

**Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Opportunities within  
Workforce Education and Development (WFED) Occupational Education Studies (OES)  
Undergraduate Degree Program at  
Western Michigan University (WMU) – Effective April 15, 2023**

**Overview:**

WMU recently adopted a policy allowing programs to grant credit via Prior Learning Assessments (PLA). This document describes the process developed by the faculty within the Workforce Education and Development unit, to review and potentially award credits via PLA for the Occupational Education Studies (OES) undergraduate degree program. The OES program primarily serves CTE teachers hired on annual authorizations from their district. These teachers are hired based on their extensive work experience and not necessarily their formal education. This degree program allows them to complete a bachelor's degree which is a requirement of the State.

**Program Description:**

Historically, the OES program has allowed specific community college coursework through articulation agreements or passage of the Michigan Occupational Competency Assessment Center (MOCAC) test to meet 30 credits of the major's course requirement. This PLA opportunity would allow prior related work experience to count for up to 30 credits of OES major coursework.

**Route to Earning PLA Credits:****Professional Experience in Industry**

WMU OES students who have professional experience that is directly pertinent to CTE can apply for PLA credits for the Approved OES Major Classes section of the major. The work experience must be related to the standard certification in CTE they are attempting to earn. For example, if they are seeking the Fire Science CIP code standard certification, the student would need to document work experience related to fire fighting.

**Application, Portfolio Development & Review Procedures:**

1. Interested individuals must first apply for and/or be enrolled in the pre-OES or OES undergraduate program
2. Even prior to acceptance, individuals can then complete a PLA Review Application form [**Link to Online Application Here, Still to Be Created**]
  - a) Those seeking PLA credit will be able to offer evidence of alternative program and/or course completion via the application and a portfolio review process.
3. Such PLA Review Applications and associated evidence may be submitted at any time during an academic year. Applications will typically be reviewed by at least one WFED faculty member within a 30-day time period during the academic year semesters, and a 45-day time period during the summer semesters.
4. Any credits awarded will not be placed on a student's transcript until the student is admitted to the pre-OES or OES programs. All such credits will be posted on transcript as "credit earned by PLA examination" without letter grade, and not counted in the grade point average. Such credits can be used to meet all other University graduation requirements (such

as minimum number of credits completed at WMU for a given degree). In some instances, students pursuing certification may still be required to take WFED coursework to fulfill Michigan Department of Education certification requirements.

**Detailed Program and Course Information:**

Since the OES program has a 30-credit block to allow for the approved OES major classes, there are no specific courses for which a candidate can apply to be granted PLA credit. Each candidate will be assessed on the relevance and length of prior work experience.

**PLA Rubric:**

To earn PLA credits, the applicant must submit a narrative detailing their related work experience. The work experience documented must be related to the standard certification they are seeking to earn. The candidate must also submit a resume for review.

The formula used for each credit hour awarded follows WMU’s definition of a credit hour multiplied by 9.75.\*

WMU’s credit hour definition–

“One hour of classroom (50 minutes) or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester hour of credit”

Each credit hour is 170 minutes a week x 15 weeks = 42.5 hours. Multiplying 42.5 hours x 9.75 = 415 work hours for each credit (rounded up). An applicant wishing to earn all 30 credits based on prior work experience, would need document 12,450 hours. The average full-time job requires 2,080 work hours per year. So to earn 30 credits, an applicant would need to document approximately 6 years of full-time work experience. The work experience does not need to be full time, but equal that amount. The rubric below will be used to evaluate the attainment of credit hours.

Credit Hour Evidence	Not Proficient	Proficient
Narrative and Resume	The narrative and resume do not demonstrate or document adequate, related work experience.	The narrative and resume demonstrate a <i>wealth of related work experience</i> . Additionally, the narrative and resume show that the candidate has a deep understanding of the related content.

\* The multiplier of 9.75 allows for work years to match up to credit hours. For example, to earn 10 PLA credits a person would have document 4,150 hours which is approximately 2 years of work experience. The same for 20 credits and 30 credits.