Can I earn college credit for knowledge I have gained outside the classroom?
Quot...
College Level Examination Program (CLEP)

College Level Examination Program (CLEP) exams, produced by The College Board, are standardized tests that measure the mastery of concepts presented in introductory or intermediate college courses. The program offers an efficient, inexpensive, clear-cut method of earning college credit. Experience dictates that adult students have good success in earning credit through CLEP exams. (The DeSales University CLEP Test Center estimates that well over half of examinees are successful in earning credit.)

There are two types of CLEP exams—general examinations and subject examinations. General examinations are analogous to end of year comprehensive final exams and require a thorough understanding of the subject matter. CLEP offers general examinations in five liberal arts areas. Subject examinations measure the understanding of principles, concepts, and knowledge from a wide range of specific college courses. (The current list of CLEP examinations and corresponding DeSales University equivalencies is available on the web.)

First and foremost, if you are considering CLEP, meet with an ACCESS Academic Advisor to determine appropriateness of the subject area in terms of your degree program. Keep in mind you may not CLEP a course that you have previously taken for credit, audit, or cultural enrichment.

There are some other considerations. For example, if you receive tuition benefits through an employer check the policy. Some employers will not reimburse for credits earned without the assignment of a letter grade. Likewise, if you are considering post-baccalaureate work be certain the institution will not require you to earn a letter grade. (Additional CLEP regulations and limitations are available by contacting the ACCESS CLEP Coordinator or your Academic Advisor.)

Do not underestimate what sitting for a CLEP exam entails. Preparation is critical to CLEP success. Earning three credits via CLEP is more than simply sitting for a standardized exam.

Obtain a CLEP study guide to serve both as a framework for your preparation and a resource for sample tests. Study guides are available for use in the reference section of Trexler Library and for purchase at the DeSales University Campus Store, most bookstores, and at the College Board website.

After locating the desired exam section, become familiar with what is covered on the exam. (Do not take the sample test at this time.) The guide is rather specific about what to study. However, it is not intended to stand alone. In addition to the study guide, you will need to obtain a current, college-level textbook in the test content area. (In addition to bookstores, texts are often available for circulation at college and public libraries. Another great source is the neighborhood yard sale.)

Review the textbook keying in on what the study guide indicates will be covered on the exam. Pay extra attention to items that look important in the text, review chapter summaries and key points, and treat questions at the end of each chapter as practice for the CLEP exam.

After sufficient review of the material, return to the study guide and take the sample practice test. The College Board suggests that you are ready to sit for the exam when you successfully answer at least half of the questions. At that point, you can either schedule a date to take the exam or return to the textbook and study guide until you feel comfortable.

CLEP exams are offered for your convenience at the Easton Area campus of DeSales University. (You may take a CLEP exam at any authorized CLEP Test Center. However, no matter where you choose to take the exam, request that your scores are sent to DeSales University by indicating “2021” as a score recipient.) A schedule of testing dates and additional information are available on the web or by contacting the Easton Area campus (610.814.3026).

DANTES (Defense Activity for Nontraditional Education Support) Subject Standardized Tests (DSST)

DANTES (formerly referred to as DANTES) exams are administered by The Chauncey Group International, a subsidiary of Educational Testing Service (ETS). DSST testing is often associated with the military. Still encouraged for use by the United States Department of Defense, it has become more widely used among adult learners.
DSST exams are comparable to CLEP exams. However, DSST offers a greater selection and some exams are equivalent to more focused, upper-level baccalaureate courses. At this time, the University has not reviewed all of the exams for equivalency to courses available at DeSales. However, exams and corresponding score requirements will be considered on an individual basis.

The preparation process involved in sitting for a DSST exam is similar to that of CLEP. A group called iStudySmart offers (for a fee) online course materials geared to a number of the exams. Information regarding the exams and study materials is available at the DSST website.

If you are interested in taking a DSST exam (or have already taken one) you should consult your ACCESS Advisor to determine its relevance to your program at DeSales.

Military Training

Many veterans of the United States Armed Forces have received valuable and substantial training during the course of their military careers in the form of occupational training, job-specific skills, and academic courses. Since 1954, the American Council on Education has evaluated military training programs for college credit. Credit recommendations are published in the Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Forces.

The guide evaluates courses and training with regards to contact hours and content. Recommendations are then made as to how they fit into programs of higher education.

As this is a less conventional method of earning college-level credit DeSales University reviews all such work on an individual basis. While using ACE recommendations as a guide, the University seeks to fit the training experience into DeSales degree requirements utilizing existing DeSales courses.

For instance, a course in cartography would not earn credit because DeSales does not offer a similar type of course. On the other hand, training for duty on a nuclear submarine may earn credit in any one of a number of areas (e.g., communication, natural science, etc.).

The first step to earning credit for military training is to obtain an official transcript. Veterans with recent service may request them from the Army/ACE Registry Transcript Service (AARTS) or Sailor/Marine/ACE Registry Transcript Service. Those who served during the 1980s and earlier may submit DD Form 295, Application for the Evaluation of Learning Experiences During Military Service for review.

Non-traditional Training

Employers often provide training for employees. This may be in the form of a stand-alone workshop, seminar, or conference. Or, it may be extensive training leading to professional certification. Many volunteer organizations provide similar training for volunteers. And, it’s not uncommon, today, for individuals to seek training from any one of a number of providers for personal enrichment. DeSales University recognizes the value of non-traditional training and attempts to offer students credit for what they have learned whenever possible.

If you have completed non-traditional training that you would like considered for credit at DeSales University, you are encouraged to meet with your ACCESS Advisor. Things you will want to have available when you meet include:

1) Documentation (e.g., certificate of completion, statement from the provider, etc.) that you completed the training;
2) Basic information (e.g., name of provider, name of training, number of hours, basic description, etc.); and
3) More detailed information (e.g., objectives, methodology, assignments, etc.).

Your advisor will review the information with you, checking for any equivalency as recognized by the ACE Guide to Training Programs and the National Program on Noncollegiate Sponsored Instruction (PONSI). A decision will then be made whether the training should be submitted to the appropriate
academic department for review. (Please note: Acknowledgement by the ACE Guide to Training and/or an ACCESS Academic Advisor should not be interpreted as an opinion regarding credit-worthiness of the training.)

You will need to complete two forms, a Request for Non-traditional Training Evaluation and a Non-traditional Training Summary. These will be reviewed for completeness by your ACCESS Academic Advisor and submitted to the department for consideration. You will then be contacted by your advisor with the department’s response.

**DeSales University Challenge Examination**

Students who have acquired substantial knowledge in certain subject areas may apply for permission to validate this knowledge by examination, and consequently receive credit. However, students who have previously been registered—either for credit, audit, or cultural enrichment—in the same course may not exercise credit by examination.

Credit by examination may be earned (via a challenge exam) for any course unless specifically excluded by the offering department. An examination is always required, but other forms of evaluation may also be required by a department (e.g., written, laboratory, studio, etc.).

If you are interested in this option you should meet with your ACCESS Academic Advisor. After consulting with the department chair, your advisor will let you know if you have been approved to sit for the challenge exam. If so, you will be instructed to meet with the faculty member designated by the department to administer the exam.

Prior to your meeting, you will want to obtain an Application for Challenge Examination available in the ACCESS Office. The faculty member will share with you a course syllabus and discuss expectations. At that point, if you decide to proceed with the exam, complete the student portion of the application and return it to your advisor.

You will need to indicate how you wish to be graded. You may take the exam for a letter grade or utilize the pass/fail option. Keep in mind pass/fail may be designated for free electives only.

You will have 60 days from the date of final approval to complete the exam. Payment (60% of the tuition) must be made prior to taking the exam.

If you have elected to take the exam for a letter grade, you may accept or decline the grade. Accepted grades are placed on the student’s permanent record. Declined grades are not recorded. The student earns no credit and may not challenge the same course again. Likewise, failures will not be recorded. The student earns no credit and forfeits further credit by examination opportunity for the same course.

**Portfolio Assessment**

Portfolio assessment is a unique opportunity for students to earn college-level credit. However, the process should be entered into with a full appreciation of the amount of effort required. Students who successfully earn credit do so not simply by submitting proof of experience. Rather credit is earned by demonstrating that the experience has led to a significant, measurable understanding of the material presented in a college-level course.

ACCESS students may earn up to a maximum of thirty credits via portfolio assessment. Portfolio assessment is considered to be transfer credit. Therefore, credits earned through portfolio assessment are counted toward the maximum number of credits that may be transferred.

Knowledge and skills may be gained through a variety of experiences. Common opportunities include employment; military service; training, workshops, and seminars; independent study; professional organizations; community and religious activities; and travel, hobbies, and recreation.

Keep in mind, you will need to relate the experience to material presented in a college-level course. And, more importantly you will need to demonstrate mastery of the material through the development
of a portfolio.
   In brief you want to:
   1) Identify your skills, knowledge, and competencies;
   2) Explore areas for which you want to seek credit;
   3) Conduct a college catalog search for appropriate courses;
   4) Determine how you will demonstrate mastery of the material commonly presented in the
      course(s) you have selected; and
   5) Assemble a portfolio for review by the appropriate department.

   Portfolio assessment is the most involved of the prior learning assessment methodologies available
   to you at DeSales University. For that reason, it is important you meet with your ACCESS Academic
   Advisor to discuss whether portfolio assessment is a good option for you.

I think I may be able to earn credit through prior learning assessment. Where do I start?
   We recognize that many students come to us with a wealth of knowledge gained through
   experience. And, we are pleased to offer you a variety of methodologies to turn that experience into
   college-level credit.

   To take advantage of prior learning assessment you will first want to reflect on your experiences.
   What training events have you attended? What skills are related to your employment? Do you have any
   interests or knowledge in a particular area? Take the time to make a detailed list.

   Next, consider college-level courses. How is your experience relevant to material instructed in
   college-level courses? And, how can you best demonstrate you have mastered that material? That is
   often the most difficult question to answer. You will, then, need to follow through with the prior
   assessment method you have selected as a way to demonstrate mastery of the material. It is through
   successful demonstration of mastery of material that you are awarded college-level credit.

   Prior learning assessment sounds complicated. In some respects it is. It requires a significant amount
   of reflection, preparation, and effort. However, prior learning assessment can be a very cost-effective,
   time-saving method of earning college-level credit. ACCESS Academic Advisors are available to offer
   guidance. You are encouraged to discuss prior learning assessment options with an Advisor early on in
   the process.

How much does prior learning assessment cost?
   That depends upon the methodology you choose. Standardized exams (e.g., CLEP, AP, etc.) include
   fees set by each of the testing organizations. Credit earned for military and corporate training is
   evaluated and transcribed to DeSales University student records at no cost to the student. Sixty percent
   of the current ACCESS tuition is billed for DeSales University Challenge Exams and 50% of the current
   ACCESS tuition for portfolio assessment. Fees are due prior administration and are nonrefundable.

Will credit earned through prior learning at DeSales University transfer to another institution?
   That is not a decision made by DeSales University.

How will DeSales University help in the process to access prior learning?
   Your ACCESS Academic Advisor will be able to offer some guidance, as well as the Assistant Dean of
   Lifelong Learning. They, however, are only resources, without any ability to grant credit. The work of
   demonstrating mastery of college-level learning rests with the student.