

DCH Advance Standing Policy

I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy establishes the framework for evaluating and awarding advanced standing credit for students entering the Doctor of Community Health (DCH) program at Southwestern Oklahoma State University. The policy applies to:

1. Professional work experience and competencies
2. Prior doctoral coursework completed at accredited institutions
3. Professional certifications and credentials
4. Prior learning through professional development and training programs

II. GENERAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

A. Academic Standing Requirements

Applicants seeking advanced standing must:

1. Be in good academic standing (not on academic or disciplinary probation/suspension) from their previous institution(s)
2. Have maintained a minimum GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale in all prior graduate/doctoral coursework
3. Student must complete 12+ hours at SWOSU before any advanced standing may be posted to their SWOSU transcript

B. Documentation Requirements

Applicants must submit:

1. Official transcripts from all accredited institutions attended
2. Detailed course syllabi for all courses for which credit is sought
3. Letter of good standing from the Dean or Program Director of the most recent doctoral program attended (if applicable)
4. Professional portfolio documenting work experience (for PLA evaluation)
5. Current resume or curriculum vitae
6. Supporting documentation for professional certifications or credentials

III. ADVANCED STANDING THROUGH TRANSFER CREDIT

A. Eligible Coursework

Doctoral-level coursework may be considered for transfer credit if it:

1. Was completed within the past five (5) years at an institution accredited by a recognized accrediting body
2. Received a grade of "B" or better (3.0 on a 4.0 scale)
3. Is substantially equivalent in content, rigor, and learning outcomes to DCH program courses
4. Aligns with doctoral-level competencies in community health, public health, or healthcare management

B. Maximum Transfer Credits

1. Maximum allowable transfer credits: Up to 12 semester hours (4 courses) of the required 48 credit hours
2. Residency requirement: A minimum of 36 semester hours must be completed in residence at SWOSU
3. Core course requirement: All seven (7) DCH core courses must be completed at SWOSU unless a direct equivalency is demonstrated
4. Field Research requirement: The DCH Field Research component (minimum 12 hours) **cannot be substituted** through transfer credit

C. Course Equivalency Review Process

1. Initial Review: A review of course syllabi and transcripts
2. Content Mapping: Course content is mapped against DCH course learning objectives
3. Faculty Review: Relevant faculty assess alignment with program competencies
4. Final Determination: DCH Chair makes final determination with input

IV. PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT (PLA) FOR PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

A. Eligible Professional Experience

Professional experience may be evaluated for advanced standing credit through the PLA process for:

1. **Executive Healthcare Leadership:** Minimum 5 years in senior healthcare administration
2. **Community Health Program Management:** Minimum 5 years directing community health initiatives

3. **Healthcare Innovation and Consulting:** Minimum 5 years in healthcare consulting or innovation roles
4. **Research and Grant Management:** Minimum 5 years managing funded research or grant programs
5. **Health Policy Development:** Minimum 5 years in health policy analysis or development roles

B. PLA Portfolio Requirements

Applicants seeking PLA credit must complete a comprehensive portfolio including:

1. **Learning Narrative:** A detailed narrative (minimum 3,000 words per course) demonstrating:
 - How professional experience aligns with specific DCH course learning objectives
 - Application of doctoral-level theoretical frameworks in practice
 - Evidence of critical thinking and analysis at the doctoral level
 - Integration of research and evidence-based practice
2. **Evidence of Learning Table:** Documentation mapping:
 - Specific professional accomplishments to course learning objectives
 - Demonstration of competencies through work products
 - Progressive skill development and leadership growth
 - Measurable impact and outcomes
3. **Supporting Documentation:**
 - Work products, reports, or publications
 - Performance evaluations demonstrating relevant competencies
 - Professional certifications or credentials
 - Letters of verification from supervisors or colleagues
 - Evidence of professional presentations or training delivered

C. PLA Evaluation Process

1. **Pre-Assessment Review:** Initial screening to determine PLA eligibility
2. **Course Mentor Assignment:** Qualified faculty mentor guides portfolio development
3. **Content Matter Expert Review:** Subject matter expert evaluates portfolio against course objectives
4. **Competency Assessment:** May include:
 - Oral examination or presentation
 - Written comprehensive examination
 - Practical demonstration of skills

5. **Credit Determination:** Final decision by subject matter expert and Chair of DCH

E. Maximum PLA Credits

1. **Maximum PLA credits:** Up to 9 semester hours (3 courses) may be earned through PLA
2. **Course restrictions:**
 - No more than 2 core courses may be satisfied through PLA
 - Complete Area of Study (all 3 courses) may be satisfied if comprehensive expertise is demonstrated
 - Research methods courses limited to 1 course through PLA
3. **Combined maximum:** Total of transfer credit and PLA credit cannot exceed 15 semester hours

V. PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION AND CREDENTIAL EVALUATION

A. Eligible Certifications

For example, the following professional certifications may be evaluated for advanced standing:

1. Healthcare Management:

- Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives (FACHE)
- Certified Healthcare Executive (CHE)
- Certified Medical Practice Executive (CMPE)

2. Public Health:

- Certified in Public Health (CPH)
- Master Certified Health Education Specialist (MCHES)

3. Quality and Safety:

- Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality (CPHQ)
- Certified Professional in Patient Safety (CPPS)

4. Project Management:

- Project Management Professional (PMP) with healthcare focus
- Certified ScrumMaster (CSM) with healthcare applications

NOTE: Other professional certificates may be considered at the discretion of the Chair of the DCH.

B. Credit Award Guidelines

1. Professional certifications may qualify for up to 3 semester hours of elective credit
2. Multiple certifications may be combined for a maximum of 6 semester hours
3. Certifications must be current and in good standing

VI. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

A. Implementation Timeline

- This policy becomes effective for students entering the DCH program in Fall 2026 or later

B. Annual Review

- Policy will be reviewed annually by the DCH Program Committee
- Modifications of the policy requires approval by the DCH Chair and Dean of the College of Pharmacy

C. Documentation and Record Keeping

- All advanced standing evaluations and decisions will be documented in student academic files
- Records maintained for minimum of 7 years after graduation or last enrollment

VII. SPECIAL PROVISIONS

A. Military Service Members

Active duty and veteran service members may receive additional consideration for:

- Military healthcare leadership experience
- Military medical training and education
- VA healthcare system experience

B. International Students

- International transcripts must be evaluated by an approved credential evaluation service
- Professional experience in international settings evaluated on case-by-case basis
- English language proficiency requirements apply as per university policy

C. Time Limitations

- Transfer credits older than 5 years require additional justification

- Professional experience must be within the last 10 years to be eligible for PLA
- Certifications must be current at time of application

CONTACT INFORMATION

For questions regarding the Advanced Standing Policy, contact:

DCH Program Office

College of Pharmacy

Southwestern Oklahoma State University

Signatures:

- Chair, Doctorate in Community Health
- Dean, College of Pharmacy
- Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Effective Date: [To be determined]

Last Revised: [Date]

Next Review: [Annual review date]

Guidance Document for Eligible Courses for PLA

Evaluation and Experience Requirements

The following courses may be evaluated for PLA credit through comprehensive portfolio assessment. Each course requires specific professional experience as outlined below:

Core Courses (21 hours):

Minimum 5 years executive-level healthcare experience required for each core course, plus specific expertise as noted:

- DCH 7103 Health Cultural Competency
 - Required: Leadership in diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives or community health disparities programs\
 - Example: Director of health equity programs, community health assessment lead, or social determinants intervention management
- DCH 7113 Critical Thought and Informed Action
 - Required: Direct involvement in health policy development, analysis, or legislative advocacy
 - Example: Health policy analyst, legislative liaison, or policy director for healthcare organization
- DCH 7123 Design Reasoning: Strategic Choice
 - Required: Strategic planning and system design experience at organizational level
 - Example: Chief strategy officer, healthcare system planner, or organizational design consultant
- DCH 7133 Innovation in Modern Healthcare
 - Required: Leading innovation initiatives or consulting in healthcare transformation
 - Example: Innovation director, healthcare consultant, or transformation officer
- DCH 7143 Leading Interdisciplinary Teams
 - Required: Management of multidisciplinary healthcare teams across departments/organizations
 - Example: Chief operations officer, integrated care director, or interdisciplinary program manager
- DCH 7153 Operational Excellence
 - Required: Quality management, performance improvement, or operational leadership
 - Example: Chief quality officer, performance improvement director, or Lean/Six Sigma implementation lead
- DCH 7163 Financial Planning for Community Health
 - Required: Healthcare finance management, grant writing, or program funding experience
 - Example: Chief financial officer, grant program director, or healthcare finance manager

Research Methods Courses:

Minimum 5 years conducting or managing health services research, plus evidence of research dissemination

- DCH 7503 Implementation Research
- DCH 7513 Qualitative Methods: Get Your Code On!

NOTE: DCH 7523 Field Research (12-30 hours) cannot be satisfied through PLA and must be completed in residence.

Area of Study/Certificate Courses (9 hours per area):**Health Systems Leadership & Entrepreneurship:**

Minimum 5 years senior leadership or entrepreneurial experience in healthcare required

- DCH 7213 Innovative Healthcare Leadership
- DCH 7223 Agile Leadership: Navigating Leadership
- DCH 7233 Entrepreneurship and Consulting in Healthcare

Rural Health Management:

Minimum 5 years rural health administration or program management required

- DCH 7313 Advanced Lifestyle Intervention Strategies
- DCH 7323 Consult in Rural Community Healthcare
- DCH 7333 Family Health Programming

Quality Improvement in Healthcare:

Minimum 5 years quality improvement leadership with relevant certification (CPHQ, Lean, Six Sigma) preferred

- DCH 7413 Quality by Design
- DCH 7423 Quality Measurement
- DCH 7433 Quality Improvement: Impactful Change