

**TOPIC:                    MODIFICATIONS TO THE STATEWIDE TRANSFER  
POLICY FOR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER  
EDUCATION IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
PERFORMANCE CONTRACTS**

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**I.        SUMMARY**

In January 2003, the Commission adopted the Statewide Transfer Policy for Public Institutions of Higher Education. The goal of this policy was to ensure access to undergraduate degree programs and facilitate the completion of degree requirements.

Section 5.02 of this policy deals with the transfer of general education. Within this section is the outline of the Commission approved guaranteed transfer general education curriculum, commonly known as gtPathways, which fulfills the requirement in C.R.S. 23-1-125 for the Commission to develop a “core course concept.”

In September 2004, in response to the passage of Senate Bill 04-189 (The College Opportunity Fund Act), CCHE staff began negotiating performance contracts with the governing boards of each institution or system of public higher education in Colorado. Found in each performance contract is a section that requires public institutions to modify their general education requirements to comply with the gtPathways curriculum.

During performance contract negotiations, several institutions argued that the gtPathways curriculum needed modification in order to accommodate unique institutional circumstances or statutory roles and missions. By way of the performance contracts, the Commission agreed to consider modifications to the gtPathways curriculum to facilitate institutions’ adoption of it.

Between March and May 2005, the Academic Council and GE-25 Council discussed modifications to the gtPathways curriculum that would accommodate the unique circumstances at the public campuses and comply with the Commission’s transfer curriculum and performance contracts. In April 2005, the GE-25 unanimously endorsed the proposed refinements to the gtPathways curriculum found herein. In May 2005, the Academic Council followed, again unanimously.

To provide an incentive for community college students to complete their degree programs prior to transfer as well as ensure that these students would not be encumbered with additional lower-division, institution specific requirements upon transfer, the Academic Council unanimously approved a recommendation that transfers to four-year public institutions that hold a Associate of Arts or an Associate of Science degree from a

Colorado public community college should be exempt from additional general education lower-division core requirements.

As Colorado's post-secondary institutions began to address issues of compliance within their respective Performance Contracts, both Academic Council and GE 25 have further explored the implications of the gtPathways curriculum upon institutional general education structures and requirements. Specifically, the larger research institutions have examined ways in which the current structure and requirements of the gtPathways curriculum could be reconciled with the current structure and delivery of their respective general education programs.

After a thorough analysis, some of the institutions determined that the Communication component of the gtPathways curriculum was incongruent with their general education programs and served to limit and compromise their ability to successfully engage their students in the scope and sequence of courses that comprise their Communication content category/specific general education writing requirements.

As a result, a dialogue was engaged in with other Chief Academic Officers at Colorado's public post-secondary institutions via discussions in ongoing, Academic Council and GE 25 meetings. With exhaustive dialogue and analysis, both groups came to the unanimous agreement that the Communication category of the gtPathways curriculum could and should be modified to accommodate the addition of an advanced writing course, with the stipulation that Speech not be a consideration for placement in the Communication category of the gtPathways curriculum and that the larger, research institutions address any and all transfer issues related to the Communication category of gtPathways upon receipt of students transferring from other institutions whose Communication requirements differ from the receiving institutions.

Commission staff recommends the approval of the proposed adjustments to the Statewide Transfer Policy presented herein.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

Colorado's statewide guaranteed general education courses are designed to allow students to begin their general education courses at one Colorado public higher education institution and later transfer to another without loss of general education credits. That is, state guaranteed general education courses may be applied to the general education graduation requirement program.

Effective fall 2003, Colorado policy ensures that students who successfully complete a state guaranteed general education course will receive transfer credits applied to general education graduation requirements at all public institutions unless a specific statewide articulation agreement exists. As indicated in Section I-L-5.04 of the Statewide Transfer Policy, certain majors may prescribe specific courses in the major or prerequisite courses that must be completed as part of the Associate of Arts or Associate of Sciences degree

for admission into the degree program. (Students should consult the transfer guides for each CCHE-approved baccalaureate degree program for information regarding specific major or prerequisite course requirements.)

The state's guaranteed general education curriculum is organized into five categories (see Table 1 below): communication, mathematics, arts and humanities, social and behavioral sciences, and physical and life sciences. To complete the current Colorado state guaranteed general education of 31 semester credit hours, students are required to take courses in the prescribed categories and earn a C grade or better in each course. The guarantee is limited to the number of semester credit hours in each general education category.

TABLE 1: CURRENT STRUCTURE OF GT-PATHWAYS CURRICULUM

Structure of gtPathways Curriculum effective Fall 2006

Credits	Category
6	<b>Communication:</b> Introductory Writing (GT-CO1) <b>Communication:</b> Intermediate Writing (GT-CO2)
3	<b>Mathematics</b>
15	<b>Arts and Humanities, History, &amp; Social and Behavioral Sciences:</b> <b>Arts &amp; Humanities</b> – Two courses (minimum 3 credits each) Arts and Expression (GT-AH1) Literature and Humanities (GT-AH2) Ways of Thinking (GT-AH3) Foreign Language (GT-AH4)
	<b>History</b> - One course (minimum 3 credits) (GT-H11)
	<b>Social and Behavioral Sciences</b> - One course (minimum 3 credits) Economic or Political Systems (GT-SS1) Geography (GT-SS2) Human Behavior, Culture, or Social Frameworks (GT-SS3) <i>If necessary to reach a minimum of 15 credits, select 1 additional course (minimum 3 credits) in Arts and Humanities, History, or Social and Behavioral Sciences</i>
7	<b>Natural and Physical Sciences:</b> With Laboratory (GT-SC1) Without Laboratory (GT-SC2)

In April and May 2005, the GE-25 Council and the Academic Council agreed unanimously to the following modifications to the gtPathways curriculum:

- Reducing the credit hour requirement in Physical and Life Sciences from eight to seven.

- Combining the credit hour requirements for the Arts and Humanities and Social and Behavioral Sciences categories, and reducing the total credit hours required from 18 to 15.
- Clarifying that the minimum Mathematics requirement is three credit hours.

In addition, in May 2005, the Academic Council unanimously approved a recommendation to exempt transfer students to four-year institutions with Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degrees from additional lower division, institution specific general education requirements.

The proposed modifications to the gtPathways curriculum are illustrated in the following table:

TABLE 2: PROPOSED STRUCTURE OF GT-PATHWAYS CURRICULUM

**Communication (6 credit hours):**

Introduction to Writing Course (3 semester credits/CO1)  
Intermediate Writing Course (3 semester credits/CO2)  
Advanced Writing Course (3 semester credits/CO3)

*A total of six hours are required from the above listed courses, including either an introductory followed by an intermediate, or an intermediate followed by an advanced (writing course) as required by the institution.*

**Mathematics (3 credit hours)**

**Arts and Humanities, History, & Social and Behavioral Sciences (15 credit hours):**

**Arts & Humanities** – Two courses (minimum 3 credits each)  
Arts and Expression (GT-AH1)  
Literature and Humanities (GT-AH2)  
Ways of Thinking (GT-AH3)  
Foreign Language (GT-AH4)

**History**

One course (minimum 3 credits) (GT-H11)

**Social and Behavioral Sciences** - One course (minimum 3 credits)

Economic or Political Systems (GT-SS1)  
Geography (GT-SS2)  
Human Behavior, Culture, or Social Frameworks (GT-SS3)

*If necessary to reach a minimum of 15 credits, select 1 additional course (minimum 3 credits) in Arts and Humanities, History, or Social and Behavioral Sciences*

**Natural and Physical Sciences (7 credit hours):**

With Laboratory (GT-SC1)  
Without Laboratory (GT-SC2)

### **III. STAFF ANALYSIS**

The changes to the gtPathways curriculum presented herein fulfill the CCHE's contractual obligation to "refine and amend" the gtPathways curriculum to accommodate unique institutional circumstances and roles and missions. These changes have been discussed at length with academic affairs staff at the state's public institutions, and have received unanimous endorsement from these officials.

In total, the proposed changes to the gtPathways curriculum include an amendment to the Communication category which will serve to accommodate the current structure and delivery of the writing requirements presently administered in some of the state's larger research institutions. While not substantively changing the general structure of the gtPathways curriculum, these changes give institutions more flexibility with the delivery of their respective general education programs, especially in the area of specific writing requirements.

The total credit hours to degree for Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degree remain unchanged at 120. Consequently, the changes proposed herein are expected to have minimal impact on students' overall academic experience, while simultaneously allowing institutions' improved opportunities to meet the conditions of the CCHE performance contract, thereby increasing the transferability of credit hours from institution to institution.

If approved, these changes would take effect beginning fall semester 2007.

### **IV. RECOMMENDATION**

That the Commission approve the proposed modifications to the gtPathways curriculum and authorize CCHE staff to update CCHE Academic Affairs Policy Section I-L to reflect the modifications to the gtPathways curriculum and Communication content area.

### **STATUTORY AUTHORITY**

#### **CRS 23-1-108.5:**

The General Assembly hereby finds that, for many students the ability to transfer among all state-supported institutions of higher education is critical to their success in achieving a degree. The General Assembly further finds that it is necessary for the state to have sound transfer policies that provide the broadest and simplest mechanisms feasible, while protecting the academic quality of the institutions of higher education and their undergraduate degree programs. The General Assembly finds, therefore, that it is in the best interests of the state for the commission to oversee the adoption of the statewide

articulation matrix system of course numbering for general education courses that includes all state-supported institutions of higher education and that will ensure that the quality of and requirements that pertain to general education courses are comparable and transferable statewide.

**CRS 23-1-125:**

Commission directive – student bill of rights – degree requirements – implementation of core courses – on-line catalogue- competency test. (1) Student bill of rights. The General Assembly hereby finds that students enrolled in public institutions of higher education shall have the following rights:

- (a) Students should be able to complete their associate of arts and associate of science degree programs in no more than sixty credit hours or their baccalaureate programs in no more than one hundred twenty credit hours unless there are additional degree requirements recognized by the commission;
- (b) A student can sign a two-year or four-year graduation agreement that formalizes a plan for that student to obtain a degree in two or four years, unless there are additional degree requirements recognized by the commission;
- (c) Students have a right to clear and concise information concerning which courses must be completed successfully to complete their degrees;
- (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.