308 Awarding of Credits Earned through Extra-Institutional Learning

Approved by President

Effective Date: June 5, 2017

Responsible Division: Academic Affairs
Responsible Office: University Provost
Responsible Officer: Vice Provost for Academic Programs

I. Purpose

This policy articulates the process Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU or University) will use for the recognition of equivalent extra-institutional learning that includes the awarding of credit or advanced placement.

II. Extra-Institutional or Lifelong Learning

A. The process for awarding of credits through extra-institutional or lifelong learning must be in compliance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges’ Principles of Accreditation (Reference 3.4), the Commission’s Position Statement on the Transfer of Academic Credit, and its policy on The Transfer or Transcripting of Academic Credit.

B. The process for awarding credits through Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) must be in compliance with the Recommended Standards in Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Policy and Practice of Tennessee Public Colleges and Universities (August 7, 2012).

C. When awarding credit under this policy, MTSU will use a recognized guide or procedure for awarding the credit for extra-institutional or lifelong learning. Recognized guides or procedures may include:


2. ACE Guide to Credit by Examination.

3. College Entrance Examination Board Advanced Placement Program (CEEB/AP).
4. Defense Subject Standardized Test (DSST) formerly DANTES.

5. Credit by Departmental Examination.

6. Subject matter experts who are not members of University faculty but who evaluate extra-institutional learning at the institution’s request.

7. Individual portfolios using the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) or other standardized guidelines authorized, in advance, by the Provost.

8. Applicable MTSU transfer equivalency procedures, including portfolio review for prior learning assessment, for academic credit earned as part of a microcredential awarded by an accredited institution of higher education.

D. When awarding credit to students who are veterans or military service members, the University will reference the Joint Services Transcript (JST), DD-214 and/or transcripts from the Army/American Council on Education Registry Transcript System (AARTS), Sailor/Marine American Council on Education Registry Transcript (SMART), Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) and Coast Guard Institute (CGI). The University will use the American Council of Education (ACE) procedures for awarding credit for military experience, education, and/or training obtained during military experience. The recognized procedures include:

1. If military experience, education, and/or training are equivalent to a course that fulfills a general education or degree program requirement, the credit will count towards graduation. Otherwise, appropriate course credit will be granted for elective credit.

2. Should credit not be captured through ACE recommendations, the University will offer veterans and service members an opportunity for prior learning assessment via another recognized mechanism.

3. The University College will provide veteran and military service members relevant information on awarding college credit for military education, experience, and/or training.

E. When utilizing published guides for extra-institutional learning, the information provided should include:

1. course title;
2. location of all sites where the course is offered;

3. length in hours, days, or weeks;

4. period during which the credit recommendation applies;

5. purpose for which the credit was designed;

6. learning outcomes;

7. teaching methods, materials, and major subject areas covered; and

8. college credit recommendations offered by categories (by level of degrees) and expressed in semester hours and subject area(s) in which credit is applicable.

Forms: none.

Revisions: none.

Last Reviewed: November 2020.

References: Recommended Standards in Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Policy and Practice of Tennessee Public Colleges and Universities.