

Graduate Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) Policy

Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania – Previously Interim

Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania

Issued by Provost Kiec – May 11, 2026

Reviewed by University Senate Executive Committee – April 27, 2026

Responsible Office: Academic Affairs, Workforce Development

1. Purpose

This policy defines the requirements for the review and acceptance of graduate credit for prior learning that may be applied to a graduate program.

2. Scope

This policy applies to graduate degree programs including certificates offered by Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania, subject to program-level approval and limits.

3. Definitions, Roles, and Responsibilities

3.1 Definitions

Credit for Prior Learning (CPL): Credits granted in acknowledgment of graduate-level learning from personal, professional, and non-formal educational experiences through a process of faculty review of relevant credentials and other evidence of mastery.

Graduate Degree Programs: Academic programs in which the end result is a graduate degree. This definition applies to degrees and certificates at the master's and doctoral levels.

3.2 Roles and Responsibilities

Student: Identifies relevant learning, meets with graduate program director to ensure full understanding of CPL process, completes a CPL portfolio demonstrating graduate-level learning, and pays associated fees that support faculty review of the portfolio.

Faculty Evaluator / Program Faculty: Assesses CPL portfolios relative to specific course learning objectives. CPL approval is at the discretion of the program faculty.

Program Director / Advisor: Discusses CPL during degree planning and guides the student through program-specific procedures.

School of Graduate Education: Provides oversight for policy implementation and compliance.

4. Policy

4.1 General Criteria for Graduate-Level CPL

Credit for Prior Learning is assessed through review of a CPL portfolio that includes evidence determined to demonstrate mastery of course learning objectives. Each department that offers CPL as an option defines what evidence is necessary based on the norms and practices of their own academic area. The portfolio is assessed by an expert in the discipline, typically a member of the graduate faculty who teaches the course for which CPL is being requested, for possible academic credit.

Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania's criteria for assessing experiential learning at the graduate level are consistent with principles for distinguishing between undergraduate and graduate credit and with best practices in the field. CAEL and ACE standards are incorporated into the University's expectations and procedures.

4.2 Credit Limits

Consistent with the University residency requirement, the combined total of transfer credit and Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) may not exceed one-third (1/3) of the total program credits. Individual programs determine whether that program will consider any CPL and may impose additional limits on the amount of CPL or combined CPL and transfer credits.

4.3 Eligibility Requirements

Each academic program determines whether that program accepts CPL and which courses may be eligible for CPL. Students who are interested in CPL should discuss this option with the Graduate Program Director at admission.

4.4 Procedures

A student begins the Credit for Prior Learning request process by discussing the program specific CPL guidelines including the following with the graduate Program Director:

- whether that program accepts CPL
- which specific courses are eligible for CPL
- what types of evidence should be included in a CPL portfolio
- the portfolio review process, timeline, and fee
- how the specific CPL they plan to request or pursue may fit into their degree program.

If the student chooses to proceed with requesting a portfolio review, they work with their program director to compile and submit the required materials and with the Office of Workforce Development to pay the required fee.

4.5 Fees and Use of Credit

There is a Graduate Credit for Prior Learning fee of \$100 per credit. The Graduate CPL Fee supports the evaluation of CPL portfolios.

Once collected, fees are transferred to the department for the professional development of the faculty member who completed the portfolio review. Departments that accept CPL will develop transparent and equitable processes for determining how they select which faculty members have the opportunity to review portfolios.

5. Compliance and Appeals

Some graduate programs do not accept graduate CPL or their guidelines for CPL use may be more restrictive than the university policy.

CPL decisions follow program specific review processes. If a student wishes to appeal the outcome of a CPL review they may do so by submitting a letter explaining their concerns to the Dean of Graduate Education via e-mail.

6. Additional Information

6.1 Related Policies

PRP 3463: Graduate Admission, Withdrawal, Course Repeat, Transfers, and Graduation Requirements.

6.2 Contacts

Office of the Graduate Education, Associate Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies, Dr. Heather S. Feldhaus, hfeldhau@commonwealthu.edu 570-389-4214

Office of Workforce Development, Director of Credit for Prior Learning, Ms. MaryJo Campana, mcc831@commonwealthu.edu 570-484-3129