

Alternative Credits/Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)

Types of Alternative Credits

Simpson University accepts three types of Alternative Credits: Exams, Formal Training, and Experience-Based Learning. The maximum number of credits a student can receive with Alternative Credits is 21 credits.

- **Exams** – Simpson offers credit for CLEP standardized tests, AP/IB recognized exams, and challenge exams.
- **Formal Training** – An evaluation can be done on prior education such as certificates, licenses, CPEs, seminars, and in-service training. Formal trainings are those that result in a verifiable document for verification. Credit is awarded based on time spent on the training (15 hours = 1 credit). Credits are only awarded as General or Academic Electives on a student's academic plan.
- **Experience-Based Learning** – Degree Completion students are eligible to receive academic credit from documented work and volunteer experiences, as well as other experiential activities. DC students prepare a PLA Portfolio describing and documenting their learning experiences.

The Council for Adult and Experiential Education (CAEL) is creating a Credit Predictor Tool for us that will be on our website that prospects will be able to utilize to estimate the numbers of credits (and time & cost savings) they might be eligible to receive (see [sample page](#)). This tool will be customized to Simpson's specific Alternative Credits and costs, and will use SU's logo and colors on the website tool.

All students are eligible for Alternative Credits with Exams and Formal Training. These will be evaluated through the Registrar's Office with their own processes. Only Degree Completion students are able to complete a Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Portfolio for Experience-Based Learning credits.

PLA Portfolio

The PLA Portfolio is intended to demonstrate learning through previous experiences through rich narrative and documented evidence. The portfolio should organize and present verifiable evidence of college-level learning through proper documentation (including a résumé).

Supporting documentation may include:

- Job description and performance evaluations
- Work samples such as computer code, lesson plans, or proposals
- Description of the work environment
- Verification of knowledge, skills, and abilities by a supervisor or employer
- Other appropriate forms of documentation verifying learning

The student must also include a narrative that explains the rationale for the claim for credit. The student must document the fulfillment of learning outcomes and follow the portfolio development and assessment process. A Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Portfolio will only be evaluated for matriculated students and will be evaluated by faculty members. Once a student has enrolled in courses, the Degree Completion Academic Advisor will be available for consultation in the preparation of the PLA Portfolio. PLA Portfolios will be evaluated by the end of the semester the portfolio is submitted (assuming submission within two weeks of end of the semester). Credits can be applied to all General Education categories of a DC student's degree plan but will not count toward major courses.