

A Student Guide: Credit for Prior College-level Learning



**EMPIRE STATE
COLLEGE**

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

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This guide is current as of September 2009. The college reserves the right to make changes in policy and regulations, and its faculty reserves the right to change academic content, as circumstances dictate, subsequent to publication. Each student is expected to have knowledge of the information contained in this guide and in other college publications. Changes in policy and programs are noted at information sessions and orientation workshops. Updated information also may be obtained from the following offices:

www.esc.edu/Assessment

Academic Policy and Procedures Office of Academic Affairs

Financial Information Office of Administration

Admissions Information Admissions

Financial Aid Information Financial Aid

WHAT IS COLLEGE-LEVEL LEARNING?

The faculty at Empire State College recognizes that adults have many opportunities for valuable learning in their everyday lives and work. When this prior learning is college level, it can be identified in an evaluative process designed to determine whether it is worthy of college credit. You and your mentor work together to determine what college-level learning you might have and what might be used in your degree program. This guide is designed to help you understand the various ways you can demonstrate and earn credit for the college-level learning you may already have. If you have further questions about anything in this guide, ask your mentor or your Center Office of Academic Review (COAR). The Office of Collegewide Academic Review in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., also can assist you or go to www.esc.edu/Assessment.

Defining college-level learning can be a complex task, so you and your mentor should have several discussions about your own case. At Empire State College, we use the following standards to decide whether learning is college level:

- The learning should be *theoretical* as well as *practical*. For example, if you seek credit for supervising several employees at work, you should be able to explain some understanding of the concepts of motivation, management styles and job evaluation techniques as well as the routine processes of day-to-day operations.
- You should be able to identify the *principles* involved in doing what you are able to do.
- The learning should be equivalent to college-level work in terms of *quality*.
- The learning should be *identified as college level when evaluated by an expert in the field*. This means you should be able to demonstrate by examination, license, essay, etc., that your knowledge or competence is at the college level.

People are learning constantly and much of what is learned, no matter how valuable, may be too simple and routine to qualify as college level. Some examples of these commonplace, *noncollege-level* learning competencies might include driving a car, maintaining the family budget, putting up bookshelves, buying a house or planning a party.

CREDIT FOR LEARNING, NOT FOR EXPERIENCE

Empire State College grants credit only for verifiable college-level learning acquired through life or work experience. To help understand the distinction between learning and experience, consider two students, Suzanne and Tom.

Tom and Suzanne each own a restaurant and each is involved in the day-to-day operations. Since their experience is similar, one might expect them to have the same knowledge and skills.

Although there are some similarities in their knowledge, Tom, who began cooking in the military, has focused on preparing gourmet meals and started a local cooperative so he could buy fresh, local products. Because of some health problems, he also has learned a lot about nutrition and has been incorporating what he knows into menu choices.

Suzanne, on the other hand, has focused totally on the business aspect of her restaurant. She does the accounting for the business, has developed a marketing plan, and is trying to expand into a catering business. She also is on the board of the local homeless shelter, which she became involved with when she realized food not used by her restaurant could be donated.

When these two students start to develop degree programs with their mentors and explore credit for prior learning, they discover that they know different things. Both of them may choose to take a standardized examination in small business management but then they would explore other ways to demonstrate their very different knowledge. Tom might be eligible for credit for his military training (noncollegiate sponsored training evaluated by the American Council on Education) and he also might be able to demonstrate his learning of food preparation through credit by individualized evaluation. Suzanne might take standardized examinations in accounting and marketing, and then seek credit through individualized evaluation for her knowledge of community organizing.

The examples of Tom and Suzanne demonstrate that even though students can share similar experiences, the learning each student acquires from those experiences is unique.

POSSIBLE SOURCES OF COLLEGE-LEVEL LEARNING

Some of the possible sources of prior college-level learning that could be considered for evaluation include work, noncredit courses, seminars and in-service training programs, volunteer work in the community, hobbies, recreational activities, independent reading and research, and military training. This list is intended to give you an idea of possible sources. Other sources of college-level learning are possible.

HOW IS COLLEGE-LEVEL LEARNING EVALUATED?

Empire State College has a variety of methods available to assist you in finding out what college-level learning you possess and how much college credit it is worth. Your mentor can help you to determine if your prior college-level learning applies to your Empire State College degree program, might satisfy a general education requirement and the best way to demonstrate that knowledge. Your Center Office of Academic Review can serve as a valuable resource. The information following is an overview, and each category is covered in more depth later in this guide.

TRANSCRIPT CREDIT

You can transfer credit earned at regionally accredited colleges and universities on an official transcript that is sent from the original institution directly to Empire State College Admissions. In most instances, you need to have earned grades of C or higher. You also can transfer in credits with grades of C or higher from degree-granting institutions that were approved by the New York State Education Department while you were a student there. An official transcript must be sent from that institution to Empire State College Admissions, unless you have a transcript from a foreign institution and then it must be evaluated by World Education Services (WES). There is a page on the WES Web site designed especially for Empire State College students at www.wes.org/esc.asp. For information about your specific situation, see your mentor or your Center Office of Academic Review.

STANDARDIZED EXAMINATIONS

Standardized examinations such as College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), Excelsior College Examinations (ECE), TECEP and DSST are commonly used to verify college-level learning. After some independent study, you can take an examination covering the subject area you believe you have mastered. Study guides are available at bookstores and often on the examination organization's Web site. If your results meet those established by the college for credit, you can include that credit in your degree program. You need to have an official score report sent to Empire State College Admissions.

EVALUATED NONCOLLEGIATE SPONSORED LEARNING

The American Council on Education (ACE), the National Program on Noncollegiate Sponsored Instruction (National PONSIS) and Empire State College have each pre-evaluated a variety of structured programs, trainings or licenses. If you have learning from one of these pre-evaluated experiences,

you may be able to gain credit by supplying the appropriate documentation. The dates, location and length of time of your training must match the dates, location and length of time stipulated in the training's evaluation. You need to have official verification that you successfully completed the program sent to Empire State College Admissions.

INDIVIDUALIZED CREDIT BY EVALUATION (CBE)

If you have college-level learning that cannot be evaluated by the methods already mentioned, you might try individualized credit by evaluation, also known as individualized prior learning assessment (PLA). For each subject area identified during educational planning which may be college level, you usually complete the following process: write an essay describing your college-level learning with supporting documentation, request that your Center Office of Academic Review arrange for an evaluator, and engage in an evaluation session or interview where you explain further what you know. If satisfied that your learning is college level, the evaluator submits an evaluation and credit recommendation for faculty review and approval.

PLA PLANNER

PLA Planner is an online tool designed to help Empire State College students, mentors and evaluators through the prior learning assessment process. This tool will facilitate the work you do with your mentor to create your requests for prior learning assessment. After the PLA requests are submitted, PLA Planner will provide communication and clear tracking of the evaluation process. There are many ways to begin the process of identifying topics for PLA and developing your PLA requests. Please consult with your mentor before you begin PLA Planner. Your mentor will help you decide when and how it will be best for you to begin working in PLA Planner.

WHAT IS OFFICIAL DOCUMENTATION?

Official transcripts and documents must come to Empire State College directly from the issuing agency or institution and have an official seal (or agency letterhead) and signature. These documents are required in order to receive credit for transfer credit, standardized examinations and evaluated noncollegiate sponsored learning. Each section in this guide includes information about appropriate sources and the type of official documentation required. You should request that all official documents be sent to:

Admissions
Empire State College
Two Union Avenue
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866-4390

Transcripts from most international institutions need to be evaluated by World Education Services (WES – www.wes.org/esc.asp). Some Canadian institutions, some Israeli institutions and all of our partner international institutions are exceptions. Check with your mentor or Center Office of Academic Review if you have questions.

WHAT STANDARDIZED EXAMINATIONS DOES EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE ACCEPT?

Many standardized examinations exist for adults who have learned in nontraditional ways, such as reading, self-directed research or professional experience. Several programs that offer examinations are the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), Thomas Edison College Examination Program (TECEP), DANTES Subject Standardized Testing (DSST), Excelsior College Examinations (ECE) (formerly Regents College Examinations) and New York University Proficiency Tests in Foreign Language. Examinations are available in a wide range of academic disciplines in the humanities, social sciences, business, natural sciences and mathematics, and professional/vocational areas.

Most of the examinations offered through these programs are multiple choice, although some have essay components. Study material is available for most examinations and the cost of examinations varies.

You should discuss these testing programs with your mentor since they can be a speedy and inexpensive way to earn credit for your learning. Many Empire State College students do well on these examinations. Adults who have learned about subjects outside of the classroom often have more working knowledge than undergraduates who have learned only in the classroom and from books. However, if you do not do well on standardized or multiple-choice examinations, or if you experience test anxiety, you may want to explore other ways to demonstrate your knowledge.

Since any credit achieved by evaluation must fit within an approved Empire State College degree program, talk with your mentor. Any examinations you take cannot overlap or be redundant with college courses, other examinations you have taken, credit from noncollegiate sponsored learning, or individualized credit by evaluation. You can get credit for the same knowledge only once.

COLLEGE-LEVEL EXAMINATION PROGRAM (CLEP)

www.collegeboard.com/clep

The College-Level Examination Program offers five general examinations in English Composition, Humanities, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences and History, which validate nontraditional learning equal to what is usually taught during the first year or two of college. About 30 additional subject examinations correspond to specific college courses taught across the country.

The CLEP tests are offered nationwide on a monthly basis. Your Empire State College Center Office of Academic Review can provide more detailed information, check the Web site listed above or contact:

College-Level Examination Program (CLEP)
P.O. Box 6600
Princeton, NJ 08541-6600
800 257-9558
CLEP@info.collegeboard.org

There are a number of study guides available through the CLEP Web site, bookstores or libraries that are helpful in preparing for the CLEP examinations. College-Level Examination Program does not keep a record of scores that are 20 years old or older. Empire State College's identification code for CLEP is 2214.

CLEP SCORES AND CREDIT AMOUNTS

CLEP General Examinations

	<i>Credit</i>	<i>Score</i>
College Mathematics	6	50
English Composition	6	50
Social Sciences and History	6	50
Natural Sciences	6	50
Humanities	6	50

Note: The scores on this chart are effective July 1, 2003. If you have taken a CLEP examination prior to that date, contact your Center Office of Academic Review or mentor.

CLEP Subject Examinations

	<i>Credit</i>	<i>Score</i>		<i>Credit</i>	<i>Score</i>
COMPOSITION AND LITERATURE			SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HISTORY		
American Literature	6	50	American Government	3	50
Analyzing and Interpreting Literature	6	50	History of the United States I: Early Colonization to 1877	3	50
English Literature	6	50	History of the United States II: 1865 to the Present	3	50
Freshman College Composition	6	50	+Human Growth and Development	3	50
FOREIGN LANGUAGES			Introduction to Educational Psychology	3	50
College-level French Language	8/12/16	50/62/73*	Introductory Psychology	3	50
College-level German Language	8/12/16	50/63/70	Introductory Sociology	3	50
College-level Spanish Language	8/12/16	50/63/70**	Principles of Macroeconomics	3	50
BUSINESS			Principles of Microeconomics	3	50
Financial Accounting (as of 1/07)	3	50	Western Civilization I: Ancient Near East to 1648	3	50
Information Systems and Computer Applications	3	50	Western Civilization II: 1648 to the Present	3	50
Introductory Business Law	3	50	SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS		
Principles of Accounting***	6	50	Calculus	3	50
Principles of Management	3	50	College Algebra	3	50
Principles of Marketing	3	50	College Algebra-Trigonometry***	3	50
			General Biology	6	50
			General Chemistry	6	50
			Precalculus (as of 1/06)	3	50
			Trigonometry***	3	50

Note: The scores on this chart represent CLEP examinations taken on a computer since July 1, 2001. If you have taken a CLEP examination with paper and pencil before July 1, 2001, contact your Center Office of Academic Review or mentor.

* Scores as of February 2003. If you took the examination before that date, contact your Center Office of Academic Review.

+ Advanced-level credit

** Scores as of July 2007. If you took the examinations before that date, contact your Center Office of Academic Review.

***CLEP no longer offers these examinations.

EXCELSIOR COLLEGE EXAMINATIONS (ECE)

www.excelsior.edu

Formerly the Regents College Examinations (RCE), College Proficiency Examination Program (CPEP), the Regents External Degree (RED) Program, and ACT/PEP tests outside of New York.

Excelsior College Examinations are available in business, education, liberal arts and sciences, and nursing. To see the list of titles go to the Web site and search for “examinations.” Examination content outlines and study guides are available at no cost. Check with your Empire State College Center Office of Academic Review for information.

Excelsior College Examinations
7 Columbia Circle
Albany, NY 12203-5159
888 647-2388
testadmn@excelsior.edu

The official score report from Excelsior indicates whether or not you passed and are eligible for the credit. Refer to the following listing of currently available tests for credit amounts.

THOMAS EDISON COLLEGE EXAMINATION PROGRAMS (TECEP)

www.tesc.edu

DANTES SUBJECT STANDARDIZED TESTS (DSST)

www.getcollegecredit.com

The Thomas Edison College Examination Program (TECEP) and the DSST (developed by Prometric™) examinations are available to Empire State College students through special agreements and offer more than 100 examinations in liberal arts, business and management, and professional/vocational areas. The tests are administered at Empire State College centers, and flexible testing arrangements may be made.

Check with your Empire State College Center Office of Academic Review for information on tests, examination dates and study materials. Listings of TECEP examinations and DSST examinations are available on their Web sites. The official score report indicates whether or not you passed the examination and are eligible for the credit. All examinations are 3 credits unless otherwise noted. To have DSST scores sent directly to Empire State College, use code #8732.

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY (NYU) PROFICIENCY TESTING IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

www.scps.nyu.edu/trans

Empire State College awards credits for the New York University language examinations. The amount of credit depends on your score on the test and the credit recommendation from NYU. Examinations are offered in many languages; check the Web

site for the complete list and prices. These tests can be taken at locations outside of New York City, but you must make arrangements to have the test proctored by a college faculty member, administrator or government official.

New York University provides an official letter or transcript and the results are valid for five years.

To get a list of the available language examinations, go to the Web site, on the left side under “Subjects” click on Foreign Languages, then Proficiency Testing. You also can call 212 998-7030.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT PROGRAM (AP)

www.collegeboard.com/ap/students

Empire State College students may be eligible for credit for Advanced Placement examinations for which a grade of three or better has been achieved. Examinations are administered to high school students in over a dozen different college subjects. If you have taken AP examinations, you need to provide the college with official score reports sent from College Board to Empire State College Admissions. Ask your Center Office of Academic Review if you need more information.

If a student took an AP examination four or more years ago, the archived record can be requested from

AP Services
P.O. Box 6671
Princeton, NJ 08541-6671
888 225-5427
apexams@info.collegeboard.org

Students need to send their full name at the time they took the examination, current address, date of birth, Social Security number, year the test was taken, name of the high school where it was taken, name(s) of the examinations taken, daytime phone number and where the student wants the information sent. A copy also will be sent to the student. Even if a student does not remember the exact year or which examinations s/he took, AP archives should be able to locate the information. It takes about three weeks to process.

GRADUATE RECORD EXAMINATION (GRE) ADVANCED SUBJECT TESTS

www.gre.org

The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) Advanced Subject Tests are examinations offered in eight fields of study (biochemistry, literature in English, biology, mathematics, chemistry, physics, computer science, psychology). The GRE also offers general aptitude tests which are not translatable to credit. The GRE Advanced Subject Test is designed to assess learning normally expected in a college major, so depending on your score on an examination, you may be eligible for a certain amount of credit. Check with your Center Office of Academic Review for information.

WHAT COLLEGE-LEVEL LEARNING HAS ALREADY BEEN EVALUATED?

Noncollegiate sponsored learning is college-level learning you have acquired from educational experiences that already have been evaluated and for which credit can be awarded without additional evaluation by the college. You may have credit for pre-evaluated learning from:

- a license or certificate of completion of a training program pre-evaluated for academic credit by Empire State College;
- completion of formal educational courses offered by business, industry, professional associations, labor unions, and other noncollegiate organizations evaluated by National Program on Noncollegiate Sponsored Instruction (National PONSI) or American Council on Education (ACE).
- completion of formal military training and/or possession of military occupational rating or specialty evaluated by the American Council on Education (ACE).

What Has Been Evaluated?

There are several hundred organizations with evaluated courses, training programs, licenses and/or certificates, and the number grows continually. Most evaluated courses and programs are at least several days in length, although occasionally shorter courses are grouped together for evaluation purposes. All evaluated experiences include some procedure or mechanism to evaluate the participant's learning. Credit is never recommended solely on the basis of attendance.

How Do You Know If Your Learning Has Been Evaluated?

There are many training programs offered by noncollegiate organizations that have been evaluated for college-level learning and there are several ways to learn if the program you completed has been evaluated. Perhaps when you completed your training, you were told that it had been evaluated for college-level credit, or you received a certificate for the training, which states that the training was evaluated for college credit. You also can check the sponsoring organization's Web site for that information, and your Center Office of Academic Review has a number of reference books on noncollegiate sponsored learning. Continuing education units (CEUs) do not equate to college credits. Since training programs need to adapt to the on-going changes in a field and the content of a training often changes, in order to be eligible for the credit, the dates and location of your training must match the dates and location of the evaluated training.

Source of Official Documentation

In order to document potential credit, you must request that official documentation from the sponsoring agency be sent to Empire State College Admissions. The guides and directories listed on the following pages give the source of official documentation for each noncollegiate organization. These publications are available at your Center Office of Academic Review. Documentation for Empire State College generic evaluations is available at your Center Office of Academic Review.

EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE GENERIC EVALUATIONS

The college evaluates some licenses, certificates and training programs and courses sponsored by noncollegiate organizations, and recommends college credit that can be used in an Empire State College degree. To be eligible for this credit you need to have completed the training or obtained the license during a certain time period and you need official documentation. Your Center Office of Academic Review has more detailed information.

Some of the Empire State College generic evaluations:

Licenses and Certificates

- American Red Cross Certification – 1 credit in First Aid/CPR
- Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC) – 32 credits
- Emergency Medical Technician Certification (EMT/AEMT) – up to 34 credits*
- Insurance Licenses (New York state) – credit varies
- Real Estate Licenses (New York and other states) – up to 6 credits*
- Series 7 Stockbroker's License: General Securities Registered Representative (NASD) – up to 10 credits

*Amount of credit depends on level of certification or licensure.

Training Activities and Apprenticeships

- Apprenticeships (NYC Locals) evaluated by Empire State College's Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies – credit varies
- New York City Police Department – Officer Promotions – credit varies

The complete list is available on the college's Web site. Go to www.esc.edu and search for "generic evaluations."

DIRECTORY OF THE NATIONAL PROGRAM ON NONCOLLEGIATE SPONSORED INSTRUCTION (NATIONAL PONSI)

www.nationalponsi.org

National PONSI is another organization that evaluates courses, training programs, licenses and/or certificates and recommends credit. Credit recommendations apply only to training received during the period of time, at the locations, and for the length of time listed in the directory. You can read their credit recommendations on their Web site in the College Credit Recommendations Online (CCR Online).

Among their evaluations are:

- New York City Fire Department
- New York City Police Department
- J.P. Morgan
- LOMA
- Verizon

AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EDUCATION (ACE) "NATIONAL GUIDE TO COLLEGE CREDIT FOR WORKFORCE TRAINING"

www.acenet.edu/nationalguide/

Empire State College students may receive credit for training programs and courses offered by noncollegiate organizations according to recommendations established by the American Council on Education (ACE) and listed in the "National Guide to College Credit for Workforce Training." Noncollegiate organizations include business and industry, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, hospitals, professional associations, labor unions and some other types of organizations.

The information is now available at the Web site listed above and includes details on course title, length, location, dates, objectives, topics of instruction, and methods of instruction in addition to recommended number and level of credits. Credit recommendations apply only to training received during the period of time, at the locations, and for the length of time listed in the guide and directory. Course listings in the ACE guide typically look like this:

Asbestos Abatement Worker Course

ACE Transcript Data: LABO-0002

Location: Local training fund programs affiliated with Laborers-AGC

Length: 40 hours (five days)

Dates: October 1987 - Present

Objective: To provide workers with information on asbestos hazards, engineering controls, protective equipment, procedures and technology of abatement; and with information on how to become certified under federal, state or local regulations to gain access to the workplace.

Learning Outcome: Upon successful completion of this course, the participant will be able to recognize the hazards of asbestos; know the regulations governing asbestos abatement operations; perform asbestos abatement tasks; and know the worker's rights referent to asbestos work.

Instruction: Major topics covered in the courses are asbestos and its uses, health effects of asbestos, medical monitoring, legal rights, personal protective equipment, safe working practices, engineering controls, negative pressure worksite systems, preparation and decontamination, abatement techniques, air monitoring, and hazard communication. Methods of instruction include lecture, discussion, role-playing, problem solving, classroom exercises, and hands-on experience. Evaluation methods used include, performance testing, student activities, exercises, assignments and final examination.

Credit Recommendation: In the lower division bachelor's/ associate degree category, two semester hours in Industrial or Environmental Technology (6/93) (8/05).

Organization: Laborers-AGC

AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EDUCATION (ACE) "GUIDE TO EDUCATIONAL CREDIT BY EXAMINATION"

www.acenet.edu

Empire State College students may receive credit for passing standardized examinations and licensing examinations. The ACE "Guide to Educational Credit by Examination" has information about some of the examinations listed in the standardized examination section of this guide, as well as a number of other examinations, such as:

- American Council on Exercise
- Microsoft® Office Specialist Certification Program
- National Court Reports Association RPR and RMR Examinations

AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EDUCATION (ACE) “GUIDE TO THE EVALUATION OF EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES IN THE ARMED SERVICES”

www.militaryguides.acenet.edu

Military Training and Occupations

The American Council on Education “Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services” provides credit recommendations for many military service school courses and military occupational specialties. Students requesting credit for this learning must provide the proper documentation, and the learning must match the course description in the guide as to title, contents, dates, location and length of study. The college accepts credit labeled by ACE as “lower-division associate/bachelor’s degree category,” “upper-division baccalaureate category” and “graduate degree category.” The college accepts credit recommendations for credit from primary MOS and duty MOS and requires more documentation to accept secondary MOS.

ACE credit recommendations for military service are available online at the address listed above.

Courses and Training Evaluated for Credit

ACE recommends credit for:

- formal military courses
- Army enlisted and warrant officer occupational specialties
- Navy general rates and ratings
- Navy limited duty and warrant officer specialties
- selected Navy Enlisted Classifications (NEC)
- Coast Guard ratings and warrant officer specialties
- selected Marine Corps occupational specialties

The guide normally includes service school courses conducted on a formal basis, i.e., approved by a central authority within each service and listed by the service in its catalog. Most courses occur on a full-time basis and (since 1981) include at least 45 academic hours of instruction. Before 1981, evaluated courses lasted at least two weeks or included a minimum of 60 contact hours of instruction. Before 1973, the minimum requirements were three weeks or 90 contact hours. The American Council on Education does not evaluate most correspondence courses.

Some military schools are regionally accredited and you need to request an official transcript be sent from that institution directly to Empire State College Admissions. These institutions are:

- Community College of the Air Force (CCAF)
- Army Command and General Staff College
- Air Force Institute of Technology
- Defense Intelligence College

Naval Postgraduate School

Naval War College

Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences School of Medicine

OBTAINING OFFICIAL MILITARY DOCUMENTATION

More information is available in the “Student Degree Planning Guide” or at your Center Office of Academic Review. Always have your official documents sent to Empire State College Admissions.

Army

<http://aarts.army.mil>

Army/American Council on Education Registry Transcript System (AARTS) transcripts are available to veterans or active-duty personnel. You can request your AARTS transcript online at the Web address above.

If you have any questions, the toll free number to the AARTS Operations Center is 866 297-4427.

Navy/Marine

<https://smart.navy.mil>

Sailor/Marine American Council on Education Registry Transcript (SMART) transcripts are available to active duty and reserve sailors/Marines, Navy veterans separated/retired after 1975, and Marines separated/retired after Oct. 1, 1999. You can request SMART transcripts online at the Web address above.

If you have any questions, the toll free number to the Navy College Center is 877 253-7122.

Coast Guard

http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cgi/ve/official_transcript.asp

Air Force

<http://www.au.af.mil/au/ccaf>

Since 1972, the Air Force has operated the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF). Anyone who has attended an Air Force school or course can obtain a transcript that documents training if the course is recognized by CCAF for credit.

WHAT IS INDIVIDUALIZED PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT (PLA) OR INDIVIDUALIZED CREDIT BY EVALUATION (CBE)

Prior learning assessment offers students the opportunity to receive college-level credit for knowledge gained outside of the traditional classroom. This process is usually utilized when other alternative assessment processes (e.g., standardized examinations, pre-evaluated noncollegiate sponsored learning programs) are not available. Your mentor can help you review your prior learning to determine if it is college level, appropriate for your degree program plan, and is not redundant with other learning.

To begin a PLA Request, you write a learning essay, also called a learning description, for each learning component that you wish to have evaluated. This learning essay describes the sources, nature and extent of your learning. It serves several functions:

- Enables you to focus your ideas and be specific about the types of learning for which you want to be evaluated.
- Helps the college select a qualified person to evaluate your learning.
- Introduces the evaluator to your learning and presents your knowledge and skills so your evaluation can be efficient and productive.

The particular form, content and length of a learning essay can vary depending on the type of learning involved, the amount of verification available and the amount of credit requested. For example, if you were requesting credit for knowledge in the area of “community organization” based on years of volunteer work, your essay might require several pages to describe the learning you have acquired, and to make connections to concepts of community organization and participation.

On the other hand, suppose you were requesting credit in the area of “Visual Basic/C++ programming,” gained primarily through attendance at seminars and training courses offered by your employer. Supplementary materials that you might include to augment the request and present the learning you have gained include: course outlines, examples of computer programs you wrote, and any training manuals or materials. You should consult your mentor for advice and assistance. The college’s “Student Degree Planning Guide” publication also is helpful.

You can use PLA Planner to organize your request and attach your essay. Through this tool, you and your mentor can review your request and determine when it is ready to submit. Your mentor submits the request to COAR. Once COAR has received your PLA request, they will review it and, if ready, assign an evaluator.

You are responsible for making contact with the evaluator, responding to requests for additional supporting materials in a timely fashion and participating actively in the evaluation

process. If you cannot make contact with the evaluator or if you have other difficulties, you are responsible for notifying your mentor or COAR.

The evaluator is given a copy of your learning essay, supporting materials and a copy of your degree plan. The evaluator reviews the materials and discusses your learning with you to gain a deeper understanding of your knowledge. The evaluator may ask you to demonstrate your learning or to elaborate on your learning essay. You may be asked to supply additional examples of your work. The evaluator needs to be confident that your learning is college level and not redundant with other learning in your degree plan.

Once the evaluator has reviewed your request and has communicated with you about your learning, he or she will submit a written recommendation to COAR. The evaluator may suggest changes in component titles for your degree program and may recommend credit amounts or credit designations differently than you requested. Your COAR will process this recommendation and include it in your degree plan portfolio for the faculty committee to review and make final determinations for your request. You and your mentor will be notified by e-mail through PLA Planner once COAR has processed the recommendation. The evaluator only recommends credit – an award of Empire State College credit can only be made by the center faculty academic review committee and college administration in the context of your degree program. In most cases, the specific recommendations of expert evaluators are accepted and are translated to Empire State College credit as advanced standing on the approved degree program.

Each year, over 2,000 Empire State College students complete the individualized credit by evaluation process. While the prospect of being interviewed by an expert to justify your claim of college-level learning can seem imposing, most students who go through the process find it satisfying, affirming and worth the time and effort.

CASE STUDIES

Donna is 43 and the mother of two grown children. She attended college right after high school and earned some credits but never completed her degree. She has always expressed her thoughts in poetry and has read the works of English and American poets on her own. She has even published poems in local publications over the years. She is very active in volunteer work for groups such as the Red Cross and the United Way, participating in major fund drives and holding various leadership positions. She has read extensively in the area of women's studies and has taught an adult education course on women's issues in contemporary society.

When Donna enrolled at Empire State College, she talked with her mentor and decided to pursue a degree in literature and poetry. She had an official transcript sent to Empire State College from her previous college. She chose to take a number of CLEP examinations that dealt with literature and writing. Since she couldn't find an examination that appeared to be a good measure for her fund-raising skills, she decided to try to earn individualized credit by evaluation or individualized prior learning assessment (PLA). She also wrote a learning essay for her knowledge of women's studies.

When Donna and her mentor put her degree program together, it included transcript credit, credit from standardized examinations and individualized credit by evaluation.

Robert joined the military right out of high school and made a career of it. Now that he is retired from the service, he is interested in earning the degree he never pursued. He worked in the human resources arena in the military and wants to continue in that area as a civilian. Robert's mentor told him that the American Council on Education (ACE) had evaluated his military training, so he requested that the appropriate documentation be sent to Admissions. He also had taken some training courses at a bank where he now works that had been evaluated for credit by National PONSI, so he had that documentation sent to Admissions as well. He knew that he did not test well and chose not to take any standardized examinations. He also wanted to have space in his degree program for more formalized learning about United States history, which has always been an interest of his. Therefore, he was pleased with the credit for prior learning ACE and National PONSI offered him, but he was not interested in pursuing more credit. That allowed him space in his degree program to study advanced human resource/business subjects and expand his United States history knowledge.

Robert's credit for prior college-level learning included credit for his military learning that was evaluated by ACE and the learning from the bank training evaluated by National PONSI.

Sam had a number of illnesses that no doctor seemed able to cure, so he began to read on his own about alternative and Eastern medicines. These alternative medicines worked and he decided he wanted to learn enough so that he could share his knowledge with others to make them feel better. He traveled around the United States to study with experienced practitioners. He also wanted to travel to China to learn even more, but realized that he should speak the language before he went, so he bought some language tapes and practiced talking with some of his Chinese neighbors. After many years of study, he wanted to meet his state's educational requirements so that he could establish his own office. He took a New York University Foreign Language Proficiency Examination in Chinese, but he found that much of his knowledge in alternative medicine was not evaluated by standardized examinations or other standard measures. As a result, he wrote a number of CBE essays that described the depth and breadth of his knowledge and skills.

Sam's mentor helped him realize that although his learning might not be evaluated through standardized methods, it was in fact college-level and that individualized credit by evaluation would be the best route for him.

Shawna began working with computers because everyone else in her office was afraid of them. She found she enjoyed the work and was very good at it. Every time her company asked who wanted to attend a training seminar, she jumped at the chance. Although she often knew much of what was covered, Shawna always learned something new. Now she wants a new job but finds she is competing against other people who have similar experiential learning but also have degrees.

Shawna and her mentor looked through her training certificates to see if some of them might be pre-evaluated by ACE or National PONSI. She also took some standardized examinations measuring her computer skills and wrote CBE essays for her more specialized computer skills.

This guide has described the various methods Empire State College uses to recognize the college-level learning you may already have when you enter the college. If you have more questions or need more detailed information, please ask your mentor or Center Office of Academic Review.

We wish you continued success in your Empire State College studies.

