

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR): Receive credit for prior learning and shorten your studies

Guidelines on receiving credit for vocational skills and prior learning
in part-time Bachelor's and Master's programmes

- _ Business Administration for Top Athletes (BA)
- _ Business Administration in Medium-sized Enterprises (BA)
- _ Education and Research Management (MBA)
- _ Law and Information Systems (LLM)
- _ Innovation Management and Entrepreneurship (MBA)
- _ Risk Management for the Financial Industry (MSc)
- _ Management of Technology Enhanced Learning (MA)

Welcome to C3L at the Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg

With the start of your part-time programme at the Center for Lifelong Learning (C3L) at the University of Oldenburg, you are ready to embark on the next chapter of your education. Many things will be new for you, but you will also be bringing some things with you – especially if you have already completed vocational training before you start the programme, have worked (or continue to work during your studies), have successfully completed professional training or an earlier course of study. Did you know that you can apply to receive credit for these previous achievements and skills if they are equivalent to the learning outcomes of your chosen programme?

This guide¹ explains the process of receiving credit for prior learning, also called Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR), and gives you tips on how to gain credits for knowledge and skills that you have acquired elsewhere.² The following information is intended to help you in completing your application for PLAR.

Legal framework

In order to strengthen the transparency and transfer between work and study, the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK) and the Lower Saxony Higher Education Act (NHG) permit the receipt of credit for prior learning through vocational skills and previous academic achievements acquired outside higher education. This helps to avoid unnecessary duplication of education and can shorten your path toward obtaining a university degree.

The University of Oldenburg has implemented the NHG and the KMK requirements for its part-time degree programmes in its 'Joint examination regulations for the part-time Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes at the Faculties of Educational and Social Sciences (Faculty I), Computing Science, Business Administration, Economics and Law (Faculty II) and Mathematics and Science (Faculty V)' in Section 7 (see Appendix 1).

Eligible applicants and application deadlines

Prospective students and students enrolled in part-time programmes at the University of Oldenburg are eligible to apply to receive credit for prior learning. This means that you can apply to receive credit for prior learning *before* you begin your studies. There are no deadlines

¹ c.f. 'Musterleitfaden' in Seger/Waldeyer 2014, pp. 143-172 and 'Leitfaden zur Anerkennung von Qualifikationen, Studien- und Prüfungsleistungen auf Basis von Kompetenzen an der Friedrich-Alexander Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg (FAU)'.

² This guide is based on a project by Dr. Christiane Brokmann-Nooren and Sarah Lammers, MA/MEd (both C3L) within the framework of the project 'Recognition of qualifications and skills acquired outside the university', funded by the Ministry of Science and Culture of Lower Saxony (MWK).

for applying. However, you can only apply to receive credit for course modules that you have not yet taken or for which you have not yet completed any examinations (for example, with the intent to improve your grade).

Prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) process

There are two ways to receive credit for prior learning: general and individual assessment.

General assessment describes the process where a fixed amount of credits are awarded in the chosen programme if you already have a recognised vocational qualification. The University must first confirm with the awarding institution if the qualification can be recognised and to what extent through an equivalence assessment. Once this is determined, any student with this qualification will be awarded the defined amount of credits. At the University of Oldenburg, this procedure is currently established in some of our part-time programmes. Further information is given in the appendix.

For **individual assessment**, you will need to submit a portfolio demonstrating the skills and prior learning relevant to each module of your chosen programme.

Prior learning assessment based on learning outcomes

The purpose of prior learning assessment is to give credit for knowledge and skills that students have already acquired. Learning outcomes are statements that describe the knowledge or skills that students should acquire by the end of a particular assignment, class, course, or programme, and help students to understand why that knowledge and those skills will be useful to them. In the process of assessing learning outcomes to determine whether credit can be awarded for prior learning, the place of learning or the institutional background are not considered. This means that it does not matter whether the applicant has acquired knowledge and skills at their university, another university, in the vocational education system, during professional experience or as part of a stay abroad. Learning outcomes are assessed in terms of their equivalence to the modules prescribed in the chosen curriculum. **Equivalence means that achievements are not significantly different, rather than entirely identical.**

The following forms of prior learning will be recognised if they are equivalent to the chosen programme in terms of learning outcome, content and level:

- _ relevant and successfully completed vocational qualifications
- _ relevant and successfully completed school education
- _ professional experience
- _ previous study periods
- _ other forms of continuing education or professional development

Applying to receive credit for prior learning

Prior learning is not recognised automatically – **you must first apply to receive credit for prior learning** by submitting complete and relevant documentation.

Individual assessment: Before applying for assessment of prior learning, you should check the module description of your chosen programme to see whether the learning outcomes of the module match what you have already learned. Knowledge and skills that you can demonstrate but are not listed in the module descriptions of your chosen programme cannot be awarded credit. In practice, this means that prior learning outcomes must always have a counterpart in a target module. Once you have identified this counterpart, the process of prior learning assessment can take place.

General assessment: Before applying for assessment of prior learning, you should check which vocational, continuing education and professional development programmes are recognised and can be awarded credit (see the appendix of these guidelines). If the programme is recognised, you can apply for credit.

Steps to receiving credit for prior learning

1. **Consult with programme director about eligibility for PLAR.**
2. **Prepare and submit application for PLAR.**
The C3L examinations office will review and then respond to you regarding the application.
3. **Revise and submit PLAR application, if required.**
The C3L examinations office will review the application to ensure its completeness and then submit to the review committee. The committee will then make a decision regarding the application, at which time you will be informed of the decision.
4. **Meet with the programme director to discuss and plan future studies.**

Applications for accreditation comprise the following documents:

- **Application form to receive credit for prior learning**
- **Table** listing modules for general or individual recognition of prior learning
- **Supporting evidence** (type and scope depends on the application)

Application form to receive credit for prior learning: Please use the appropriate form for your chosen programme. You can download the accreditation form for your chosen programme from the download area of the programme website. You can access all programmes offered by the Center for Lifelong Learning from this website: www.uni-oldenburg.de/c3l/studiengaenge/

Table listing the modules for receiving general or individual credit: The purpose of this table is to help you to structure your application. This makes it easier for us to review your application and allows us to respond more efficiently to your individual situation.

To complete the table that lists the modules for receiving individual credit, please refer to the following table.

Equivalent knowledge and skills	Learning context	Supporting documents
<p>Describe your prior knowledge and skills in relation to the module of your chosen programme in your own words. Use phrases like 'I can', 'I am able to'.</p>	<p>Describe briefly where you have acquired these knowledge and skills (for example through a formal qualification, professional experience as X at Company Y, a volunteer position).</p>	<p>Provide evidence of your acquired knowledge and skills in the form of transcripts, professional references, examples of your work, examination tasks/results, lecture notes or similar. Prior professional experience should be confirmed by your current or previous employer where possible.</p> <p>Please number your supporting documents so that they are easier to review.</p>

To complete the table that lists the modules for general accreditation³, please observe the following:

- _ To receive general credit for a prior vocational qualification (e.g., certified trainer), the programme-specific regulations specify which qualifications may be recognised under which conditions and determine the amount of credit awarded. Further information on the Bachelor's programmes that this applies to is given in the appendix. Prior vocational qualification and details of modules that can be awarded credit on this basis of this qualification (according to the programme-specific regulations) and supporting documents must be listed in the table.
- _ To receive general credit for a prior university degree, the conditions under which credit may be awarded and the amount of credit awarded is determined on a programme-specific basis. Further information on the Master's programmes that this applies to is given in the appendix. For prior university degrees, you will need to provide general information on the programme (including type of degree, subject, standard period of study, university and final grade) along with supporting evidence.

³ Please note that general credit for prior learning is not available for all Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes.

Please complete the application carefully and accurately. Complete and accurate applications help us to efficiently make decisions about prior learning. Please do not forget to attach the supporting documents to your application. If we need to ask for missing information or documents, this can delay the process for prior learning assessment.

Special cases in the accreditation procedure

Credit awarded for Bachelor's modules in Master's degree programmes

If you have previously completed a Bachelor's programme with more credits than required for admission to the Master's programme (e.g., a Bachelor's degree with 180 credits is required and you have a Bachelor's degree with 210 or 240 credits), credit may be awarded for individual Bachelor's modules. Please note the following conditions:

- _ A maximum of two modules can be awarded credit on the basis of previous achievements from a Bachelor's programme in order not to reduce the level of the qualification.
- _ Credit cannot be awarded for foundation and introductory modules from a Bachelor's programme.

Double calculation

Some qualifications may count toward programme entry requirements as well as be credited to a module (e.g., professional experience). The qualification level must not be lowered by awarding credit, and variances in qualification levels will be taken into consideration.⁴

Processing of PLAR applications

The decision about recognition of prior learning is made by the responsible examining board, usually after the documents have been reviewed by a subject expert. An equivalence assessment will be conducted to ensure that skills are not significantly different in terms of content and level. In the case of general recognition of credit, the equivalence assessment has already been conducted, and the submitted documents will be reviewed according to this assessment. As a rule, a decision about a PLAR application will be made within a maximum of 12 weeks.

⁴ The qualification levels for degrees, for example, are standardised in the German Qualifications Framework (DQR): <https://www.dqr.de/> [22.02.2019]

Decision on awarding credit for prior learning

Credit will be awarded under two conditions:

1. If the prior qualification level is identical to or higher than the level of the target module
2. If the content of the prior learning outcomes overlaps with the target module by a minimum of 70%.

Only complete modules will be awarded credit. Credit cannot be partially awarded for module or examination components.

Grade transfer

There are different options for transferring grades for prior learning credit.

1. If the prior module has been awarded a grade from the same grading system as the target module, the grade will be recognised and taken into consideration when calculating the final grade.
2. If the prior module has been awarded a grade from a grading system that is different from the target module, an equivalent university grade will be calculated using the following conversion formula, and the converted grade will be taken into consideration when calculating the final grade.

$$\left[\frac{N_{\max} - N_d}{N_{\max} - N_{\min}} \right] * 3 + 1 = Z$$

N_{\max}	= Maximum grade in the foreign grading system
N_d	= Grade to be converted
N_{\min}	= Minimum grade in the foreign grading system
Z	= Converted grade

If an equivalent grade cannot be determined or if the module is ungraded, a grade will not be recorded for the target module, and the final grade to be transferred will be based on the grade from all other modules identified in the application.

PLAR decision

If the PLAR application is approved, the modules or credits will be recognised formally in your examination records. The transcript will include a remark to indicate that credit for prior learning has been recognised and applied to the degree.

If you are not yet enrolled in a degree programme, you will receive a notification of credit transfer that will apply once you enrol.

Applicants may appeal decisions about prior learning credit within one month after being notified of the decision.

Costs

The procedure for assessment of prior learning is free of charge.

The duration of your studies may be reduced if credit is granted through prior learning recognition and assessment (PLAR). You will not be charged tuition fees for modules for which you have received credit through PLAR.

Contacts and support

We can help you prepare your application to receive credit for prior learning and to offer advice throughout the process. Please contact us to arrange an appointment to discuss your application.

Contacts at the Center for Lifelong Learning (C3L):

Degree programme	Contact
Business Administration in Medium-sized Enterprises (BA)	Charlotte Angic bba-info@uni-oldenburg.de +49 (0)441 798-4275 www.bba.uni-oldenburg.de
Business Administration for Top Athletes (BA)	Manuel Karczmarzyk bwlsport@uni-oldenburg.de +49 (0)441 798-4409 www.bwlsport.uni-oldenburg.de
Education and Research Management (MBA)	Christina Meyer-Truelsen mba-info@uni-oldenburg.de +49 (0)441 798-3111 www.mba.uni-oldenburg.de
Law and Information Systems (LLM)	Tim Zentner informationsrecht@uni-oldenburg.de +49 (0)441 798-4433 www.informationsrecht.uni-oldenburg.de
Innovation Management and Entrepreneurship (MBA)	Christina Meyer-Truelsen innovationsmanagement@uni-oldenburg.de +49 (0)441 798-3111 www.innovationsmanagement.uni-oldenburg.de
Risk Management for the Financial Industry (MSc)	Silke Welter risikomanagement@uni-oldenburg.de +49 (0)441 798-3244 www.uni-oldenburg.de/risikomanagement

Management of Technology
Enhanced Learning (MA)

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Appendix 1: Extract from the joint examination regulations (2017)

Section 7 Recognition of prior learning from study periods and examinations

(1) Periods of study, including vocational activities and examinations in the same or a related degree programme at a university or equivalent institution of higher education in Germany or another European country, will be recognised automatically without a special equivalence assessment.

(2) Periods of study, including vocational activities and examinations within a different degree programme, will be recognised at the request of the student insofar as there are no fundamental differences regarding the acquired skills. The student's overall situation will be taken into account in deciding whether credit may be awarded. The prior learning assessment process includes verification of the level of education and the learning outcomes. Any fundamental differences will be reviewed and verified by the University. Students must submit the documents required for recognition of prior learning in German or English. Additional factual and legal information about assessment of prior learning can be obtained from the Central Office for Foreign Education. Agreements for recognising prior learning that have been made with foreign universities will remain unaffected.

(3) Skills acquired through prior vocational training, continuing education or professional development and in professional practice may be recognised if they are not substantially different in terms of content and qualification and are deemed equivalent to the chosen programme. A general assessment of achieved learning may be determined for certain vocational and professional qualifications following a formal equivalence assessment. Up to 50 percent of the credits of a degree programme may be awarded. If insufficient evidence of prior learning is available, a test of knowledge may be required.

(4) Grades and credits will be transferred for recognised examinations. In the case of different scopes or grading scales, the Examining Board will make a decision on the conversion. If grading scales are incompatible, a pass grade will be recorded. Recognised examinations will be included in the transcript.

(5) Examinations that have already been successfully completed while in the degree programme may not be credited additionally as part of the prior learning assessment.

(6) Details are specified in the programme-specific regulations (see item 5 in Appendices 5–12).