

# DANIEL INSTITUTE

## Prior Learning Assessment Policy

Date Created: April 15, 2021  
Executive Responsibility: Provost and Faculty Board  
Functional Responsibility: Academic Secretary

Applies to Undergraduate Students

### **I. About Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)**

#### ***1. What is Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)?***

Experiential and lifelong learning is learning that has occurred outside of a traditional classroom. Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is an assessment process based on the belief that adults acquire knowledge and skills through life and work experiences that match what we teach in a specific course or programme.

Recognizing that knowledge may be acquired in many different ways, Daniel Institute offers adult students the opportunity to apply for academic credit for learning that has taken place outside of the traditional college classroom through the Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Programme. The work world, self-study, volunteer activities, non-credit courses, workshops, seminars, practical ministry and other activities often involve significant learning experiences. A student who successfully demonstrates that the knowledge gained through one or more of these activities corresponds to the knowledge gained in a Daniel Institute course may be granted academic credit. The most common method for students to demonstrate their knowledge and competency is through a PLA portfolio.

#### ***2. What PLA is not:***

PLA is not “credit for work or life experience.” Credits earned through PLA are awarded not for the experience itself, but for the knowledge, skills or competencies gained through that experience.

#### ***3. Why do PLA?***

By utilizing PLA to earn college credit, Daniel Institute students can not only reduce their time to degree but also reduce costs by earning credits at a discounted PLA tuition rate. Moreover, PLA recognizes and validates the complex learning processes that adult students engage in regularly during their day-to-day lives, and helps students connect academic theory and scholarship to their life experiences.

#### ***4. What does DI use PLA for?***

PLA can be used towards Bachelor of Divinity at Daniel Institute.

- If you have previously studied at university level, or you have equivalent experience, you may be able to get credit for this on your course at Daniel Institute.
- For example, if you have previously passed a module with similar content on a programme of study taken elsewhere, you may be awarded Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) credits for this course. You would then be exempt from the requirement to complete this module within your new programme.
- The maximum number of RPL credits accumulated at another institution that may be credited towards a Daniel Institute award is usually the decision of the Faculty Board.

Though a Bachelor degree normally requires, globally, a minimum of 120 credit hours for graduation, Daniel Institute's Bachelor of Divinity requires 144 credits hours. Maximum Number of RPL credits which may count towards the requirements of the award of the Bachelor of Divinity is 42. The minimum number of credits to be achieved at DI the courses taken for the degree is 102.

## **II. Administering PLA in Daniel Institute**

### ***1. Preamble to how DI administers PLA***

Prior Learning Assessment is a student-centered and faculty-driven process for awarding students' college credit for demonstrated knowledge. Daniel Institute recognizes that students may acquire knowledge equivalent to that obtained through completion of courses through their professional experience or other methods of instruction. Prior knowledge may be demonstrated in two ways:

- a. examinations administered internally by Daniel Institute; and
- b. portfolio assessment.

DI's Prior Learning Assessment programme will be administered through Daniel Institute Division of Academic Affairs in collaboration with the Faculty Board.

### ***2. General Policies for all Methods of Prior Learning Assessment***

**Eligibility:** To earn credit for prior learning, a student must be enrolled and registered at Daniel Institute.

**Application of Credit:** Credit for prior learning shall be applied to degree or programme requirements in the same manner as credits earned through the completion of the equivalent courses at Daniel Institute. Credit will be applied for DI course equivalents when students demonstrate mastery of course objectives. Credit will be counted only once for the same course. Credit awarded for a general education course in the Daniel Institute Core will count toward the total number of general education credits required.

### ***3. Grading:***

- a. For Single Subject Certificates, credit awarded by prior learning assessment at DI shall receive a neutral grade such as "P" for Pass or "CR" for credit.
- b. For BD and Cert.Div., conventional letter grades will be awarded when that student passes either an internally administered examination or a three-hour oral defense the portfolio.

**Transcription:** The transcript will not indicate an unsuccessful attempt to earn credit for prior learning. Credit awarded for prior learning will be transcribed indicating the method of prior learning assessment

used. Fees shall be consistently applied and will cover transcription as well as administration. These will be posted to the PLA website.

#### ***4. Policies for PLA Awarded by Internally Administered Examinations***

Credit for prior learning can be awarded through examinations created and administered by academic units that offer the course.

The examination could take the form of any two of the following methods: written test and essay. The aim of the examination is to:

- (a) allow the student to demonstrate mastery of the learning outcomes of the course.
- (b) determine what grade to assign the course being assessed.

A list of courses for which internally administered examinations are available is posted on the Prior Learning Assessment website.

Students may repeat an examination one time. No exam may be repeated before 30 business days have passed. If a department offers credit by examination, no eligible student can be refused the opportunity to take the exam for course credit.

#### ***5. Policies for PLA Awarded by Portfolio Assessment***

Credit for prior learning can be awarded through a portfolio assessment process managed by an academic department at Daniel Institute.

The Prior Learning Assessment by portfolio assessment will follow a course-equivalency credit model. Students demonstrate college-level learning by submitting a portfolio consisting of an organized collection of evidence that demonstrates mastery of the learning outcomes of a specific course offered at Daniel Institute.

There will be oral defense (via voce) of the portfolio submitted and/or practical demonstration (whichever is appropriate). The aim is to:

- (a) assess the validity or authenticity of the content of the portfolio submitted.
- (b) allow the student to demonstrate mastery of the learning outcomes of the course.
- (c) determine what grade to assign the course being assessed.

Students choosing to submit a portfolio for evaluation must take one of the two portfolio development courses taught at Daniel Institute:

BDIV 100—a self-directed, three-week, online, 0 credit hour course or  
BDIV 110—an online or in-person, faculty-taught, 3 credit hour course. Students create their first portfolio in BDIV 110 Prior Learning Portfolio Development

One of these courses must be completed before requesting a portfolio assessment from Daniel Institute.

## ***6. Internal Portfolio Analysis***

To submit a portfolio for assessment, students must contact the department offering the course, and follow the schedule established by the department. Once the examination is completed, the department will notify the student of the results within thirty days. Notification will simply indicate whether credit has been awarded. The portfolio will be returned unmarked.

Courses eligible for credit by internal portfolio assessment are determined by the department that offers the course and are posted to the PLA website.

Students may submit a portfolio for assessment at most two times for a given course. The second portfolio cannot be submitted within 30 business days of notification of the outcome of the initial submission.

If a program offers credit by portfolio assessment, no eligible student can be refused the opportunity to submit a portfolio assessed for course credit.

All portfolio assessments will be completed by discipline-appropriate faculty trained in assessing portfolios for credit. Departments offering prior learning assessment by portfolio will establish rubrics to guide faculty assessment and scoring.

Fees for portfolio assessments by Daniel Institute Departments: Fees shall be consistently applied and will cover transcription as well as administration. These will be posted to the PLA website.

## ***7. Review***

This policy will be reviewed every five years by the PLA Coordinator and reported to the Faculty Board. The Faculty Board Undergraduate Academic Policy Committee will review the report and make suggestions for any changes to the policy.