Assessment of Prior Learning: Frequently Asked Questions

Assessment of Prior Learning (APL) is a way to save students thousands of dollars and countless hours in their quest for a college degree. The Vermont State Colleges (VSC) believe that college-level learning can occur in many places other than a classroom. An adult who is considering going to college may join over 7,000 people who, since 1976, have earned college credit for college-level learning acquired on the job, in the community, and through independent study.

How does the program work?

Assessment of Prior Learning is a three-step process:

1. Students enroll in Community College of Vermont’s three-credit Assessment of Prior Learning course (EDU1240). During the 15-week semester, they develop a portfolio that identifies, articulates and documents their prior college-level learning. Classroom instruction consists of large and small group work, as well as individual sessions with the instructor and possibly some on-line work.

2. Students submit a portfolio. At the end of the semester, portfolios are submitted to the Vermont State Colleges Office of External Programs (OEP). OEP assembles advanced standing committees to assess the portfolios and recommend college transfer credit.

3. Students transfer the credit they are awarded to a degree-granting institution. While our assessment program is part of the Vermont State College system, it is not attached to any one college or university. The credits awarded are considered Vermont State College transfer credits. Students may transfer their credit to the college or university of their choice that accepts experiential learning credits.

How much does it cost?

Assessment of Prior Learning is a great value. Students only pay tuition and fees to take the APL course; there is no additional cost for credits awarded through the portfolio. Many students earn the equivalent of one, two, or more semesters of college credit for the cost of one three-credit course.

Where can students transfer their credits?

Assessment of Prior Learning (APL) credit, as it applies to the student’s degree program, is fully transferable within the Vermont State Colleges system. In addition to CCV, these include Castleton State College, Lyndon State College, Johnson State College, and Vermont Technical College. Additionally, most colleges in Vermont and many outside of Vermont accept APL credit.

How does one get started?

Students can register for the APL course at the local CCV site office. Before registering, students should meet with a CCV academic advisor to ascertain whether the course is appropriate. College-level writing skills are necessary to enroll in the course; the CCV advisor will discuss the writing requirements and assessments with prospective students. Students should also plan to attend an information session about APL – these are offered before every semester. A schedule of upcoming information session is at ccv.edu/apl .

How is the portfolio evaluated?

At the end of the semester, portfolios are sent to the Assessment of Prior Learning program office for evaluation. Advanced standing committees of usually four faculty (and occasionally credentialed practitioners) will evaluate each group of portfolios.
Do students have to be a degree student to take APL?
No. Although most students go on to earn associate or bachelor’s degrees, there is no requirement to enroll in a degree program before taking the APL course. Students use APL to advance their careers, qualify for pay raises, meet personal goals, or simply to identify what they know at the college level.

Do students have to be a Vermont resident?
No, there is no residency requirement.

How many credits can students earn through APL?
No limits are placed on the number of credits or curricular areas one may request credit for. Credit awards will depend on how much college-equivalent knowledge students have acquired and on how well they can articulate and document what they know.

"APL allowed me to get a jump-start on completing my college education and gave me a clearer sense of where I had been and where I was going. Thanks to APL, I had enough energy and money to go on to graduate school, where I was able to complete a M.F.A. in writing."  Mary Welz, former APL Student

How long does the process take?
From start to finish, it takes seven to ten months. Assessment of Prior Learning is a one-semester course. The portfolio is evaluated for credit sometime during the following semester.

What fields qualify for college credit?
Students can earn credit for any subject covered in a college curriculum. Students have earned credit in business, education, social services, religious studies, journalism, criminal justice and emergency management, environmental studies, office administration, manufacturing, computer science, real estate, and a host of other fields.

What if students need more information?
They may call the Vermont State Colleges Office of External Programs at 802-628-4064. The staff there will be happy to talk with prospective students and send out additional information. Or, by checking www.ccv.edu/apl, the information the student is seeking might be available on the website.

"Serving on a committee gives you a window into the lives of some remarkable people and allows you the opportunity to give them recognition for the tremendous experience and knowledge they have gained outside the classroom".  Lori Stroutsos, Committee member

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