

Community College of Baltimore County Prior Learning Assessment Guide

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I. What is Prior Learning Assessment?

Prior learning assessment (PLA) is becoming more widespread at colleges and universities throughout the world. Prior learning encompasses any college-level learning that a student has acquired outside of a traditional classroom setting. This includes workplace training, skills learned in a job or career, credits earned by testing, volunteer activities, civic duties, and major life experiences.

Prior learning assessment at CCBC is intended to encourage degree and/or certificate completion. In many cases, PLA can help students save time and money by reducing the number of courses a student must take.

CCBC values the diversity of its students and understands that they come to the college with a diverse assortment of unique experiences, interests, and intellectual pursuits that may translate into college level learning.

CCBC Policy on Degrees and PLA

- Students must earn at least 25% of the credits required for a program of study directly through CCBC coursework.
- They may earn up to 75% of the credits required for a program of study through Prior Learning Assessment (PLA).
- PLA credit will be posted to current CCBC student transcripts- students that have completed coursework at CCBC and/or are currently registered for CCBC classes.*

**Individual exceptions can be considered by emailing transfereval@ccbcmd.edu. This requirement does not apply to Credit by AP, IB, and the Articulated Construction Apprenticeship programs.*

Prior Learning Assessments are conducted through a variety of evaluation processes, including, but not limited to, the following:

Credit by Exam: Scores from Departmental Challenge Exams, the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST), Advanced Placement Testing Program (AP), and International Baccalaureate (IB) are reviewed for possible award of credit. ***Fees may apply and vary by exam type.*

Credit by Portfolio Assessment: Qualified students may choose to develop a portfolio of their college-level learning. Portfolios are presented to appropriate faculty for evaluation and possible award of credit. ***Fees apply.*

Credit by Industry Certification, Licensure, or Apprenticeship: Qualified students may choose to present their nationally recognized Industry Certificate, License, or state or federally recognized Apprenticeship Completion Certificate for evaluation of their college-level learning. Credentials are presented to appropriate faculty or staff for evaluation and possible award of credit. There is no fee for this type of PLA.

Important Information about Prior Learning

Once a student takes a traditional college course, he or she cannot usually retake the course using prior learning. Exceptions will be decided upon a case-by-case basis after a review of the student's transcripts and resume. Financial aid cannot be used to pay for prior learning.

Many students will ask about transferring prior learning credits to other institutions. This is especially important for courses required for the program of study at the 4-year institution, as well as for schools that do not offer general education waivers. Further information about the transfer of PLA credit can be found in the flow chart below.

While the PLA Office facilitates the process, the decision about whether or not to award credit is made by the Subject Matter Faculty Expert, who has expertise in that subject. In many cases, students will work with a Subject Matter Faculty Expert (SMFE) to assist them in the PLA process, and to evaluate potential PLA credits. These SMFEs are people who teach or have taught courses in that subject area and are familiar with course requirements.

II. Credits Awarded for Previous College

The first step in prior learning assessment should always be to review previous college transcripts. Please note: the transcript evaluation process can take up to 4 weeks from the time that transcripts are received. If the student's program of study (major) is changed, a request may be made to repeat the transcript evaluation.

A. Transfer from Regionally Accredited Schools:

CCBC accepts credits from regionally accredited colleges and universities around the nation (state universities, community colleges, etc.), when applied towards the program of study. In order to have credits evaluated and applied at CCBC, the student must submit to the Registrar's Office official transcripts from all colleges attended: *CCBC Registrar's Office, 7201 Rossville Blvd. Baltimore, MD 21237.*

B. International Credit Transfer:

1. Transcripts containing international credits must be translated and evaluated by either World Education Services (www.wes.org) or the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (www.aacrao.org). *AACAO stopped evaluating International Transcript as of 2016.
2. The student must submit the evaluated transcript to the *CCBC Registrar's Office, 7201 Rossville Blvd. Baltimore, MD 21237.*
3. In order to have credit evaluated and applied at CCBC, the student must submit to the CCBC Registrar's office official transcripts from all colleges attended.

C. Transfer from Non-Regionally Accredited Schools:

Excerpt from Middle States Federal Compliance Guidelines:

“The acceptance or denial of transfer credit is not determined exclusively on the basis of the accreditation of the sending institution or the mode of delivery, but, rather, will consider course equivalencies, including expected learning outcomes, with those of the receiving institution’s curricula and standards.”

Once the student indicates they have transfer credits from a non-regionally accredited institution (such as Distance Education Training Council or DETC accreditation or other national accreditation, some religious schools, some proprietary schools, etc.), the student should be advised:

1. The credits will NOT count towards General Education Courses. Even if a student took English Comp. I, they may get credit for a lower level elective, but it will not satisfy CCBC’s ENGL101. However, if they would then like to go about obtaining the general education credit via another means of PLA (i.e. CLEP exam), that might be a possible alternative. If they have questions, they can contact the Prior Learning Office: PLA@ccbcmd.edu.
2. Since these credits cannot count towards General Education Courses, students should still be tested for placement level into CCBC English/Reading and Mathematics courses.
3. The student must be in a declared program of study that requires these specific courses or a degree that has room for open electives (such as some of the Humanities and Social Sciences degrees or General Studies). These courses will not be evaluated unless the student can use them towards their declared program of study.
4. These credits will NOT count towards any School of Health Professions degree (such as Nursing, Medical Lab Tech, etc...).
5. The student or advisor should send the transcript to the Registrar’s office for evaluation. The Registrar’s office will evaluate the transcript in collaboration with the student’s declared program of study head (chairperson usually) to determine if these courses can be accepted. This process may take as much as 90 days.
6. When this step is finalized, the student will be notified via their CCBC email that transfer credits have been applied to their academic record. In some instances, these courses may come in as departmental waivers (but never for General Education status).
7. If the institution holds no accreditation (even nationally), the course most likely will not transfer in, but the student should still send over the transcripts and let the Registrar’s Office make the final determination (in collaboration with the academic departments).

III. Procedures for Prior Learning Assessment

Students planning on transferring to a 4- year bachelor’s degree granting institution should note that not all PLA credits will transfer.

1. As early as possible in the student’s time at CCBC, a Degree Works (DW) audit should be completed to determine remaining courses needed to graduate and if the student is identified in the correct program of study (major).
2. If assisting an online learner or student that is not able to come to campus for face-to-face meetings, CCBC employees should follow FERPA guidelines with regards to release of student information. Verify the student’s I.D. (900#), address, and use their CCBC student email address when discussing sensitive information.
3. Refer to the prior learning website for assistance: <http://www.ccbcmd.edu/Resources-for-Students/Academic-Advisement/Prior-Learning-Assessment.aspx>.

Flowchart to Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) at CCBC

Prior Learning & Assessment Options

Use the chart to cross reference potential PLA options for students.

Prospective Students

1. **Apply** to CCBC and **declare a program of study**.
<http://www.ccbcmd.edu/Get-Started/Applying-to-CCBC.aspx>

Current CCBC Students

2. **Send all transcripts** to CCBC from other higher education institutions. It may take 3-4 weeks from receipt in the Registrar's Office for transcripts to be evaluated.

CCBC Registrar's Office, 7201 Rossville Blvd., Baltimore, MD 21237

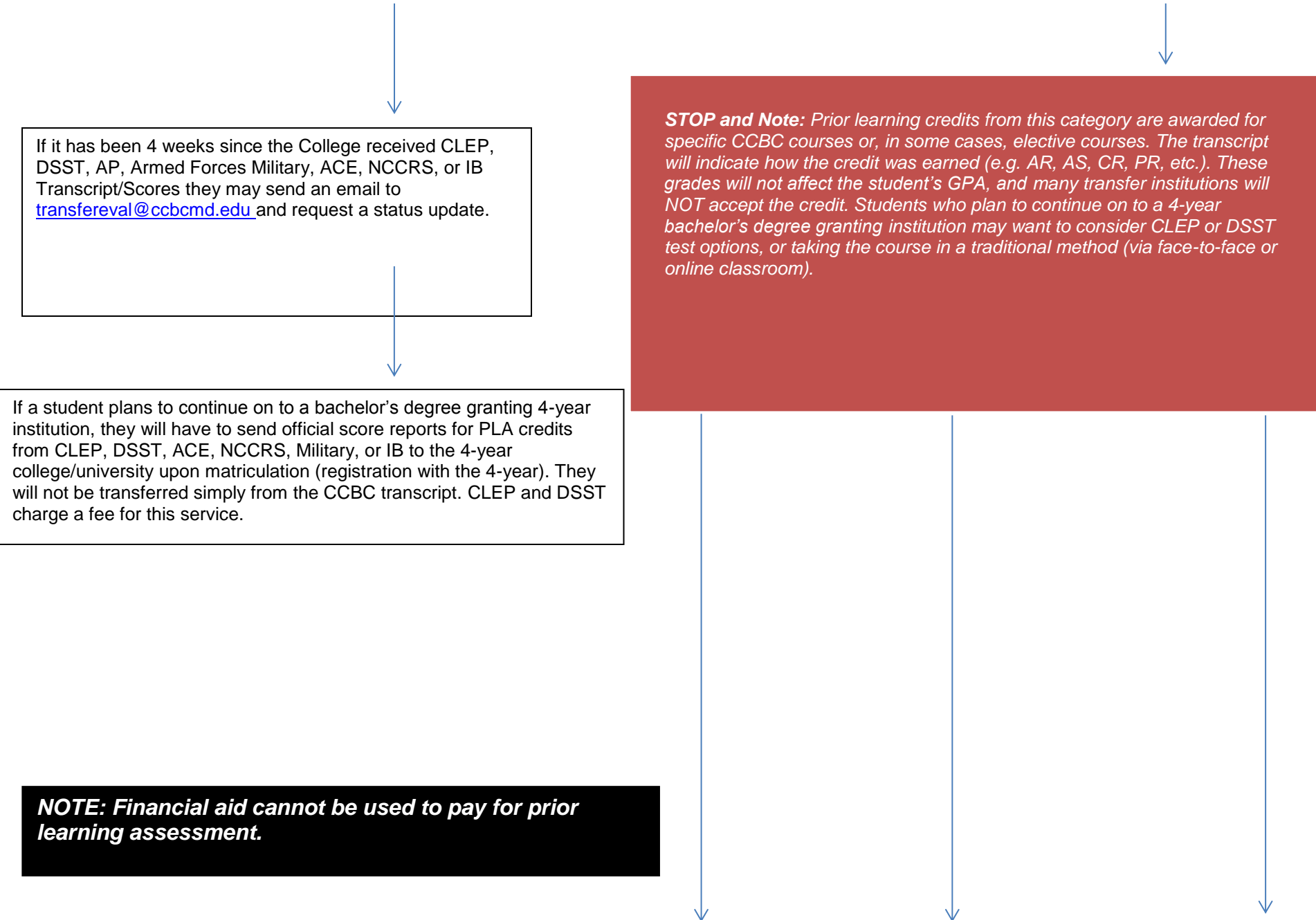
POLICY AS OF 5/2016
(subject to change)

3. A **Degree Works (DW)** audit will help students know which courses are needed for graduation: <http://www.ccbcmd.edu/Resources-for-Students/Academic-Advisement/DegreeWorks/DegreeWorks-FAQ.aspx>. Be sure to set the accurate catalog year that the student began at CCBC. For assistance with the DW audit, please see an Academic Advisor or email degreeworks@ccbcmd.edu. PLA options at: <http://www.ccbcmd.edu/Resources-for-Students/Academic-Advisement/Prior-Learning-Assessment.aspx>.

4. If PLA is College Level Examination Program (**CLEP**) or DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (**DSST**), **student must indicate CCBC as the receiving institution on their actual exam**. Scores will be reviewed, verified, and posted to student transcripts. It may take 3-4 weeks from the receipt of score reports for credit to be posted to the student's record. When transcription is completed, students will be notified via their CCBC student email account. The following website will lead to FAQs and testing registration information:
<http://www.ccbcmd.edu/Resources-for-Students/Testing-Centers/Schedule-an-Appointment.aspx>

4. If PLA is Advanced Placement (**AP**), **Armed Forces-Military** or (CCBC approved) **ACE or NCCRS** or International Baccalaureate (**IB**): students must send official score report and/or transcription of credits to *CCBC Registrar's Office*. Scores may be from the ACE Credit Online Transcript System, the organization that sponsored the course or learning if NCCRS, and/or their official military transcript. Send to: Registrar's Office, *7201 Rossville Blvd., Baltimore, MD 21237*. Scores will be reviewed, verified, and posted to student transcripts. It may take 3-4 weeks from the receipt of score reports for credit to be posted to the student's record. When transcription is completed, students will be notified via their CCBC student email account.

4. IF PLA is for **Departmental Exams, Industry Certification, Licensure, Apprenticeship, or PLA Portfolio**: Students should see an Academic Advisor, PLA Coordinator, or Subject Matter Faculty Expert (SMFE). Students can email PLA@ccbcmd.edu for more information or to set up an appointment.



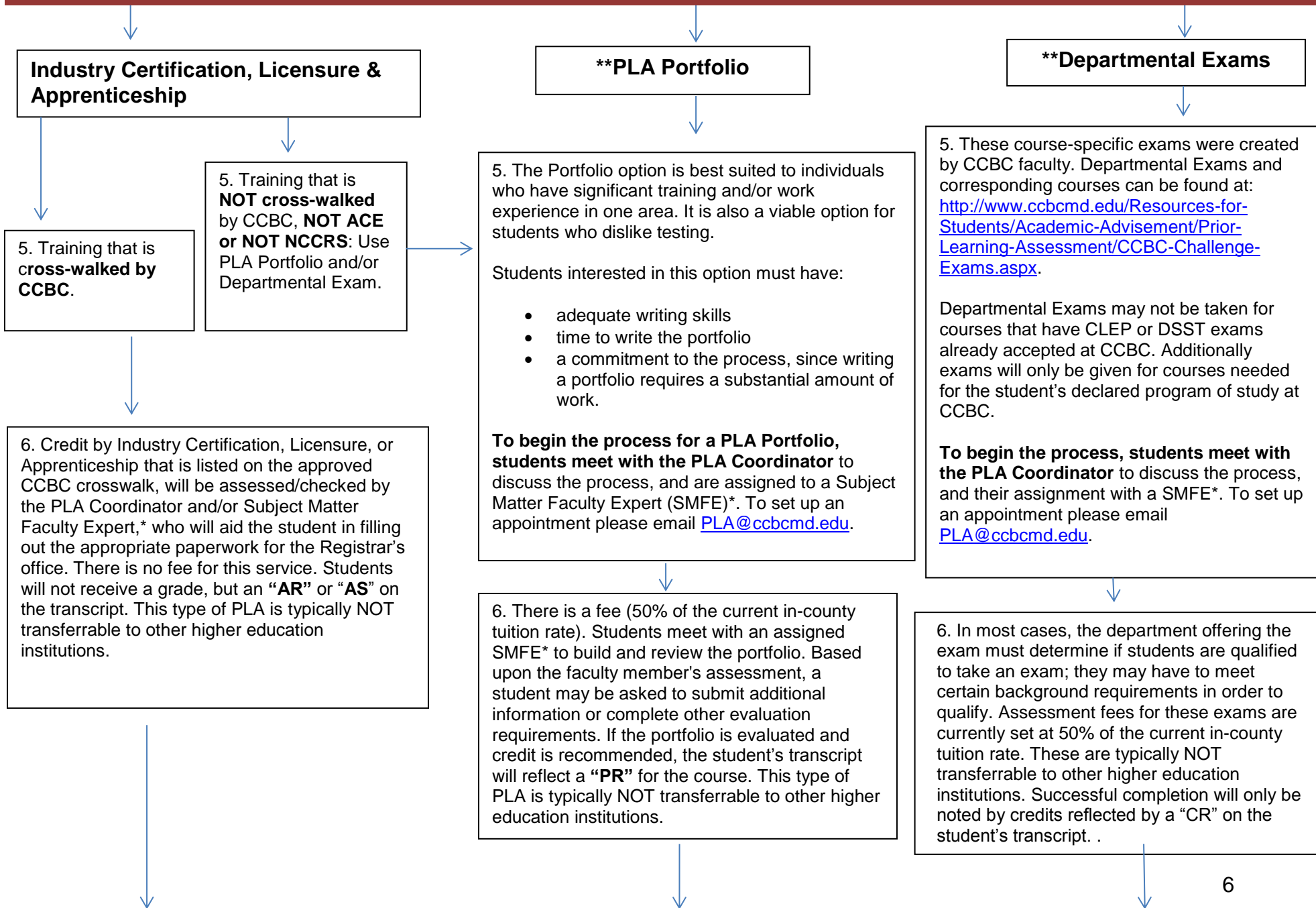
If it has been 4 weeks since the College received CLEP, DSST, AP, Armed Forces Military, ACE, NCCRS, or IB Transcript/Scores they may send an email to transfereval@ccbcmd.edu and request a status update.


STOP and Note: *Prior learning credits from this category are awarded for specific CCBC courses or, in some cases, elective courses. The transcript will indicate how the credit was earned (e.g. AR, AS, CR, PR, etc.). These grades will not affect the student's GPA, and many transfer institutions will NOT accept the credit. Students who plan to continue on to a 4-year bachelor's degree granting institution may want to consider CLEP or DSST test options, or taking the course in a traditional method (via face-to-face or online classroom).*

If a student plans to continue on to a bachelor's degree granting 4-year institution, they will have to send official score reports for PLA credits from CLEP, DSST, ACE, NCCRS, Military, or IB to the 4-year college/university upon matriculation (registration with the 4-year). They will not be transferred simply from the CCBC transcript. CLEP and DSST charge a fee for this service.

NOTE: *Financial aid cannot be used to pay for prior learning assessment.*

2. **STOP and NOTE:** Before recommending non-traditional prior learning methods, always make sure to review the student's transcript for traditional college credit transfer credit. Please note that once a student takes a traditional college course, he or she usually will not retake the course using prior learning methods. Determination will be decided on a case-by-case basis, upon review of the transcript and resume of the student.






7. To receive the approved PLA credit by means of Industry Certification, Licensure, Apprenticeship, PLA Portfolio, or Departmental Exam students (and the assigned Subject Matter Faculty Expert*) must complete the appropriate paperwork, pay the fee (if applicable), and send all documentation to the Registrar's office.

Please note:

- It may take 3-4 weeks from receipt of documentation of the credit by the Registrar's Office for credits for credits to post to the CCBC transcript. Be aware of graduation timelines when planning to begin the PLA process.
- Students only have up through the semester they begin PLA paperwork, to request the PLA be applied to their transcript, and pay for all services (if applicable).



8. The assigned Subject Matter Faculty Expert* is accountable for documentation and record keeping of all completed paperwork sent to the registrar, case notes, and other items they used in assessing the PLA credits awarded for each student and assessment. SMFEs* must also add SPACMNT student notes into Banner about which courses students are attempting to complete through PLA and/or PLA credit that has been recommended.

If assisting an online learner or student that is not able to come to campus for face-to-face meetings, CCBC employees should follow FERPA guidelines in regard to release of student information. Verify the student's I.D. (900#), address, and use their CCBC student email address when discussing sensitive information.

SMFEs* are also accountable for scanning and uploading approved PLA documentation to the student's secured e-file folder on the CCBC PLA SharePoint site. This is housed under the tree of Instruction then Articulation, Transfer, and Prior Learning Assessment.

END of this Tree Branch.

*Subject Matter Faculty Experts (SMFE) are the departmental experts in the field that assist with PLA options, assignment of credit, etc. These are often the Department Chairs, Program Coordinators/Directors, or faculty assigned by the Dean to assist with PLA and student advisement.

** *Prior Learning Assessment charges for Departmental Exams and Portfolio Assessment will be waived for CCBC employees who are also eligible for tuition waivers. When the form is filled out, please note that charges are \$0.00 because the student is also a full-time CCBC employee. The bursar will then sign next to that note on the form instead of providing a receipt number.*

NOTE: The assigned Subject Matter Faculty Expert would be housed in the department offering the subject matter for which the student is applying for PLA. Students may end up working with multiple SMFEs if they apply for PLA credit in multiple areas. The PLA Coordinator can help identify SMFEs

IV. Credit by Examination

There are several standardized exams that can result in credit at CCBC. Two types of exams, CLEP and DSST, are administered in CCBC's Testing Centers. They can also be taken elsewhere, and students can have the scores sent to CCBC. Two types of exams, Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB), are not administered in CCBC's Testing Centers. Students usually take these exams in high school, after completing specific coursework, and have the scores sent to CCBC. To ensure credit will be awarded, see the CCBC websites for CLEP, DSST, AP, and IB for a list of acceptable tests and scores.

Additionally, CCBC faculty have developed several departmental exams that correspond to specific classes at CCBC. The departmental exams cover a wider range of subjects than the standardized exams do.

A. CLEP and DSST

College-Level Examination Program (**CLEP** - www.clep.collegeboard.org) and DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (**DSST** - www.getcollegecredit.com) are nationally recognized exams which measure a student's knowledge in a particular subject.

CLEP offers general and subject exams in Business, Composition & Literature, History & Social Sciences, Science & Mathematics, and World Languages.

DSST offers general and subject exams in Business, Humanities, Math, Physical Science, Social Sciences, and Technology.

- Both CLEP and DSST are proctored exams taken at a computer. Students are charged a fee to register and sit for the exam. Most exams last around 90 minutes and consist of multiple-choice questions.
- Students may find information on the content and format of CLEP or DSST exams via the links above or via links on the CCBC website.
- If the student earns a qualifying score, CCBC may grant credit for comparable CCBC courses; however, not all exams are accepted by CCBC.

To register for either exam, students must contact a test center. Both exams are offered through the CCBC Testing Centers, as well as other locations. Information (including accepted exams and corresponding courses) on CLEP testing at CCBC may be found at: <http://sitecore.ccbcmd.edu/Resources-for-Students/Academic-Advisement/Prior-Learning-Assessment/CLEP-Examination.aspx> and for DSST at: <http://sitecore.ccbcmd.edu/Resources-for-Students/Academic-Advisement/Prior-Learning-Assessment/DSST-Examination.aspx>.

Students should enter CCBC's college code on the exam to have test results sent directly to CCBC:

- CLEP: CCBC COLLEGE CODE = 2192 (all campuses)
- DSST: Use the "Locate an Institution" button on the DSST website for a list of CCBC campus codes.

B. AP and IB

Advanced Placement (AP) courses are college-level classes in a wide variety of subjects that can be taken while still in high school. They offer challenging course work and a taste of what college classes are like.

AP Exams are given in May. They are two- to three-hour tests made up of multiple-choice and free-response questions. The exams are scored on a scale of 1 to 5.

CCBC students must achieve minimum scores on tests appropriate to their desired courses. See this link for a listing of courses accepted via AP by CCBC: <http://sitecore.ccbcmd.edu/Resources-for-Students/Academic-Advisement/Prior-Learning-Assessment/Advanced-Placement.aspx>.

The **International Baccalaureate® (IB)** assesses student work as direct evidence of achievement against the stated goals of the Diploma Programme (DP) courses. CCBC students must achieve minimum scores on tests appropriate to their desired courses. See this link for a listing of courses accepted by CCBC via IB examination: <http://sitecore.ccbcmd.edu/Resources-for-Students/Academic-Advisement/Prior-Learning-Assessment/International-Baccalaureate.aspx>. Please note that CCBC only accepts scores on the High Level (HL) tests, not the Standard Level (SL) tests.

C. Departmental Exams

(previously referred to as 'internal' or 'in house' Challenge Exams)

These are course-specific exams created by CCBC faculty. Accepted exams and corresponding courses can be found in the Credit for Prior Learning, available online at <http://www.ccbcmd.edu/Resources-for-Students/Academic-Advisement/Prior-Learning-Assessment/CCBC-Challenge-Exams.aspx>.

1. In most cases, students must contact the department offering the exam to determine if they are qualified to take the exam; they may have to meet certain background requirements in order to qualify.
2. Assessment fees for these exams are currently set at 50% of the current in-county tuition rate.
3. In most cases, credits awarded for CCBC Departmental Examinations are NOT transferrable to other higher education institutions.
4. Students would need to meet with the PLA Coordinator and/or subject matter faculty expert within the department to fill out appropriate paperwork.

5. The assigned subject matter faculty expert is accountable for documentation and record keeping of copies of all completed paperwork sent to the Registrar's office, case notes, and other items they used in assessing the PLA credits awarded for each student and assessment.

V. Military Training and Courses

Veterans and active-duty military may be granted credit for military service school courses and skills if the awarding of credit is approved by the Academic Dean or designee of the student's chosen curriculum or recommended by ACE. Students may check for ACE recommended courses at <http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Military-Guide-Online.aspx>.

Military Transcript Evaluation

In order to have credit evaluated and applied at CCBC, the student must request an official military transcript be submitted to the Registrar's office.

Please note: The transcript evaluation process may take 3-4 weeks for credit the time transcripts are received. Students will only receive credit that is applied towards their official declared CCBC program of study.

VI. Credit by Programs Evaluated by ACE / NCCRS

Students may be granted credit for courses or programs offered by employers, professional organizations and other agencies if those courses or programs have been evaluated and recommended for course credit by the American Council on Education (ACE) college credit recommendation service, or the National College Credit Recommendation Service (NCCRS). CCBC is not obligated to accept every recommendation made by ACE or NCCRS.

A. American Council on Education

1. Refer to the American Council on Education's National Guide to College Credit for Workforce Training at www.acenet.edu/nationalguide to determine if the student's employee training program has been recognized for credit.
2. If the training program has been recognized for credit, the student needs to request a transcript by utilizing the CREDIT Online Transcript System found at <http://www2.acenet.edu/credit/?fuseaction=browse.main> ACE will send the transcript to CCBC on behalf of the student.
3. Students must have the credit evaluated and approved in order for it to be applied to their transcript.

4. Students will only receive credit that is applied towards their official, declared CCBC program of study.

B. National College Credit Recommendation Service

1. Refer to the college credit recommendations directory at www.nationalccrs.org/ccr to determine if the course has been evaluated for college credit recommendation and to view detailed information about the course and credit recommendation. If the organization is not in the directory, be sure to look in the Former Members link.
2. Students must contact the organization that sponsored the course or learning experience and have an official transcript sent to the Registrar's Office. (NCCRS does NOT issue transcripts.)
3. Students must have credit evaluated and approved in order for it to be applied their transcript.
4. Students will only receive credit that is applied towards their official declared CCBC program of study.

VII. Portfolio Assessment

The Portfolio option is best suited to individuals who have significant training and/or work experience in one area. It is also a viable option for students who dislike testing.

Students interested in this option must have:

- adequate writing skills
- time to write the portfolio
- a commitment to the process, since writing a portfolio requires a substantial amount of work.

There is a fee (50% of the current in-county tuition rate), due in advance of the faculty assessment of the portfolio. Students must meet with an assigned Subject Matter Faculty Expert to build and review the portfolio. Based upon the faculty member's assessment, a student may be asked to submit additional information or complete other evaluation requirements. If the portfolio is evaluated and credit is recommended, the student's transcript will reflect a "PR" for the course. Credits awarded for CCBC PLA Portfolio are typically NOT transferrable to other higher education institutions. Students would need to meet with the PLA Coordinator and/or Subject Matter Faculty Expert within the department to fill out a 'PLA Request for Approval' form and send it to the Registrar's office.

The assigned subject matter faculty expert is accountable for documentation and record keeping of copies of all completed paperwork sent to the Registrar's office, case notes, and other items they used in assessing the PLA credits awarded for each student and assessment.

VIII. Industry Certification, Licensure, and Apprenticeship

A. Apprenticeship Training Registered through the Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Council, or Other CCBC-Approved State or Federally Registered Apprenticeship

A student may qualify for college credits for the satisfactory completion of an apprenticeship training program registered with by the Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Council, another state apprenticeship agency, or the U.S. Department of Labor. Students would need to meet with the PLA Coordinator and/or Subject Matter Faculty Expert (SMFE) within the department to fill out the appropriate paperwork and send it to the Registrar's office.

B. Industry Credentials Cross-walked by CCBC

Faculty Evaluators have reviewed industry recognized certifications and licenses to recommend college credits within an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), and courses have been cross-walked to indicate what the credits awarded would be. Students would need to meet with the PLA Coordinator and/or Subject Matter Faculty Expert (SMFE) within the department to fill out the appropriate form and send it to the Registrar's office.

IX. Credit for Other Types Non-traditional Experience

Students that have learning experiences, other than those listed in this Prior Learning Assessment Guide, would have to follow procedures for PLA Portfolio and/or Departmental Exam to get credit for their learning. After an evaluation, Subject Matter Faculty Experts may recommend additional Industry Credentials be added to the CCBC cross-walk.

X. Student PLA Credit Re-Evaluation Process

The PLA credit re-evaluation process is for the following situations:

A. Students have been assigned inappropriate credit or non-credit for PLA requested;

- B. It has been more than four weeks since the student submitted their CLEP or DSST test scores or their official AP, Armed Forces Military, ACE, NCCRS, or IB Transcript/Scores to CCBC; or**
- C. It has been more than four weeks since completing the paperwork for internal CCBC PLA with their SMFE (Articulated Credit, Credit for Portfolio, or Credit for Departmental Exam).**

Any inquiry regarding expected Credit for Prior Learning not posted to the student's record within four weeks of submission to the Registrar's Office should be addressed to the Transcript Evaluation Team by emailing transfereval@ccbcmd.edu from the student's CCBC email account. The Transcript Evaluation Team will research the situation at hand and respond to the student within 3 business days of the receipt of the inquiry. The response will outline what action is being taken (i.e. referral to SMFE, etc...).

If the situation is outside the purview of the Transcript Evaluation Team, the Team will refer the situation to the Prior Learning Coordinator. The student will be notified of the referral via their CCBC email account. The Prior Learning Coordinator will inform the student of the next steps needed in the situation and will appraise the Transcript Evaluation Team of the needed remedy.