

Get credits for your learning!

Your learning from experience *is* valuable!

Get assessed through PLA!

Get credits through PLA!

Gain entry to The UWI Open Campus through PLA!

Let your prior learning work for you!

Let your learning from experience help

You reach your educational goals!

Let PLA advance your studies!

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About PLA at The UWI Open Campus

1. Welcome to the Prior Learning Assessment Unit!

As a “student-centred”, “agile”, “accessible” and “enabling” institution, The UWI Open Campus has provided Prior Learning Assessment as an alternative pathway to give students access to its courses and programmes. The UWI Open Campus recognises that:

1. learning takes place outside of traditional settings and this learning should be identified, documented, validated and recognised by granting academic credits
2. there are persons accessing the programmes of the Open Campus who also have learning from experience (experiential learning) and by offering PLA, these students can save time and money and reach their educational goals in a shorter time
3. there are also persons without formal qualifications, but who have relevant learning outcomes from other sources and wish to further their education. Through PLA, learning from experience may be assessed and applied towards an undergraduate degree, or used to enter the Open Campus.

The PLA Unit provides administrative support for Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) at The UWI Open Campus. Questions about PLA should be emailed to the Programme Officer at pla@open.uwi.edu

Scholarships are available to students applying for PLA in the academic year (2016/2017). These scholarships are granted through the Global Affairs Canada (GAC), Strengthening Distance Education in the Caribbean (SDEC) Project and The University of the West Indies Open Campus (UWIOC). A scholarship application form may be obtained from the PLA Unit at pla@open.uwi.edu. The completed form should be emailed to the PLA Unit. Further information on the PLA Scholarship is available at: <http://www.open.uwi.edu/pla>.

2. What is Prior Learning Assessment or PLA?

PLA is the process by which relevant learning (i.e. skills, knowledge and abilities) gained through experience (also known as experiential learning) can be identified, documented and assessed by subject content experts for university-level credits.

3. What type of learning does PLA evaluate?

PLA assesses non-formal and informal learning. This means that your relevant prior learning may be obtained, for example, through:

- work experiences
- on-the-job training
- short courses
- community activities
- volunteer work
- independent study and reading
- open source courses
- travel or hobbies.

4. What is PLA offered for at The UWI Open Campus?

PLA is offered for two purposes at The UWI Open Campus:

A. Persons considering applying for an undergraduate degree may consider PLA for advanced placement if they believe they have relevant non-formal and informal learning which can be documented and assessed for credits. They may opt for *PLA for Advanced Placement in an undergraduate degree programme*.

PLA for Advanced Placement is linked to certain undergraduate degree programmes. There must be a proper fit between your prior learning and the specific course objectives (or course learning outcomes) of the Level 1 courses in the undergraduate degree programme.

Applicants interested in **PLA for Advanced Placement** are required to satisfy the relevant University minimum entrance requirements for matriculation and must have:

- been working for 5+ years

- reached the age of 21
- undertaken relevant training workshops/seminars, read widely in the area of the degree; and
- acquired the relevant learning from experience (i.e. knowledge and skills) at the required level.

B. *PLA for Matriculation*

Persons without formal qualifications, who are considering furthering their education at The UWI Open Campus, may seek PLA for admission (or matriculation). They can opt for **PLA for Matriculation** once they have relevant non-formal and informal learning which can be assessed for credits.

If persons can demonstrate successfully that their informal and non-formal learning satisfies The UWI admission requirements, they will be granted admission to the Open Campus and begin their journey towards the fulfillment of their educational goals.

Applicants interested in **PLA for Matriculation** must have:

- reached 18 years
- have at least two (2) years experience post CSEC, or equivalent level, relevant to the desired areas of study for which PLA is currently available;
- demonstrate experiential learning in the subject areas approved for matriculation;
- possess non-formal, informal and short-term training in areas of interest.

5. What are the Benefits of PLA?

Many benefits may be gained as a result of PLA; for example, you may:

- earn academic credits for what you already know
- advance in your degree programme/get exempted from courses
- complete your degree sooner (fast track completion time)
- save time and money (tuition and books)
- have your prior knowledge documented, validated and recognised

- gain recognition for what you already know
- gain access to higher education
- build your self-esteem and grow in confidence
- study online in the comfort of your home or elsewhere!

6. Which degree programmes are offered for PLA for Advanced Placement?

- BSc Accounting
- BSc Banking & Finance
- BEd Early Childhood Development & Family Studies
- BSc Management Studies
- BSc Youth Development Work

7. How do I begin the PLA process?

- Contact the PLA Unit at pla@open.uwi.edu for information and guidance.
- Review the information on PLA at <http://www.open.uwi.edu/pla>
- Click on the PLA e-Form to complete and submit to the PLA Unit.

8. Should a Résumé be submitted to the PLA Unit?

Yes. Your detailed résumé should be submitted to the PLA Unit for preliminary screening. Be sure to provide full details of your employment history and experience, for example:

- name of employer, job title and dates of employment in the position(s)
- details of duties/tasks undertaken
- on-the-job training, seminars, workshops and/or courses completed
- involvement in volunteer or community work; and
- any other informal/non-formal activities from which you have gained relevant knowledge and skills.

9. Is PLA Pre-advising important?

PLA pre-advising is important for persons considering PLA as it provides the necessary information about PLA. The pre-advising:

- is used in conjunction with formal advising provided by the PLA Unit and/or the Programme Delivery Department
- must be completed before registering for the Prior Learning and Portfolio Development/Assessment course: PLPD0100
- allows you to determine whether or not you:
 - meet the University's matriculation requirements
 - meet the age requirement
 - have the necessary non-formal, informal and/or short-term requirements for PLA
 - are competent in the use of English
 - have strong writing skills, and
 - are comfortable studying in an online environment
- provides an opportunity for you to gauge your readiness for PLA
- allows you to review the PLA Web pages at <http://www.open.uwi.edu/pla>
- allows you to examine the Course Objectives for each Level 1 course at <http://www.open.uwi.edu/sites/document/> and identify your comparable prior learning
- encourages you to review the information on PLA at <http://www.open.uwi.edu/pla>

10. How do I apply PLA for Advanced Placement?

Step 1: Ensure that you satisfy the relevant University minimum entrance requirements for matriculation, either at Normal or Lower Level. Information on admissions is available at <http://www.open.uwi.edu/admissions>

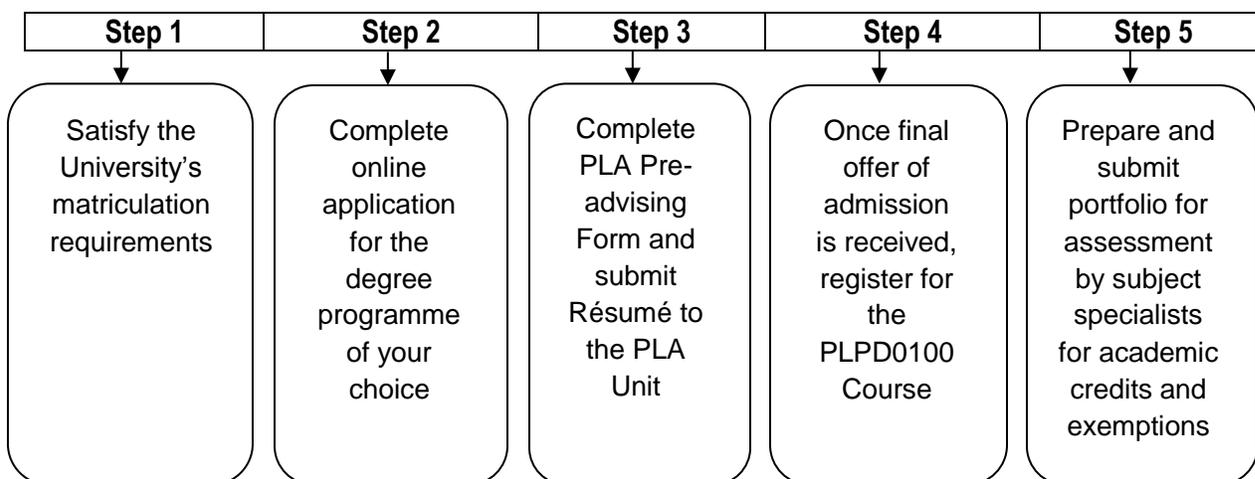
Or <http://www.open.uwi.edu/pla>

Step 2: If you qualify for admission, complete the online application for the undergraduate degree of your choice.

Step 3: Complete the PLA Pre-advising Form online at <http://www.open.uwi.edu/pla> to ensure that you qualify for PLA. The PLA Unit will provide the necessary guidance.

Step 4: Once you receive a final offer of admission, on registering for your Level 1 courses, select **PLPD0100**, the **Prior Learning and Portfolio Development/Assessment Course** to begin your PLA journey. (Note: *Students are encouraged to take the PLPD0100 Course only in Semester 1*).

Step 5: If you successfully complete the PLPD0100 course **and** your learning portfolio, in which you demonstrated your prior learning, you will earn academic credits for advanced placement in your undergraduate degree programme.



11. What does the PLPD0100 Course involve?

- The PLPD0100 Course will acquaint you with the process of Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), its basic theoretical background and the required parts of the portfolio.
- You will acquire knowledge *about* and engage *in* the PLA process as they work towards the ultimate product of the course, **the PLA portfolio**, which will be assessed by academic faculty.
- As part of the PLPD0100 Course, you will be expected to provide supporting documentation for your learning; for example, by providing a letter(s) to attest to your attendance at a training seminar or a certificate of attendance, etc.
- On successful completion and assessment of the learning portfolio, credits for the comparable course(s), will be recommended.
- You will **not** be required to take the corresponding Level 1 course(s) for which you have earned credits (i.e. exemptions will be granted).

12. How many Level 1 courses are available for PLA for Advanced Placement?

- Credits for up to 7 Level 1 courses (a total of 21 credits) may be earned through Prior Learning Assessment.
- Foundation (FOUN) courses are currently **not** available for PLA for advanced placement.

13. How do I apply for PLA for Matriculation?

PLA for Matriculation is for you if:

- (1) (a) you applied to The UWI Open Campus but was unsuccessful;
(b) you do not have formal qualifications, but have relevant learning from experience.
- (2) You will receive counseling for PLA for Matriculation.
- (3) You will be guided by an Instructor to prepare your learning portfolio for evaluation by subject content specialists.
- (4) (a) If your portfolio does not meet the standard, you will be advised to take **Access courses** to help you meet the requirements.
(b) If your portfolio meets the standard, you will gain entry to the Open Campus.

The Chart below shows the process for PLA for Matriculation:

Chart: Processing of Applicants (Pilot Phase)

