

## Credit for Prior Learning at USHE Degree-Granting Institutions Academic Year 2023-24

Prior learning refers to knowledge, skills, or competencies acquired through formal and informal education outside a traditional academic environment. This can include a student acquiring knowledge or skills through employee-sponsored training or military training, earning an industry certification, or taking national standardized exams. In the 2023-24 academic year, 34,490 students earned 246,128 college credits through prior learning at institutions in the Utah System of Higher Education, saving an estimated \$60.2 million in tuition and fees.

In the 2023-24 academic year (AY2024), 78 fewer students received credit for prior learning compared to the previous year. However, 13,185 more credits were awarded. The majority of prior learning credit continues to be awarded for assessment through Advanced Placement (AP), College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), and International Baccalaureate (IB) exams. Credits awarded include 58,158 credits for non-exam-based prior learning experiences, such as military training, third-party certifications, employer-sponsored training, foreign language proficiency examinations, institutional portfolio assessments, institutional challenge exams, and technical college coursework.<sup>1</sup>

### Credit earned through national or international standardized exams

- **Advanced Placement:** In AY2024, 32,476 Utah high school students were awarded a total of 144,183 credits for AP exam scores of 3 to 5. This is an increase of 1,669 exam takers and 12,825 credits awarded compared to the previous year.<sup>2</sup>
- **International Baccalaureate:** In AY2024, 234 students enrolled in IB courses and earned a total of 3,334 credits for IB exam scores of 4 to 7. This is a decrease of 25 students and 1,591 credits compared to the previous year.
- **The College Level Examination Program:** In Utah, CLEP tests are primarily taken by adult learners. In AY2024, 276 students were awarded 1,361 credits for CLEP exam scores of 50 or higher—an increase of 85 students and 313 credits over the previous year. As discussed during the 2024-25 USHE Faculty Major Committees, certain academic departments in USHE institutions plan to use

<sup>1</sup> Utah high school students also earn credits through the Concurrent Enrollment program. In AY2024, 56,716 students earned 443,147 credits through Concurrent Enrollment. Because Concurrent Enrollment (CE) students take actual college courses while in high school, CE is not considered a form of credit for extra-collegial prior learning.

<sup>2</sup> The College Board, *AP Score Distributions*, 2023-24 data. Accessed April 10, 2025. <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/about-ap/ap-data-research/national-state-data>.

CLEP exam scores to assess prior learning. This initiative may lead to an increased number of students who take CLEP exams to earn credit for prior learning.

- **ACT/SAT:** Students can earn college credit or waive prerequisite requirements in mathematics, the sciences, and English, depending on their ACT or SAT exam scores. In AY2024, 12,745 students were awarded 39,068 college credits for qualifying scores on the ACT or SAT exam. The statewide average ACT composite score was 20.0, a higher score than the average national composite score of 19.4. Despite most USHE institutions no longer requiring ACT scores for admission, participation remained steady, with 89% of Utah high school juniors taking the ACT.

### Other Prior Learning Assessments

- **Foreign Language Exams:** In AY 2024, 2,352 students were awarded 17,808 credits in foreign languages for appropriate scores in several world language assessments—an increase of 347 students and 2,270 credits awarded compared to the previous year. The Brigham Young University Foreign Language Aptitude Tests (FLATS) are the most widely used language proficiency exams among U.S. institutions of higher learning. Many students take these exams to earn college credit for foreign language skills acquired during missionary service for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
- **Institutional Challenge Exams:** Institutions appear more likely to use challenge exams to assess students' prior learning than was the case a few years ago. In AY2024, 1,161 students were awarded 8,742 credits for prior learning through challenge exams, an increase of 179 students and 1,798 credits compared to the previous year. Challenge exams are deemed a more efficient and effective tool for assessing prior learning in many academic disciplines. Some academic departments are opting to use CLEP exams as challenge exams to measure subject matter competence for introductory courses in their disciplines. Other challenge exams are created by departments by drawing content from written assignments, tests, and other assessment tools used to award credit for students when the course is taught on a campus.
- **Institutional Portfolio Evaluations:** While there was a sharp increase in the number of challenge exams administered in AY2024, there was a notable decline in the number of portfolio assessments. Only 14 students were awarded a total of 95 credits for portfolios in AY2024, compared to 108 students and 1,017 credits the previous year. While challenge exams are the most common assessment tool, portfolio assessment remains the preferred method of assessment for some faculty, especially in the performing and visual arts areas.
- **Apprenticeships:** Apprenticeships offer structured, hands-on learning experiences under the supervision of faculty experts within academic institutions. Apprenticeships typically involve students employed in high-demand technical fields, such as electrical work, mechanics, construction, and plumbing, where they receive both on-the-job training from industry professionals and advanced instruction from qualified college faculty. In AY2024, 19 students at Salt Lake Community College earned a total of 140 credits through apprenticeship programs in traditional technical education programs.
- **USHE Technical College Articulations:** Degree-granting institutions in USHE grant up to 30 credits toward degree programs for completed coursework at USHE technical colleges. In AY2024, 777 students were awarded 11,765 credits at degree-granting institutions for completing coursework at

USHE technical colleges—an increase of 229 students earning credit and a 62% increase in total credits awarded compared to the previous year.

- **Third-Party and National Certifications:** Certain industry-recognized certifications are accepted by USHE institutions as meeting student learning outcomes and fulfilling course equivalencies in specific disciplines. These certifications span a range of fields, including:
  - Health and medical sciences, such as the Human Anatomy & Physiology Society (HAPS) online assessments;
  - Business and supply chain management, such as the APICS Certified Supply Chain Professional certification; and
  - Computer science and programming, such as the Python Institute’s Certified Entry-Level Python Programmer credential.

During AY2024, 629 students were awarded 11,291 credits for industry-recognized certifications, a 9% increase in credits earned compared to the previous year.

- **Military Credit:** Military personnel can receive credit for their training through two pathways. The Joint Services Transcript (JST) is a record of military training in specific disciplines that is accepted by over 2,000 institutions of higher learning in the United States. The American Council on Education (ACE) evaluates military training and makes recommendations for course equivalencies. JST training transfers as college course credit.

Military veterans can also receive credit for prior learning by presenting their DD-214 discharge papers, which document completed military training and certifications that are accepted as credit for prior learning at USHE institutions. In Utah, the number of current and former members of the military receiving credit for prior learning varies depending on training cycles at the state’s military bases, primarily Camp Williams and Hill Air Force Base. In AY2024, 674 students were awarded 8,317 credits from JST and DD-214 equivalencies, a 20% decrease in both the number of students and the credits awarded compared to the previous year.

### **Faculty Engagement in Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Development**

During AY2024 annual meetings, faculty participating on 36 USHE Faculty Major Committees were engaged to determine PLA options for over 4,300 lower-division courses. Faculty identified common academic assessments they would develop on a course-by-course basis. Common types of assessments include:

- Challenge exams
- Portfolio reviews
- Oral exams and interviews
- Recitations and auditions
- Skills demonstrations

Faculty also identified assessments from external entities, such as College Board CLEP exams for various courses, or American Chemical Society standardized exams for Chemistry courses, as well as industry-recognized credentials, including a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential for Introduction to Early Childhood courses.

Many faculty members provided detailed descriptions of their portfolio or exam processes. A number of faculty also provided explanations when they determined that credit for prior learning was not an

appropriate option for courses. Labs, cooperative work experiences, internships, apprenticeships, and seminars require faculty supervision throughout the semester and do not easily fit credit for prior learning parameters. Other courses build upon foundational courses, and the learning outcomes cannot be met through prior learning experiences.

Table 1 is a brief overview of Major Committee faculty assessment determinations for lower-division courses.

**TABLE 1:** Summary of AY2024 PLA Determination Project

4330*	Lower-division courses evaluated by major committee faculty
966	Number of those courses that are designated general education courses
2239	Assessments to be developed and administered, upon request from a student, by the academic department
623	External assessments that will be evaluated for CPL requests
1526	Courses where faculty determined CPL is not appropriate

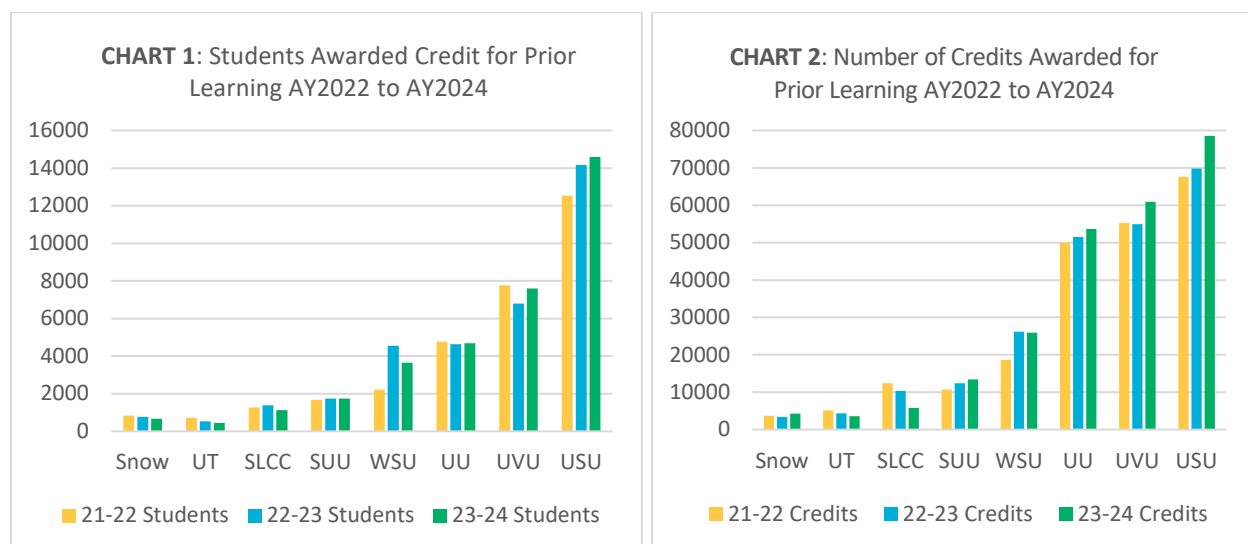
\*In a small number of instances, faculty determined they would allow students the choice to use an external assessment or take a department-developed assessment. For this reason, the sum of the number of department assessments, external assessments, and courses for which CPL is not appropriate is larger than the number of courses evaluated.

The creation of the lower-division course PLA tool tables presented faculty with an opportunity to share PLA information among academic departments across the system. The tables will be reviewed annually by faculty who participate in the major committees. Faculty will be able to share best practices and make adjustments to the types of assessments they use to assess prior learning.

During AY2025-26, major committee faculty will be engaged to identify and share information on national certifications, licenses, and training that their departments recognize as meeting the learning outcomes of specific disciplinary courses. Faculty may also revisit and discuss procedural matters, such as whether a student can retake a prior learning exam for credit, and may explore the adoption of systemwide assessment tools, where possible. Commissioner's staff will post summary information on the system's PLA webpage.

### **Multi-Year Credit for Prior Learning Summary Data**

In AY2023-24, 34,490 students were awarded 246,128 credits by USHE institutions. Charts 1 and 2 provide a three-year comparison of the number of students and credits awarded through CPL by institution. Table 2 presents summative systemwide data.

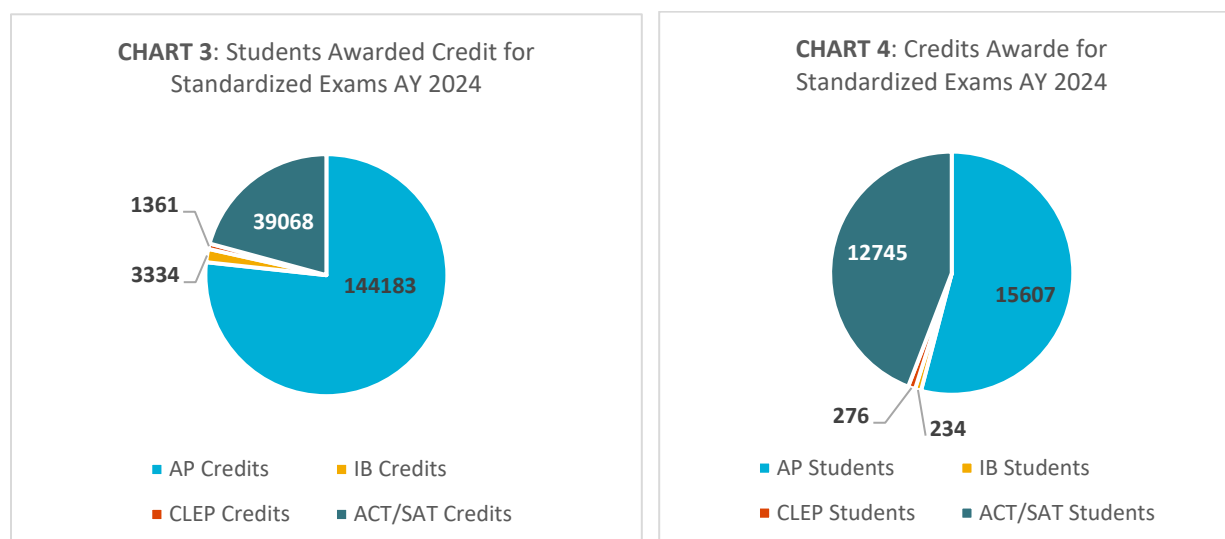


**TABLE 2: Students Awarded Credit for Prior Learning AY2022 to AY2024**

	Academic Year 2021-2022		Academic Year 2022-2023		Academic Year 2023-2024	
Institutions	Students	Credits	Students	Credits	Students	Credits
SLCC	1259	12413	1376	10321	1122	5837
Snow	831	3654	769	3425	664	4255
SUU	1678	10718	1745	12361	1746	13419
UU	4773	49954	4640	51548	4680	53645
USU	12538	67629	14164	69818	14587	78544
UT	720	5114	527	4354	447	3576
UVU	7766	55250	6794	54944	7598	60904
WSU	2211	18650	4553	26172	3646	25948
<b>Total</b>	<b>31776</b>	<b>223382</b>	<b>34568</b>	<b>232943</b>	<b>34490</b>	<b>246128</b>

## AY2024 Credit for Prior Learning Summary Data

The following charts and tables summarize data for the 2023-24 academic year.



**TABLE 3: Students Awarded Credit for Standardized Exams AY2024**

Institutions	AP Students	AP Credits	IB Students	IB Credits	CLEP Students	CLEP Credits	ACT/SAT Students	ACT/SAT Credits
SLCC	391	3378	3	21	44	96	517	1551
Snow	90	703	3	52	1	3	460	1383
SUU	581	5066	3	18	21	105	822	3024
UU	2901	44554	120	2289	24	152	1527	4581
USU	7807	52898	79	591	98	571	4990	14967
UT	356	2703	3	29	14	68	0	0
UVU	2670	26734	14	256	49	250	2546	7913
WSU	811	8147	9	78	25	116	1883	5649
<b>Totals</b>	<b>15607</b>	<b>144183</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>3334</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>1361</b>	<b>12745</b>	<b>39068</b>

**TABLE 4: Students Awarded Credit for Other Types of Assessments AY2024**

Assessment Area	AY 2023 Students	AY 2024 Students	% Change	AY 2023 Credits	AY 2024 Credits	% Change
Foreign Language Exam Students	2005	2352	+15%	15538	17808	+13%
Institutional Challenge Exam Students	982	1161	+16%	6944	8742	+20.5%
Institutional Portfolio Review Students	108	14	-89%	1017	95	-91%
Technical College Students	548	777	+30%	7286	11765	+39%
Apprenticeship Students	*	19		*	140	
3 <sup>rd</sup> -Party Certification Students	568	629	+10%	11124	11291	+1.5%
Military/Joint Service Transcript	776	623	-20%	9825	7880	-20%
Military/DD214 Program	29	51	+43.5%	137	437	+69%
<b>TOTAL Military</b>	<b>805</b>	<b>674</b>	<b>-16.5%</b>	<b>9962</b>	<b>8317</b>	<b>-16%</b>

**TABLE 5: Students Awarded Credit for Foreign Language Assessments by Institution AY2024**

Institution	Students Awarded Foreign Language Credit	Foreign Language Credits Awarded
SLCC	7	35
Snow	44	524
SUU	155	2184
UU	54	702
USU	1077	4369
UT	55	636
UVU	617	5656
WSU	343	3702
<b>Total</b>	<b>2352</b>	<b>17808</b>

**TABLE 6:** Students Awarded Credit through Third-Party Certifications by Institution AY2024

Institution	3 <sup>rd</sup> -Party Certifications		National Certifications	
	Students	Credits	Students	Credits
SLCC	10	29	14	158
Snow	1	11	0	0
SUU	3	45	72	2160
UU	40	1200	0	0
USU	0	0	0	0
UT	3	9	0	0
UVU	357	6209	0	0
WSU	109	1217	20	271
<b>Total</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>8702</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>2589</b>

**TABLE 7:** Students Awarded Credit for USHE Technical College Credit by Institution AY2024

Institution	Students Granted Credit	Credit Awarded
SLCC	66	309
Snow	63	1556
SUU	0	0
UU	0	0
USU	140	2663
UT	0	0
UVU	140	1479
WSU	368	5758
<b>Total</b>	<b>777</b>	<b>11765</b>