

## *Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) at SAU*

### Protocol

Students with significant college level learning from experience may be granted academic credit by Spring Arbor University for life learning and/or professional training not sponsored/transcribed by a college or university. An evaluation will be directed by the coordinator of prior learning assessment. This option is planned to benefit the more mature student who is returning to college after having significant life experience.

Students must be enrolled at SAU to submit materials for prior learning assessment. An exception is made for former Global students who are finishing their degree requirements.

SAU is committed to following the 10 quality control and evaluation standards as put forth by the Council on Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL). These standards can be found in their publication *Assessing Learning: Standards, Principles & Procedures* (Urban Whitaker, 1989; Morry Fiddler, Catherine Marienau, and Urban Whitaker, 2006). Copy Attached.

At SAU, there are two options for documentation of prior learning: the life-learning paper and the Professional Schools and Training (PST worksheet). The nature of the experience will determine which option will be used.

Prior learning credit will not be awarded for learning that duplicates transcribed course work.

Credit is awarded on a credit/no credit basis, but credit is awarded only for work that is at a "C" level or above.

Prior learning credit will be posted on the transcript with a grade of LL or PR.

The generic course numbers for life-learning paper credit are 295 (lower division credit), 395 (upper division credit), or 595 (graduate level credit). The generic course numbers for PST credit are 296, 396, and 596, respectively.

Life-learning papers written to meet the requirement for specific courses will be posted with the course number, but the grade (LL) will indicate that the credit is for prior learning rather than for the regular course.

All life-learning papers are written using David Kolb's Model of Experiential Learning. Students must receive training in this model, either by participating in a life-learning paper workshop (either face to face or online) or being trained one-on-one with a workshop instructor or Coordinator of Prior Learning Assessment. Papers will be formatted according to the current version of the American Psychological Association (APA) Manual. Papers not written in the appropriate format will not be forwarded to be assessed.

In accordance with CAEL standard IV, PLA materials will be evaluated by using the following hierarchy:

- A faculty member who teaches in the topic area of the prior learning submission
- A faculty member with special expertise in the topic area
- A person with a master's degree who has special expertise in the topic area
- A person with a bachelor's degree who has special expertise in the topic area

Faculty evaluators who read PLA submissions are approved by the department in which they read. Evaluators with special expertise are approved by the coordinator of prior learning assessment in consult with the assistant registrar.

Associate degree students are limited to 12 prior learning credits, baccalaureate students are limited to 30, and graduate students' limitations are set by each school and are different for each masters program. Usually the limit is 6-9 credits.

*All* prior learning submissions for *all* students are prepared in consultation with the coordinator of PLA and submitted to the Coordinator of PLA for quality control, tracking, and evaluator payment.

### Procedures

#### *Approval*

For Global students, the academic advisor approves life-learning paper (LLP) topics and submissions for PSTs. The advisor consults with the PLA coordinator if necessary to determine if training is college and can be documented to be submitted.

For campus students, the PLA request usually begins with the student's advisor.

1. The advisor refers the student to the PLA coordinator for an assessment of PLA possibilities
2. The PLA coordinator meets with the student and outlines the process and determines who will need to approve the request
3. The student fills out PLA request form and obtains the necessary permission to proceed.
  - a. Elective credit requests are approved by the Registrar.
  - b. Credit for the major is approved by the department.
  - c. PLA options for meeting a general education requirement are approved by the Registrar (in consultation with other departments if necessary).

### Charges

A journal entry will be submitted to the business office to charge students for the assessment of prior learning. For GPS students, the charges are submitted by the academic advisor, either graduate or undergraduate. For main campus students, the charges are submitted to the business office by the Coordinator of Prior Learning Assessment.