Saving Time and Money Webinar Supplemental Resource

University of Phoenix®

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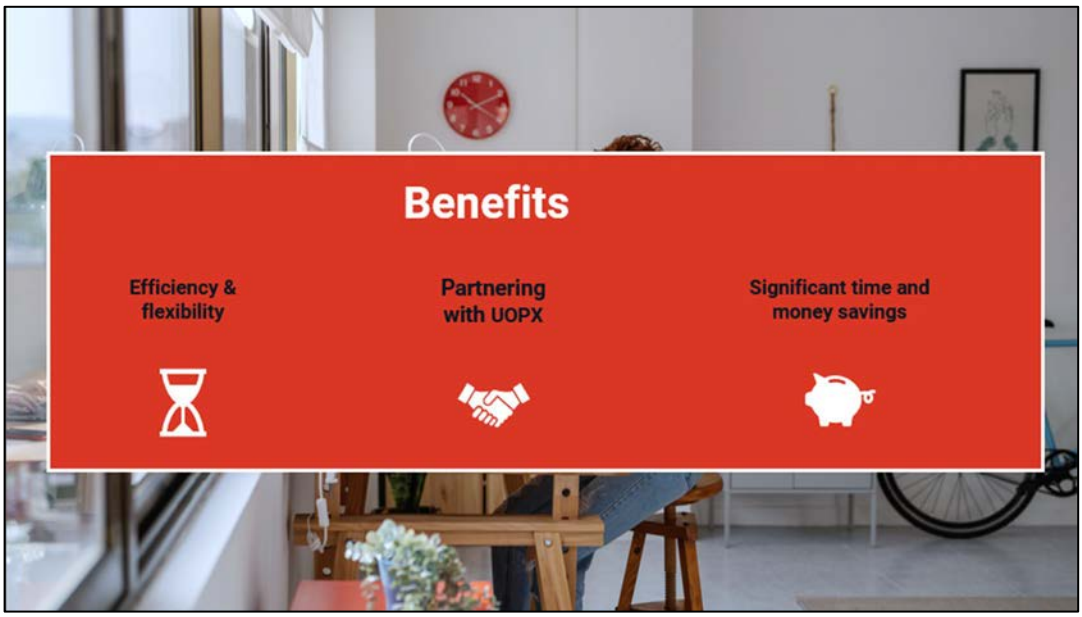
Alternative Credit Types

When students think about completing their degree and transferring credits, they typically think of the standard route: Taking semester or quarter-long courses at a college or university. While this certainly is an option, there are other non-traditional avenues to consider, referred to as "Alternative Credits". Alternative credits may include Prior Learning Assessment, National Testing Programs, or self-paced alternative credit providers. Alternative credits are learning gained outside the college classroom through formal or non-formal means and usually cost less, are more efficient, and self-paced.

Here is a brief overview of the three alternative credit types which will be addressed in more detail shortly.

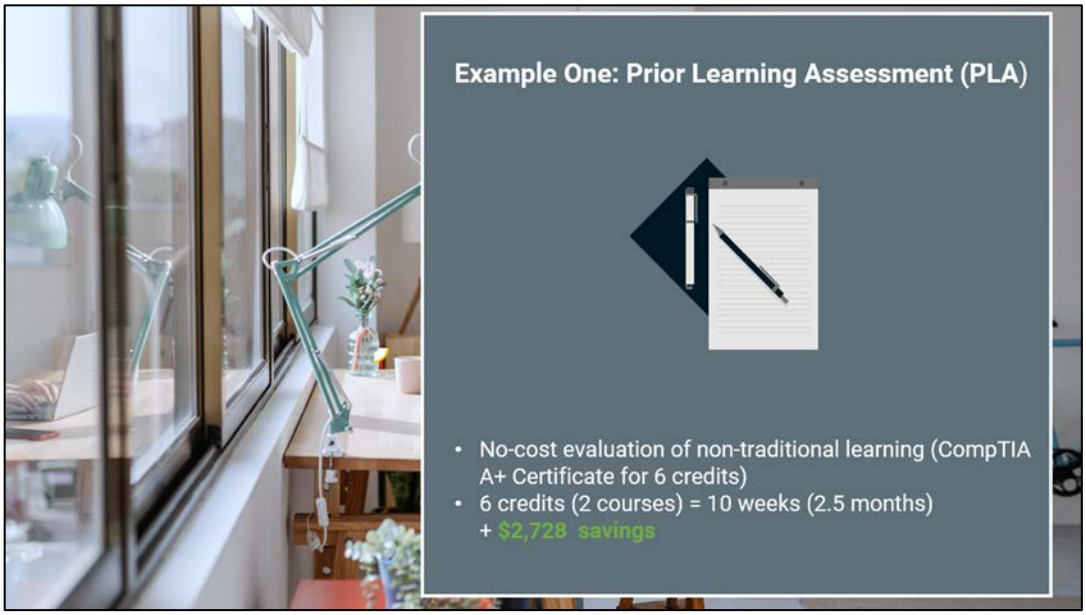
- **Prior Learning Assessment (or PLA)** refers to earning college credit by submitting industry training & licensure or writing on an approved life experience journal topic. University of Phoenix offers this option free of charge for students.
- **National Testing Programs (or NTPs)** provide options to demonstrate existing knowledge by taking an exam in an available content area.
- And **Self-paced alternative credit providers** offer a variety of self-paced courses that are a great way to fast-track your degree completion goals.



Alternative credits may be a great option because they are efficient and flexible. With alternative credit options like self-paced courses and national testing providers, there's no enrollment paperwork or waiting for a new semester to begin. Our Student Services team can help answer questions you have based on your program, credit needs, preferences, and background. Alternative credits can also save time and money. Below are a few examples of alternative credit options used.

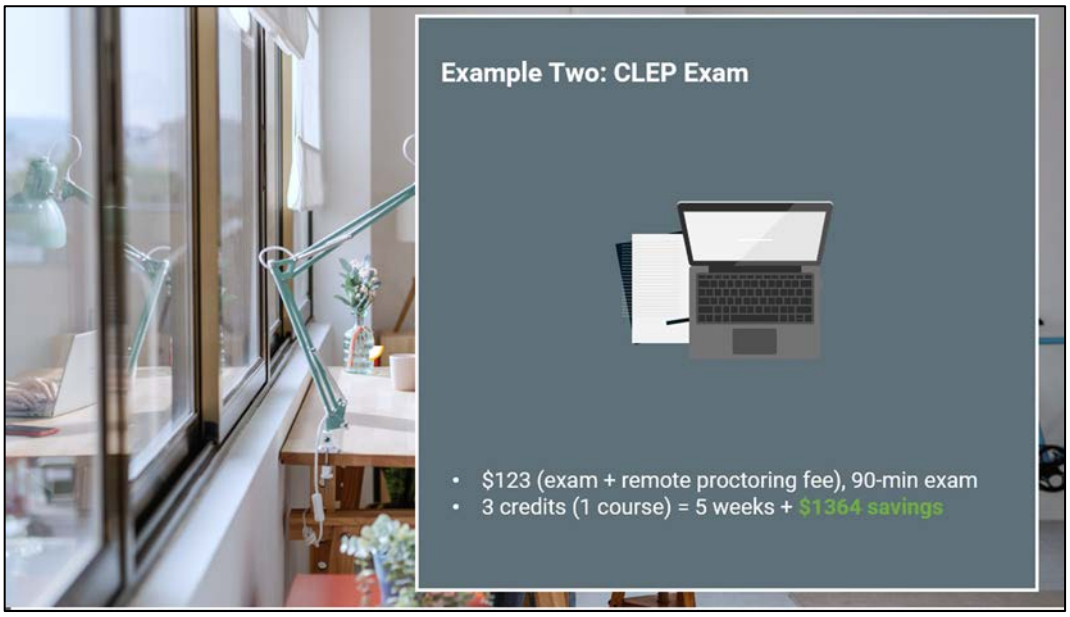
Example One

Student one submitted the CompTIA A+ certificate they previously earned for a no-cost evaluation. Our PLA team awarded them 6 credits, which **shaved** off two and a half months of school and saved them $2,728 worth of tuition and fees.



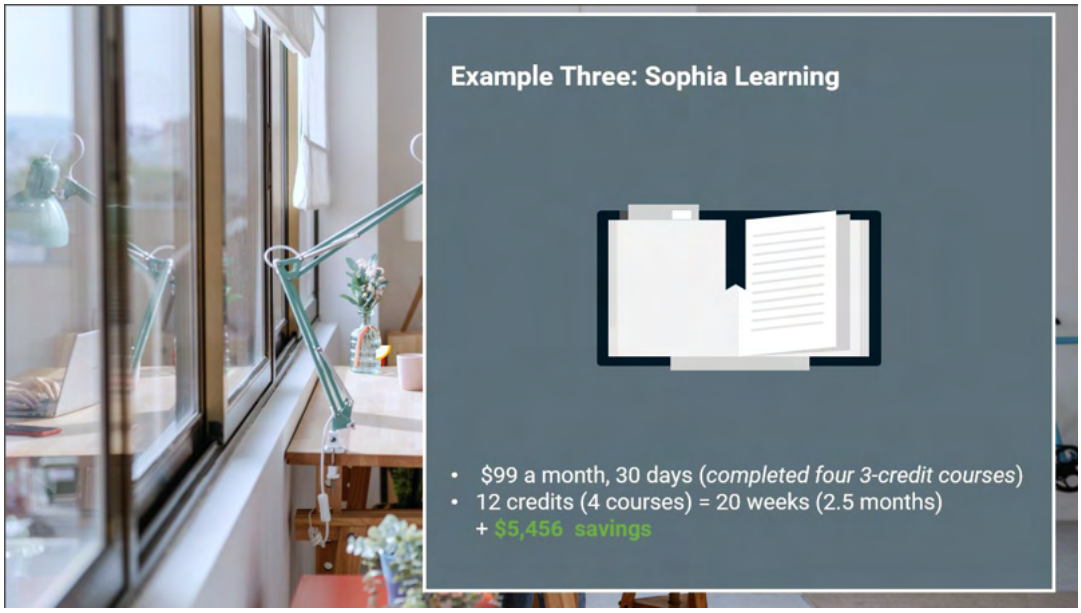
Example Two

Student two worked with the **Student Services team** to choose a National Testing Program exam that could leverage their long-time interest in history. After successfully completing a 90-minute CLEP History exam from the comfort of their own home, the student paid $123, transferred in 3 credits, and saved 5 weeks and $1,364 in tuition and fees.



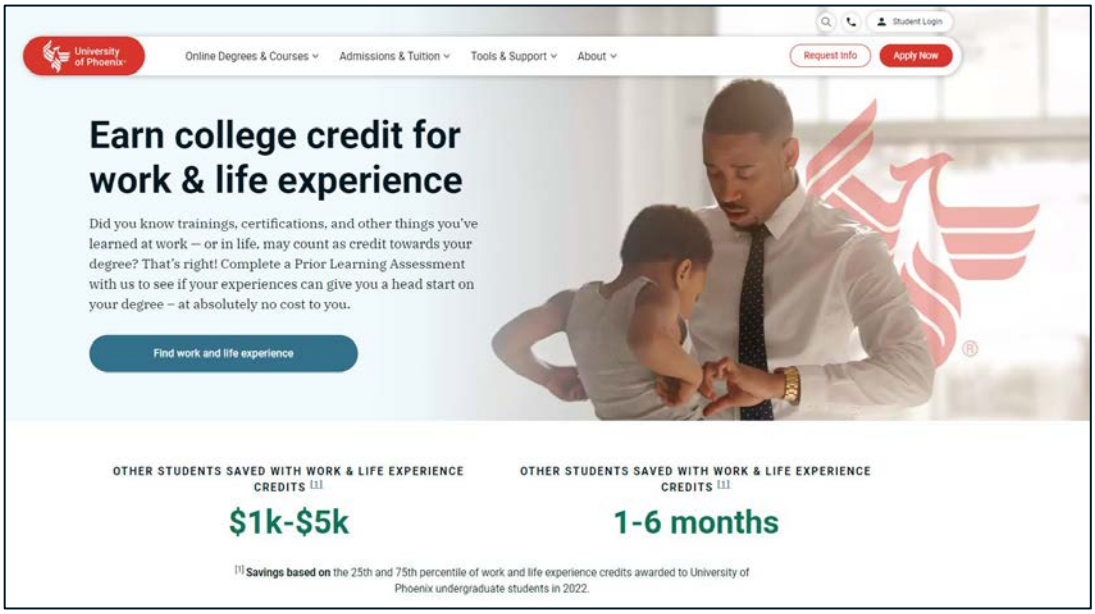
Example Three

Student three collaborated with our **Student Services team** on which self-paced Sophia Learning courses to take. 30 days and 99 dollars later, they completed four 3-credit courses, saving them four and a half months of school, and $5,456 worth of tuition and fees.



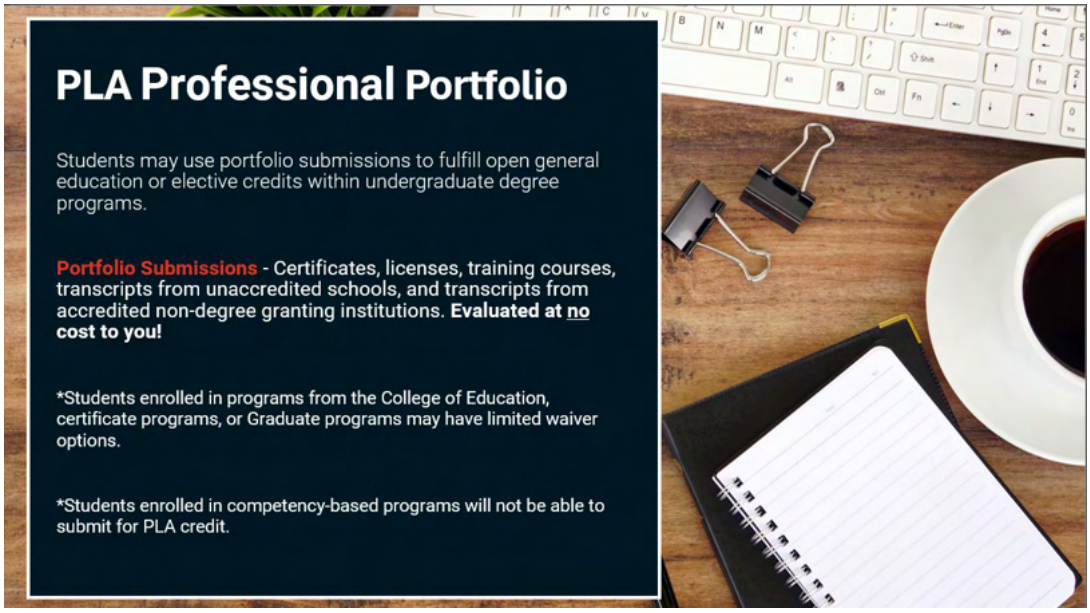
PLA

PLA submissions provide many credit opportunities for our students. Two of the most popular options include Professional Training Portfolio and the Life Experience Journal.



PLA Professional Portfolio

The Professional Training Portfolio may be for you if you completed certifications, professional licenses, or training courses. The PLA Team can evaluate these items for possible credit towards your degree. If you've taken vocational, technical, or continuing education courses from a school that is either unaccredited or non-degree granting, those transcripts can also be evaluated by our PLA Team.



If this sounds like you, start a list and gather the documentation. Once you're admitted and officially evaluated into your University of Phoenix program, you can upload and submit your portfolio as one batch. With the number of submissions received, it can take weeks to be assigned an evaluator before the evaluation process begins, so the sooner you prepare, the better you'll be positioned to upload and submit your portfolio.

In fact, many students don't realize they already have something they can use to help save time and money for school! What are possible interests that can translate to PLA credit?

- Are you a licensed scuba diver?
- Have you earned a state barber's or cosmetology license?
- Did you finish a diploma in welding, or a medical assistant diploma program?
- Do you have a real estate license? Or maybe you're a certified personal fitness trainer?

These are the kinds of things to include in your PLA Professional Portfolio submission. One important callout to remember is that some programs, such as Education, Certificate, and Graduate may have limited PLA options. In addition, competency-based programs are not eligible for PLA options. If you are in one of these programs, please contact your Academic Counselor to discuss possible options. Whether you're still working on choosing the right program or are already underway in your program, we're more than happy to discuss your eligibility.

PLA Life Experience Journals

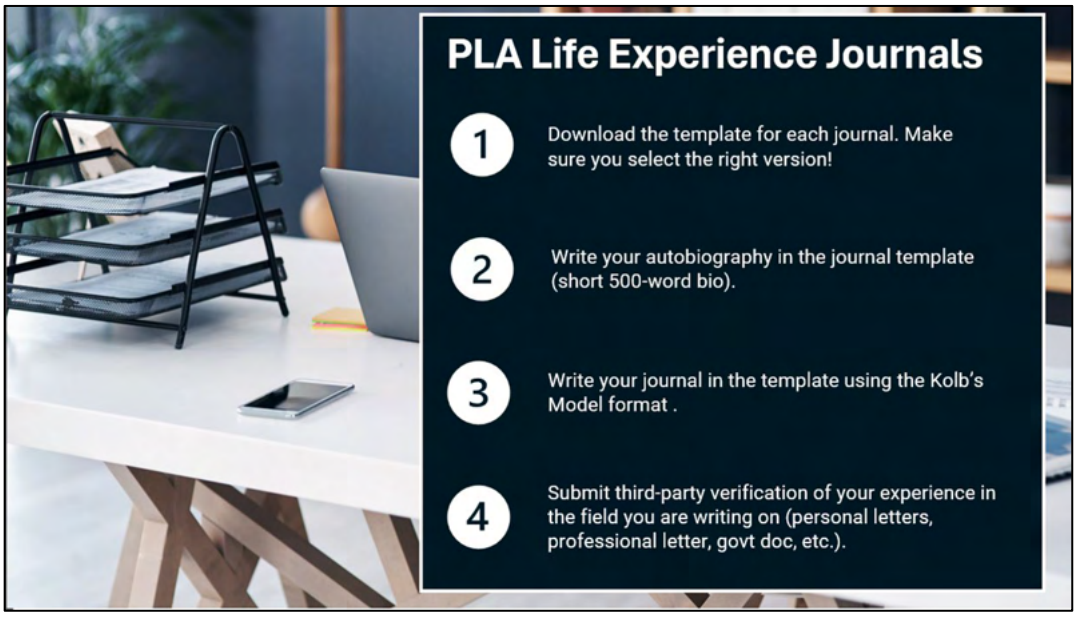
Another type of PLA submission is the PLA Life Experience Journal. Once you're admitted and officially evaluated into your program, you can see which general education and elective categories are still needed. The Student Services team

can help you match the general education category you need with an approved journal topic available for that category.

For example, you need 3 credits of social science and 1 credit of physical/biological science so you review our approved topic list. Next, you notice ***Parenting*** is an option that fulfills social science and ***Human Nutrition and Health*** is an option that fulfills physical/biological science. You find that you are interested in writing about these life experiences as they relate to the approved topics. Our Prior Learning Assessment department can review your program and determine if this journal would duplicate any other coursework you've already taken or transferred in. To begin this review, email PLAC@Phoenix.edu to learn your options and get started if eligible.

Process

Next, let's review the steps of this process:



1. **First, download the template for each journal**. Since the templates are different for 1-credit, 2-credit, and 3-credit journals, make sure you download the right version.
    a. For example, for the three credits of social science that you will fulfill with the Parenting journal, download the three-credit template, which requires writing 3000-4500 words and covering all 6 subtopics. For the one-credit of physical/biological science you will fulfill with the "Human Nutrition and Health" journal, download the one-credit template, which only requires writing 1000-2000 words and covering just two subtopics.
2. **Next, write your autobiography in the journal template**. This is a short 500+ word bio that you write to introduce yourself to the faculty who will be grading the journal. There is an example of an acceptable autobiography on the Phoenix.edu website. The same autobiography may be used for multiple journals but must be included in each template submitted.
3. **The journals themselves are written in Kolb's Model format** rather than the traditional APA format you may be used to. This format structures the writing experience for you. The official Kolb's Model template will break the topic you selected into subtopics and will then break each subtopic down into an area of Kolb's Model. This model describes experiential learning, and how the individual transforms learning into knowledge through four distinct areas.
    a. For example, one of the subtopics of ***Human Nutrition & Health*** is to "explain the physiological role of protein, fat, and carbohydrates in maintaining health." The first Kolb's model segment is the "Description of Concrete Experience". Here, you can discuss your experiences with the way your body reacts to specific types of foods, namely proteins, carbs, and fats, and how these contribute to your overall health.
    b. The second segment is ***Reflections***. Here, you can describe your feelings about the experience, and how your thoughts and attitudes developed. For example, as you

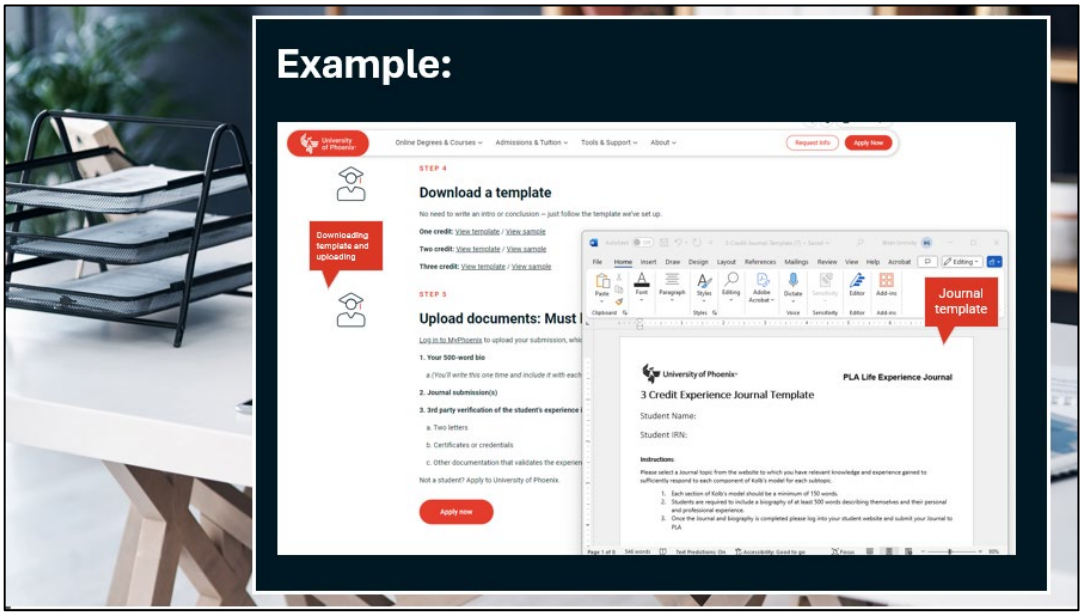
experimented with different foods, how did your thoughts change about your nutrition plan? Did you grow to like foods you didn't before? Explain that.

c. Next is the third segment, ***Generalizations, Principles and Theories*** before wrapping up with the "testing and application" segment. You'll repeat this process for each subtopic you're writing on. The journal will be written entirely in first person based on the experiences you have already been through. No research, references, citations should be used as part of the paper.

4. **Along with your journal and bio, you'll submit third-party verification of your experience in the field you are writing on**. This can include personal letters from friends and family, one professional letter from your work or volunteer organization, a government document, or other documentation that validates the experience. For the parenting journal, a great supporting document is your child's birth certificate listing you as a parent. For Human Nutrition and Health, you can submit two letters from friends or family discussing your health journey.

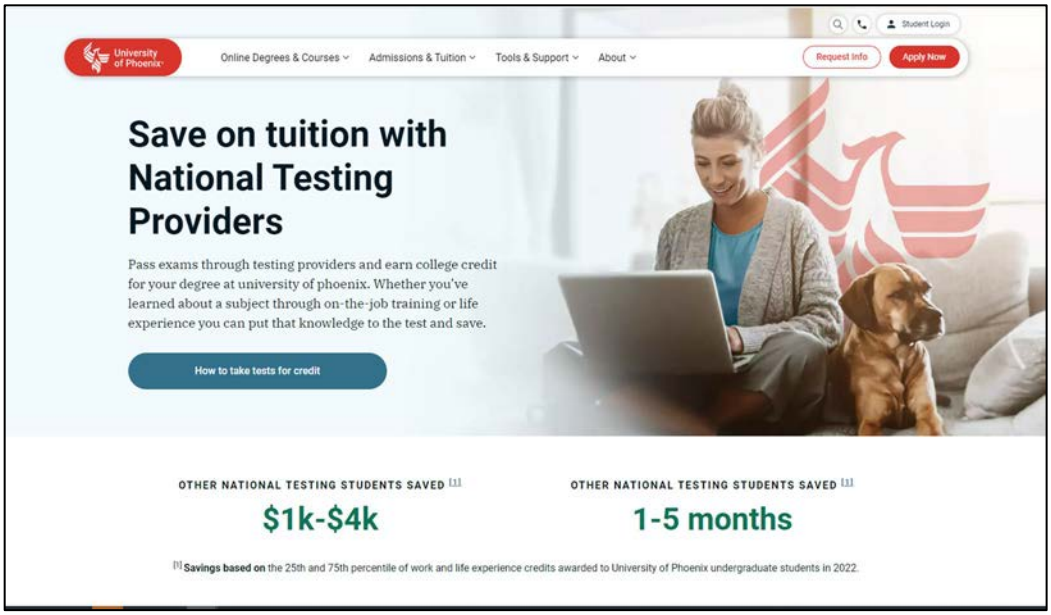
Once all three components of your journal submission are complete, submit everything through the student portal on MyPhoenix. A PLA evaluator will be assigned to review your journal and work with you to ensure the journal is ready for faculty to complete an evaluation. After the evaluation is complete, your evaluator will provide the full evaluation results. If your journal is denied credit on your first attempt, you can rewrite and resubmit it one additional time using the full feedback given from faculty.

Below is an example of what some of this may look like as you go through the process. In the lower right corner, you can see the Journal template. In the background, is a snapshot of some of the steps with downloading the template showing.



National Testing Programs (NTPs)

Pass exams through testing providers and earn college credit for your degree at University of Phoenix.



CLEP

CLEP offers 34 exam titles that focus on introductory level college-course content. Some examples of content areas include psychology, college algebra, and Spanish. Depending on the subject, the exam takes about 90-120 minutes to complete, and contains multiple-choice questions. Once you're done with the exam, you receive your score immediately after testing, unless your test includes a writing component (such as College Composition). Their website also includes links to official test prep guides and other study resources. The exam cost is $93 (plus the proctoring fee), and they provide discounts and fee waivers to eligible military service members, spouses, and civil service employees.

Cost	Description	Exam Offerings	Highlights	Remote Proctoring?
$93 per exam (plus proctoring fee)	Introductory level college-course content	34 exam titles	• 90-120-minute exam • Multiple-choice questions • Scores received immediately. • Official prep resources • Discounts for eligible military service members	Yes

DSST

At $100 plus a proctoring fee, DSST exam costs are comparable to CLEP. They offer over 30 exam titles in a variety of subjects at both the upper- and lower-level, and each exam on their website includes links to available test prep partners that can be used to prepare for the test. Test takers are given two hours to take the 100-question multiple-choice exam. They also provide special discounts and waived test fees for eligible military service members.

Cost	Description	Exam Offerings	Highlights	Remote Proctoring?
$100 per exam (plus proctoring fee) *	Upper- & lower-level exams in a variety of subjects	30+ exam titles	• 120-minute exam • 100 questions, multiple-choice • Online Test Prep Materials • Discounts for eligible military service members	Yes

Berlitz

All three national testing programs include a remote proctoring option, which means you can do a test from the comfort of your own home using a computer and a webcam.

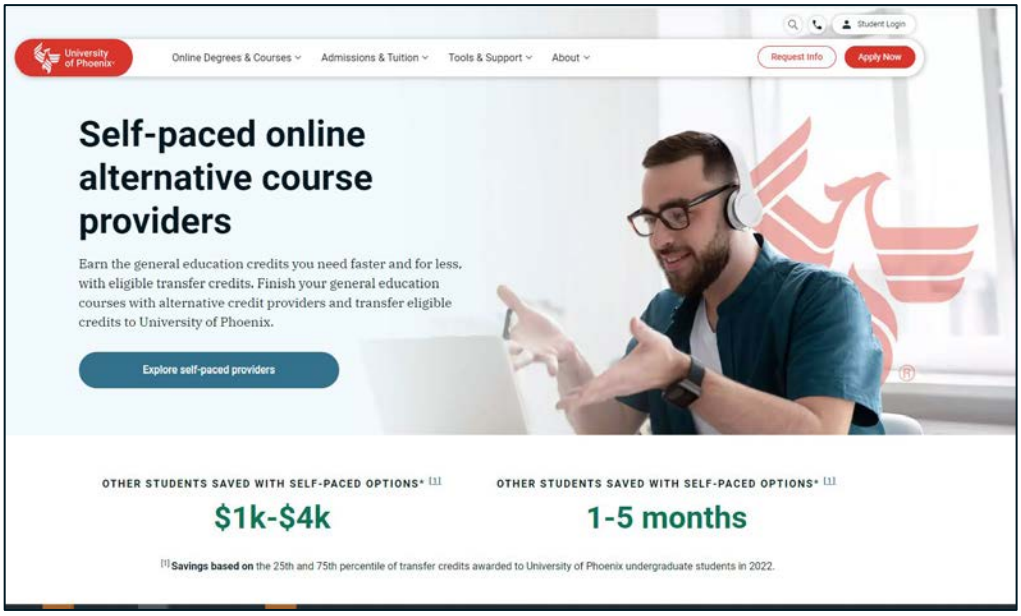
Cost	Description	Exam Offerings	Highlights	Remote Proctoring?
$325 per exam	Foreign language proficiency	5 languages avail *(can vary)*	• 90-minute exam • Covers speaking, listening, reading, and writing ability	Yes

Notes:

- UOPX accepts credit from Advancing Placement (or AP) Exams.
    - These are exams that high school seniors can take once they've gained the knowledge in their advanced placement courses.
- Active-duty military personnel can take standardized language proficiency exams through the Defense Language Institute.
- If you take one or more of these, we can work with you to request score transcripts once you enroll in a program with the University of Phoenix.

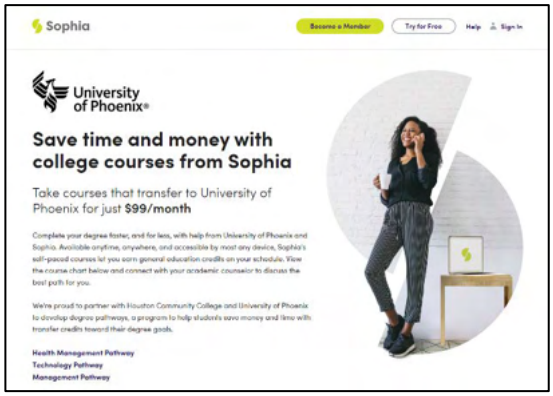
Alternative Credit Providers

Three alternative credit providers that offer self-paced coursework include Sophia, Study.com, and StraighterLine.



Sophia

Sophia is a flexible learning platform that offers over 60 course titles, such as Web Development, Principles of Management, and Art History. For $99 a month, take as many courses as you want, up to two at a time. They offer 4-month and 12-month pricing plans that reduce the monthly cost even further. Everything you need to complete your course is included as part of a Sophia subscription. With no textbooks, video and text-based tutorials, and a mobile-friendly platform, Sophia has streamlined the learning experience. and offers the flexibility that students want. On top of all that, students



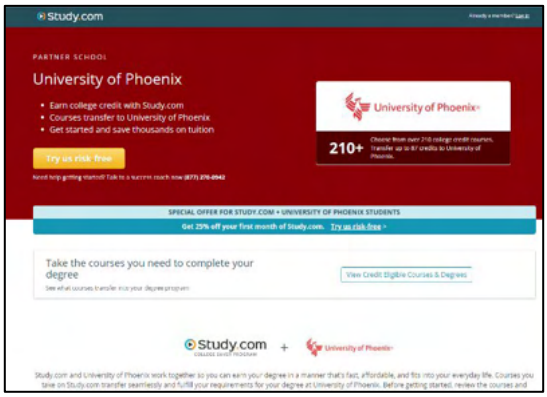
are given a chance to retake an assessment if they need to improve their grade. And if necessary, they offer 10 hours of free tutoring on select courses.

Cost	Course Offerings	Course Structure	Requires Webcam?	Placement Tests?	Average Completion Time	Tutoring Availability	Passing Score
$99/month (unlimited)	60 + course titles	• "Many Ways to Learn" • No textbooks • Mobile-friendly • 1 retake per assignment	No	No	Varies from course to course and student to student.	10 hours free (on select courses)	70% or higher

Study.com

With over 200 course titles, **Study.com**'s catalog includes both upper- and lower-level content and covers a wide range of unique subjects. Imagine learning Cybersecurity, Spanish for the Workplace, or Social Psychology at your own speed. With flexible courses that you can start, stop, & resume at any time, **Study.com's courses** are designed to make the learning process simpler and more enjoyable. No textbooks!

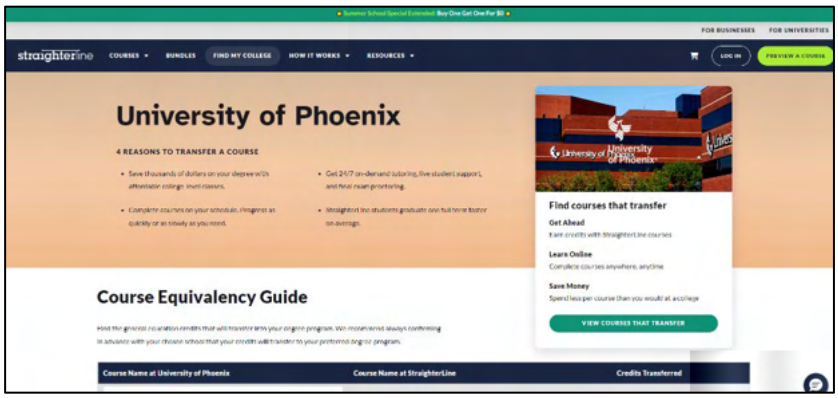
Complex concepts are broken down into quick 5-minute engaging, animated video lessons, and are followed by a short, optional quizzes and required chapter tests. To help you be successful and stay on track, they offer a mobile app for learning on the go, flashcards, practice tests, and an "Ask the Expert" homework help feature. Their Adaptive Learning model allows you to skip the content you already know by taking a placement test. And finally, their best-of-three policy means you have three opportunities to get the highest possible grade on any quiz, assignment, and even the final exam. For $99 a month, you'll have access to their entire catalog of courses and five exams.



Cost	Course Offerings	Course Structure	Requires Webcam?	Placement Tests?	Average Completion Time	Tutoring Availability	Passing Score
$99/month*	220+ course titles	• "Micro-learning" (5-min lessons & short quizzes) • Mobile app, flashcards, & other tools • 3 chances to improve grade.	No	Skip what you already know.	Flexible courses: start & stop anytime.	"Ask an Expert" feature.	70% or higher

StraighterLine

StraighterLine offers over 60 course titles for just $99 a month plus the cost of the course, most of which are just $79. They provide Textbooks (at no cost) and support your learning with free on-demand tutoring & writing center support that's available 24/7. With practice assignments and multiple chances to improve your grade, StraighterLine is a great way to take self-paced courses in subject areas that include Business Communication, Medical Terminology, Sociology, and Personal Fitness and Wellness. Average time of completion is 4-6 weeks per course, but many students are able finish a course in less than 30 days. You'll only need a computer and webcam for the final exam, and they often offer discounts on course bundles, so feel free to peruse their catalog to see what you might be interested in.



Cost	Course Offerings	Course Structure	Requires Webcam?	Placement Tests?	Average Completion Time	Tutoring Availability	Passing Score
$99/month + cost of course (most are $79)	60 + course titles	• eTextbooks (at no cost) • Multiple chances to improve. • Practice assignments. • 2 to 3-day grading turnaround	Yes (proctored final exams)	No	4-6 weeks per course	Free on-demand tutoring & writing center (avail 24/7)	70% or higher

Additional Resources

- PLA - College Credit for Your Work and Life Experience | University of Phoenix
- Journal Info - Experiential journals | University of Phoenix
- Self-Paced Courses - Online Alternative Course Providers | University of Phoenix
- National Testing Programs - National Testing Programs | University of Phoenix