

CPL: INTRODUCTION

Credit for Prior Learning Webinar | First Friday of Every Month¹, 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. | Click here (<https://vccs.zoom.us/join/join?secret=1234567890>) to register.

¹ Except for January 2, 2026

Introduction to Credit for Prior Learning (CPL)

Credit for Prior Learning is the administrative awarding of academic credit to students for subject matter competency acquired through previous academic study, nonacademic study, work experience or other nontraditional means. NOVA's Credit for Prior Learning policies are aligned with Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Accreditation Principles (<https://sacscoc.org/accrediting-standards/>) and comply with Virginia Community College System (VCCS) Academic Policies (<https://go.boarddocs.com/va/vccs/Board.nsf/goto/?open&id=9RHCDG597139#>).

CPL Eligibility

There are five general categories/types of credit for prior learning:

1. Credits from Post-Secondary Institutions (e.g., Transfer Credit);
2. Credit by Exam (AP, IB, CLEP, Cambridge, or Other Exams);
3. Credits Earned from Non-Traditional Program Completion (e.g., Certifications, Professional Licensure, etc.);
4. Credits from Military Training and Courses
5. Credit for Learning Obtained Through Professional Work and Other Experiences (e.g., via Experiential Learning Portfolio Course).

The general policies listed below apply to students seeking credit for prior learning:

- To be eligible to apply for credit for prior learning, a student must be admitted to NOVA.
- Total credits possible through all forms of credit for prior learning must conform to the residency requirements of the particular curriculum, as stated in the current NOVA Catalog. A minimum of 25% of the total number of credits for any degree or certificate must be earned at NOVA.
- Assessments by Local Examination (ABLE) are exams used to allow students to show their mastery of a particular course's objectives. These exams are only used when no CLEP exam is available.
- Nationally standardized exams (e.g., CLEP, AP, and IB) may accept an unlimited number of credit hours. However, the residency requirements listed above still apply.
- College credits may only be determined and awarded upon the recommendation of appropriately qualified teaching faculty to ensure that the learning experiences fall within the regular applicable course outcomes of a course offered by NOVA.
- The student's curriculum academic dean or designee is responsible for final determination of the use of credits in the student's curriculum.
- All accepted credits for prior learning will be acknowledged and recorded on the student's permanent record, with the transferring agency identified. No unsuccessfully attempted credit for prior learning applications or examinations results will be recorded on the student's permanent record.

- No grades, scores or grade points will be recorded on the student's permanent record for credits earned through credit for prior learning procedures.
- Credit awarded for prior learning is applicable only to NOVA's curricular requirements. Students are cautioned that CPL credit may not be accepted as transfer credit by other post-secondary institutions. Please consult the transfer institution for more information on their CPL policies.
- No credit for prior learning shall be awarded that duplicates course credit earned at NOVA with a passing grade¹. Students who, *after* receiving an F, U, or W grade in a course at NOVA, successfully demonstrate knowledge aligned to that course's learning objectives through a credit for prior learning method² approved by NOVA's faculty may use the credit awarded for that course as a repeat of the course taken at NOVA. Prior grades with quality points will continue to be factored into the student's cumulative GPA³ and the student will be ineligible to re-enroll⁴ into that course at NOVA for a grade improvement once the CPL has been officially recorded on their academic record.

¹ Grades of "A," "B," "C," "D," "P," and "S" are passing grades at NOVA. A grade of C or above is required for transfer of credit from other institutions. NOVA courses with a grade of an "X" for 'Audit' are ineligible for CPL.

² Credit for prior learning opportunities approved by NOVA faculty are in the CPL Manual for the current academic year. CPL methods include but are not limited to transfer courses, nationally recognized credit by examination programs, industry certifications, and military/employer trainings.

³ CPL does not have quality points assigned, so the cumulative GPA will not be affected. Students are awarded grades of "T" or "P" for CPL.

⁴ After credit is recorded for an approved CPL method to replace a course taken at NOVA, re-enrollment for a grade improvement is not permitted.

Evaluation Process

The faculty role in assessing student learning outcomes for the purpose of awarding credit for prior learning is clearly defined in the Virginia Community College System policy. To ensure that course work and learning outcomes are at the collegiate level and comparable to NOVA's courses, discipline faculty make the decision to award credit for a type of non-traditional learning after careful review. NOVA does not award credit based on another institution's or agency's evaluations; all sources of credit will be evaluated based on NOVA's policies and guidelines. College Records Office (CRO) staff evaluates course equivalencies from all transcripts. Post-secondary collegiate transcripts must have at least an 80 percent match to a course taught at NOVA. In situations where the CRO staff evaluates a transcript that does not have at least an 80 percent course match from the Transcript Evaluation System (TES) students are awarded elective (EEE) credit (ex. MTH EEE).

Limits on the Amount of CPL Credit

There is not a formal limit on the number of credits that may be awarded through credit for prior learning, but such credit may not be used to fulfill the residency requirements for graduation. A minimum of 25% of the credit required for any NOVA degree, certificate or career studies certificate must be earned at NOVA. The amount of CPL credit awarded is regulated by the faculty in a given discipline and must abide by state law as prescribed by the state legislature, VCCS policies and SCHEV policies.

CPL Evaluation Responsibilities

The responsibility for effective evaluation of credit for prior learning is shared among many NOVA faculty and staff. The Credit for Prior Learning Committee, a subcommittee of NOVA's Curriculum Committee, formally represents the different disciplines and is responsible for the development of policies, the management of policies and the implementation of consistent college-wide CPL procedures.

Campus Level CPL Evaluation Contacts

Student Services Centers: The campus registrars and their staffs are responsible for insuring that appropriate records relating to credit for prior learning are received and processed. In cases where there are faculty approved routine procedures for awarding credit for prior learning transcript evaluators are empowered to record these credits on the student's transcript. Students can submit requests for CPL credit and documentation via Student Service Centers on each campus.

Faculty and Advisors: Discipline faculty can initiate requests for new credit for prior learning opportunities to the CPL Committee and are often asked to review all policy recommendations for discipline specific CPL credit. Advisors may recommend the use of electives to meet specific discipline requirements through substitution procedures. Advisors may also recommend that elective course credit be changed to specific course credit based on supplemental course descriptions that the student has obtained from his/her previous school. Requests for substitutions must be approved by the appropriate academic dean(s).

Provosts, Deans of Students and Academic Deans: All policies and procedures regarding credit for prior learning are approved by the deans and program heads that have responsibility for the specific discipline where credit for prior learning credit will be awarded. Approval from the Provost(s) and Deans is needed. Specific decisions about the qualifications of a student for graduation from a program, including the applicability of any credit awarded through credit for prior learning, are approved by the responsible academic dean(s) for the required course and the student's program, and, if there is a conflict, by the provost.

College Level CPL Evaluation Contacts

Credit for Prior Learning Committee: The Credit for Prior Learning Committee hears requests for new or revised policies and procedures for credit for prior learning and forwards its recommendations to the Curriculum Committee for approval. Items approved by the Curriculum Committee are forwarded to the Administrative Council for final approval. The Credit for Prior Learning Committee also monitors the implementation of the policies and procedures to assure consistent application throughout the College. NOVA also empowers the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Associate Director of Curriculum and Innovative Education, and the Credit for Prior Learning Coordinator to oversee CPL policies, procedures, and all other matters related to CPL.

College Records Office: Staff at the College Records Office (CRO) certifies students for graduation. In order to do so, they must ensure that all credits, including credit for prior learning, are awarded correctly.

Recording CPL Credit

All accepted credit for prior learning will be acknowledged and recorded on the student's permanent record, with the transferring agency or other source of credit identified. No unsuccessful attempts at credit for prior learning applications or examination results will be recorded on the student's permanent record. No grades, scores or grade points will be recorded on the student's permanent record for credits earned through credit for prior learning procedures. Except for Experiential Learning

portfolios and ABLE exams, for which students receive a "P" grade, the student record will show a "T" instead of an A-F grade. Students are advised to check with their transfer institution regarding implications of CPL credit reflected on a transcript.

Appeals of Credit for Prior Learning Decisions

Students who wish to request reconsideration of a credit for prior learning decision based on existing policy should make their request first to a faculty advisor. Appeals may be sent to the appropriate academic dean, who may forward them to the campus provost. Deans discuss appeals with the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs. Students who wish to have new or revised credit for prior learning policies established must email a counselor or faculty advisor. The counselor/faculty advisor will forward the request to the Credit for Prior Learning Coordinator for review by faculty and, if the faculty support the request, then the Credit for Prior Learning Committee will take a deliberate approach to address the question submitted in the proposal. Students should be told that this process may take several months due to the rigor of NOVA's credit for prior learning policy revision process.

Credit for Prior Learning Committee Duties and Role

Formerly known as the Advanced Standing Committee, the Credit for Prior Learning Committee is a subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee. It reviews all policy requests for credit for prior learning and develops recommendations for acceptance and course credit equivalencies, in conjunction with the faculty and in accordance with college policy. The Credit for Prior Learning Committee also hears requests for new or revised policies and procedures for credit for prior learning. Items approved by the Curriculum Committee are forwarded to the Administrative Council for final approval. The Credit for Prior Learning Committee also monitors the implementation of the policies and procedures to assure consistent application throughout the college.

The Academic Dean, Dean of Students, Counselor, Instructional Faculty and Workforce Development Representative are nominated by the College Senate. The Chief Academic Officer appoints the committee. Appointments are for staggered two-year terms. The committee consists of the following members:

- Associate Director of Curriculum and Innovative Education
- Director of Military Outreach and Veteran Support Services
- Credit for Prior Learning Coordinator
- College Registrar
- Associate College Registrar
- Chair of Enrollment Services Working Group
- 1 Academic Dean
- 1 Dean of Students
- 1 Counselor
- 5 Instructional Faculty (1 IT, 1 Health Sciences, 1 Other CTE, 2 General Education Disciplines)
- 1 Workforce Development Representative

The Credit for Prior Learning Coordinator is the chair of the committee and is responsible for calling and conducting all subsequent meetings, as well as assembling the agendas. The Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs assists the chair as needed.

Procedure for Submitting Requests to Credit for Prior Learning Committee

Faculty, counselors, administrators, and students can submit CPL proposals for the followings reasons:

- New CPL opportunity
- Update to existing CPL
- Change a CPL procedure

These proposals should be submitted to the CPL Coordinator at cpl@nvcc.edu. The CPL Coordinator forwards proposals to the CPL Committee. Proposals should include the essential information below:

- The level of need for the CPL opportunity usually supported by labor market data.
- Effectiveness towards the college's mission
- Responsible offices for implementation
- Information on the period in which the credit is valid
- Sample documentation students should submit to get the credit

Moreover, proposals for new CPL and updating existing CPL must include documentation showing how a course's learning objectives are met through the non-traditional learning.

If the CPL Committee supports the proposal the chair of the CPL Committee forwards the proposal to the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, requesting that the proposal be placed on the agenda for a subsequent Curriculum Committee meeting. Proposals for college policy from the CPL Committee are referred by the Curriculum Committee to the Administrative Council for final disposition. If approved, the CPL Manual is updated to reflect the change for the upcoming academic year and College Records Office (CRO) is informed of the changes.