

Credit for Prior Learning Policy

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SECTION I. PURPOSE

The University of St. Thomas recognizes that learning occurs both within traditional educational settings and outside the classroom through life, work and military training and experience, and believes that college credit should be awarded for demonstrated college-level competencies and learning outcomes. This policy establishes the standards and guidelines to assist academic units at St. Thomas in awarding credit for prior learning for credit-bearing courses.

SECTION II. SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to the awarding of credit for prior learning for credit-bearing courses that fulfill requirements for any undergraduate major, minor or certificate or for any graduate program or certificate at St. Thomas. This policy does not apply to a degree offered by the Dougherty Family College.

For information on transferring credit, including credit earned at another postsecondary educational institution, undergraduate students should review the Office of Undergraduate Admissions & Aid webpage on [Credit Transfer](#) and graduate students should review the [Graduate Academic Policy on Transfer Courses](#) and contact the appropriate graduate academic unit.

In the absence of a more stringent credit for prior learning policy at the academic unit level, this policy shall apply. Should an academic unit not have a credit for prior learning policy or should there be omissions or gaps in their policy, this policy shall govern.

SECTION III. DEFINITIONS

When used in this policy, the following terms have the following meanings:

- a. **Academic unit** means a St. Thomas academic department or program.
- b. **Conventional letter grade** means the grade A, either alone or followed by a minus, the grades B, C or D, either alone or followed by a plus or minus, and the grade F.
- c. **Credit for prior learning** means academic credit that is awarded to students who successfully demonstrate college-level learning outcomes achieved through previous experiences other than coursework at postsecondary educational institutions. St. Thomas awards credit for prior learning through one of the methods of assessment described in Section V of this policy.
- d. **Credit-bearing course** means a course that (i) is offered by St. Thomas for academic credit, (ii) is required as an accompaniment to a course offered by St. Thomas for academic credit (e.g., a laboratory section) or (iii) bears no academic credit but is required or counted by St. Thomas as part of a credit-bearing program, in each case regardless of the mode of course delivery.
- e. **Enrolled** means a student has registered for at least one credit-bearing course at St. Thomas.

- f. **Registrar's Office** means the university office responsible for maintaining the integrity of student records, including, but not limited to, course registration and withdrawal, academic grades and transcripts and personal information. This office also may be referred to at St. Thomas as the Office of Student Data and Registrar.
- g. **Student** means an individual who has been admitted by St. Thomas to enroll in credit-bearing courses with the intention of obtaining an undergraduate or graduate degree or certificate.
- h. **Transcript** is the permanent record of a student's courses taken and grades received at St. Thomas.

SECTION IV. STANDARDS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

In recognition of the need to fairly and consistently evaluate learning acquired outside of the traditional educational setting, St. Thomas adopts the following standards for implementation:

1. Students eligible to receive credit for prior learning must be enrolled at St. Thomas to be awarded credit.
2. St. Thomas does not accept transfer credits for prior learning that were evaluated and approved by another institution. If a student wants St. Thomas to award credit for prior learning, they must complete one of the methods of assessment described in Section V of this policy.
3. A student shall not be awarded credit for prior learning for a course in which they have previously earned a conventional letter grade or for a course which they audited pursuant to [St. Thomas policy](#). Conversely, a student who is awarded credit for prior learning for a course cannot subsequently enroll in the same course to earn a conventional letter grade. A student who enrolls in a course and then withdraws after the last day to drop a class without notation on record cannot subsequently request credit for prior learning for the course.
4. While general elective credit may be given for prior learning, it should be understood that in the interest of accurate recognition of learning as well as being welcoming to adult students, every effort should be made to give credit for specific courses in the academic unit's offerings that fulfill core, major, minor or certificate requirements. **General elective credit should be awarded only when no other option is available.**
5. Academic units are encouraged to consider having at least one course for which they will award credit for prior learning. The academic unit shall decide which courses are eligible and the method of assessment (described in Section V of this policy). The academic unit must follow the relevant procedures and standards listed in this policy to implement and maintain any method and tool for assessing prior learning. Academic units shall only award specific course credit for prior learning in disciplines in which they have faculty expertise. If the course eligible for credit for prior learning has a prerequisite course in another academic unit, the academic unit awarding credit shall consult with the other academic unit in the development of the method of assessment.
6. Academic units shall assign their own course title and number to the credit awarded and the neutral grade of S (satisfactory) shall be utilized to designate credit awarded for prior learning. Conventional letter grades shall not be used.
7. All credit awarded for prior learning shall be appropriately identified by source and method on the student's transcript by university-wide codes established by the Registrar's Office.

SECTION V. APPROVED METHODS AND TOOLS FOR ASSESSING PRIOR LEARNING

A. **Methods Specific to Undergraduate Programs**

Some undergraduate academic units allow students to obtain credit for specific courses if they can demonstrate that they have mastered the content of the courses. Students interested in seeking credit via the methods in this section should contact the chair of the appropriate academic unit. Consistent with the limits specified in the St. Thomas [Admission Requirements and Limitations for Non-Degree-Seeking Undergraduate Students](#) policy, a maximum of 24 credits can be awarded for prior learning.

1. **Department Examination**

The examining faculty member offers no special instruction to the student except to furnish the syllabus and learning outcomes of the course. If this is unavailable or of insufficient assistance to the student, the course should be taken as a regular semester offering or on an Individual Study basis. A student may attempt to earn credit by examination only once for a particular course. Grades for courses taken in this way are given on an S/R basis. Only courses for which credit is awarded will be posted on the transcript. If a non-refundable fee is charged for administering the examination, this fee must be submitted to and approved by the vice provost for academic affairs via the Course or Lab Fee Approval Process.

If an undergraduate academic unit grants credit by examination, the academic unit must submit its unit-specific procedure through the curriculum review process. The academic unit's procedure must also be [included in the undergraduate catalog](#).

2. **Advanced Placement (AP) Examinations**

Students who meet the conditions [described by departments in the undergraduate catalog](#) for an Advanced Placement (AP) Examination will receive four credits and an "S" grade (satisfactory). This examination must be taken prior to matriculation to a college or university.

3. **International Baccalaureate (IB) Examinations**

All exams, with the exception of foreign languages, must be taken at the higher level. Students who pass the higher level International Baccalaureate (IB) Examination(s) in subjects included in the St. Thomas curriculum with a score of 4 or higher will ordinarily receive four credits toward graduation. The specific courses for which credit would be awarded will be determined by the appropriate academic department.

[The undergraduate catalog](#) includes a list of guidelines according to which credit may be obtained through the higher level IB exam in specific departments. Credit awarded will be assigned an "S" grade (satisfactory).

4. **College-Level Examination Program (CLEP)**

The College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) was conceived to serve post-secondary students who have acquired certain kinds of knowledge outside the usual formal educational channels. Students must take CLEP examinations before or during the first semester to receive credit for the CLEP examination from St. Thomas. The academic units that grant credit for CLEP examinations are [listed in the undergraduate catalog](#).

5. Cambridge International A Level Examinations

[The undergraduate catalog](#) identifies the St. Thomas courses for which equivalent credits may be awarded when a student receives a grade of “C” or higher on specific A Level exams.

B. Methods Specific to Graduate Programs

1. Department Examination

If a graduate academic unit grants credit by examination, the academic unit must have a policy that notifies students of this fact. The policy should include the following components if applicable:

- A list of specific courses available for credit by examination.
- The minimum score required for course credit.
- The maximum number of credits accepted, not to exceed the limits specified below, which are consistent with Section V of the St. Thomas [Admission Requirements and Limitations for Non-Degree-Seeking Graduate Students](#) policy:
 - For academic degrees or licensure programs, no more than one-third of the total credits in the degree would apply from credit by examination.
 - For certificate programs, no more than one-half of the total credits in the program would apply from credit by examination.
- The registration procedure for examination.
- The non-refundable examination fee, if any, a student must pay for the examination. Any fee must be submitted to and approved by the vice provost for academic affairs via the Course or Lab Fee Approval Process.
- The form of report required from third party testers.
- A statement that credit will be posted in the term in which the official test report is received.

If a graduate academic unit grants credit by examination, the academic unit must submit its unit-specific policy and procedure through the curriculum review process. The academic unit’s policy and procedure must also be included in the relevant academic catalog. Academic units that do not grant credit by examination must publish a statement to this effect in their governing documents.

C. Methods Applicable to Both Undergraduate and Graduate Programs

1. Military Experiential Credit

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs mandates that all transcripts be evaluated for prior credit within two semesters, including transcripts for military training, even if credit may not be granted. To request military transcripts, students should visit the appropriate website applicable to their service branch.

- [Joint Services Transcript \(JST\)](#) (Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, and Navy)
- [Community College of the Air Force](#)
- [Air Force Institute of Technology](#)
- [Other Air University schools](#)

Academic units may award credit for prior learning based on the recommendations of the American Council on Education (ACE) and experience description documented on an official military transcript. Military experiential credit may be awarded up to the maximums specified below:

- For undergraduate degrees, no more than 24 credits of the total credits required for the degree;
- For graduate degrees or licensure programs, no more than one-third of the total credits required for the degree or program; and
- For graduate certificate programs, no more than one-third of the total credits required for the program.

If military experiential credit is accepted to award credit for prior learning, the number of credits will be based on ACE recommendations. If an academic unit chooses to award credit for military experience, training or education, that unit must develop a procedure that ensure uniform standards for transcript review and awarding of credit. The academic unit must have a unit-specific process that describes the procedure, notifies students of this option and specifies the non-refundable fee (if any) a student must pay for a transcript assessment. Any fee must be submitted to and approved by the vice provost for academic affairs via the Course or Lab Fee Approval Process. Academic units must also submit their unit-specific procedure through the curriculum review process. The academic unit's procedure must be included in the relevant academic catalog.

2. Portfolio Assessment

Portfolio assessment is a method of documentation of college-level learning gained from experiences outside of university credit-bearing courses. The portfolio assessment process enables students to assemble and submit an organized collection of materials that demonstrate mastery of course learning outcomes that have been gained through the workplace, community work, self-study and personal experiences. A portfolio may be assessed to demonstrate meeting the learning outcomes of an individual course or a range of courses, depending on the procedure developed by the academic unit. Academic unit faculty or equivalent content experts assess the portfolio materials as evidence of learning to determine whether and how much credit will be awarded. Credit via portfolio assessment may be awarded up to the maximums specified below:

- For undergraduate degrees, no more than 16 credits of the total credits required for the degree;
- For graduate degrees or licensure programs, no more than one-third of the total credits required for the degree or program; and
- For graduate certificate programs, no more than one-third of the total credits required for the program.

To ensure uniform standards for assessment and awarding of credit, academic units opting to award credit via portfolio assessment must have a unit-specific process that describes the procedure, notifies students of this option and is readily available to students. The portfolio assessment procedure must:

- Specify the learning outcome(s) the portfolio should address;
- Include instructions that specify how students collect, select, reflect, format and submit their portfolio;
- Provide the rubric that will be used to assess the quality of the portfolio;
- Provide the scoring standards (that align with the rubric) about what constitutes a passing score to earn academic credit; and
- Specify the non-refundable fee (if any) a student must pay for a portfolio assessment. Any fee must be submitted to and approved by the vice provost for academic affairs via the Course or Lab Fee Approval Process.

Academic units must submit their portfolio assessment procedure through the curriculum review process. The academic unit's procedure must be included in the relevant academic catalog.

The University Learning Assessment Committee shall review implementation of this policy at the conclusion of the 2026-2027 academic year to determine which departments or programs are making use of the policy and to recommend whether the policy should be continued, revised or discontinued.