

Competence-based PLA (formerly known as ILPs) Frequently Asked Questions from Students

1Q: What are the top three things that Competence-based PLA readers expect to see in a Competence-based PLA?

1A:

1. Student clearly articulates a demonstrated learning experience that aligns with a competence statement
2. Student relates learning/experience to all competence criteria that comprise a competence statement
3. Student provides specific detail and scholarly voices, published theory, and/ or research findings to support demonstration of a competence and all related criteria

2Q: How many scholarly sources (listed in essay or in rationale) use in a written Competence-based PLA?

2A: At least 8 scholarly sources

3Q: How long should a written (essay) Competence-based PLA be?

3A: At least 12 pages (2400 words), using MLA or APA style.

4Q: How long will it take for the second reader to review and assess my Competence-based PLA after I submit it?

4A: The average turnaround time is 6 weeks.

5Q: What are some typical reasons that Competence-based PLA do not pass or require revision?

5A:

1. It does not address all competence criteria that comprise the competence statement.
2. Poor academic writing (lacks organization, thesis, detail, correct citation, grammar, appropriate sources).
3. The Competence-based PLA is too focused on personal experience.
4. The Competence-based PLA does not focus enough on the scholarly work and broader intellectual context of the learning/experience.

6Q: In my Competence-based PLA, how much should I explain my experience and how much should I discuss the scholarly sources and intellectual context that relate to my learning/experience?

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6A: In a survey of 15 assessors, most stated that they like to see a ratio of 30-40% personal experience and 60-70% scholarly sources and broader context in the Competence-based PLA.

7Q: What types of sources are typically acceptable and unacceptable for a Competence-based PLA?

7A:

- Generally acceptable: scholarly or trade journal articles, scholarly books, textbooks, primary sources (historical documents, transcripts, survey data, interviews, etc.)
- Generally unacceptable: Wikipedia, personal blogs or websites, mainstream/pop culture websites like Reddit, BuzzFeed, eHow

8Q: How much time does a student typically spend preparing a Competence-based PLA?

8A: The answer to this varies depending on several factors, such as the student's typical pace of research and writing, the competence chosen, whether your experience is prior or new learning, etc. Below are some questions to ask yourself when developing a Competence-based PLA:

- Have I discussed a plan for the Competence-based PLA with my Academic Advisor and/or the SCPS PLA Advisor (SCPSPLA@depaul.edu)?
- Have I already had an experience that allows me to demonstrate the competence (prior learning) or will I have to set aside additional time to undergo a new experience to demonstrate competence (new learning)?
- Have I already conducted research and found sources related to the competence criteria? (See **FAQ – 2A:** Competence-based PLA essays tend to incorporate at least 8 scholarly sources.)
- Have I started drafting my Competence-based PLA? Some students begin by writing about or gathering evidence of their learning experience that they believe demonstrates the competence. Some start by writing about the scholarly sources/research related to the competence that they are addressing with their Competence-based PLA. Neither of these is the "best way" to begin since every student's independent learning will be different. Your academic advisor, SCPS PLA Advisor writing instructor, or Writing Center tutor can help you think through the process.
- Have I completed the Competence-based PLA submission form?
- Have I reviewed the Competence-based PLA assessment criteria to ensure I have addressed all of them with my Competence-based PLA essay, presentation, artifact, etc.?