Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is the process through which students can earn college credit by identifying and documenting college-level learning that has been acquired through life experiences such as military and/or work experience, training, professional certification, independent study, volunteer activities, and hobbies.

Some opportunities to demonstrate prior learning include the following:

- Nationally standardized exams
- Credit by exam, if applicable
- Military experience and training
- Non-academic instruction evaluated by the American Council on Education (ACE)
- Portfolio assessment of college-level learning acquired through work, training, volunteering, or personal experiences

CAEL Ten Standards for Assessing Learning

http://www.cael.org/pla.htm#Follow%20the%20Ten%20Standards%20for%20Assessing%20Learning

Taken from Assessing Learning: Standards, Principles, and Procedures (Second Edition)

1. Credit or its equivalent should be awarded only for learning, and not for experience.

2. Assessment should be based on standards and criteria for the level of acceptable learning that are both agreed upon and made public.

3. Assessment should be treated as an integral part of learning, not separate from it, and should be based on an understanding of learning processes.

4. The determination of credit awards and competence levels must be made by appropriate subject matter and academic or credentialing experts.

5. Credit or other credentialing should be appropriate to the context in which it is awarded and accepted.

6. If awards are for credit, transcript entries should clearly describe what learning is being recognized and should be monitored to avoid giving credit twice for the same learning.

7. Policies, procedures, and criteria applied to assessment, including provision for appeal, should be fully disclosed and prominently available for all parties involved in the assessment process.
8. Fees charged for assessment should be based on the services performed in the process and not determined by the amount of credit awarded.

9. All personnel involved in the assessment of learning should pursue and receive adequate training and continued professional development for the functions they perform.

10. Assessment programs should be regularly monitored, reviewed, evaluated, and revised as needed to reflect changes in the needs being served, the purposes being met, and the state of the assessment arts.