### Credits through Prior Learning Assessment

Students may petition for the acceptance of credits for learning experiences that occurred after high school but prior to admission to the university. A student’s past postsecondary education and experiences are assessed through a formal process called Prior Learning Assessment (PLA). This process is in accordance with commonly accepted good practice in higher education and satisfies criteria established by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Commission on Colleges and the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL).

A student petitioning for PLA credits must complete a course in foundations of professional studies, develop a PLA plan with an advisor, and submit portfolios that document the experiential learning to be assessed by subject matter faculty through the formal process. This process is handled through the office of Electronic & Continuing Education by the Coordinator of Adult Education Initiatives.

The policy for assessed credit will be governed by the Prior Learning Assessment Council. For information on program policies, standards and requirements, and fees see the website for the Northwestern State University CALL Initiative at [http://nsula.edu/ece/CALL/](http://nsula.edu/ece/CALL/).

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### Prior Learning Credits in the Professional Studies Concentration

Students in the Professional Studies concentration in the Bachelor of General Studies (BGS) must meet the established criteria for “adult learner” (i.e., have at least 60 semester credit hours or completed high school 3 or more years ago). In addition, these students must be eligible for at least 6 semester credit hours of prior work experience. A maximum of 30 hours credit from past occupational, educational, and training experiences may be applied toward the Professional Studies concentration in General Studies. Students enrolled in the Professional Studies concentration may petition for the acceptance of Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) credit to be used to complete degree requirements. Credit for these learning experiences will be established by departmental evaluation using appropriate guidelines from Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and Council for Adult and Experiential Learning. General Studies students interested in developing a Prior Learning Assessment Portfolio should contact the University College.

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### Credits for Military Educational Experiences

Military experiences (MOUs and Service Schools) will be evaluated after a student earns six hours of credit at NSU. Credit is awarded in accordance with recommendations set forth by the American Council on Education (ACE). The Community College of the Air Force transcript (CCAF) and the Army/American Council on Education Registry Transcript (ARET) are treated as regular college transcripts and no fee is charged for their evaluation. Evaluation of the DD-214 will be done by the Military Liaison Officer on a case-by-case basis. Duplicate credit and vocational credit will not be awarded.

Credit is also allowed for satisfactory completion of the following proficiencies examinations:

- **CLEP (College Level Examination Program)**
- **DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST)**

Candidates who are military service members and whose exams are funded by DANTES may not repeat an examination of the same title within a 180-day period under any circumstances.

Official copies of test results or results published on the AARTS transcript will be accepted. NSU accepts ACE recommended scores.

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### Northwestern’s Special Examination Program

Northwestern’s academic departments extend to enrolled undergraduate students the opportunity to “challenge” virtually any course offered by the University. These examinations, administered by the departments, may not be repeated. A student may not challenge any course in which a grade (A, B, C, D, F, P, I, W, X, Z, WA, WB, WC, WD, WF, WP, WX, WZ, or AU) has been earned. Undergraduate students interested in taking a special examination must be enrolled in at least one credit hour and must register for the exam on or by the last day to register for classes during regular registration by completing the following steps:

1. Contact the Department Head responsible for the course to get a purple special exam card. The Department Head must approve the special exam by completing the information on the card and signing the card. (If there is no Department Head, the Dean must complete the information.)
2. Have your advisor sign the card to approve the special exam.
3. Take the completed card to the University Registrar’s Office to be registered for the exam.
4. A non-refundable fee of $25.00 for each special exam will be assessed.

### How to Earn Semester Hours Through Examination

**Revised April 09**
Northwestern recognizes that students enter college with varying degrees of preparedness. Students with superior skills and academic accomplishments have the opportunity to obtain college course credits by examination. After enrollment at Northwestern, a satisfactory performance recorded in semester hours, with no letter grade will be placed on the student’s transcript. The hours of credit will not be used in the computation of grade point averages or considered in determining academic hours, probation, or suspension.

While students are encouraged to utilize all types of credit by examination programs, there are certain limitations. Credit by examination may be awarded only to students who are currently registered in other courses during a semester. A maximum of thirty semester hours of credit may be earned through any one type of program. In addition, not more than half of the semester hours of credit required for an undergraduate degree may be fulfilled through an accumulation of credits from the categories of testing, correspondence, and extension work. A special examination for credit by examination is available for certain courses.

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