

UC PLA (Part 2 of 3) Transcript

Slide 1

OK, let's talk a little bit now about the Prior Learning Assessment credit process.

Slide 2

Well, first of all, a total of 30 units can be processed through Prior Learning Assessment, and this means either your Experiential Learning Essays or any Professional/ Technical training documents that you choose to submit. This unit amount was set by our regional accrediting body, WASC. The cost for units is \$75.00 per unit. These units will only be charged to you if they are actually awarded, and you will only be charged for credits needed. For example, if you submit an Experiential Learning Essay and a Faculty member awards you 3 units of credit, which is the standard unit amount awarded for an Experiential Learning Essay, but you only need 2 elective units, Your Prior Learning Assessment Faculty member will only award the 2 units that you needs, and that's what you'll be charged for.

Slide 3

Well, you might be asking yourself at this point in our presentation, "How do I even know if I need additional units in order to complete my degree?" That's a great question, and it's one that you need to have a right answer for, for your particular situation. Remember the burden is upon you, the student, to understand how many units that you have outstanding, and to be finding creative ways to get those units taken care of so that you can graduate with the rest of your cohort. Your Student Success Coach or Program Completion Advisor will be able to assist you in determining exactly how many additional units are needed in order to complete your degree. This is the person at APUC who is just ready and waiting to assist you in finding courses that can help you finish your degree. Please keep in mind that you need you need a total of 120 total units on order to have your degree post. These 120 total units represent any units transferred from other colleges or universities as well as the 39 units that you will earn through the APUC Program. Any additional units must be completed through the PLA process.

Slide 4

Let's explore some avenues that might help you earn some of these additional units: either general studies or electives. You can always take community college course. We accept up to 70 units of this kind of work. You can take unlimited university courses. Just remember that these two options involve quite a bit of time. Another thing to think about is a CLEP Exam. Particularly if you have general studies courses that you need to take like history or fine arts. If you have questions about the CLEP Exam process, please contact your academic progress counselor. We've already talked about the PLA process, and how you can earn up to 30 units by this means. Pull together Professional/ Technical training documents that you might have. Also, consider turning in your Experiential Essay: not only the ones that you're writing in your APUC course, but any that you might want to write beyond that as well. One of the richest resources for students in terms of additional units that they can use in order to fulfill their degree, are non-transferrable units that are already on their transcript. Please contact your Student Success Coach or Program Completion Advisor if you have questions about those possibilities.

Slide 5

Submitting essays and Professional/ Technical coursework for credit evaluation is a simple process. For example, if you'd like to submit an essay, do that via email as a Microsoft Word attachment. Be sure to complete a Petition for Academic Credit and attach it to that same email. For Professional/ Technical coursework you'll go ahead and scan and email copies to us, along with those completed Statements of Learning Outcomes.

Slide 6

Here is a sample Petition for Academic Credit form. It is very similar to the Statement of Learning Outcomes. It has great textboxes for you to fill in. Put your name and your email address at the top. Include your essay title and the date that you are submitting this essay, and then let us know whether or not you're petitioning for elective or general studies credit. Generally, the number of units you're requesting is 3. An Experiential Learning Essay typically only earns up to three semester units.

Slide 7

What types of things do Faculty evaluators look for when they're evaluating your professional/technical training submissions for credit? Well, first of all, they're going to ask themselves, "Is it a college-level subject? Does it have relatable concepts?" How many units could be granted in this process is another question that students ask when they submit their technical and professional trainings. For a rule of thumb, consider that 30 to 60 instructional hours could be the equivalent of one semester unit. Of course it depends on the quality of your documentation. How much information did you give us, and how well did you complete your Statement of Learning Outcomes to show your depth and breadth of learning around that training. We will also be looking at course content and rigor, and the type of institution granting the credit.

Slide 8

Evaluation of your Experiential Learning Essay will take place by a Faculty member in the academic field for which you write the essay. So, for example, if you wrote an essay on coping with loss, a psychology Faculty Evaluator would be reviewing your essay. Essays are worth 3 units of credit. Sometimes, a student can receive partial credit for an essay. This might occur in a case when you wrote about coaching or nutrition, or some other area where the Faculty member feels that your demonstration of learning is comparable to a course that they teach. If you're concerned about writing a topic that would earn you a full 3 units of credit, please consult your Prior Learning Assessment Faculty member before choosing your topic. Sometimes an essay is returned for rewrite. You should not be discouraged if this happens. Faculty often wants you to rework, particularly Section III, where you are demonstrating theory around your experiential learning. When you are finished revising your essay, simply turn it in again to your Prior Learning Assessment Faculty member who will send it on to that same evaluator for a second review. Again, you are not charged for these revisions, only when you receive actual credit. If your essay comes back with no credit, particularly after a second time or a third time, it means that perhaps you did not have the college-level experience in order to write this particular essay. You couldn't demonstrate breadth and depth of knowledge to the extent that a Faculty member felt comfortable awarding you credit for your essay submission.

Slide 9

Some students ask the very good question of whether or not they can use the Experiential Learning Essay process in order to meet their General Studies requirements. So, for example, if I need a speech class or a fine arts class or a history course, could I use the Experiential Learning process in order to write about something like that to get credit? The answer, fortunately, is yes, but there is an important addendum to that answer to have the adult personal experience, but this time in the field that you are going to be writing about. So, for example, if I want to write an essay on Speech, public speaking, because I have a Communications requirement to fulfill, it is only if I have that background and can support it through the Experiential Learning Essay format that I am able to write about it. Some of the General Studies essays also have additional components. Again, the public speaking essay also asks you to submit a video of yourself speaking. Make sure to check your portfolio handbook so that you can see whether or not you have the personal adult experience to write an essay in the General Studies area that you are thinking about writing for.

Slide 10

How will you know if you've received credit for any of these submissions for your Prior Learning Assessment? Well, one of the best parts of our job is that we get to send you a memo that says yes you were awarded credit, how much that credit was, and then how much we are charging you in order to have that credit be transcribed your account. Professional/ Technical submission can typically 2-4 weeks to process, so be sure to build in that time. Experiential Learning Essays, it can be a little bit longer for those. We send them out to Faculty member, first of all. And then, sometimes you have to revise that essay as we discussed in the earlier slide. So please consider, as you are making your plans to finish your degree, to submit your Prior Learning Assessment documents and essays early on.

Slide 11

Ok, so take a deep breathe. Maybe take a sip of that coffee you've been drinking while watching this presentation, and consider your plan for your outstanding units. Are you going to take traditional courses? Are you going to turn in

your Experiential Essays? How about a CLEP Exam or trainings that you've taken? How about a transcript review? Remember to email your Student Success Coach or your Program Completion Advisor about these things. Finally, we suggest you find an accountability partner in your program who can help you ask the questions, "Have you finished this course yet? Do you need any more units? What are you doing to get this outstanding work done?" That, more than anything, can help you as you move along your way.

Slide 12

In the next portion for the presentation, we are going to focus explicitly on writing an Experiential Essay. Now, this section has a lot of detailed information, but if you stick with it I'm quite sure that you'll feel very equipped to jump into this writing process.

Slide 13

First of all, I want to focus on the Kolb Model Learning Cycle. Now you may have heard of David Kolb in the past. He was an adult learning theorist, who in the 1980's came up with a model of adult learning. He was primarily interested in looking how at adults enter the classroom, differently than traditionally undergraduate students between the ages of 18 and 24. Now, you may have heard your professor or other students, who you've known and have gone through the program before, refer to the Experiential Essay as the Kolb Essay. That's because here at Azusa Pacific University College, we use David Kolb's model in structuring the essay. In essence, you're going to take one experience and base it around each of the steps here in David Kolb's Learning Cycle Model. Let me explain a little bit about each step. To begin, there is concrete experience. Now, concrete experience is what happened. So, when you are describing a life experience, this is the nitty gritty details of what happened during that experience. And, for many people, Kolb argued that they learn best by doing. He also believed that reflective observation was a key way that people learn, and in this section of the model we look at people who have had an experience and it's in the reflecting back on that experience that they're able to extract learning. There's also the idea of abstract conceptualization, which is that blue square down at the bottom. Now, in this particular portion of the model, theories and principles come into play. So, these are the types of students who learn best through lecture or text book reading. It's really the theories and principles, the meat of the material that is what speaks to them in terms of their own learning styles. And the finally, there is active experimentation. These are the folks who hear those theories and principles, and learn best by going out and applying them into real life pragmatic situations.

Slide 14

Now, when we think about the Experiential Learning Essay that you're going to write for this course, really what we are going to ask you to do is take an experience from your adult life, and to look at it through those four unique processes. First, you're going to spend some time describing the concrete learning experiences. Then, you're going to talk about observations and reflections that you have about that learning experience. In Section III, you're going to extract theoretical principles, and you're going to support them with scholarly sources from outside of your particular experience. So, things like text books, scholarly articles, and we'll help you figure out how to find all of these sources. Then finally, in the fourth section, you're going to take that learning experience and apply it to a new setting.

Slide 15

So, that pretty much comprises your essay. You'll have four sections. You'll start with a short introduction that talks about the topic you're going to write about and the three key concepts, and I'll explain those in just a minute, followed by Section I, Concrete Experience; Section II, Reflective Observations; Section III, Abstract Conceptualization, Section IV, Active Experimentation, and References page. Now, again, if you look at each of those section titles, you'll notice that it correlates to that David Kolb Learning Model. So, what we're asking you to do it to take one experience, and look at it through four very different lenses so that you can give a holistic representation of your learning.

Slide 16

So, let's go step by step in how you can actually go about writing this thing. To get started, your first step is to choose a college-level subject. Now, there are any number of fields and disciplines that you can choose your subject from.

Slide 17

I want to give you an idea of some Sample Essay topics that students have used in the past. You'll notice that each of these is structured under a discipline heading. So, in other words, if you were to write about alcoholism, death and dying, divorce, parenting, stress management, each of these topics falls under the umbrella of Psychology. Similarly, if you wanted to focus on advertising, or sales, human resources, effective management, or business ownership, that would fall under the umbrella of Business.

Slide 18

Now, as you're thinking about these various topics, and trying to settle on one, it's important that you know your audience. Think of it this way, in terms of your topic, what academic department would it fall under? This will help you determine how to research your key concepts so that they're relevant to the appropriate discipline or academic field. In other words, if you decide that you want to submit your essay for credit evaluation through the Prior Learning Assessment Process, it's important that you know what subject because it will be sent on to a faculty subject matter expert in a corresponding department or field, and you want to make sure that they see your concepts as relevant and key to whatever it is you're writing about.

Slide 19

So, now that you have a college-level subject, the next step is to research that subject.

Slide 20

In terms of research, first of all, we want you to verify the relevance of your topic. What makes this relevant in terms of college-level content? And, secondly, we want you to confirm that you're using industry-specific language. Now, a good example of this is that 20 or 30 years ago, when you talked about being a teacher in an education setting and having unruly children, you often talked about the need to have Disciplinary Practices. Well, today that terminology is considered outdated and even rather contentious at time. So the language that they use now in educational settings is Behavior Modification. So, for example, we'd want you to make sure that you're using industry-specific language like that. Also, we want you to utilize various sources to help point you toward abstract (key) concepts. Now, you may say, well what do you mean by key concepts?

Slide 21

That's actually third step in the process. Once you have your subject, and you've had a chance to research a little bit, the next step is to identify three abstract concepts, and these concepts will really form the basis for your entire essay outline.

Slide 22

There's a couple of different ways to think about developing abstract key concepts, and here I want to give you some examples. You may choose things like mentoring, communication, delegation, and those would be three key concepts that are applicable to any number of topics. For instance: perhaps management. If your topic of your essay was management, you can envision where three key concepts of mentoring, communication and delegation come into play. Other examples: customer service, recruiting, and employee assessment. Keep in mind a few things when you are trying to develop your abstract key concepts. First of all, brevity is key. In other words, these should be one to two word ideas. If you're coming up with a sentence and saying this is a key concept, it is not yet a concept, it's still a sentence. So, we need you to boil that down, and hone it into just a few key words that capture concept idea. And in the process of brainstorming here in the threaded discussion, we are going to help you hone your concept, so we may ask you to go back and work on that a little bit over the next week.

Slide 23

There are a lot of ways to identify abstract concepts. One of the things that we encourage students to do is to go back to college text books, new or old, to open them and to look at the section headings and often the glossary terms throughout the chapters. What you'll see is that text book authors tend to denote key concepts by either bolding or by making them section headings. The other thing you can look at is a professional journal article. Often times, again, the section headings the articles are divided into are great key concepts. You can also go course catalogue descriptions, or course syllabi. So, for instance, if you were to open Azusa Pacific University College catalogue, and

look up a course on business ownership, often the description would say something like, "This course teaches the fundamentals of business ownership, including...", and then it would go on to describe a litany of key concepts that you could use in your essay. You might also decide to do an academic database search, under which you'd probably find articles, and many of them will talk about the same key concepts; which is a good indication to you that that they may be something you want to write about in your essay. You also might use other online search tools. Sometimes students will go to Google, and they'll write, "key concepts related to parenting", and the search results that you get may point you in the right direction.

Slide 24

So, just to rehash that: We now have a college-level subject, you've researched your subject, and you've been able to identify three abstract concepts. The fourth step is to title your essay.

Slide 25

There are a lot of different titles you can come up with, but the key thing is that it's relevant to your personal adult experience, and it demonstrates college-level learning. So, here are some examples, and I won't read through all of them, but for instance: Operating a Landscaping Business, Inventory Control Management, Public Speaking in Corporate Training, or Coaching High School Basketball. Each of these sample topics is a good indication of the type of title you might choose for your essay.

Slide 26

The formatting of your essay is very important inasmuch as each essay is equivalent to a college-level course and has the potential to earn just as many units. The same three units earned through a 15-week, full semester course, can be earned by means of a well-written essay. Therefore, the formatting of the essay is as important as the content of the essay simply because if the format is incorrect, the essay will not be submitted for evaluation. Here are important reminders when writing an essay:

Slide 27

- ✓ Include the Reference Page as part of the essay document (very last page)
- ✓ Include page #'s in upper right corner
- ✓ Font: Times New Roman (12 pt)
- ✓ APA style is only necessary in Section III
- ✓ Insert hanging indents on Reference Page
- ✓ Section length is critical!! (refer to "Essay Guidelines")
- ✓ Avoid informal language (use "children" instead of "kids")
- ✓ Pay attention to paraphrasing and quoting differences

Slide 28

- ✓ Use only 1st person (Section I, II, and IV) and 3rd person (Section III); there should be no "you" or "your" anywhere in your essay
- ✓ Check out Hacker's A Writer's Reference for help with APA citations
- ✓ Avoid contractions (use "did not" instead of "didn't")
- ✓ Use numerals for all but the numbers one through nine
- ✓ Double-spacing (remove "Orphans and Widows" option)