

## UC PLA (Part 1 of 3) Transcript

### Slide 1

Welcome to the Prior Learning Assessment portion of this particular course module. We're excited that you're here, and chances are that many of you heard about prior learning assessment prior to starting the program and were excited about opportunities that you have to earn credit for your prior life experiences. Our goal in this presentation is to help you understand the road of Prior Learning Assessment.

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Consider us your guides along this journey, and consider Graduation your next exit.

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At this point, you may be wondering what is Prior Learning Assessment, or as we refer to it here as "PLA." Well, PLA is the evaluation of learning that took place outside of the traditional classroom setting for the purpose of awarding college credit. In other words, we have the privilege of looking at everything you've learned in your adult life--from the age of 18 or post high school--and figuring out whether or not there is way we can award college-level credit for your learning.

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There are a variety of historical and philosophical roots for credit for Prior Learning. This isn't just something that University College has arbitrarily thought up, or that we subjectively engage in. It all began back in 1938 when Dewey popularized the notion of experience as a source of learning. Now, up until this point, most people believed that higher education, and education in general, involved sitting in a classroom and absorbing whatever knowledge came from a lecture or from a text book. In other words, there was one way to learn, or at least one legitimate way to learn. After World War II, partly as a result of the GI Bill which included government funding for adult veterans to return to college, adults started to flock to Universities, and what happened when they got there, is that many of them came more prepared than traditional undergraduate students had been. Colleges and Universities started to realize that military training and other life experience meant that students entered the classroom in a different place. So, in 1974, the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning was founded, and this council was interested in looking at the unique ways that adult learners enter the college classroom. In particular, they were interested in coming up with ways to measure and assess prior learning. Shortly thereafter, CAEL developed what they called the "Ten Standards for Quality Assurance", and these were guidelines that helped govern the practice of Prior Learning Assessment, and these guidelines are still used today. In fact, each of your Prior Learning Faculty members at Azusa Pacific University College is certified at the mastery level, guaranteeing that these 10 standards continue to govern how we award college-level credit through Prior Learning Assessment here at Azusa Pacific University College.

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Internationally, there are two types of Prior Learning Assessment that are commonly used. One is sponsored learning, and the other is non-sponsored learning. Sponsored learning is that which is documented training from a specific organization. So, think of this as formal training courses, licenses or certificates, or any non-accredited Professional/Technical coursework. In other words, these are the types of professional development trainings that you've been through at your work, or perhaps community classes that you've engaged in. Whereas, non-sponsored learning is learning that arises from an adult life experience rather than some kind of formal training or coursework. So non-sponsored learning may include things like work experience, social roles, community involvements, or independent reading and study. This is the kind of learning that you learn by doing rather than by being taught.

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Azusa Pacific University College, as well as many other universities, use the PLA process associated with your prior learning experiences to award credit. Students have the potential to earn additional units towards their degree for Sponsored Learning (Professional Technical training received) or Non-Sponsored Learning (demonstrated through Experiential Learning Essays).

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What kinds of things might you consider for credit evaluation? Students often ask this question, and it's an important one. First of all, think about coursework you may have taken from non-accredited schools. For example, perhaps you went to a Bible college, but it wasn't regionally accredited. A transcript from that school could be considered for credit evaluation. Next, consider any formal trainings that you've received in a professional setting. So, for example, if your boss sent you to a facilitative leadership course, and it took you about 40 hours to finish that course, and you have a certificate, that could be considered for credit evaluation. And then, don't forget about things that you've done through other organizations: volunteer or otherwise. Perhaps, you are a Boy Scout leader, and somebody sent you to a training associated with your work in the Boy Scouts. That could be considered for credit review. And then finally, licenses, either current or expired licenses can also be considered for credit evaluation. Perhaps in a previous life you were a Real Estate Broker, or perhaps you still are. Maybe you were a cosmetologist, a pilot. Maybe you took some scuba diving certification courses. All of these licenses can be considered for credit evaluation.

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Ok, so what qualifies as training? First of all, a reminder that everything in your portfolio of Prior Learning has to do with your adult personal experience from age 18 on. Next, training is when you're the student, not somebody teaching that training. Also, it can't be "on the job training", where you are simply learning a new professional role, but it can include trainings or workshops that your employer has sent you to.

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Documentation is an important part of the Prior Learning Assessment credit review process. So, what kinds of things qualify as documentation? First of all, those certificates we talked about earlier. Things that show you attended and completed a training session. Next, letters of verification. This is particularly important if those certificates don't detail the number of hours that you spent in the training, or the nature of the course. You could also consider copies of licenses that you might hold. We spoke earlier of a Real Estate license. You would simply scan a copy of the license and submit that along with the completed Statement of Learning Outcomes, and that could be sufficient documentation. Sometimes, students have to get a little bit creative about what they submit to prove that they've attended a training session. You might have an old seminar brochure, or course descriptions left over from a session. Sometimes, a course training syllabus will detail the kinds of things that you learned in a training session. Be creative, again, about the things that you use to pull together to support that you've had this outside learning. The burden is really upon you, the student, to provide any documents that we need for credit review.

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So, how do you submit this work for us to take a look at? Make copies of your documentation. All of the documents you want us to see. Then, complete Statements of Learning Outcomes to go with each of those documents. Finally, scan and email these documents to your Prior Learning Assessment Faculty member for review. Just a reminder, credit award process can take 2-4 weeks. When a credit memo is sent to you, you will know that you have been awarded the units associated with your training, and we will be just as excited as you are.

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Ok, so let's take a look at that Statement of Learning that we've been talking about. Sometimes we call it SOLO for short. You are documenting your learning, rather than your experience on this form. So, that's a good thing to keep in mind. You're going to pull up the form and start typing answers to the questions that are very simple throughout the form. You're going to complete a SOLO form for each Professional/ Technical item, but you are welcome to cluster similar training on to one form to save you time.

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When you're completing a SOLO form, you are going to be briefly describing the training, and 3-4 key concepts and/or skills that you've learned that are associated with that training. You are then going to be asked to reflect on the value for you, both personally and professionally. And, finally, you're going to have to look at how you might be applying this learning to other settings and contexts.

### **Slide 13**

Here you have a sample Statement of Learning Outcomes form. Simply pull up the form and start filling in the text boxes. You'll see a place for your name and the date of your submission. List your trainings and include the year, the name of the sponsoring organization, the course title, and the number of hours involved in each training. Skipping the For Office Use Only box, go on to respond to each of the questions below. Be sure to adequately support your experiential learning in this section.

### **Slide 15**

Now, Section 5 of your portfolio is where you'll have an opportunity to demonstrate your adult learning through the writing of an Experiential Learning Essay. Right now I'm just going to show you the layout for Section 5, and then talk a little bit about the purpose of the essay, but then we'll get in to great detail about how to actually write the essay later on in this presentation.

### **Slide 17**

Often students wonder about the reason for writing an Experiential Learning Essay. The format really allows you the opportunity to look at a life-learning experience, and to describe it fully, in a way that a Faculty member from that subject area of study would feel comfortable awarding you college-level credit. So you'll have an opportunity in this essay to both describe your concrete experience, and then reflect on that experience. You'll support that experiential learning through some theory and other things that you'll articulate about your expertise in that experience, and then, finally, you're going to show how you apply that learning in a new setting.