Overview and Context
Students may acquire knowledge, skills and competencies through experiences that are academic in nature but may not necessarily correspond to a setting in which UW-Madison awards traditional credit. Credit by department examination is one opportunity for undergraduate students to demonstrate mastery of material that is equivalent to what would be learned in a specific UW-Madison course. The course credits granted through department examination are based on a student’s demonstration that they have mastered the learning outcomes equivalent to those for the specified course. Examples of circumstances that will lead students to seek credit by examination may be: they completed preparation for advanced placement exams in high school but were unable to take the AP test; they have a placement test scores that place them in a course lower than what they think they are prepared for; they didn’t get transfer equivalency for a course but they judge that they have completed the material in a course at another university.

Offering students the opportunity to earn credit by examination has several benefits for both students and the University. Students will have a low-cost option for earning credit for skills and knowledge they already possess. They will have the opportunity to quickly move on to more challenging and enriching courses. The University will benefit by freeing up seats in courses that are in demand and by supporting timely progress to degree.

This policy does not cover transfer credit, UW System placement exams, Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), College Level Examination Program (CLEP), retroactive credits or departmental placement examinations. These mechanisms for awarding credit are
covered in well established, existing policy. See Appendix B for a summary of how the various ways of earning credit are related to each other.

Students who wish to earn credit by examination should contact the relevant department. A list of courses that offer credit by exam is available at [website to be created after policy approval].

For the purposes of this policy the word “exam” or “examination” will be cover all potential methods of evaluation of student learning.

**Eligibility and Limitations**

A student must be classified as a degree-seeking undergraduate (i.e. career = UGRD). They must be in good academic standing with no holds on their record.

Credits earned by department examination do not count toward the credit residency requirements for a bachelor’s degree.

Students may not attempt a department examination for credit for any course they are enrolled in or were previously enrolled in at UW-Madison beyond the add deadline.

Students may not take a credit by examination for a specific course more than once.

Students may not earn credit by examination for a course or course equivalent for which they have previously been awarded credit.

Students must satisfy all prerequisites prior to attempting credit by examination for that course.

No student may attempt credit by examination in a course which is a prerequisite, stated or implied, for an advanced course in the same subject for which credit has already been earned, without approval from the department offering the course.

Native speakers of a language cannot earn credit by exam in that language. For UW-Madison, native language is defined as the language of instruction at the student's secondary school.

Students must take a separate exam (or set of assessments) for each course they are seeking credit for.

The department offering the exam is responsible for determining a student’s eligibility for taking the exam. In general, once the student has been given permission to take the exam they will be considered eligible to receive credit regardless of circumstances that may indicate otherwise.

Students are strongly encouraged to take departmental examinations for credit prior to earning 90 degree credits (including the semester in which the 90th credit is earned) in order to avoid complications with the residence requirement.

The College of Engineering limits the use of credit by exam to a total of six (6) credits or two (2) courses during an engineering undergraduate student’s career.
**Posting Credits**

The Office of the Registrar will post credits to the student record. It will be posted in a way that is easily distinguishable from other types of credit.

The credits will be posted for specific regularly taught UW-Madison courses. (Credit by exam will not be provided for independent study, topics courses, general or departmental credit.)

Course credit earned via examination does not carry grade points and does not factor in to the grade point average.

Course credit earned via examination does not factor in to a semester course load.

The Office of the Registrar will post credits earned through credit by exam within 10 days of receiving a completed credit by exam form from a department.

No entry will be made on a student's transcript if the attempt for credit by exam is unsuccessful; an entry will be made when he or she successfully completes the requirements for departmental examinations.

The course credits will be posted to the term that corresponds with the date the examination was completed.

**Department Requirements**

It is up to each department to determine which courses they offer that they want to make eligible for credit by examination. There is no requirement or expectation for credit by examination, but if a credit by examination will be offered for a course, it must follow these policy guidelines.

Generally, courses that provide credit by examination will be large enrollment and will be offered as lower- or mid-level courses.

Department faculty will determine the standards, methods, and procedures for evaluation. Departments may use any evaluation method or combination of methods including:

- Written examination
- Oral examination
- Performance evaluation (practical exam)
- Examination of completed work and/or records presented and defended by the student (portfolio)
- Other methods consistent with evaluation of student learning in the corresponding regular course

The content, quality and quantity of material covered in the examination for credit must be consistent with what is covered in the specified UW-Madison course for which the exam is intended to provide credit. The method of evaluation must be similar to the standard method used in the equivalent course. (Ex. a dance course that had a performance as the final exam should include some type of performance evaluation, a writing intensive course would not use a multiple choice exam format etc.) Because some course attributes, like Comm B or Service
Learning, are assigned to courses that use particular pedagogies, it would be difficult for a department to measure mastery of course content and evaluate students’ learning gains with respect to those pedagogies. As a result, Comm B, Service Learning, and other courses may not be appropriate courses for awarding credit by examination.

In order to pass the examination, the student must demonstrate a clear mastery of the course material and student performance must be at a sufficient level that they are well prepared for higher level work in that field of study.

If a course is crosslisted, all crosslisted units will agree on an examination and select one department to administer all examinations for the course.

If the department also offers placement exams, the department must clearly state whether the examination results in credit or course placement. Such information must be clearly communicated to students.

**Approval to Offer Credit by Examination for a Course**

Before offering credit by examination for a specific course, a department must get approval to do so. The approval process will be handled through the existing course approval process. Credit by exam for a course will be proposed and approved by the subject owner (department) of the course and by any crosslisted subjects. The proposal would then be reviewed by the school or college followed by the University Curriculum Committee.

Once a course has been approved it will be listed on a master list of all courses available for credit by exam. This process will serve as the only avenue for awarding departmental credit other than by offering for-credit courses. Departments will be required to review and assess all credit by exam opportunities at least once every 3 years to determine whether the exam continues to match the content of the course. For courses that are not reviewed, approval will expire and they will be removed from the list of course available for credit by exam. Anytime the equivalent course is changed through the course change proposal process the examination must be evaluated to make sure it is still aligned with the learning outcomes of the course.

**Administration of Exam**

Department examinations must be administered and/or supervised by a member of the faculty or academic staff.

The department is responsible for validating the identity of the student prior to administering the exam, by checking the student ID.

The department is responsible for determining whether the student is eligible to take the exam. If the department administers an exam to a student it is assumed that they have verified their eligibility. Training and tools will be available to assist department faculty and staff in validating eligibility.

Departments must submit a Credit by Examination Form to the Office of the Registrar within 7 business days of scoring the exam/evaluation for all students who attempted credit by
examination, even if the attempt is not successful. The Office of the Registrar will process the form and archive it with the student’s record in ImageNow. The ImageNow student record will serve as a record of all credit by exam attempts and will allow for the enforcement of the single attempt rule.

**Fees**

The fee for each exam is $135.

The fee must be paid prior to attempting an examination. The fee is not refundable. The department offering the exam is responsible for verifying that the fee has been paid.

The fee is waived for Banner, FASTrack and Pell students.

The fee will be paid using the CASHNet system. The Bursar’s Office will provide support with set up and reconciliation.

The fee will be divided among the department offering the exam (75% of the fee), the Office of the Registrar (12.5%) and Bursar’s Office (12.5%).

The fee will be reviewed annually by the Office of Academic Planning and Institutional Research.
Appendix A
Fee Rationale

Offering credit by examination to students provides them with a low cost, efficient means of demonstrating knowledge and earning credit toward a degree. The department that offers the exam incurs costs based on the use of resources to develop and maintain the evaluation instrument and to administer the exam. The administrative units that are involved with record keeping will also have resources costs.

Other UW System schools that offer students opportunities to earn college credit by examination have similar fees ranging from $90 to $20. Two options that are already exist for UW-Madison students are the College Board’s Advanced Placement program where the fee is $89 and the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) where the cost is $80 per exam. The fee that is charged represents a small fraction of the tuition for the equivalent course.

Faculty members familiar with national exams (as well as with departmental exams) advised that substantial effort is required by the department and the faculty in setting an examination that meets the credit by exam standards. In most cases, the process will not be as straightforward as administering the same final examination a professor might set for a course. In most cases, departments will need to create examinations or evaluative experiences that are equivalent to the various processes used to evaluate students over the course of a semester. Creating these examinations, “refreshing” them on a regular basis so they’re current (and not likely to be found in student files), proctoring, grading, contacting students, updating the database of students who already took the test, and otherwise managing a credit-by-exam program, requires considerable effort. The proposed fee seems, to us, to undervalue that effort. Faculty familiar with this process already in their departments estimate that the effort costs the department on the order of $100 per test. Taking the administrative cost share formula into consideration, the fee at $135 would allow that department, at least, to recover the cost of administering these exams.
# UW System Institutional Prior Learning Assessment Fees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UW Institution</th>
<th>PLA Departmental Exams Fees</th>
<th>PLA Portfolio Fees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colleges</td>
<td></td>
<td>$100 per portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eau Claire</td>
<td>$15.00 for taking this type of test. If passed, there is no charge for the first credit earned and the student must pay $7.50 for each additional credit earned. There is no fee beyond the initial $15.00 if the test is not passed.</td>
<td>$100 per portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Bay</td>
<td>$90.00 per departmental exam</td>
<td>$50.00 administrative fee and $50.00 per credit requested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Crosse</td>
<td>$20.00 per exam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison</td>
<td>No fee is collected by our office. Not aware of any department charges.</td>
<td>$50.00 assessment fee. An additional fee of $75.00 for entering up to 10 credits on transcripts (i.e., total of $125.00) and additional $10.00 per credit for each credit over 10 (i.e., 11 or more credits).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee</td>
<td></td>
<td>$95.00 fee associated with the assessment (w/$75.00 of fee paid as stipend to assessor of portfolio).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oshkosh</td>
<td>$50.00 fee associated with the assessment (w/$75.00 of fee paid as stipend to assessor of portfolio).</td>
<td>$50.00 assessment fee. An additional fee of $75.00 for entering up to 10 credits on transcripts (i.e., total of $125.00) and additional $10.00 per credit for each credit over 10 (i.e., 11 or more credits).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkside</td>
<td></td>
<td>$25 base fee + $5 per credit after the first four credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platteville</td>
<td>$20.00 per credit for Math and English Computer Science and Speech typically require students to enroll in course (i.e. full tuition) Criminal Justice and Business (typically Distance Learning) - $150/test but may vary Graduate - $150/test</td>
<td>Business – regular tuition charged for course along with $75 portfolio development fee paid at time of enrollment. Transcript fee paid at end of course that is based on number of credits earned. Engineering - $500 per course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Falls</td>
<td></td>
<td>After completion of the Learning Counts.org portfolio course, there is a fee of $250 for 0-6 credits per subject area petitioned for.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stevens Point</td>
<td>$20.00 per application</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stout</td>
<td>$10 base fee + $10 per credit hour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superior</td>
<td>$100 administrative fee plus $75 for each 1-3 credits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitewater</td>
<td>$20.00 per departmental exam</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix B

### Ways of Earning Credit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course based – in residence</th>
<th>Course based – other institutions</th>
<th>Prior Learning Assessment Credit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UW-Madison Course Credit (at least 30 credits must be earned in residence to earn a UW-Madison degree)</td>
<td>Transfer Credit (no more than 72 credits from 2-year institutions may be transferred in and applied to degree requirements)</td>
<td>Third Party credit by exam (AP, IB, CLEP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Retroactive Credits (foreign language)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Covered by existing policies

Proposed policy

No existing policy and none proposed for UW-Madison