

The Council for Adult & Experiential Learning (CAEL)

http://www.cael.org/online_pla_certificate_program.htm

The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) is a national, non-profit organization whose mission is to expand learning opportunities for adults. CAEL works to remove policy and organizational barriers to learning opportunities, identifies and disseminates effective practices, and delivers value-added services.

CAEL helps institutions of higher education:

- * Attract and retain more adult learners.
- * Acquire skills to assess their prior learning.
- * Expand their market to the corporate and government communities.

Benefits: CAEL offers colleges and universities more than 30 years experience in:

- * Enhancing adult student recruitment, retention, advising and career development.
- * Assessing prior learning for college credit.
- * Creating adult learning programs and career pathway programs that address critical skills gaps identified by business and/or the public sector.

CAEL has established and disseminated standards for the awarding of credit through assessment, has trained faculty evaluators, and has conducted research on the outcomes of these efforts. CAEL encourages institutions to offer a range of PLA assessment options, but our work places special emphasis on the portfolio method of assessment.

PLA Options

Prior Learning Assessment is not just one method or tool. PLA includes options such as:

- **Experiential Learning Assessments:** also known as individualized student portfolios or interviews
- **Evaluation of Local Training:** program evaluations done by individual colleges of non-collegiate instructional programs
- **American Council on Education (ACE) Guides:** published credit recommendations for formal instructional programs offered by non-collegiate agencies, both civilian employers and the military
- **Challenge Exams:** local tests developed by a college to verify learning achievement
- **Advanced Placement (AP) Exams:** a series of tests developed by the College Board initially for AP High School courses - 34 exams in 19 subject areas

- **College Level Examination Program (CLEP) Exams:** tests of college material offered by the College Board
- **Excelsior College Examination Program,** (formerly, Regents College Exams or ACT/PEP Exams), offered by Excelsior College, NY
- **DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST) Program,** conducted by the Chauncey Group International, a division of Thomson Prometric tests knowledge of basic entry-level college material through 37 exams

Ten Standards for Assessing Learning

http://www.cael.org/standards_assessing_learning.htm

1. Credit or its equivalent should be awarded only for learning, and not for experience.
2. Assessment should be based on standards and criteria for the level of acceptable learning that are both agreed upon and made public.
3. Assessment should be treated as an integral part of learning, not separate from it, and should be based on an understanding of learning processes.
4. The determination of credit awards and competence levels must be made by appropriate subject matter and academic or credentialing experts.
5. Credit or other credentialing should be appropriate to the context in which it is awarded and accepted.
6. If awards are for credit, transcript entries should clearly describe what learning is being recognized and should be monitored to avoid giving credit twice for the same learning.
7. Policies, procedures, and criteria applied to assessment, including provision for appeal, should be fully disclosed and prominently available to all parties involved in the assessment process.
8. Fees charged for assessment should be based on the services performed in the process and not determined by the amount of credit awarded.
9. All personnel involved in the assessment of learning should pursue and receive adequate training and continuing professional development for the functions they perform.
10. Assessment programs should be regularly monitored, reviewed, evaluated, and revised as needed to reflect changes in the needs being served, the purposes being met, and the state of the assessment arts.

Taken from Morry Fiddler, Catherine Marienau, and Urban Whitaker. *Assessing Learning: Standards, Principles, and Procedures*. Second Edition. (Chicago, Kendall Hunt Publishing Company, 2006)