

# **EXCEL Program**

## **TRINITY COLLEGE**

### **Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Frequently Asked Questions**

Trinity recognizes that adult students have had many learning experiences prior to their entrance into the EXCEL Program. EXCEL offers a variety of ways through which you may be able to earn college credit for learning acquired through these life experiences. This learning may have been acquired through your professional/job endeavors, ministry/church activities, personal or family events or education in unaccredited settings. You may receive credit for college level learning gained through these experiences, not for the experiences themselves. This learning may be demonstrated in a variety of ways:

- Credit by examination through CLEP and DSST
- ACE assessed credit for military training
- Life Learning Papers (LLP)
- Business and Professional Training (BPT)

The following questions are designed to clarify how you might receive college credit through these options.

#### **1. Who do I talk to about PLA at EXCEL?**

The Coordinator of EXCEL Records manages the PLA process. Talk to your advisor about your options.

#### **2. What is the limit for PLA credit?**

A maximum of 32 credits can be granted for prior learning. This includes credit awarded by CLEP/DSST, ACE credit, Life Learning Papers and Business and Professional Training.

#### **3. Can I use PLA to substitute for core requirement of a major, or to meet General Education requirements?**

No. Prior Learning credits may not be used for core requirements in a major, or to meet General Education requirements. PLA credits may be applied toward Free Electives for the degree.

#### **4. What is CLEP/DSST?**

*College-Level Examination Program (CLEP)* is administered by the Educational Testing Service (ETS). ETS also administers the STA, ACT and other exams.

More information can be found at [www.ets.org](http://www.ets.org) and [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org).

DSST (DANTES Standardized Tests, formerly known as Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support) is administered by the military, but open to civilians.

More information can be found at [www.getcollegetcredit.com](http://www.getcollegetcredit.com).

Both of these exams award credit based on receiving a passing score as determined by CLEP/DSST and Trinity College. The credit is not given a grade and does not count toward the

GPA. Students can prepare for the exams through study guides and practice tests at the test websites.

These tests are available in many subject areas, such as: Business, Composition, Literature, Foreign Language, History, Social Science, Science, and Mathematics. Contact your Academic Advisor to see if such tests might be an option.

#### **5. Where can I take CLEP/DSST tests and how much do they cost?**

Locations and costs vary but are available at the CLEP and DSST websites listed above.

#### **6. What is ACE?**

The *American College on Education* is composed of over fifteen hundred institutions of higher learning and national and regional education associations, and is the major non-governmental body concerned with postsecondary education. ACE evaluates military and professional training programs, determines the level of learning and recommends the amount of credit that should be granted.

At the present time, EXCEL accepts credit for military training through ACE. More information can be found at [www.acenet.edu](http://www.acenet.edu).

#### **7. What is a Life Learning Paper?**

Life Learning Papers (LLPs) earn credit by demonstrating college-level learning acquired through life experience apart from formal training. This can include learning from a variety of settings including travel abroad, family, and work and ministry experiences. Learning is demonstrated through writing a paper clearly describing learning outcomes. Faculty evaluate the LLPs. Students must participate in a Prior Learning Assessment Workshop before they can pursue such credit. For planning purposes, an early start on this process is encouraged. Credit in this area is granted based on CAEL (*Council for Adult and Experiential Learning*) standards.

#### **8. What is Business and Professional Training (BPT)?**

Business and Professional Training (BPT) demonstrates college-level learning through nontranscribed training experiences such as workshops and conferences. The student documents learning through providing documentation regarding the curriculum, organization, trainers/teachers and hours. Faculty evaluate the BPTs. Students must participate in a Prior Learning Assessment Workshop before they can pursue such credit.

#### **9. What is college-level learning?**

College-level learning must demonstrate the following characteristics:

- Be measurable through documentation
- Be at a level of achievement defined by faculty as university equivalent or consistent with the learning of other students in university studies
- Be applicable outside of the specific job or context in which it was learned
- Have a knowledge base
- Be reasonably current
- Imply a theoretical or conceptual as well as practical understanding

- Show some relationship to degree goals and/or lifelong learning goals, and
- Not repeat learning for which credit has already been earned

#### **10. What is Advanced Placement (AP) credit?**

Some students earn AP credit in their high schools studies. These credits were earned through having acceptable scores in the Advanced Placement Program of the *College Entrance Examination Board*. An acceptable score is a grade of 3 or better. The student should have the appropriate materials and scores submitted to the EXCEL Records Office.

#### **11. How much does PLA cost?**

CLEP, DSST and ACE credits are paid to those organizations and are determined by those organizations. Trinity does not charge a transcription fee for these credits.

For LLP papers, fees are based on the number of credits petitioned, not the number of credits earned. Students pay a petition fee, and a per credit fee for each credit being petitioned. For example, if the petition and per credit fee were \$100 (the 2009-2010 rate), petitioning for 3 credits for an LLP paper would cost a total of \$400. This cost includes \$100 for the petition, and \$100 for each credit being petitioned. In the case of BPTs, the fee of \$100.00 per credit (or whatever the latest fee is) is based on transcribed credit the student will request once credit has been awarded by the reader. There is no fee for the Prior Learning Assessment Workshop.

#### **12. Does Financial Aid cover PLA?**

No. Financial aid is not available for this type of evaluation.

#### **13. How does PLA credit appear on the transcript?**

PLA credit appears on the transcript in the semester in which it was earned. It is listed as a number of credits with no grade.

#### **14. When can I start on PLA?**

LLPs and BPTs may be petitioned anytime after you take the Prior Learning Assessment Workshop, and receive approval of your proposed topic (via the appropriate PLA Topic Approval Form). The workshop is offered twice a year at the Davie location.

CLEP, DSST and ACE credits may be submitted at any time during the student's time in EXCEL.

AP credits should be submitted at the time of admission to Trinity along with other transcripts.

#### **15. Is there an appeals process for Prior Learning Assessment?**

Yes. Appeals regarding Prior Learning Assessment can be made through the regular EXCEL appeals process found in your EXCEL catalog. The only difference is that your initial meeting will be with the Director of Student Services rather than the faculty reader of the PLA.