

# SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

## Student Instructions on Gaining Credit through PLA (Prior Learning Assessment)

### Learning Essay – Individualized Learning Assessment

The PLA Learning Essay process helps students identify the course for which they are requesting credit, describe and document the experiential setting, and detail the learning and skills obtained.

#### Learning Essay Principles

1. Southeastern grants credit for specific courses. The student should explore with their advisor which courses could be matched to their learning experience. The process should begin with the SEU catalog. In the event the learning does not match any of the courses in our catalog, other regionally accredited colleges and universities can be utilized. However, since Southeastern faculty must evaluate the Essay, they can only evaluate courses from disciplines in which they have academic qualifications.
2. The PLA must address the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) of the course. Every course has ILOs. The student should obtain the syllabus and pay attention to the ILOs that are specified, then be able to show how these ILOs have been met, as part of the submission. If a PLA does not address completion of the ILOs, credit cannot be granted.  
If ILOs are not available (no syllabus) for the chosen course, the student should determine five to seven critically important principles to be addressed in the PLA.
3. Time and learning are related. Although the amount of time students are involved in their learning experiences cannot be directly connected to the amount of credit awarded, it is recognized that learning requires both time and involvement. For this reason, accumulated applicable learning experiences of less than one year are not normally sufficient support for experiential learning credit. Evaluators also understand that long periods of experience do not necessarily directly relate to deeper learning and more credit.
4. Breadth and depth of involvement are required. The level of the course for which students request credit determines the level of learning that they must demonstrate. In some situations, introductory courses are more challenging for credit awards since they usually require a broad degree of knowledge and skill compared to upper level courses that are more specific and

detailed. Participation in multiple areas of an organization with various authority levels usually involves more learning and results in more credit recognition. Students who have worked their way up through the ranks of a company to top leadership are often candidates for more credit than those hired directly to the top leadership.

5. Documentation of experiences is required. The student is required to submit supporting documents, pictures, or other evidence of the experience. Written documentation from a former supervisor or other involved person can be considered. Family members should not be used for this documentation.
6. Partial credit sometimes counts. At times, a person may have limited experience, problems documenting all of their experiences, or not need full credit in a course. Although most of SEU's courses carry three credits, less credit at times is awarded. Students should only request credit that is applicable towards graduation. Faculty can award less credit than is requested if the Learning Essay does not support full credit or less credit is actually needed.
7. Learning Essays are not graded. Faculty must, however, be assured that a student with the indicated learning would have earned at least a "C" grade in the course. Courses are recorded on the transcript with a grade of "CR" for credit.
8. Learning Essay Assessment Fees are charged. These are to cover the assessment process and not the credit awarded. The Fee of is based on the number of credits submitted for evaluation by the student and is charged at \$75. per credit at the time of submission. Charges are added to the student's account by the Registrar's office, and the student must make sure payment is submitted.
9. Each Learning Essay must stand on its own. Courses should not reference other Essays or refer the evaluator to other courses. Students who plan to submit multiple Learning Essays should plan to finish one Essay before beginning another one.
10. Learning Essays are official academic submitted assignments. They therefore are governed by the University's plagiarism and academic honesty guidelines. Evidence of purposefully submitting inaccurate information will result in non-awarding of credit, forfeiture of the Learning Essay Fee, and other appropriate penalties as explained in the Plagiarism/Cheating Policy (see Academic Catalog).

## **Learning Essay Required Sections**

Learning Essays must contain the following sections. The indicated page lengths are expectation guidelines. Significantly less or more pages usually indicate a misunderstanding of section guidelines, students' insufficient experience or knowledge of the academic field, or a lack of focus on the learning acquired.

**Cover Sheet.** (1 page) The cover sheet must include your information in a Word Document format, to save as a PDF, to include:

Subject of PLA, Name, SEU ID number, Major Program, Date

**Course Request.** (1 page) Use the PLA Learning Essay Course Request included at the end of these instructions.

**Learning Experiences** (3-5 pages approximately) This section allows students to describe in detail the settings in which their learning occurred. Students should include the approximate dates, levels of involvement and leadership experienced, responsibilities, and any awards or recognitions received. Do not explain WHAT was learned, just WHERE and WHEN the learning events occurred. Key words: "I did..." or "I was responsible for..." Students often find it easier to present this section using a date-based outline format rather than narrative.

**Learning Principles** (3-5 pages approximately) This section allows students to describe the key factors, principles, and practices they learned that made them successful in the field covered by this course. This is the heart of the Learning Essay, describing what was learned and how well that learning was put into practice. Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) should be addressed.

If ILOs are not available for the chosen course, the student should determine five to seven critically important principles for the field and describe in individual paragraphs how they were successfully applied.

HINT: If you were teaching others this subject, what five to seven principles or key issues would you include?

HINT: Textbooks on the course subject always include these principles and competencies. The faculty evaluator will be expecting the student to demonstrate understanding of these points in place of the ILOs.

HINT: Just because the student has been successful in a particular subject does not mean credit will be awarded – students must understand WHY they were successful. This section is where the Why is explained.

**Learning Resources** (1-2 pages) This is an expanded bibliography listing the sources of information that proved valuable to you as you learned and mastered the subject. Include books, recordings, periodicals, internet sources, and people that helped you develop the Principles detailed in the Learning Principles. Each entry should be in proper bibliographic format with a brief explanation as to its specific contribution to you and your success.

HINT: A specific bibliographic style is not required, but the document must be consistent and accurate.

HINT: Some courses are much more sensitive to current theory or practice than others – this section should reflect students' understanding of current knowledge, theory, and practices in the selected discipline.

**Experience Documentation** (variable depending on experiences referenced) This section includes documentation, such as signed letters from employers, certificates and awards, pictures and published announcements.

NOTES:

- All sections of the Essay must be complete prior to submittal. Do not insert notes that other documentation will be sent under a separate submittal.
- One document can certify several Learning Essays. In these cases, each learning experience must be specifically referenced and the document can be copied for each Essay.
- A supervisor merely knowing that you fulfilled your responsibilities without actually witnessing or monitoring your work cannot document your learning but can document the work experience.
- Copies of certificates, awards, and evaluations are satisfactory. Do not include original documents. Southeastern is not responsible for any materials that are included in an Essay.
- Video and audio recordings can be included. If any online links are provided, verify that they are active address links prior to Essay submittal.
- Learning Essays are retained by the University following established guidelines for student coursework.

### **Submission of Learning Essay and Documentation**

Learning Essays with documentation should be submitted to the Registrar's office in a secure folder or portfolio. The Registrar will send the charges to the Business office to be posted on the student's account, based on the credits requested. The Registrar will then pass the portfolio to a qualified instructor who agrees to evaluate the submission within two weeks. The instructor will send the evaluation back with the portfolio to the Registrar. Credit will be posted on the student's transcript according to the evaluation results.

### **So How Do I Begin?**

1. Meet with your advisor and discuss the possibility of a course that would be appropriate to gain credit via the PLA process.
2. Go to the Academic Advising office. Ask for approval to have your submission evaluated by a qualified professor before you begin the paper.
3. Review these instructions carefully. Obtain the syllabus and a textbook on the subject.
4. Submit your PLA in proper ADA or MLA format, in a professional portfolio, to the Registrar. The Registrar will send your submission to the evaluating professor and have charges added to your account (\$75.00 per credit requested).
5. The evaluating Professor may contact you for further information or ask for corrections or additions, in order to receive credit.
6. You will be notified once the PLA is reviewed and returned to the Registrar. Credit awarded will be added to your transcript.

Prior Learning Assessment

Learning Essay Cover Sheet



Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Daytime Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Major \_\_\_\_\_ Academic Advisor \_\_\_\_\_

Southeastern equivalent course code/title \_\_\_\_\_ or

Other college course code/title/college name \_\_\_\_\_

\*Attach Catalog course description (include web link)

Amount of credit requested \_\_\_\_\_ Assessment Fee: \_\_\_\_\_ credits @ \$75. per credit = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Assessment Fee Payment: I authorize Southeastern University to place the full amount on my student account. Initial: \_\_\_\_\_

I request that Southeastern University evaluate for college credit the material listed in this Learning Essay. The materials contained in this request are accurate and true to the best of my knowledge at the time of submission, and I authorize Southeastern University to verify any details necessary in the evaluation process.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Essay Evaluation Results

Content Evaluator (PRINT) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Credit Recommendation:

- YES... This Essay demonstrates that the student has sufficient knowledge and competencies to receive the requested credit.
PARTIALLY YES... This Essay demonstrates that the student has sufficient knowledge and competencies to receive \_\_\_\_\_ credits.
NO... This Essay does not demonstrate that the student has sufficient knowledge and competencies to receive credit in this course.

Comments or recommendations:

Signature of Evaluator \_\_\_\_\_

Reviews:

College Dean \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ Registrar \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_