



**COLORADO**

Department of  
Higher Education

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## **FAQ: Changes to Colorado's Admissions Policy**

*The Colorado Commission on Higher Education approved key changes to the state's Admissions Policy in December 2013, with approved revisions in November 2014. Learn more about the changes below.*

### **Why did Colorado review and change the admission policy?**

State law requires the Department of Higher Education (DHE) to review the first-time and transfer admission policy to consider the effects it is having on student success, which includes retention and graduation rates, at Colorado public four-year institutions of higher education. Additionally, the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHHE) reviews the policy every three years to determine if any revisions are needed to align with state goals and priorities.

### **When will the changes to the admissions policy go into effect?**

Institutions can begin using the new policy as early as fall 2016, but all institutions will be under the new policy by fall 2019.

### **When did the review of this policy begin?**

A task force began meeting in May 2012. Task force members heard from a number of presenters (nationally and regionally) and reviewed various reports and data before completing their initial recommendations for change in April 2013.

### **Which institutions of higher education are included in the statewide admission policy?**

All public four-year institutions of higher education in Colorado are included in the policy. Colorado's public community colleges are not included in the policy as, by statute, they do not impose admission requirements.

### **Who will "First-time" admission standards apply to?**

First-time admission standards will apply to students who are seeking admission at an institution for the first time after high school graduation. They also apply to students who are transferring from another institution but have less than 24 college-level credit hours at the point of application.

Revised: December 17, 2014



## What are the major changes?

- A shift in focus from enrollment to student success.
- Elimination of the [index score](#).
- Instead of the index score, institutions will provide the mid 50% range of GPA and test scores (ACT/SAT) of their admitted class from the previous year(s).
- Ability for institutions to expand and provide more details on their performance indicator standards beyond the [Higher Education Admission Requirements](#) (HEAR).
- Closer alignment with pre-school – 12<sup>th</sup> grade policies and practices and the [remedial education policy](#) (which includes increased options for students to demonstrate competency and college readiness).
- A change and simplification of the transfer admission standard credit hour requirement.
- Guaranteed admission for Colorado community college Associate of Arts and Associate of Science graduates (see further details below).

## Why does the policy shift away from enrollment to student success?

CCHE's [Master Plan](#) for higher education includes shifting from the number of students that enroll at institutions and more toward student success indicators. Student success is largely defined by how many students stay at the institution (or transfer to another institution to continue their studies) and receive a certificate and/or degree. Student success also means enhancing access and decreasing the credential attainment gaps between students from underserved communities and those in the majority.

## Why do away with the index score?

The index, a combination of a student's high school performance and college entrance exam scores, is used to determine whether a student qualifies for a particular college or university under the first-time admission standards. The index currently uses cumulative grade point averages and combined test scores. Test scores and grade point averages receive equal weight under the current policy. The index, created in 1987, will be replaced by a more flexible review of a student's academic background and performance, including the rigor of his or her coursework. The index score does not distinguish between achievement in general high school courses and performance in more advanced work such as higher levels of math, successfully completing college courses while in high school, or Advanced Placement (AP) classes. The new policy will more accurately evaluate student achievement and preparation.

## Will there be an admission standards tool that will replace the index?

Yes. An online admission tool is now under development that will allow students at all grade levels, parents, counselors, educators – anyone interested – to clearly see the first-time and transfer admission requirements at each public four year institution in Colorado.



## What does a “mid 50% range in GPA and test scores” mean?

Looking at previous year’s first-time classes, institutions will provide a range of what GPA and test scores that the middle 50% of their admitted students possessed. As such, 25% of admitted students GPA and test scores would have been below the 50% average, and 25% would have been above. For example, an institution may provide the following:

The mid 50% **GPA** range of our previously admitted class was: 3.0 – 3.55

The mid 50% **ACT** composite test score range of our previously admitted class was: 22 – 27

The intent is that students will compare their GPA and test scores to these mid 50% ranges to be better able to assess how competitive their academic profile is at the institution (in addition to reviewing the institution’s rigor standards). Additionally, students at any grade level (ideally as early as grade school) will also know what standards to strive for in preparation for the colleges and universities they are interested in attending.

## How will students demonstrate rigor and competency under this policy?

Colorado has relied upon completion of Higher Education Admissions Requirements (HEAR) to determine whether students are eligible for admission to the state’s four-year colleges and universities. Examples of these “seat-time” requirements include four years of language arts, four years of math and three years of science. The revised policy encourages colleges and universities to be more flexible in considering other means of demonstrating readiness beyond the completion of a particular set of courses by title or time. HEAR requirements will still be able to be used but institutions will also be encouraged to consider other demonstrations of competency, such as completing college classes while in high school, subject-specific test scores or performance in particular courses and exams such as AP, CLEP and IB, and a rigorous course load in the senior year.

## What are the changes to the transfer admission standards?

The transfer admission standards apply when students have completed 24 or more college-level semester credit hours (total of all institutions attended) at the point of application. Other specifications follow:

- Remedial courses are not included in the calculation of the 24 hour total;
- Only college-level courses completed after high school graduation are included in the calculation of the 24 hour total (i.e. Concurrent or Dual Enrollment courses are not included);
- A cumulative GPA will be calculated from all previous college-level work;
- Similar to the first-time admission standards, a mid-50% GPA range of admitted transfer students for the previous year will be included in the online admission tool;
- To be admitted, transfer students must be college-ready (as demonstrated through assessment scores and/ other means – please refer to the [Remedial Education Policy](#) for further details on ways to demonstrate college-readiness);
- Academic rigor (successful completion of college-level English composition and mathematics especially) will be preferred. For many programs of study, students are

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encouraged to complete [gtPathways or a statewide transfer articulation agreement](#) which will assist in making them a competitive candidate for admission and guarantee the transfer of their courses.

### **What is this guaranteed admission for community college graduates?**

Applicants who have completed an Associate of Arts (AA) or Associate of Sciences (AS) degree from a Colorado public two-year institution will be guaranteed admissions at all Colorado public baccalaureate awarding institutions, except Colorado School of Mines, provided the student meets the institution's transfer GPA standard (which will be included in the online admission tool), has completed all courses with a grade of C or better and a two-year institution is the last institution attended prior to transfer. Admission will not guarantee placement in a specific degree program (as some academic programs are more competitive and/or have additional admission requirements). Data analysis has shown students who transfer after receiving an associate's degree are more likely to graduate from four-year institutions than those who transfer with fewer credits earned.

### **Where can I get more information and read the current and new policy?**

<http://higher.ed.colorado.gov/Academics/Admissions/>

For additional information, contact:

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