



## **Credit for Prior Learning**

---

**Authors: Ellen Karl, MBA, RHIA, CHDA, FHIMA and Jennifer Talbot, MsEd., RHIA, CCS-P**

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

[INTRODUCTION](#)

[WHAT IS CPL](#)

[COLLEGE LEVEL EXAMINATION PROGRAM \(CLEP\)](#)

[AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EDUCATION \(ACE\)](#)

[IN-HOUSE COMPETENCY EXAMS](#)

[OTHER EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING](#)

[PORTFOLIO CREATION AND EVALUATION](#)

[CREDIT FOR CREDENTIALS](#)

[MICROCREDENTIALS](#)

[ADVANCED PLACEMENT \(AP\) EXAMS](#)

## **Introduction**

This toolkit has been crafted to assist individuals in exploring avenues for attaining Credit for Prior Learning (CPL). The CPL Toolkit is designed to get you started in your journey of exploring the different types of assessment methods that could be utilized to gain college credit for experiential learning that may reduce the number of credit hours required for degree attainment.

## **What is CPL**

Credit for Prior Learning (CPL), also known as Prior Learning Assessment, is an academic process that offers students the opportunity to earn credits for college-level learning acquired outside the traditional classroom.

These methods offer incoming students assistance to successfully maneuver potential hurdles standing in their way between education and employment.

Benefits to students who utilize credit for prior learning include a faster track to degree completion, financial savings, and getting credit for knowledge that they have gained outside of the classroom.

## **College Level Examination Program (CLEP)**

College Level Examination Program (CLEP) exams provide students with the opportunity to register for and complete an examination that assesses what the examinee knows about focus areas register for.

**CLEP Resources:**[Learn About CLEP](#)

Students can learn about the CLEP examination eligibility requirements, how to get registered for the exam (in-person and virtual) and provides links to downloadable study resources to assist students in preparing for the examination.

[Modern States](#)

Modern States Education Alliance™ is a non-profit dedicated to making a high-quality college education free of cost and accessible to any person who seeks one.

[Study.Com](#)

Study.Com offers a variety of video-based modules and practice tests to assist students in preparing for CLEP exams.

**American Council on Education (ACE)**

The American Council on Education (ACE) is represented by a diverse membership of more than 1,700 colleges and universities related associations, and other organizations in America and abroad. Organizations must apply for their coursework/certification to be evaluated. ACE puts together a team of faculty in the discipline to evaluate the courses, program, or certificates.

**ACE Resources:**[ACE Website](#)

The ACE website provides a wealth of resources for higher educational institutions, faculty, and students.

[ACE National Guide](#)

If you look at the National Guide you can see the equivalencies.

## **In-house Competency Exams**

A possible route for students to gain credit for knowledge and skills that they possess is through institutional competency exams, also referred to as credit by exam.

These types of examinations are typically written and graded by faculty teaching within specific disciplines to provide students with an opportunity to gain credit within a specific program/degree by demonstrating knowledge and skills assessed in program/degree courses. Typically, there is a set percentage/grade that must be achieved on the credit by exam for a student to earn the credit.

## **Other Experiential Learning**

### Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship training programs provide students with invaluable hands-on experience paired with programmatic coursework to earn a degree. Some employers offer apprenticeship programs specific to their field and organizational needs. For example, a medical coding department within an organization may provide on-the-job training with the expectation that the employee agrees to sit for a certification and sign a contract to work within their employ for a set time frame.

### Military Service

College credits for military service is another type of experiential learning that incoming veterans, active-duty service members, reserves, or air force students may be able to benefit from.

See: [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. \(August 8, 2022\). How do I get college credits for my military service?](#)

## Portfolio Creation and Evaluation

Students can opt to create a portfolio to demonstrate knowledge of a particular topic. Students create the portfolio based on the course information, but specifically the learning outcomes.

Although this process varies by institution, typically, a student must complete a specific course, in which the student is guided in how to create a portfolio. Upon completion of the course, the student will submit all necessary documentation for review using e-portfolio or another digital tool. Generally, this includes their resume, a narrative describing how each learning outcome is met as well as other documentation to demonstrate their knowledge. Documentation may include a certification, a job evaluation, or samples of work performed.

The portfolio is then examined using institutional criteria and a determination is made regarding which courses the prior learning can be applied for credit.

### **Portfolio Creation and Evaluation Resources:**

#### [Student Portfolio Ideas & Examples](#)

This article provides resources on insight of how students can create a portfolio, including information on their purpose, advantages, disadvantages, types of portfolios, and example ideas.

### **Credit for Credentials**

Many academic institutions recognize industry credentials as credit for prior learning.

For example, many CAHIIM accredited programs recognize AHIMA Certifications such as the CCA, CCS, or CCS-P as credit toward

an associate degree program in Health Information Technology or a Baccalaureate degree program in Health Information Management, etc.

### **Credit for Credentials Resources:**

#### [WorkCred](#)

On WorkCred's website you will find a wealth of invaluable insight on leveraging the value of certifications as a pathway to earn degree credits toward a program that will further their career/professional development and personal growth.

### **Micro-credentials**

A micro-credential is a short, focused credential that validates competency of in demand skills and experience for a specific job function. An individual who possesses the required skills may elect to demonstrate their ability via a micro-credential assessment.

Often micro-credentials are coupled with short term learning and may include a course or set of courses designed to provide the knowledge and practice required for a specific job role. Many micro-credentials are stackable to provide a pathway to an industry certificate or full degree.

<https://ahima.org/certification-careers/microcredentials/>

### **Advanced Placement (AP) Exams**

Advanced Placement Exams offer students a way to earn college credit while they are still in high school. AP exams are typically completed by students at the end of Advanced Placement courses offered at high schools with their scores being reviewed by higher education institutions that the student applies to (following the institutions policies and procedures in place for earning AP credit).