Prior Learning Assessment Policy Checklist

Consider the following concepts when developing principles and practices for Prior Learning Assessment (PLA). This checklist can be used to ensure you have incorporated each aspect into your own PLA Policy. Make notes to remind yourself of next steps and questions you want to raise with your institution.

POLICY & PHILOSOPHY

Provide context:

- ❑ How does the institution define PLA?
- ❑ Does the mission of the institution articulate the purpose of PLA?
- ❑ Has the institution clearly defined college-level learning?
- ❑ Is the criteria for awarding credit for prior learning clearly identified?
- ❑ Have the specific ways to earn credit for prior learning been identified?
- ❑ Is PLA an integral part of the institution's outreach and marketing strategy?

ACADEMIC CRITERIA

Applicability:

- ❑ In which programs and courses will students be eligible to receive PLA credit?
- ❑ Are there specific courses that are exempt from PLA?
  - ❑ If yes, what is the rationale for this decision?
  - ❑ Is there an appeal process for special exceptions?

Awarding of credit:

- ❑ Is there a limit to the number of credit hours a student may earn through PLA?
  - ❑ What is the rationale for this decision?
- ❑ Does the limit apply to the total number of PLA credits or only portfolio credit?
- ❑ Does PLA credit apply as residency credit?
- ❑ How will PLA credit be reflected on the transcript?
- ❑ Will PLA credit from other institutions be accepted?
  - ❑ Will 100% of the credits be accepted?
  - ❑ Is there a limit on the number of credits accepted?
  - ❑ How will this transfer of PLA credits be reflected on the transcript?

Assessment Credit

- ❑ Will the criteria for portfolio assessment be uniform and consistent across programs and courses?
- ❑ How will the criteria be written?
- ❑ What are the criteria for challenge exams?
  - ❑ Who will write the exams?
  - ❑ How will exams be kept secure?

❑ How will criteria for all PLA opportunities be communicated to assessors, advisors, students, prospective students and (if necessary) accrediting bodies?

ROLE OF FACULTY

Assessment Process

❑ Who will assess portfolios and/or challenge exams?

❑ How many assessors will evaluate each portfolio/challenge exam?

❑ How will the assessors be trained?

❑ How will assessors be evaluated?

❑ What are the expectations and provisions for ongoing training/professional development?

❑ Will assessing faculty be given special considerations for course load and other requirements outside of the classroom?

❑ Will faculty be paid a stipend for each assessment or a lump sum each semester?

STUDENT SUPPORT

Student Eligibility:

❑ When is a student eligible for PLA credit (e.g. upon applying, upon matriculating, after/before completing a specific number of credit hours, after earning a minimum GPA, after completion of a required course)?

Supporting Students:

❑ Do students regularly receive help in understanding PLA and in making PLA-related decisions?

❑ Do students receive clear and accessible information about your PLA program?

❑ Do students have options for financial support to cover the costs of PLA?

❑ Do faculty and other staff understand PLA policy and process and *training on how to discuss them with students?*

Financial considerations:

❑ What are the fees for assessment?

❑ CAEL maintains that fees "should be charged independent of the assessment outcome" (Fiddler, M.)

❑ What services are provided for an assessment fee?

❑ Will a different fee structure apply to different types of PLA credit (e.g. CLEP, challenge exams, portfolio)?

❑ How will fees for PLA be assessed?

❑ At what point in the process will fees be assessed?

❑ Where do students pay the assessment fee?

Preparing Students: *(NOTE: This section is specific to portfolio development and has additional questions/policy implications that may not be applicable to all institutions.)*

- ❑ How will students be trained in portfolio preparation?
- ❑ Will the institution develop a course?
- ❑ Will the course be credit or non-credit?
- ❑ Which department will offer the course?
- ❑ What are specific learning outcomes of the course?
- ❑ Who will teach the course?
    - ❑ What criteria are required for instructors who will teach the course?
- ❑ Who will advise students about PLA?
- ❑ How will the advisors be trained?
- ❑ How will assessment fees be credited within the institution?
- ❑ How will faculty assessors be paid?
- ❑ Is assessment a part of the faculty load?
- ❑ Is the PLA process cost-effective for the institution?
- ❑ How does the institution address the issue of cost effectiveness?

INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure:

- ❑ Do administrative policies conform with CAEL principles?
- ❑ Is the PLA process facilitative, consistent, and designed to encourage policy implementation?
- ❑ Does the institution implement the policy consistently across personnel and departments/divisions?
- ❑ Do internal players know their roles and responsibilities?
- ❑ Do internal players have the knowledge and resources to implement PLA across the institution?
- ❑ Does everyone know the key handoffs in the process and what happens before/after each step?
- ❑ How is information about the student transferred to the next person?
- ❑ How will you know that the next part of the process happened?
- ❑ Will anyone notice if the student falls into a void?
- ❑ Are there testing centers and/or external resources (like LearningCounts) readily available to assist students?

Step-by-step:

- ❑ In addressing the following, consider involving institutional stakeholders who will be involved in the PLA process (e.g., faculty, administrators, advisors, registrar, admissions and financial aid, career services, and marketing).
- ❑ Identify the steps necessary to approve and implement PLA in your institution.
- ❑ Develop a flow chart of all steps in the process including all forms of PLA.

❑   What are the necessary provisions for maintaining privacy and are they necessary?

❑   What is the anticipated timeframe for portfolio preparation?

❑   What is the anticipated timeframe for portfolio evaluation after submission?

❑   What is the appeals process?

❑   Is there an additional fee for evaluation during appeal?

OVERSIGHT & RESEARCH

Oversight and Research:

❑   Has a process for PLA data collection been established?

❑   Have institutional research questions been developed about use and impacts of the PLA program and its progression?

❑   Is PLA information regularly being shared with faculty, staff, and leadership?

❑   Does the institution regularly review data and process for continuous improvement?

❑   Where will portfolios and other PLA documents be housed post-review?

❑   How long will portfolios be archived or stored?

Review of PLA:

❑   What are the provisions for the review of the PLA process itself?

❑   What are the steps in that process?

❑   Which office(s) will be charged with the review of the PLA process?

❑   What is the schedule for review and updating?

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