

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION

COMMITTEE: Academic Affairs

NO.: AAC 17-29

COMMITTEE DATE: June 13, 2017

BOARD DATE: June 20, 2017

STATEWIDE POLICY ON COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRANSFER PRINCIPLES

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education hereby adopts the attached statewide Community College Transfer Principles and calls upon the Commissioner and the Community College Presidents to work together to implement the Community College Transfer Principles by September 2017.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, § 9(u) and (v)

Contact: Elena Quiroz-Livanis, Chief of Staff and Director of Academic Policy and Student Success

Background

The Department of Higher Education and the community colleges of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, in order to ease and clarify the process of transferring earned credit from one college to another, whether among themselves or from other public or private institutions; to provide standards for the evaluation of alternative sources of credit; to reduce the time and cost of completing a college education; and to increase the opportunities for graduation of their students, developed these Community College Transfer Principles. These Principles respect the academic standards, quality and integrity of each of the Massachusetts community colleges.

In accepting undergraduate transfer credit from other institutions, the Massachusetts community colleges apply these Transfer Principles to ensure that credit accepted reflects appropriate levels of academic quality and is applicable to students' programs. Each community college makes these Guiding Principles publicly available to students and prospective students on their websites and other communications. These Principles reduce unnecessary barriers to protect the colleges' academic quality and integrity.

These Transfer Principles address issues of academic credit earned through coursework completed at one institution and transferred to another. It also addresses the related issue of credit earned through alternative sources of credit, such as examinations, professional courses, military training and other prior learning experiences.

These Transfer Principles were developed by the transfer professionals at the community colleges over a period of more than a year. The close collaboration of the transfer professionals was fundamental to reaching agreement on these Transfer Principles. The Principles establish standard expectations for transfer practices, while allowing appropriate flexibility for institutional variations.



**Massachusetts Department of Higher Education
Massachusetts Community Colleges
Community College Transfer Principles**

I. Preamble

The community colleges of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, in order to ease and clarify the process of transferring earned credit from one college to another, whether among themselves or from other public or private institutions; to provide standards for the evaluation of alternative sources of credit; to reduce the time and cost of completing a college education; and to increase the opportunities for graduation of their students, establish these Community College Transfer Principles. These Principles respect the academic standards, quality and integrity of each of the Massachusetts community colleges.

II. Introduction

In accepting undergraduate transfer credit from other institutions, the Massachusetts community colleges apply these Transfer Principles to ensure that credit accepted reflects appropriate levels of academic quality and is applicable to students' programs. Each community college makes these Transfer Principles publicly available to students and prospective students on their websites and other communications. These Principles reduce unnecessary barriers to protect the colleges' academic quality and integrity.

These Transfer Principles address issues of academic credit earned through coursework completed at one institution and transferred to another. It also addresses the related issue of credit earned through alternative sources of credit, such as examinations, professional courses, military training and other prior learning experiences.

III. General Conditions

- A. For credit to transfer, the courses must have been taken at an institution accredited by one of the six regional accreditation agencies in the United States or, when allowed by college practice, by a national accreditation agency recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). Consult your college about any special requirements for online courses.
- B. Credit earned at international institutions not accredited by one of the six regional United States accreditation agencies may transfer.
- C. Colleges require official transcripts from the institutions where credit was earned for credit to transfer.

- D. Students must be accepted by the institution and have declared their major programs of study for credit to be transferred.
- E. At minimum, credit will be granted for courses that apply to students' current programs of study.
- F. Once credit is transferred it becomes part of students' permanent records.
- G. Only credit for college-level coursework will transfer.
- H. Credit for pre-college-level or developmental coursework does not transfer.
- I. Colleges may choose to use developmental coursework for student placement purposes.
- J. Grades do not transfer; only credit transfers. Therefore, transfer credit grades are not used in calculating grade or quality point averages. Consult your college for any exceptions.
- K. Transfer credit is designated on transcripts with an appropriate letter or symbol in the grade field.
- L. Credit will transfer as (1) the course equivalent at the receiving institution, if it exists, or (2) as an elective equivalent within a comparable department, if it exists. Some colleges transfer credit with an appropriate transfer code and number, when neither the course equivalent, nor a comparable department, exists.
- M. Credits earned in a quarter-hour system will be converted to semester-hour equivalents.
- N. Audited coursework does not transfer.
- O. Credit will not be granted for duplicate coursework or for two courses that cover the same or similar content.

IV. Minimum Grades

- A. Most colleges require a minimum grade of C (2.00 on a 4.00 scale) or higher for courses and credits to transfer. Some colleges will accept grades of C- or higher for transfer.
- B. Grades of D, D+, C- and CD (1.00 to 1.99 on a 4.00 scale) may transfer if they are for courses that are part of the 34-credit General Education Foundation (formerly MassTransfer Block) and students have completed the Block with a cumulative grade or quality point average of 2.00 or higher.
- C. Grades higher than C (2.00) may be required for admission to certain programs, for use as pre-requisite courses and for application of credit to certain program requirements. The colleges will publish the higher standards and the programs to which these higher standards apply.
- D. Grades of Pass (P), Satisfactory (S) or similar grades will transfer only when official transcripts indicate that such grades are equivalent to a grade of C or higher.

V. Residency Requirement/Maximum Transfer Credit Allowed

Institutions require students to complete at least one quarter (25%) of the credits of the first associate degree at that institution in order to graduate (referred to as the residency requirement). Transfer of up to the remaining three-quarters of the credits will depend upon the associate degree program's requirements and elective options. Requirements for a second and subsequent degree vary depending on institutions' practices. The number of credits transferable toward a certificate program varies by college and certificate.

VI. Alternative Sources of Credit

- A. Credit will be granted for satisfactory scores on Advanced Placement (AP) examinations based on institutions' policies.
- B. Credit will be granted for satisfactory scores on College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) examinations based on institutions' policies.
- C. Official score reports from the College Board are required in order to receive credit for AP and CLEP.
- D. Credit will be granted for satisfactory scores on challenge or credit examinations based on institutions' policies.
- E. Credit may be granted for formal courses or examinations offered by various organizations, including businesses, unions, government and military based on the recommendations of the American Council on Education (ACE) as found in its *National Guide to College Credit for Workforce Training*, a resource of its College Credit Recommendation Service (CREDIT).
- F. Credit also may be granted for learning from experience at work, volunteering in the community, military service, job training, independent reading, open source courseware study, and hobbies based on the Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) standards of the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL).
- G. Members of the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) Consortium adhere to the Consortium's Academic Residency Requirements for servicemembers at their institutions.
- H. Academic credits earned through the evaluation of military occupation, training, experience and coursework are transferable within the Massachusetts public higher education system in accordance with the Mass Transfer agreement.
- I. Credit granted by one institution from alternative sources other than that included by item H above may not transfer to another institution.

VII. Time Limits

- A. Credit will be transferred without time limits, unless otherwise specified in college catalogs for specific courses or programs.
- B. Certain programs, courses or admission standards may require courses to be taken within a specified time period based on institutions' policies. The colleges will publish the programs, courses or admission standards with specified time limits.

VIII. Student Appeals

- A. Institutions maintain and publish a process for students to appeal decisions made about transfer credit.
- B. Institutions designate and publish the contact information of an ombudsperson who ensures institutional compliance with these Community College Transfer Principles.

IX. Review and Amendment

The Department of Higher Education will from time to time convene a group of community college transfer professionals to review these Principles and recommend amendments to the Department.

X. Contact

Interested parties with comments or questions may contact Elena Quiroz-Livanis of the Department of Higher Education at (617) 994-6909 or equiroz@bhe.mass.edu.

XI. Adoption

These Community College Transfer Principles were reviewed and approved by the Academic Affairs Committee on June 13, 2017 and adopted by the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education on June 20, 2017.