

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

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Alternative Learning

A student may apply for Alternative Learning Credits for experiences incurred as a matriculated MCLA student for which they have not otherwise been awarded credit, and that either do not reasonably well fit the definitions of Internship, Independent Study, or Independent Research, or for which application for such mechanisms was not a reasonable expectation. To apply for alternative learning credit, students will create and submit a portfolio documenting said learning experiences as they relate to a specific course in the MCLA curriculum. Alternative learning credits awarded will not be included in the 45 MCLA credits required for graduation and will not count towards the final 15 credits needed to be taken at MCLA for graduation. Students at MCLA may earn a total of 15 credits for alternative learning credit, prior learning credit, and/or internships. In the rare event that a student is approved to receive 15 credits of prior learning credit and there are extenuating circumstances when an internship is required for their program of study or is deemed necessary, the Dean of Academic Affairs may grant an exception to the total 15 credit limit. This exception would only be allowed in very rare instances.

Any student seeking credit for alternative learning via portfolio should initiate the application no later than the add-drop deadline of the semester prior to graduation. To initiate the process, the student must consult with a department chair in the department for the course that will be included in the portfolio for the purpose of determining the appropriate faculty sponsor(s). In consultation with the faculty sponsor(s) and department chair (these could be the same individual), the student should draft their portfolio to include a narrative that aligns the learning objectives of the course with documentary evidence from their experience demonstrating the specific skills, abilities, and knowledge gained (examples may include photographs, logs, certifications, and a letter from a supervisor). The chair or faculty sponsor might recommend that the student enroll in ACAD 395 Experiential Credit Portfolio.

The student must submit the completed portfolio to the department chair, who will send it to the faculty sponsor. For consideration during the concurrent semester, the submission must be made no later than October 1st for the fall semester or February 15th for the spring semester. Submissions received after these deadlines would be considered for credit in the subsequent semester. The department chair will send the portfolio to the faculty sponsor(s), who will write a recommendation on the awarding of credit. The recommendation will be reviewed by the Chair and then forwarded to the Dean of Academic Affairs who will make the final decision. Portfolios will be reviewed, evaluated, and returned within four to six weeks of receipt. Students who do not receive credit, or who receive fewer credits than proposed, may revise their portfolios and resubmit for an additional review.

A per-credit fee will be assessed at the time of portfolio submission. Students are not eligible for financial aid for credits earned through the alternative learning policy. Students will not be charged additional per-credit fees for resubmission of a returned portfolio. Credit for alternative learning is never guaranteed.

College Academic Program Sharing (CAPS)

CAPS is a program for sharing academic programs among Massachusetts state universities. It offers access to the academic resources of another state university while maintaining degree status at MCLA. A student may take up to 30 semester hours of credit through the CAPS program. A minimum GPA of 2.0 must be achieved in this coursework. To qualify for CAPS, a student must first earn at least 30 credits at MCLA and have a minimum GPA of 2.0. For further information about CAPS, please contact the Registrar's Office at 413-662-5216 or registrar@mcla.edu.

Cross-Enrollment

COUNCIL OF PUBLIC LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES (COPLAC)

The Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC) offers a limited number of shared online courses using synchronous and asynchronous distance technology. MCLA students may apply to take online courses at a COPLAC institution if such courses address unmet student and/or program needs. Students must have a full-time schedule at MCLA exclusive of the COPLAC course for financial aid purposes. For additional information, please contact the Registrar's Office at 413-662-5216 or registrar@mcla.edu.

CROSS-ENROLLMENT AT BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY COLLEGE/ WILLIAMS COLLEGE

A limited number of matriculated students enrolled full-time and in good academic standing may register without additional tuition (<https://www.mcla.edu/admission-aid/paying-for-college/financial-aid/cost-of-attendance.php>) at Williams College or Berkshire Community College for courses not offered by MCLA. Students must have a full-time schedule at MCLA exclusive of the off-campus course for financial aid purposes. Interested students should consult the Registrar's Office at 413-662-5216 or registrar@mcla.edu.

First-Year Experience (FYE)

The "First-Year Experience" is a strategically integrative year-long approach that prepares and supports students for the transition from high school to college. The MCLA Onboarding Process, Orientation, Greylock L.E.A.D. Academy and the First-Year Seminar (FSEM) course are designed to enhance meaningful participation in academics and co-curricular life. Each student is assigned their own Success Team, comprised of faculty, staff, and peer mentors, to help students reach their goals and thrive in their new environment. This experience fosters students' enthusiasm for learning and creates a sense of belonging in the MCLA Community.

Independent Study

Independent Study is advanced-level coursework in a subject area not covered in depth by the normal course offerings of an academic department. It should provide within its own structure a valuable experience of independent research, analysis, and reporting which will enhance the student's grasp of their subject field, and entail the requisite motivation, skills, and discipline of independent work. Independent Study should provide new and unique objectives consistent with the academic program of the student.

Independent Study proposals are to be developed jointly by the instructor and the student. The learning objectives are to be carefully considered and identified in the proposal. The method by which the student will evaluate the learning experience and by which the instructor will evaluate the student must be indicated. It is imperative that instructors evaluate

whether the student is able to work independently and will benefit scholastically from such a study.

Students are limited to a maximum of 12 credit hours of independent study and independent research credit, combined. Independent Studies may be taken for variable credit, and require approval of the Independent Study instructor, Chair of the credit-granting department, student's advisor, and Dean of Academic Affairs. Application for an Independent Study requires that a student be a matriculated junior or senior, with the exception of freshman and sophomores whose readiness is specifically demonstrated on the Independent Study Application.

The amount of credit to be earned in an Independent Study course is to be determined by the instructor at the time the proposal is submitted, and may vary from one to three credits, depending upon the number of objectives identified in the proposal, and the degree of difficulty, or complexity, as judged by the instructor.

The number of credits is not to be changed at the end of the study period because the student failed to meet all of the objectives which were identified in the proposal. The grading system cited in the college catalog is designed to provide for this.

Internships

CHARACTERISTICS OF PROFESSIONAL INTERNSHIPS

An internship is a new learning experience, for credit, provided for selected and specially prepared individuals who aspire to become professional practitioners, apply their academic skills and knowledge to work environments, and explore vocations. It is an experience of "reality" in which the knowledge, the skills, and the judgment of the intern are put into play in solving problems which characterize professional practice.

DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Each academic department may establish an internship course according to the College-wide policies for new course development. Once established, students may apply to take the course for credit under the guidance of a faculty sponsor from the credit-granting department, who will serve as the instructor of record for the course.

FACULTY SPONSOR

A faculty sponsor will be responsible for evaluating individual student readiness for the experience; maintaining regular communication with both the student and external organization during the internship, in order to identify and address challenges as they arise; and evaluating student success at the end of the internship.

OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

1. Internship opportunities are reserved for matriculated juniors and seniors, with the exception of freshmen and sophomores whose readiness is specifically demonstrated on the internship application. Students must also have a minimum GPA of 2.0. Academic departments have the option to require higher GPAs and/or to restrict enrollment based on class status.
2. Students at MCLA may earn a total of 15 credits for alternative learning credit, prior learning credit, and/or internships. In the rare event that a student is approved to receive 15 credits of prior learning credit and there are extenuating circumstances when an internship is required for their program of study or is deemed necessary, the Dean of Academic Affairs may grant an exception to the total 15 credit limit. This exception would only be allowed in very rare instances.
3. Programmatic exemptions to the 15 credit hour limit require approval of the governance process.
4. A minimum of forty-five (45) hours of on-site experience are required for each credit hour.
5. The internship must be a new learning experience. If the internship is within an organization or location where the student has previous experience, the application must demonstrate how the intern position differs from previous experience.
6. The credit-granting department may establish reasonable additional criteria for accepting students as interns, and also have the option of offering the internship on a pass/fail basis.
7. An internship application, completed in consultation with the faculty sponsor, will require the following information:
 - a. The educational and experiential objective of the internship
 - b. The on-site work to be completed during the internship
 - c. The number of hours of on-site work
 - d. The number of credits requested and method of grading
 - e. Any information regarding prior experience relevant to the internship
 - f. A plan for evaluating the internship experience
8. The completed proposal must be approved by the student, faculty sponsor, Chairperson of the credit-granting department, student's academic advisor, and the Dean of Academic Affairs.
9. Each internship must contain a writing component, evaluation by the site director/supervisor, and a final evaluation by the faculty sponsor.

The Internship Application form can be completed online at the Career Services' Internship webpage (<https://www.mcla.edu/student-services/career-services/internships/>).

Honors Program

One of the ways MCLA explores its Liberal Arts mission is to foster a cohort of passionate students - students who are intellectually engaged with each other and the world, who love books, writing, and learning for their own sakes, whose curiosity ranges beyond conventional disciplinary boundaries, and who crave intellectual challenges. The Honors program aims to offer a home for such students. The idea behind Honors at MCLA is not that you are undertaking more work, but that the work you undertake is more interesting. Learn more at [mcla.edu/honors](https://www.mcla.edu/honors) (<https://www.mcla.edu/honors>) or www.mcla.edu/academics/undergraduate-education/honors-program/.

The Washington Center

Juniors and seniors may participate in an intensive internship program available during the summer or academic semesters, combining coursework, career workshops and networking, and seminars with an internship in Washington, D.C. For more information, contact the Registrar's Office at 413-662-5216 or registrar@mcla.edu, or visit [www.twc.edu](https://twc.edu/) (<https://twc.edu/>).

National Student Exchange

Through the National Student Exchange (NSE), students can study for one semester or up to one calendar year at one of nearly 200 participating colleges and universities within the United States and its territories (Guam, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands) and Canada. Recent student exchanges have included Sonoma State University, University of Virgin Islands at Saint Thomas, University of Hawaii, and Montana Western. For more information, contact the Registrar's Office at 413-662-5216 or registrar@mcla.edu, or visit www.nse.org (<https://www.nse.org/>).

Study Abroad

Students in all majors have the opportunity to study abroad for a semester or a year. MCLA is affiliated with International Studies Abroad (ISA) by WorldStrides and The Education Abroad Network (TEAN), Center for International Studies Abroad (CIS Abroad), and Semester at Sea. Study abroad programs are available in Europe, Asia, Latin America, Africa, and Australia. For more information, contact the Registrar's Office at 413-662-5216 or registrar@mcla.edu, or visit www.studiesabroad.com (<https://www.studiesabroad.com/>), www.cisabroad.com (<https://www.cisabroad.com/>), or www.semesteratsea.org (<https://www.semesteratsea.org/>).

Travel Courses

MCLA offers travel courses during January and March. Recent trips have included travel to South Africa, England, the Bahamas, Ireland, Japan, Peru, and Spain. MCLA's travel courses are academic courses that also meet regularly on campus before and following travel, and incorporate traditional academic experiences of reading, research, and discussion. The courses carry three upper-level credits toward graduation, and are an excellent opportunity to combine travel and study. For more information, visit mcla.edu/academics/undergraduate-education/travel-courses (<https://www.mcla.edu/academics/undergraduate-education/travel-courses/>).

Undergraduate Research Program

The Undergraduate Research Program encompasses independent scholarly and creative activity by students in the arts, humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences. This program supports students with independent study opportunities in many disciplines, small research and travel grants, and a dynamic campus-wide Annual Undergraduate Research Conference (URC) for presenting their work. For more information, visit mcla.edu/academics/undergraduate-education/undergraduate-research (<https://www.mcla.edu/academics/undergraduate-education/undergraduate-research/>).