

SECTION 18

PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

18.1 Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)

Andrews University's offers academic credit for professional continuing education courses taken prior to acceptance into the DScPT program as determined by portfolio review. In awarding PLA credit for these courses and assessing tuition at a lower rate, Andrews University acknowledges the time and money students have already spent acquiring knowledge and skills above and beyond their entry-level education. PLA credits are most commonly applied toward elective course requirements but occasionally may count toward other degree requirements as well. In order to receive the competency credits students must register for a PTH 590 topics course for the designated number of academic credits in a given content area and name the topic (e.g. "Topics in Sport-specific Rehabilitation" or "Topics in Women's Health").

18.2 Academic Work

Mere attendance at a course does not constitute mastery of the material. Therefore, unless competence has already been assessed through a certification process approved for credit in the DScPT program during portfolio review, additional academic work will be assigned. Rather than arbitrarily assigning academic work that may or may not be meaningful to an individual, students are asked to propose learning objectives, activities, and outcome measures relevant to their own practice.

Proposals for academic work should include the following elements:

- Student Name and ID number
- Proposal for Academic Work related to Competency Credits
- PTH 590 Topics in _____, _____ credits (from portfolio review)
- Continuing education course titles and contact hours that serve as a stimulus for the academic work (at least 15-20 hours per credit; related to the topic)
- A brief statement about why you have chosen this topic and what it means to you and your practice.
- Learning Objectives (formulated to reflect higher levels of knowledge acquisition)
- Learning Activities (include time estimate for each activity; at least 15-20 hours per credit, may include time spent creating outcome measures)
- Outcome Measures (items to be turned in for assessment; tied to specific learning objectives)
- Estimated completion date.

Proposals should be submitted to the assistant program director by e-mailing them to oakleye@andrews.edu for approval **before** beginning any academic work. Approval will be based on criteria listed below. Needed changes will be discussed and agreed upon jointly by the student and assistant program director before approval.

18.3 Assessment of Completed Outcome Measures

When academic work has been completed, outcome measures must be turned in to the assistant program director by e-mailing them to oakleye@andrews.edu along with a copy of the approved proposal. A committee of 3 faculty members will assess the outcome measures to determine whether or not the academic work has met the proposed learning objectives AND demonstrates scholarly activity worthy of a doctoral degree candidate. Although S and U grades are generally given, students must attain an average grade of B or higher from the 3 reviewers in order to achieve an S.

Please allow a **minimum of 6 weeks** to receive a final grade after submission of the outcome measures.

18.4 Instructions and Criteria for developing solid academic work:

1. **Establish SPECIFIC learning objectives** for what you want to learn more about within the chosen topic. Please refer to Bloom's taxonomy regarding levels of learning. (Here is a good resource if you are unfamiliar with the taxonomy: <http://teaching.uncc.edu/learning-resources/articles-books/best-practice/goals-objectives/writing-objectives> .) Make sure that your learning objectives reflect knowledge acquisition at the higher levels of the taxonomy. For example, do not just write, "Understand the effects of taping," or "list the contraindications for manipulation," etc. Describe how you will use the acquired knowledge to analyze, synthesize, evaluate, create, etc.
2. Choose **learning activities** that are relevant to your practice and will help you meet your learning objectives. This may include time spent with a mentor or reviewing literature; additionally this may include time spent creating your outcome measures. **For each competency credit awarded, it is expected that a minimum of 15-20 hours go into the academic work.** Keep this in mind when writing your proposal.
3. Create meaningful **outcome measures** to submit for review and assessment. **You must link your outcome measures to learning objectives and activities.** For example, suppose your learning objectives are to update your knowledge regarding accurate diagnosis of rotator cuff tears and integrate it into current physical therapist practice. Relevant learning activities would include reviewing current literature (<10 years old) and observing a skilled therapist or physician performing clinical examinations of patients with shoulder complaints. A meaningful outcome measure might be to develop a standard evaluation form for physical therapists to use while examining a patient's shoulder in the clinic. Not only would you submit the form for review, but you would provide an illness script for what a patient might report in the history that would lead you to suspect the possibility of a rotator cuff tear and a referenced explanation of the specificity and sensitivity of the tests and measures listed on the form that would help rule that hypothesis in or out so the results could be thoroughly evaluated. A reflection paper on how your practice may have grown or changed as a result of this experience would also demonstrate relevant knowledge acquisition.
4. **REFERENCES:** You must have an adequate list of references to support your work every step of the way. For a 1-credit assignment a minimum of 10 references would be appropriate. As the number of credits increases, so should the number of references.
5. Depending on the proposed number of credits, you may need to create more than one outcome measure. Here are some examples of outcome measures:
 - a. A case study of a patient whose condition required differential diagnosis or treatment techniques within the topic area. Emphasis should be placed on clinical reasoning (with supporting references) applied in the evaluation and treatment of the patient.
 - b. A review of literature on a topic(s) within the subject that you wish to learn more about. Develop clear "research questions" that you hope to answer so the reviewer can evaluate whether or not you met your objectives with the paper.
 - c. An inservice education lecture on the topic that you actually present to your colleagues, PT students, or etc. PowerPoint slides and/or handouts, speaker notes, and a reference list would be submitted for review along with a summary of participant evaluations provided on an approved form and a reflection paper on how you felt about it and how you might modify the presentation if you did it again.
 - d. Clinical protocols developed for your place of employment (e.g. evaluation methodologies, recording forms to be used during patient examination, treatment pathways, etc.) submitted along with written feedback from colleagues or supervisors who have utilized them in the clinic. Upon evaluating the feedback, you would implement any changes that seemed reasonable and include that in your report.
 - e. Written reflection on time spent with an expert mentor to help solidify clinical skills or reasoning processes related to the topic. Verification of hours by the expert mentor and some type of evaluation of whether or not learning objectives were met must be included.
 - f. A poster or platform presentation at professional meeting in the given topic area.