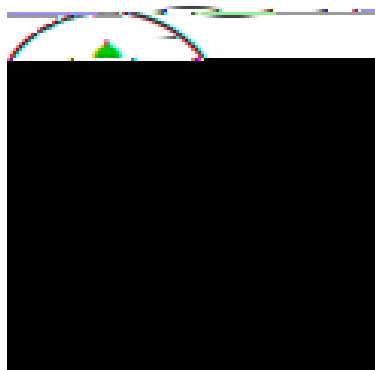# 2014 Ì 2015
Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Handbook

A Regional University
 of the
University System of Georgia

November 2014

Valdosta State University (VSU)

Prior learning is learning gained through life or work outside of structured higher educational courses. Many people learn through their experiences in life such as those in professional endeavors (through business, the military, or other work/training experiences) or through other educational experiences (through community work, family, travel, or personal study).

PLA is a process where students _____ areas of relevant learning from their experiences, _____ that learning through appropriate documentation, and _____ their materials so they can be assessed and possibly awarded academic credit relative to specific course objectives at VSU.

One goal of collegiate education is to prepare responsible, reflective individuals who constructively adapt to change. College helps students become critical thinkers and problem solvers in an ever-changing globally integrated world.

Students can acquire learning from a variety of sources outside the traditional classroom, and they can earn appropriate credit in their work towards a degree for verifiable college level learning acquired through life or work experience. Students who acquire the level of knowledge that meets the expectations and the learning outcomes of a specific course may get credit for that course, provided the students can demonstrate proficiency in that specific course.

A total of thirty (30) semester hours may be earned through any combination of credit by departmental examination, national standardized examinations, correspondence courses, extension work, Advanced Placement (AP) and PLA by portfolio [_____, page 64].

1.

Courses where credit is available by departmental examination:

ACED 2400 Computer Technology for Workplace (For information go to Exempt ACED 2400 Computer Technology for the Workplace .)

2.   . Credit for prior learning may be awarded through College Level Examination Program (CLEP), Advanced Placement (AP) credit, DSST (DANTES Standardized Test) and ACE (further explanation is available in the _____)

Academic Affairs at http://www.valdosta.edu/academics/academic-affairs/vp-office/ for more information.)

Please refer to the DSST website at http://www.getcollegecredit.com for more information.

The ACE is an organization that guides colleges and universities on the accepted credit. VSU is a member of ACE and honors ACE credits as appropriate for the program of study for students. Students must contact their advisor and the VSU Offices of Admissions (http://www.valdosta.edu/admissions/) for information on documentation of ACE credits and verification of their application to programs of study. ACE can be found online at http://www.acenet.edu.

See http://www.valdosta.edu/academic/HowDoIGetCredit for further discussion of transfer credit and International Baccalaureate (IB) credit.

3. _____. Students use the PLA portfolio development process to document their prior learning. This process requires students to prepare and submit a collection of documents that establish and support their claim that they have specific relevant skills, knowledge, values, attitudes, understandings, achievements, experiences, competencies, training, and certifications that align with specific course objectives. The portfolio developed in the documentation course should not only describe the relevant experience but also identify particular learning outcomes (PLA Documentation Course).

If prospective students have other learning experiences that may fit courses not served by departmental examination or by national standardized examination, they may be advised to consider PLA by portfolio. Students may then be advised to sign up for the PLA Documentation course (PLA 2000) or choose the PLA Workshop

The courses covered by CLEP, departmental examination, DSST, and ACE methods of earning credit will not be eligible for credit through the portfolio process. In addition, courses the student has already registered for are not eligible.

In some unusual circumstances, a student might provide documented knowledge that is legitimate college-level learning, but does not match specific courses offered by VSU. Through consultation with the PLA counselor, the department head, and one or more faculty assessors, the decision might be made to provide evaluation of the knowledge if it is appropriate to the student's major. In these situations, the PLA counselor will assist and/or guide the faculty assessor(s) in selection of appropriate evaluation methods. The evaluation methods might include determination of similar courses available at other institutions and the development of assessments that could include some combination of portfolio, departmental examination, essays, and other methods of documenting learning for credit. Evidence of knowledge related to theory as well as any evidence of skills or abilities related to practical applications will be necessary.

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Students must offer a critical self-assessment of what college-level learning has been acquired through selected non-traditional experience. This experience might include a variety of work, training, reading and research, civil and military service, or life learning.

Once students complete and submit the PLA portfolio, assessors will evaluate it to determine if the portfolio provides evidence which ties those skills to a specific course objective. If it does, credit can be awarded.

VSU is committed to helping veterans and current military personnel take full advantage of their eligible benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs (http://www.va.gov/). Students seeking VA educational benefits should contact the Veterans Affairs Office in the VSU Financial Aid Department (http://www.valdosta.edu/admissions/financial-aid/veterans-affairs/).

In additional to VSU resources, veterans and military service members are encouraged to explore the educational opportunities available through the University System of Georgia (http://www.usg.edu/student_affairs/military/).

Veterans and current military personnel can take advantage of the Military Evaluations Program conducted through the ACE for service school courses. For further information, see ACE Military Programs (http://www.acenet.edu/Content/NavigationMenu/ProgramsServices/MilitaryPrograms/index.htm) and the Defense Activity for Nontraditional Educational Support or DANTES (http://www.dantes.doded.mil/index.html).

    Veterans may be eligible for military-funded CLEP exams (http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/clep/military.html)

    For a list of military benefits by state go to http://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/Home/Benefit_Library/State__Territory_Benefits.html

    VSU is a member of the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges Consortium. For information, see the SOC website at http://www.soc.aascu.org/.

This course provides guided practice in preparing portfolio-based documentation to support application for academic credit based on prior learning. PLA is a process where students   areas of learning from their past experiences,   that learning through appropriate documentation, and   their materials related to specific course objectives of a designated target course so that they can be assessed and possibly awarded academic credit. A target course is an existing course that has been designated by the institution as eligible for PLA Assessment by portfolio (see page 2 in this handbook)

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PLA Credit Form

NAME OF STUDENT _____ STUDENT ID _____

The above student has completed either a Departmental Exam or Prior Learning Assessment portfolio and documentation to receive credit for the following course(s).

Portfolio credit   Departmental Exam Credit

_____
and Number   Course Title   Credit Hours

_____   _____   _____

_____   _____   _____

_____   _____   _____

_____   _____   _____

_____   _____   _____

Approved   Disapproved   _____

Student Name: VSU ID #:   870

Assessor: Date: (Mo/Day/Yr)

Course # Rubric for Effective Prior Learning Assessment Submissions
Course Name; Number of Credits

Components shaded would be essential for all assessments. Other components should be