



**Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)**

**Topic Guide**

**Administrative Services Experiential Learning**



## Table of Contents

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE.....	2
GENERAL INFORMATION AND REQUIREMENTS.....	3
<b>Number of Credits</b> .....	3
<b>Level of Learning</b> .....	3
<b>Page Count and Sources Guidelines</b> .....	3
<b>Additional Resources</b> .....	3
LEARNING OUTCOMES .....	4
COMPOSING YOUR PLA PROJECT .....	5
<b>Experience</b> .....	6
<b>Knowledge and/or Practice</b> .....	6
<b>Reflection and Self-Assessment</b> .....	6
Writing Your PLA Project .....	8
PLA ASSESSMENT RUBRIC.....	8
EXAMPLES OF GENERAL PLA TOPICS AND LEVELS OF LEARNING.....	11
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES.....	13
<b>Office of Prior Learning Assessment</b> .....	13
<b>PLA Advisor</b> .....	13
<b>Course Match PLA Examples</b> .....	13
<b>5 Tips About PLA from a Student</b> .....	13
<b>The Writing Center</b> .....	13

## **HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE**

This guide is meant to help you understand the knowledge and skills typically expected of someone who can demonstrate college-level learning for experiences in Administrative Services.

This guide is also meant to help you go through the processes of thinking about your experience, refining your academic knowledge, and demonstrating a connection between your experience and knowledge. Answering the questions below (Writing your PLA Project), reviewing the Learning Outcomes, and understanding how your project will be assessed (Composing your PLA Project) will help you develop the essay, which will be your PLA Project.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION AND REQUIREMENTS**

### **Number of Credits**

The Administrative Services Learning project is the equivalent to a 2-credit course.

### **Level of Learning**

The Administrative Services Learning project should be treated as a beginning/freshman college-level course.

### **Page Count and Sources Guidelines**

- at least 6 pages (1200 words)
- at least 4 scholarly, professional or college-level secondary sources
- APA style

### **Additional Resources**

- PLA Advisor ([SCPSPLA@depaul.edu](mailto:SCPSPLA@depaul.edu))
- University Writing Center (<https://condor.depaul.edu/writing/programs-writing-center-scheduling-appointments.html>)
- Purdue Online Writing Lab APA Style Guide ([https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/apa\\_style/apa\\_style\\_introduction.htm](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_style_introduction.htm))

## **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

To demonstrate this Experiential Learning Opportunity, students must:

1. Explain the integral role that Administrative Services has in supporting an organization.
2. Describe key principles, processes and best practices for effective Administrative Service delivery.
3. Explain and analyze the various functions within Administrative Services and their unique role(s) in supporting business operations.

## WHAT IS ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES?

Administrative Services is a function with a wide range of tasks whose main objective is to support and ensure the efficient flow of essential business operations. The diagram below identifies many aspects of learning in this field<sup>1</sup>. Your learning and personal experiences may be focused within some areas and not others, and that's perfectly acceptable.



## COMPOSING YOUR PLA PROJECT

Follow the outline below by considering the questions and prompts to develop your PLA Project. Simply answering questions and prompts are not sufficient – you will need to expand your writing to demonstrate the depth and comprehensive of your understanding. As you respond and revise them into cohesive portfolio, remember that a content expert will assess your PLA project based on your 1) Experience, 2) Knowledge and/or Practice, and 3) Reflection & Self-Assessment.

### **Experience**

This criterion requires you to communicate relevant descriptions and explanations of personal and/or professional experience related to learning outcome(s). Describe the experience(s) and how you achieved college-level learning. Provide the context and background of your experience, and provide relevant details regarding what you did. For example, you might include a new skill you acquired, what you observed, how you approached the situation, how you solved a problem, and the outcome.

### **Knowledge and/or Practice**

This criterion requires you to demonstrate understanding of relevant theories, models, or best practices related to learning outcome(s). You must demonstrate understanding of relationship among relevant theories, models, or best practices. Describe and cite the relevant theories, models, practices, and perspectives related to your experience.

Remember you will need to use at least 4 sources appropriate for scholarly or professional discourse and use APA style for citations.

### **Reflection and Self-Assessment**

This criterion requires you to demonstrate reflect upon experience and critically assess your abilities and experiences in relationship to the sources you have included. You must provide self-assessment of your experience showing how it relates to the academic sources you are citing.

As you reflect upon your project management experiences, consider including those that show how you meet the Learning Outcomes for the course.

- Select a project in which the Learning Outcomes can be demonstrated in your application of knowledge, experience, and expertise.
- If any required artifacts are proprietary and cannot convey actual data, they may be modified or anonymized to represent a similar, but fictional project.
- For the Learning Outcomes based on best practices in project management, use an example (citing references), that provides evidence of your understanding of the Learning Outcome.
- Each Learning Outcome will identify the related rubric category used to validate competency.

- **E = Experience:** Effectively communicates relevant explanation of personal and/or professional experience(s) related to learning outcome(s).
- **K = Knowledge and/or Practice:** Effectively communicates relevant theories and/or best practices related to learning outcome(s). Should refer to academic and/or professional research.
- **R = Reflection and Self-Assessment:** Effectively reflects upon experience and critically self-assesses abilities in relationship to relevant body of knowledge.
- The essay outline below also aligns with the required College Learning Levels used in the PLA Assessment Rubric to assess the student’s mastery of the Learning Outcomes.

**Table of Learning Outcomes matched with Rubric Expectations**

<b>LO</b>	<b>DCM 302 Learning Outcome (LO)</b>	<b>Rubric Category</b>
1	Explain the integral role that Administrative Services has in supporting an organization.	E, K, R
2	Describe key principles, processes, and best practices for effective Administrative Service delivery.	E, K, R
3	Explain and analyze the various functions within Administrative Services and their unique role(s) in supporting organizational operations.	E, K, R



## Writing Your PLA Project

Please answer the questions below to the best of your ability.

Below are a series of questions that should be addressed through your PLA Project:

- 1) Describe your background in this area:
  - a. What is your specific experience in this area? What task(s) did you manage or maintain? Did you specialize in a specific area within Administrative Services?
  - b. What training did you receive or independently secure for your position?
  - c. Choose at least one situation that you encountered in this area that addresses the impact of this function on organizational or business operations. How did you deal with it?<sup>1</sup> What specific functions or skills did you use to address this situation?<sup>2</sup>
- 2) Describe the general role of the administrative services professional, using your experience as well as your research from academic sources, and its impact and importance on efficient business operations.<sup>3</sup>
- 3) Describe best practices and processes or “rules” that you have learned and/or developed in at least two tasks of Administrative Services. For example, what do you consider the best process for offering great customer service? Or perhaps the best approach to managing data? (Remember to use sources to support your best practices or “rules.”)<sup>4</sup> Explain why you think these are best practices.
  - a. Does your organization implement best practices? If so, explain how your experience with them. If not, explain what would change if best practices were implemented?<sup>5</sup>
- 4) Identify current trends / issues that are critical to the administrative services professional. (Remember to use multiple sources to identify the trends / issues.)<sup>6</sup>
  - a. What is the impact of technology on today’s office manager? How might technical innovations impact administrative duties?
  - b. How do you recommend dealing with continual change in an office?<sup>7</sup>
  - c. How can administrative services professionals be utilized creatively in organizations?
  - d. Based on the trends / issues, what is the future outcome for this role?
    - i. How will you adapt to these trends / issues to prepare for the future outcome?
    - ii. What would you propose your organization do to address these trends / issues and prepare for the future outcome?

---

<sup>1</sup> Learning Outcome 1

<sup>2</sup> Learning Outcome 3

<sup>3</sup> Learning Outcome 1

<sup>4</sup> Learning Outcome 2

<sup>5</sup> Learning Outcome 3

<sup>6</sup> Learning Outcome 1

<sup>7</sup> Learning Outcome 2

## PLA ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

The content expert who will assess your project will determine whether you have demonstrated mastery of the learning outcomes for the class with the following rubric.

Score	Result	Meaning
9-7 Points	Accept	Student is awarded credit for PLA project.
6-5 Points	Revise and Resubmit	Student has 2 weeks to revise PLA project based on content expert feedback.
4 – 0 Points	Not Accepted	Student is not awarded credit for PLA project.

	<b>Accomplished College-Level Learning</b>	<b>Developing College-level Learning</b>	<b>Beginning College-level Learning</b>	<b>Not College-level Learning</b>
	<b>3 points</b>	<b>2 points</b>	<b>1 point</b>	<b>0 points</b>
<b>EXPERIENCE:</b> Effectively communicates relevant explanation of personal and/or professional experience(s) related to learning outcome(s).	Explanation of experience(s) is comprehensive and detailed. The context and background of experience(s) are described with specific details. There is a clear relationship between the description of the experience(s) and learning outcome(s). Provides specific evidence that learning occurred.	Explanation of experience(s) and the context and background of experience(s) are generally present though with some gaps. There is a general relationship between the description of experience(s) and the learning outcomes(s). Provides general evidence that learning occurred.	Explanation of experience is simplistic and/or incomplete. Minimal context or background of experience(s) was provided. Explanation of relationship between experience(s) and learning outcome(s) is linked but superficial, and is assumed but not explicit. Provides minimal evidence that learning occurred.	Explanation and description of the experience(s) is unclear and/or non-specific. No context or background of the experience was provided. The relationship between experience(s) and the learning outcome(s) is non-existent or scholarly investigation irrelevant. Provides no evidence that learning occurred. Experience is conflated with learning (i.e., length of time is equivalent to mastery).

<p><b>KNOWLEDGE AND/OR PRACTICE:</b></p> <p>Effectively communicates relevant theories and/or best practices related to learning outcome(s).</p>	<p>Explanation describes relevant concepts and/or practices and provides analysis (compares/contrasts) with other relevant ideas. Explanation demonstrates critique of strengths/weaknesses of ideas. Secondary sources are appropriate for scholarly or professional discourse.</p>	<p>Explanation generally describes relevant concepts and/or practice, and references other relevant ideas. Explanation may demonstrate adequate description of key idea(s) but there may be gaps in relating it to others. Secondary sources are generally appropriate for scholarly or professional discourse but may exclude key disciplinary concepts and/or be out-of-date.</p>	<p>Explanation superficially describes concepts and/or practice. Conceptual focus may be misdirected or ancillary. Explanation is mainly factual with limited analytical engagement. Secondary sources are included but markedly exclude key disciplinary concepts, are misused, and/or are inappropriate for scholarly or professional discourse.</p>	<p>Lack of evidence or understanding of relevant concepts and/or best practices. Lack of appropriate secondary sources and understanding of knowledge related to learning outcome(s).</p>
<p><b>REFLECTION AND SELF-ASSESSMENT</b></p> <p>Effectively reflects upon experience and critically self-assesses abilities in relationship to relevant body of knowledge.</p>	<p>Reflection on experience(s) specifically connects to broader body of knowledge. Recognizes relationship and provides clear critique and/or explanation of the significance of the connection. Provides critical self-assessment including descriptions of personal strengths and weaknesses as it relates to the experience(s).</p>	<p>Reflection on experience(s) generally connects to broader body of knowledge. Recognizes overall relationship and provides some critique and explanation of the significance of the connection. Provides some level of self-assessment including general descriptions of personal abilities as it relates to the experience(s).</p>	<p>Reflection on experiences(s) minimally connects to broader body of knowledge. Recognizes that there is a relationship but is unable to critique or adequately explain the significance of the connection. Provides superficial level of self-assessment that focuses on what one accomplished rather than how well they accomplished.</p>	<p>Lack of reflection on how experience connects to broader body of knowledge. Lack of evidence connecting experience within body of knowledge. Lack of self-assessment on one's abilities or performance.</p>

## EXAMPLES OF GENERAL PLA TOPICS AND LEVELS OF LEARNING

	<b>Building</b>	<b>Project Management</b>	<b>Spanish Culture</b>	<b>Professional Communication</b>
<b>NOT college-level</b>	Know how to put up wallboard	Work to complete items on a checklist given to you	Traveled in Spain twice, for two weeks each time	Sends emails and text messages at work
<b>Beginning college-level</b>	Describe why walls are constructed a certain way	Create a timeline and supervise the completion of tasks	Describe trends and practices related to daily life, holidays, food, religion, etc.; familiar with some Spanish history related to contemporary attitudes and practices  List trends and practices related to daily life, holidays, food, religion, etc.  Describe some aspects of Spanish history	Communicates in the workplace by writing emails, instant messages and reports for a general audience
<b>Developing college-level</b>	Describe why walls are constructed a certain way  Understand how to design a building so the walls stay up  Explain why walls are constructed a certain way  List the advantages and disadvantages of different methods for building a wall	Create a timeline and supervise the completion of tasks  Work to create cooperation of all parties concerned with the project	Discuss trends and practices related to daily life, holidays, food, religion, etc.  Identify sub-groups within the overall culture  Describe some aspects of Spanish history related to contemporary attitudes and practices	Communicates in the workplace by writing emails, instant messages and reports for a variety of stakeholders  Identifies characteristics of different professional communication genres

<b>Accomplished college-level</b>	<p>Make decisions to design a building so the walls stay up</p> <p>Explain why walls are constructed a certain way</p> <p>Analyze the advantages and disadvantages of different methods for building a wall</p>	<p>Create a timeline and supervise the completion of tasks</p> <p>Work to create cooperation of all parties concerned with the project</p> <p>analyze problems or issues and amend the plan; evaluate the outcome of the project</p>	<p>Analyze nuances related to attitudes and practices</p> <p>Identify sub-groups within the overall culture and analyze the sub-groups relationships with each other</p> <p>Compare Spanish history with contemporary attitudes and practices</p>	<p>Analyzes professional communication genres to develop complex, diverse, and effective written and oral communication</p> <p>Adjusts communications to mindfully consider audience, situation, context, and style</p>
-----------------------------------	---	--	---	---

This chart was modified from [SUNY – Empire State College](#).

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

### **Office of Prior Learning Assessment (OPLA)**

The Office of Prior Learning Assessment website provides guidance for students seeking to be awarded college credit for prior experience.

#### **PLA Advisor ([SCPSPLA@depaul.edu](mailto:SCPSPLA@depaul.edu))**

A Prior Learning Assessment advisor is available to help you throughout the process. They can help you understand the requirements of a PLA project and are happy to provide feedback on in-progress work.

#### **Course Match PLA Examples**

Scroll down to find a few examples of completed Course Match PLA projects.

#### **5 Tips About PLA from a Student**

Just what it sounds like—a student who has successfully completed PLA projects shares their tips for success.

#### **The Writing Center**

Peer writing tutors are available to help at all stages of the writing process. They can review completed work, in-progress drafts, and even assist with planning and outlining. You can meet with a tutor in-person or online!