



SECTION I

PART X PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT

1.00 Introduction

Learning obtained outside the classroom can be assessed and documented through a variety of types of Prior Learning Assessment (PLA). The purposes of this policy are 1) to set statewide expectations for awarding college credit for PLA, 2) to ensure that credits awarded for PLA by one institution are not lost in transfer, and (3) to provide transparent information to students, families, and advisors. This policy supports the Colorado Commission on Higher Education’s 2017 strategic plan, [Colorado Rises](#), Goals 1 and 2 to increase credential completion and erase equity gaps.

2.00 Statutory Authority

- 2.01 Pursuant to §23-1-108.5(5), C.R.S., “All credits earned by a student in any general education course identified as corresponding with a course included in the course numbering system [GT Pathways] shall be automatically transferable among all higher education institutions upon transfer and enrollment of the student... The commission shall adopt such policies and guidelines as may be necessary for the implementation of this section. Each governing board shall modify its existing policies as may be necessary to accept the transfer of these credits.”
- 2.02 Pursuant to §23-1-113.2(2), C.R.S., first-time freshman students who have successfully completed an international baccalaureate diploma program shall, at a minimum, be granted 24 semester credits, identified by the institution and that apply to the institution’s general education or other degree requirements. An institution may only grant less than 24 semester credits or their equivalent if the student has received a score of less than four on an exam administered as part of the international baccalaureate diploma program.
- 2.03 Pursuant to §23-1-125(1), C.R.S., “(d) Students have a right to know which courses are transferable among the state public two-year and four-year institutions of higher education; (e) Students, upon completion of core general education courses, regardless of the delivery method, should have those courses satisfy the core course requirements of all Colorado public institutions of higher education; (f) Students have a right to know if courses from one or more public higher education institutions satisfy the students' degree requirements; (g) A student's credit for the completion of the core requirements and core courses shall not expire for ten years from the date of initial enrollment and shall be transferrable...” and §23-1-125(3), C.R.S., “The commission shall adopt such

policies to ensure that institutions develop the most effective way to implement the transferability of core course [GT Pathways] credits.”

- 2.04 Pursuant to §23-1-125(4), C.R.S., “Competency testing. On or before July 1, 2010, the commission shall, in consultation with each public institution of higher education, define a process for students to test out of core courses, including specifying use of a national test or the criteria for approving institutionally devised tests. Beginning in the 2010-11 academic year, each public institution of higher education shall grant full course credits to students for the core courses they successfully test out of, free of tuition for those courses.”
- 2.05 Pursuant to §23-1-125(4.5), C.R.S., “Prior learning. Beginning in the 2013-14 academic year, each public institution of higher education shall adopt and make public a policy or program to determine academic credit for prior learning.”
- 2.06 Pursuant to §23-5-145(2), C.R.S., “Beginning June 1, 2018, accept in transfer from within the institution and from other state institutions of higher education prior learning assessment credit awarded for courses with guaranteed-transfer designation, unless the Colorado commission on higher education adopts a new policy prior to June 1, 2018, concerning the transfer of prior learning assessment credit for courses with guaranteed-transfer designation that requires each campus to accept in transfer credit awarded by a state institution of higher education pursuant to the provisions of subsection (2)(a) of this section. Each campus may also accept other prior learning assessment credit toward the student's program of study if the credit meets standards established by the campus.
- 2.07 Pursuant to §23-1-108(7)(b)(II)(A), C.R.S., “A state institution of higher education that admits as a junior a student who holds an associate of arts degree, associate of applied science degree, or associate of science degree that is the subject of a statewide degree transfer agreement shall not require the student to complete any additional courses to fulfill general education requirements.”
- 2.08 Pursuant to §23-5-145.5(3)(a), “On or before January 1, 2022, the [General Education] council, in collaboration with the commission, shall create, adopt, and implement a plan, referred to in this section as the “plan”, to award postsecondary academic credit for courses in GT pathways or a statewide degree transfer agreement for learning demonstrated from work-related experience.”
- 2.09 Pursuant to §23-5-145.5(7), “Beginning in the 2022-23 academic year, unless the plan is implemented prior to the beginning of the 2022-23 academic year, an institution shall accept in and transfer within the institution and to other institutions postsecondary academic credit awarded for work-related experience for a course that is GT pathways designated or part of a statewide degree transfer agreement.”

3.00 General Provisions

- 3.01 Every Colorado public institution of higher education shall accept in transfer from within the institution and from other state institutions of higher education prior learning assessment credit awarded for GT Pathways requirements.
- 3.02 Colorado public institutions of higher education shall not prohibit students from meeting general education/GT Pathways requirements with prior learning assessment credit.
- 3.03 Receiving institutions may require students to resubmit test scores or other documentation if they transfer.
- 3.04 Institutions shall limit the number of PLA credits accepted in transfer only by the residency requirements of the regional and other accrediting bodies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.
- 3.05 While the Commission may establish and publish conditions for applicability of PLA credit toward meeting GT Pathways requirements—and in the case of work-related experience articulated in Section 6.00, toward meeting the requirements for courses within a Statewide Transfer Articulation Agreement—institutions will establish and publish conditions for applicability of PLA credit toward meeting requirements of the major. In the case of transfer, the receiving institution shall determine if the PLA credit awarded by the sending institution can apply to the major requirements at the receiving institution.

4.00 Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST), and Portfolio Review

- 4.01 The statewide minimum cut score for awarding GT Pathways credit for AP exams shall be 3, for both the SL and HL versions of the IB exams shall be 4, for CLEP exams shall be 50 (except for World Languages), and for DSST shall be 400. The Department, in collaboration with the institutions, may make exceptions in rare cases where the content of an exam may not meet GT Pathways requirements. These credit awards are posted on the Department's [website](#).
- 4.02 Any GT Pathways credit awarded by one institution based on a portfolio review shall be accepted in transfer and applied to GT Pathways requirements at any other Colorado public institution of higher education, regardless of the sending institution's portfolio review method. Institutions are responsible for developing a portfolio review process that is aligned with GT Pathways, in addition to GT Pathways credit. Students should consult individual institutions for specific guidance on Portfolio review processes, and GT alignment.
- 4.03 At least 3 credit hours shall apply first to the appropriate GT Pathways content area requirements until the amount of credit has been met for that GT Pathways content area.

Once a GT Pathways content area requirement has been met, any additional credit may be awarded to fulfill other degree requirements, such as general education, elective or major/prerequisite credit. For example, the GT Pathways history requirement is 3 credits. If a student brings passing cut scores on two different history exams (such as US History and also World History, which qualifies the student for at least 6 credits), then the student shall receive 3 credits applied towards the GT Pathways history requirement. Any additional credits may be awarded to fulfill other degree requirements, such as general education, elective or major/prerequisite credit. Institutions are cautioned to consider financial aid implications when awarding credits that do not apply to any degree requirements.

- 4.04 Institutions may use their existing processes to determine the amount of credit to award for AP scores higher than 3, IB (both SL & HL) scores higher than 4, CLEP scores higher than 50, and DSST scores higher than 400 but they must award at least 3 credits, or at least 4 credits for GT-SC1 (science courses with labs).
- 4.05 Credit awarded shall be articulated as a course satisfying the appropriate GT Pathways category at the institution. When there is no equivalent, the institution shall create a generic transfer equivalency for a course in that GT Pathways content area (i.e., GT-AH1, GT-AH2, and etc.).

- 4.06 Institutions shall not impose any additional requirements on students, such as an additional written essay, to be awarded prior learning assessment credit on these and other national exams.

5.00 Military Courses and Occupations and Defense Language Proficiency Tests (DLPT) Transcribed on Joint Services Transcripts

- 5.01 Military and veteran students shall be awarded GT Pathways credit for military courses and occupations, as designated in tables posted on the Department's website.

- 5.02 Military and veteran students shall be awarded GT Pathways World Language credit (GT-AH4) for the Defense Language Proficiency tests, listed on Joint Services Transcripts, for qualifying scores at ACE recommended cut scores.

6.00 Work-Related Experience Leading to a Credential

- 6.01 Per the legislative declaration in House Bill 20-1002, "students need additional rights for their work-related experience to be evaluated fairly for application toward a postsecondary credential" and "industry credentials should be evaluated for potential application toward a postsecondary credential with transferability among two-year and four-year institutions."

- 6.02 Work-related experience is defined in §23-5-145.5(1)(f), C.R.S., as "experience acquired within the past ten years...that may lead to or result in a business credential, an industry credential, a technical certificate, or a professional license." For the purposes of this policy, work-related experience includes credentialed learning represented by an evaluated 1) industry credential; 2) professional license; 3) certificate from one of Colorado's area technical colleges; or 4) completed apprenticeship registered with the United States Department of Labor.

- 6.03 For the purposes of this policy, work-related experience does not include learning that is not represented by an evaluated credential indicated above. For non-credentialed learning, institutions may choose to engage in individualized assessment and award credit based on a portfolio review, challenge exam, or some other means. Any credit awarded through such individualized assessment is not guaranteed to transfer to other public institutions unless the credit is for GT Pathways as indicated elsewhere in this policy.

- 6.04 No later than the start of the 2022-23 academic year, the Department will publish on its website a process by which students who are enrolled or have been admitted to a state institution of higher education can request that their work-related experience is evaluated for potential alignment to the knowledge and competencies required for awarding postsecondary academic credit for courses

in GT Pathways or a Statewide Degree Transfer Agreement. The process may also be available to other parties who have an interest in such evaluation, including industry groups, trade associations, employers, institutions of higher education, and other state government agencies. The Department may also nominate selected work-related experience for evaluation.

- 6.04.01 The process will be grounded in key principles of statutory compliance, transparency, responsiveness to students, equity, workforce connections, and depth and rigor in respect to the integrity of GT Pathways and statewide transfer frameworks.
- 6.04.02 The process may include criteria to determine whether or when to engage in evaluation of credentials, which could include alignment with specific workforce needs, alignment with quality standards identified by the National Skills Coalition or other groups, and the availability of sufficient staffing and financial resources at the Department or at selected higher education institutions or systems.
- 6.04.03 The possible outcomes of an evaluation for compliance with statute will include 1) recommendation for statewide transfer; and 2) recommendation of no statewide transfer equivalency.
- 6.04.04 If the outcome of an initial evaluation by an institution or system is potential alignment with GT Pathways, the Department will convene representatives of faculty from across the state for review and consideration. If the result of the faculty review is recommendation for GT Pathways credit, the General Education Council may affirm the recommendation, including the specific GT Pathways category. The Department will then add the credential and the GT Pathways designation to credit tables posted on the Department's website.
- 6.04.05 If the outcome of an initial evaluation by an institution or system is potential alignment with a specific course within a Statewide Transfer Articulation Agreement, the General Education Council will determine the scope of faculty consultation required (e.g., statewide faculty convening, consultation with discipline chairs). If the General Education Council affirms the recommendation resulting from faculty review, the Department will add notation to the appropriate Statewide Transfer Articulation Agreement and publish the information on the Department's website.
- 6.04.06 Any equivalencies with GT Pathways or courses with a Statewide Transfer Articulation Agreement are valid for three years from the date of affirmation by the General Education Council, unless reaffirmed by the Council for an extended period. Credits received by students for

work-related experience will remain valid and fully transferrable for ten years following transcription by an institution of said credit.

7.00 Course Challenge Options

- 7.01 Per §23-1-125(4), C.R.S., “...each public institution of higher education shall grant full course credits to students for the core [GT Pathways] courses they successfully test out of, free of tuition for those courses.” Each public institution shall define a process for students to test out of GT Pathways courses, “...including specifying use of a national test or the criteria for approving institutionally devised tests.” If the student transfers, receiving institutions shall apply that credit to the appropriate GT Pathways category, even if the test out exam used was not one used by the receiving institution (CLEP, for example).
- 7.02 Requesting a course challenge option is at the enrolled student’s discretion. Institutions, including instructors of the course and department chairs, shall not refuse the enrolled student’s request, except that:
- a) Institutions may set their own policies in regard to allowing students to challenge courses in which they are currently enrolled or had been previously enrolled; and
 - b) Institutions may set their own policies in regard to limiting the number of times students can attempt to challenge a course in one semester or in total.
- 7.03
- a) Institutions shall: If the student earns the equivalent of a C- or better on an institutionally-devised challenge exam, transcript the credits as earned institutional credit and, at a minimum, include the name and number of the course, the number of institutional, and the GT Pathways category (if applicable), and note that it was a challenge exam;
 - b) If CLEP, DSST or another national exam is used to satisfy the test out option, then the above transcript formatting does not apply and the receiving institution should use the official source document from the testing company and refer to the appropriate PLA table on the Department’s [website](#) for guidance on how to apply that challenge exam credit; and
 - c) Include in the catalog, on the website, and provide to students through academic advising, course challenge policies and related information (such as fees).

7.04 Institutions may:

- a) Set their own policies in regard to counting course challenge credit as residency work;
- b) Set their own fees for administering course challenge options but the fees shall be transparent and reflect actual costs, including faculty and staff time and any appropriately amortized infrastructure cost.

7.05 Since the course challenge option applies to GT Pathways courses, students in degrees that do not contain the entire GT Pathways curriculum may not have the option to challenge all GT Pathways requirements. A list of baccalaureate degrees at Colorado institutions that have received waivers from the Commission and do not contain the full 31-credit GT Pathways curriculum is linked on the Department's [website](#).

8.00 Additional Provisions

- 8.01 Institutions (system or individual campus) may petition commission to be exempt from portions of this prior learning assessment policy. To be granted an exemption, the institution must provide evidence, including data, that demonstrates that said portions of the policy would have an adverse effect on student success. If the Commission approves the exemption, the institution must provide public notification to students (i.e. on their website) of the places in which the institution deviates from Colorado's prior learning assessment policy.
- 8.02 The department shall work with the institutions to evaluate PLA data and progress annually: The department should collect PLA data from IHE's and provide annual reporting to CCHE on the effect of PLA on student progression and completion. The department shall determine the PLA data elements and create an evaluation and reporting process. The department should use such data to inform any changes to the PLA policy.

HISTORY: CCHE Agenda Item V, A – May 8, 2015; CCHE Agenda Item IV, B – February 5, 2016; CCHE Agenda Item IV, B – June 2, 2016; CCHE Agenda Item III, A – May 4, 2018; CCHE Agenda Item IV, A – October 22, 2021; CCHE Agenda Item III, A – December 2, 2021