

CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING POLICY

Sponsor: Office of Academic Affairs

Contact: Office of the Provost

Category: Academic

Policy Number: 100.101

Effective Date: 9/2/2025

Implementation History: 07/01/2007 to replace Resources and Criteria sections 801 and 803, and elements of Policies and Procedures

"Advanced Standing: Policies and Procedures that Govern the Assessment of Prior Learning." First approved by SUNY Empire State University Senate 5/19/2006.

Review Date: TBD

Keywords: Individualized Prior Learning Assessment, iPLA, PLA, Prior Learning Assessment Background Information:

Purpose

SUNY Empire State University students may have gained knowledge from sources that are not validated in traditional classrooms, by standardized examinations or pre-evaluated learning. SUNY Empire is committed to the idea that people should be awarded credit for that learning regardless of where or how it was acquired for undergraduate programs and some graduate programs. This policy outlines how the university, in accordance with SUNY policy, (https://www.sunyempire.edu/_resources/pdfs/policies/Award-of-Academic-Credit-by-Evaluation.pdf) grants credit for verifiable college-level learning.

Definitions

Advanced Level: Study that builds on introductory level learning that involves higher levels of abstraction, increasingly extensive knowledge, complex content, and greater methodological sophistication. It is also known as upper-level study. (undergraduate)

General Education: The SUNY GE framework which includes twelve categories of knowledge, skills, and competencies—ten knowledge and skills areas expose students to different ways of knowing so that they can make reasoned judgements outside as well as inside their academic field and enabling them to develop diverse perspectives and global understanding; and two core competencies that extend beyond discipline-specific knowledge and skills.

Introductory Level: Beginning, foundational learning also known as lower-level study (undergraduate).

Liberal Arts and Sciences/Liberal Studies: Liberal Arts and Sciences studies have a strong theoretical content, generally from the disciplines of the humanities, natural sciences, mathematics, and social sciences (undergraduate).

Individualized Credit for Prior Learning (iCPL): The process by which the university evaluates a student's knowledge for possible college-level learning obtained through experiences outside the traditional college classroom such as workplace training, personal research, and special interests.

Policy Statements

Guiding Principles

The Middle States Commission (the university's regional accreditation body), the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), and SUNY recommend that each institution make explicit and public its approach to credit for prior learning (CPL). These bodies have identified several elements of prior learning assessment for which the institution should define specific principles and standards.

SUNY Empire's principles support institutional integrity by ensuring that credit awards are credible and reflect student learning. The university also recognizes emergent knowledge areas and perspectives, as well as experience-based learning by adults, which may not be represented in standard college curricula.

Empire State University:

Scope of Learning

1. recognizes students' college-level learning, however it is acquired
2. awards credit only for college-level learning, not for experience per se
3. awards credit only once for the same learning within a student's overall degree
4. allow prior-learning credit to apply toward any part of a student's undergraduate degree unless otherwise stated in the catalog
5. allows prior-learning credit to apply toward designated graduate programs as identified in the catalog
6. advances equity and inclusion by acknowledging that college-level learning takes place in a wide range of spaces from which our students have experience, knowledge, and skills and promotes equity and inclusion in the assessment process

Award of Credit

1. expects prior learning recommendations to meet the university's quality criteria, as outlined in policy
2. relies on the SUNY Empire faculty to approve the award of credit, and to determine the nature of the credit (e.g., level, liberal arts and sciences status, general education status)
3. clearly advises students that prior-learning credit awarded by the university may or may not transfer to other institutions

Student Responsibilities

1. recognizes that the process of identifying, articulating, and evaluating prior college-level learning is itself a significant learning experience for students
2. expects students to articulate and demonstrate their college-level learning and to participate actively in the evaluation process

University

1. provides for fair, consistent, and timely treatment of students
2. fully discloses to students the university's policies and procedures for prior-learning assessment, including associated fees
3. relies on subject matter experts, with the appropriate credentials to teach at the degree level and expertise relevant to a prior-learning request, to evaluate student learning using

appropriate methodologies and to make recommendations regarding college credit

4. provides systematic, periodic training to prior-learning evaluators, as well as staff and faculty responsible for quality review
5. supports institutional integrity in prior-learning assessment through such means as ensuring that there is no conflict of interest on the part of an evaluator who conducts a prior-learning assessment and that an evaluator does not assess too much credit for one student

Quality Review

1. periodically evaluates available resources and the fairness, quality, and effectiveness of credit for prior-learning

Sources of potential credit are included in the SUNY Empire catalog, and include the following:

- pre-evaluated training, certificates and licenses, including military training;
- standardized and departmental examinations;
- individualized assessment by expert

SUNY Empire does not necessarily use course catalog equivalents to automatically allow or exclude consideration of a request for prior learning credit. Credit is awarded on a case-by-case basis as outlined in the catalog and in procedures for individualized CPL. The faculty of the university is responsible for approving the award of prior learning credit by the university. The university does not assign grades for CPL and these components are not included in a SUNY Empire GPA. Credit awarded through this process is for learning at a level which is equivalent to a C or better at the undergraduate level, and B or better at the graduate level.

Applicable Legislation and Regulations

- Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) Transfer Credit, Prior Learning, and (<https://www.msche.org/policies-guidelines/page/7/?ppp=view-all>) Articulation Agreements Policy, Guidelines, and Procedures (<https://www.msche.org/policies-guidelines/page/7/?ppp=view-all>)
- Council on Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) 10 Standards for Assessing Learning (<https://www.cael.org/ten-standards-for-assessing-learning/>)
- NYS Education Department Guidance on Liberal Arts and Sciences Content (<https://www.nysed.gov/college-university-evaluation/department-expectations-curriculum/#c>)
- Award of Academic Credit by Evaluation (suny.edu) (<https://system.suny.edu/media/suny/content-assets/documents/academic-affairs/aace/Award-of-Academic-Credit-by-Evaluation.pdf>)
- SUNY General Education Requirements (<https://www2.nysed.gov/heds/IRPSL1.html>)
- Department Expectations: Admissions, Academic Support Services, Credit for Experience and (<https://www.nysed.gov/college-university-evaluation/department-expectations-admissions-academic-support-services-credit/>) Program Assessment and Improvement | New York State Education Department (nysed.gov) (<https://www.nysed.gov/college-university-evaluation/department-expectations-admissions-academic-support-services-credit/>)

Related References, Policies, Procedures, Forms and Appendices

- Individualized Program Design, Review, and Approval Policy and Procedures (<https://www.sunyempire.edu/policies/individual-degree-program-design-review-and-approval.html>)
- Student Academic Appeals Policy (<https://www.sunyempire.edu/policies/student-academic-appeals-policy.html>)
- Department Expectations: Curriculum | New York State Education Department (nysed.gov) (<https://www.nysed.gov/college-university-evaluation/department-expectations-curriculum/#c>)