accuracy.

Process: A broader sequence of activities or operations that lead to a desired outcome. It may include multiple procedures.

Standard: A formalized expectation or benchmark that defines what should be achieved or maintained.

SECTION 6. Penalties/Disciplinary Action for Non-Compliance

There are no penalties/disciplinary action for non-compliance associated with this policy.

SECTION 7. Responsible Official & Additional Contacts

Campus	Name	Title	Telephone Number	Email/Web Address
UT System	Erin Crisp	AVP Learner Success and Workforce Pathways	865-974-8764	Erin@tennessee.edu
UT Knoxville	Beth Foster	Vice Provost for Academic Affairs	865-974-2445	Bethaveryfoster@utk.edu

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UT Chattanooga	Amanda Clark	Associate Dean and Co-Director of Integrated Studies, College of Arts and Sciences	423-425-4228	Amanda-clark@utc.edu
UT Martin	Stephanie Kolitsch	Associate Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs	731-881-7477	Skolitsc@utm.edu
UT Health Science Center	Kristi Forman	Director of Admissions Operations	901-448-3285	Kforman1@uthsc.edu
UT Southern	Chris Mattingly	Vice Provost for Academic Affairs	931-424-4060	Cmattingly@utsouthern.edu

SECTION 8. Policy History

Effective: XX/XX/XXXX

SECTION 9. Related Policies/Guidance Documents

Joint Statement on the Transfer and Award of Credit: <https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/2021-Joint-Statement-Award-of-Credit.pdf>

American Council on Education: Awarding Credit for Prior Learning: <https://www.acenet.edu/Programs-Services/Pages/Credit-Transcripts/Awarding-Credit-for-Prior-Learning.aspx>

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The National Landscape of Credit for Prior Learning: Effective State and System Policies for Success and Equity: <https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/National-Landscape-CPL-2024.pdf>

CAEL's Ten Quality Standards for Assessing Prior Learning: [https://www.cael.org/hubfs/CAEL%20Assessing%20Learning%20Standards%20Toolkit%20Sept%202023%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.cael.org/hubfs/CAEL%20Assessing%20Learning%20Standards%20Toolkit%20Sept%202023%20(1).pdf)

CAEL PLA Data Tracking:

https://www.cael.org//hubfs/pdfs/CAEL_PLADataTracking_2016.pdf
