

*Academic Governing Council*  
**Decision Form**

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*This form is to be used when the Academic Governing Council makes a decision on an issue.  
This form is sent to the Provost.*

## **Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) - Policy 7.15**

### **Decision**

On April 12, 2016, the AGC membership voted to approve the following policy:

*Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC) awards course credit for college level learning in alternative settings. When a student is able to demonstrate competency in Course Learning Outcomes for a particular course through Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) from a portfolio evaluation by a subject matter expert or a GRCC Challenge Test, the GRCC Registrar's Office will award credit for the course, if the following guidelines are met:*

- *There is not another way to grant the student credit for the course through an external credential, test, or exam (i.e., AP, CLEP)*
- *If a Challenge Test exists for a course, it should be used instead of a PLA portfolio evaluation*
- *Credit is evaluated for and awarded in the context of the program/degree in which they are enrolled*
- *Credit must be aligned with a course and may only be awarded once for the same learning within a student's program/degree*
- *Credit will not be awarded for General Education courses*
- *Students have been made aware that the credit awarded by the college is typically not transferable to other institutions.*

### **Rationale**

The stated purpose\* of policy 7.15 is to:

- Increase access to college programs and decrease graduation time
- Eliminate unnecessary repeated learning
- Recognize respect for skills and knowledge acquired outside traditional classroom Settings
- Award academic credit for college level learning which leads to degrees
- Comply with Higher Learning Commission Criteria: Academic Programs-Quality, Resources and Support (3-1.g)

\*[https://www.grcc.edu/sites/default/files/docs/policies/7-15\\_prior\\_learning\\_assessment.pdf](https://www.grcc.edu/sites/default/files/docs/policies/7-15_prior_learning_assessment.pdf)

The prior policy (7.15) states that *Prior Learning Assessment is an alternative approach for analyzing prior learning in a non-academic setting and to grant credit for that learning in a non-academic setting.*

PLA is also mentioned as part of the Transfer Policy (8.29), which states that *GRCC offers credit for prior learning experiences that equate to courses taught at GRCC in the Technology area. Students who are interested in having prior learning assessed find step by step information at <http://www.GRCC.edu/academictestingservices/priorlearningassessmentpla>.*

The rewritten policy is more specific and provides more complete information and guidance for students who wish to use PLA to gain academic credit. Further, this policy will help faculty better advise students who seek information on and credit through PLA.

### **Supporting Data**

Not Applicable.

### **Implications for Action**

- Faculty and students will need to be made aware of the more specific guidelines around credit awarded through PLA.
- It is recommended that the following website be updated:

<http://www.grcc.edu/academictestingservices/priorlearningassessmentpla>

### **Date of Decision by AGC**

April 12, 2016  
Vote: 100% approved

*Section to be completed by the Provost.*

### **Evaluation Plan**

This policy will next be reviewed in Winter Semester 2019.

### **Response from Provost**

I support the AGC vote. The revised policy, with its more specific guidelines, will be in effect beginning Fall Semester 2016. The Curriculum Office should make all faculty, especially the PLA Coordinator, aware of the changes in the policy by that time. The Associate Dean of

Student Success and Retention should ensure that the website noted above is updated with the changes in the policy by that time.

Karen Chesley

5-13-16