

State Policy on College Transfer

Introduction

Two to four-year transfer within the Commonwealth has increased as a popular means for obtaining a bachelor's degree. The State Policy on College Transfer aims to enhance cooperation and consistency among institutions of higher education in Virginia with the intended goal of improving transfer for Virginia's students. The State Policy on College Transfer seeks to improve collaboration among Virginia's institutions of higher education while promoting efficiency in the transfer process as well as recognizing the changing higher education environment. Ideally, students should be able to move through Virginia's public education system as if it were a continuum, rather than a system of distinct levels and separate stages.

The State Policy on Transfer is guided by the following principles:

- All capable students in the Commonwealth should have access to all levels of higher education.
- Senior institutions have a responsibility for enrolling students from public associate degree-granting institutions and expanding college transfer options that lead to confirmation of a baccalaureate degree (Code of Virginia § [23.1-301\(7\)](#)).
- Transfer is a shared responsibility among all of Virginia's public institutions.
- Transfer between institutions should be as seamless as possible and should not increase a student's time to degree completion or result in repeated coursework successfully completed at other regionally accredited institutions of higher education.
- Transfer students should be assured of equitable treatment by each senior institution and afforded the same academic opportunities provided to native students in similar circumstances.
- Students shall be encouraged to progress as far through the higher education continuum as they are able.
- The Commonwealth shall have a coherent statewide policy on transfer that facilitates continued institutional cooperation that can be sustained over time.
- The institutional autonomy and diversity of Virginia's colleges and universities are valuable and must be assured.

Admissions

1. Senior institutions have authority over institutional and programmatic admission decisions. Each senior institution shall have a data-driven policy, approved by appropriate institutional parties and reviewed regularly, on admission of transfer students.
2. Each student who satisfactorily completes a transfer-degree program at a Virginia Community College or Richard Bland College shall be assured the opportunity to transfer to a state supported baccalaureate institution. Senior institutions have a responsibility to provide reasonable access to students graduating from Virginia's associate-degree granting institutions who meet admission requirements.
3. Transfer admissions priority shall be given to students who have completed a transfer degree over those who have not. However, admission to a given institution does not guarantee admission to a particular degree program, major, minor, or concentration of study. Every baccalaureate-degree program shall provide a reasonable avenue for admission of transfer students that is applied equally to native and transfer students.
4. Admission to a specific program, major, minor, or concentration of study may require a minimum grade point average and specific prerequisite courses. Such requirements shall be applied equally to native and transfer students.
5. Virginia's senior institutions shall develop policies addressing the admission of transfer students not completing a transfer oriented associate degree. These policies should consider course completion, earned credit, academic standing, and whether the student possesses an applied associate degree. To the extent possible, the provision should address the contribution of these factors on the admission decision.
6. Senior institutions shall develop policies addressing the admission of high school students completing a transfer associate degree concurrent with high school, in accordance with Code of Virginia § [22.1-253.13:1\(D\)\(10\)](#) and § [23.1-907\(E\)](#).
7. Senior institutions shall develop policies addressing the admission of students completing college credit through prior learning assessment and the contribution of these credits to the admission decision. The policy shall be compliant with Code of Virginia § [23.1-906](#) and the [Virginia Public Higher Education Policy on Course Credit for AP, Cambridge, CLEP and IB](#).
8. Pursuant to Code of Virginia § [23.1-907\(A\)](#), each senior public institution of higher education shall develop, consistent with SCHEV's *Guidelines for Transfer, Articulation, and Dual and Guaranteed Admission in the Commonwealth* (further referred to as Guidelines for Transfer), guaranteed admission agreements (GAA) with the Virginia Community College System and Richard Bland College. The GAA shall guarantee admission to a public senior institution for students earning an approved transfer associate degree and who meet institutional admission requirements.

Acceptance and Application of Credits

1. It is the intention of the State Policy on Transfer that students working toward a baccalaureate degree by enrolling in a transfer program at a Virginia, regionally accredited public associate degree-granting institution will have their university-parallel coursework recognized as legitimate and equivalent to courses offered at the senior Virginia institution, except for those courses deemed as institutional requirements.
2. Public senior institutions have authority over policies addressing acceptance and application of transfer credits. However, VCCS and Richard Bland College transfer students earning an associate degree based upon a baccalaureate-oriented sequence of courses or admitted under a GAA shall be considered to have met the lower division general education requirements of the senior institution and considered to have attained junior standing, regardless of delivery mode. Where students must satisfy additional general-education requirements -- credits in upper-division general education or foreign languages required of native students, for example -- senior institutions should specify and publish such requirements.
3. All Virginia public institutions shall develop policies addressing prior learning assessment (PLA) and their application to transfer students. These policies will be as transfer-friendly as possible and in compliance with Code of Virginia § [23.1-906](#) and the [Virginia Public Higher Education Policy on Course Credit for AP, Cambridge, CLEP and IB](#). Policies addressing PLA credit earned through extra-institutional learning (e.g. Massive Open Online Courses, Straighter Line, student portfolio, experiential learning, etc.) should provide a clear description of the PLA review process, address the acceptance of PLA awarded by other institutions prior to transfer, and address student expectation of credit acceptance.
4. Military education, training, and experience shall be accepted for college credit, where applicable, pursuant to Code of Virginia § [23.1-904](#) and SCHEV's [Guidelines on Award of Academic Credit for Military Education, Training and Experience by Virginia Public Higher Education Institutions](#).

Communication and Information

1. In accordance with Code of Virginia § [23.1-204\(B\)](#), Each institution of higher education shall provide a link to the postsecondary education and employment data published by the State Council of Higher Education on its website pursuant to [§ 23.1-204\(A\)](#). SCHEV institutional profile data can be obtained by accessing the following link:
<http://research.schev.edu/iprofile.asp>.
2. Institutional and program specific articulation agreements between Virginia Community Colleges and Richard Bland College, and senior institutions are beneficial to student transfer and are encouraged by SCHEV. Formal articulation agreements should follow the Guidelines for Transfer.

3. Each institution shall have a communication process established to provide current information to other public institutions in the Commonwealth as well as to students who have expressed interest in transferring. Periodically, the State Committee on Transfer will review the accessibility of the institution's communication process.

Administrative Responsibility for Transfer

1. Transfer is the administrative responsibility of all Virginia public institutions. The Virginia Community Colleges, Richard Bland College, and Virginia's senior institutions have a responsibility to promote a culture of transfer and facilitate a seamless transition for students moving from one institution of higher education to another.
2. Each institution shall designate a chief transfer officer who has responsibility for the following functions:
 - Serves as a point of contact for all transfer-related communications among institutions.
 - Reviews transfer curricula for changes, updates articulation agreements, and the currency of transfer information.
 - Reviews transfer student academic outcome data with the intended purpose of improving institutional transfer policy.
3. In addition, each college, school, or divisions within the senior institutions shall designate an official with final authority on the transferability of courses in the degree programs offered by the institution.

Transfer Student Responsibilities

Students intending to transfer are responsible for planning their course of study to meet the requirements of the institution(s) to which they desire to transfer. The student is responsible for seeking out the information and advice that is necessary to develop such a plan.

Students are encouraged to identify as early as possible the senior institution and program into which they would like to transfer. Delays in developing and following an appropriate plan or changes in plan (e.g. changes in major) may reduce the applicability of transfer credit to the baccalaureate degree program a student ultimately selects.

Under-represented Student Populations and Transfer

Biases must not impede the educational goals of students from under-represented populations. Institutions shall systematically review enrollment practices relevant to students from under-represented populations and determine whether these students are being disproportionately steered into non-transfer programs, or subjected to other factors that impede their ability to transfer smoothly into baccalaureate degree programs. Students from under-represented

populations shall be encouraged to progress through the levels of higher education, as their abilities allow, regardless of personal characteristics.

Tracking Transfer Students

1. Any VCCS institution or Richard Bland College should be able to request academic success data from the senior institution for transfer students matriculating from their institution.
2. Institutions shall use transfer student progress data and academic outcomes to improve upon or confirm the success of their transfer programs. In analyzing these data, all institutions shall pay particular attention to the performance, retention, time to baccalaureate completion, and graduation rates for the purposes of improving transfer student academic success and completion rates.
3. Senior institutions should track transfer students based on modality of admission (GAA vs. non-GAA vs. lateral), associate degree status (with an associate vs. without), and type of associate degree if transferring with a degree (A.A., A.S., A.A.&S., A.A.A., or A.A.S).

Footnote

Transfer degrees are the Associate of Arts (A.A.), the Associate of Science (A.S.), and the Associate of Arts and Sciences (A.A.&S.), (under specific articulation agreements, some institutions are accepting the Associate of Applied Arts (A.A.A.), and the Associate of Applied Sciences (A.A.S) for identified degree programs).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SCHEV Guidelines for Transfer, Articulation, Dual Admission, and Guaranteed Admission in the Commonwealth

House Bill 57 and Senate Bill 538, passed by the 2006 Virginia General Assembly, direct the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) to create guidelines for the development of transfer, articulation, and dual admission agreements between two- and four-year public institutions of higher education in Virginia. Per this directive, SCHEV called upon the expertise of the State Committee on Transfer and the Instructional Programs Advisory Committee (IPAC) to draft guidelines, in cooperation with SCHEV staff that meet the intent of the legislation and also the needs of the citizens and institutions of the Commonwealth.

The legislation noted above, in combination with existing statutory obligations of SCHEV, served as the framework for the development of transfer and articulation guidelines. These guidelines are intended to construct a framework for an efficient and effective system of undergraduate transfer in the Commonwealth while recognizing the autonomy and legal authority of institutional Boards of Visitors in the admission of students. Some of these guidelines reflect provisions and policies previously set forth in the State Policy on College Transfer.

Guideline 1

All qualified students in the Commonwealth who believe that they could benefit from a postsecondary education should have access to all levels of higher education. Two-year colleges are a point of access to higher education for a considerable portion of Virginia's population. Thus, a significant responsibility of every public four-year institution in the Commonwealth is the enrollment of two-year college students.

Guideline 2

Transfer degrees offered by two-year colleges should be comprised of courses recognized as legitimate and equivalent to those offered at four-year institutions. SCHEV recognizes transfer degrees that are based on a baccalaureate-oriented sequence of courses. Recognized transfer degrees include the Associate of Arts, Associate of Science and the Associate of Arts and Science. Recognition of additional degrees by SCHEV may be granted following a substantive review by the State Committee on Transfer.

Two-year colleges are responsible for creating courses that are equivalent; four-year institutions are responsible for recognizing those courses that are equivalent. Therefore, students who have earned a recognized transfer associate degree should be considered to have met lower level

general education requirements of public, four-year institutions. These students should be considered to have attained junior standing. It may, however, take transfer students longer than two years to complete a baccalaureate degree because of prerequisites in the major, or other requirements or circumstances.

Guideline 3

All public, four-year institutions should provide transfer information in a manner that is easily available and clearly communicated to transfer students, faculty, and advisors (e.g. the institution's website). Specifically, institutions should make easily available to students, faculty, and advisors, current and consistent information on the transferability of credit from transfer programs and courses offered by the two-year colleges, as well as information on program-specific requirements.

Guideline 4

Because articulation agreements are intended to further reduce the time-to-degree of associate degree holders by providing students with specific information on the transferability of programs and of courses within a given program, public, four-year institutions should develop articulation agreements with uniform application to all institutions within the Virginia Community College System and Richard Bland College. Articulation agreements should address the general education and program requirements of four-year institutions, and provide additional opportunities for qualified students to be admitted and enrolled.

Guideline 5

Institutions shall permit students to declare, in writing, their intent to transfer to a four-year public institution, per articulation agreements. Articulation agreements should further specify that students who complete an associate degree within four years of submitting a letter of intent to transfer and enroll at a four-year institution within 18 months of completing an associate degree shall have access to rights and privileges defined in applicable articulation agreements available at the time of the student's declaration.

Guideline 6

The development of guaranteed and dual admission agreements should provide Virginia's students with certainty in their plans to transfer seamlessly from a two-year college, to a public, four-year institution. Guaranteed admission agreements should permit students to develop qualifications at a two-year college, before receiving a transfer degree and transferring to a public, four-year institution. Dual admission agreements should permit students possessing the requisite qualifications to be simultaneously accepted by a two-year college and a four-year institution of higher education. Guaranteed admission and dual admission agreements should set forth the obligations of the student accepted in such programs, including grade point

average requirements, acceptable associate degree majors, specific course requirements, and completion timetables. In addition, these agreements should outline the student's access to privileges of enrollment in both institutions during the time enrolled in either institution.

Guideline 7

Transfer, articulation, and admission agreements forged by two-year colleges and four-year institutions should include provisions for the collection and dissemination of student level data that enhances the efficiency of transfer. Further, transfer, articulation, and admission agreements should include provisions for the systematic review of the efficiency of the agreement.

Guideline 8

In accordance with the Code of Virginia, four-year institutions should submit transfer, articulation, and admission agreements to the State Council of Higher Education. The State Council of Higher Education shall make such information available to the public.

Guideline 9

Transfer admissions priority should be given to students who have completed a transfer degree over those who have not.

Guideline 10

Transfer students should have, to the extent possible, the same opportunities as native students of comparable standing in such areas as course selection, registration, access to campus housing, and financial aid.

Guideline 11

Each institution should designate a chief transfer officer who serves as point of contact for transfer-related communication. In addition, each college, school, or division within a four-year institution should designate a person with final authority on the transferability of courses in the majors contained in the college, school, or division. An institutional process for students to appeal decisions about transfer credits should be established and well publicized.

APPENDIX B

Statutory Requirements Governing Transfer

Excerpt from Code of Virginia § 22.1-253.13:1(D)(10). Instructional programs supporting the Standards of Learning and other educational objectives.

An agreement for postsecondary degree attainment with a community college in the Commonwealth specifying the options for students to complete an associate's degree or a one-year Uniform Certificate of General Studies from a community college concurrent with a high school diploma. Such agreement shall specify the credit available for dual enrollment courses and Advanced Placement courses with qualifying exam scores of three or higher.

§ 23.1-204. Post-graduation employment rates.

- A. *The Council shall annually publish data on its website on the proportion of graduates who are employed (i) 18 months and (ii) five years after the date of graduation for each public institution of higher education and each nonprofit private institution of higher education eligible to participate in the Tuition Assistance Grant Program (§ [23.1-628](#) et seq.). The data shall include the program and the program level, as recognized by the Council, for each degree awarded by each institution; the percentage of graduates known to be employed in the Commonwealth, the average salary, and the average higher education-related debt for the graduates on which the data is based; rates of enrollment in remedial coursework for each institution; individual student credit accumulation for each institution; rates of postsecondary degree completion; and any other information that the Council determines is necessary to address adequate preparation for success in postsecondary education and alignment between secondary and postsecondary education. The Council shall disseminate to each public high school and each public institution of higher education and private institution of higher education for which the Council has student-level data a link on its website to the published data. The Council shall provide a notification template that each public high school may use to annually notify students and their parents about the availability of such data. The published data shall be consistent with the Government Data Collection and Dissemination Practices Act (§ [2.2-3800](#) et seq.) and the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (20 U.S.C. § 1232g).*
- B. *Each such institution of higher education shall provide a link to such published postsecondary education and employment data.*

Excerpt for Code of Virginia § 23.1-301(7). The Virginia Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2011

To preserve and enhance the excellence and cost-efficiency of the Commonwealth's higher education system through reform-based investment that promotes innovative instructional models and pathways to degree attainment, including optimal use of physical facilities and instructional resources throughout the year, technology-enhanced instruction, sharing of instructional resources between colleges, universities, and other degree-granting entities in the Commonwealth, increased online learning opportunities for nontraditional students, improved rate and pace of degree completion, expanded availability of dual enrollment and advanced placement options and early college commitment programs, expanded comprehensive community college transfer options leading to bachelor's degree completion, and enhanced college readiness before matriculation.

§ 23.1-904. Course credit; veterans; active duty military students.

- A. *The governing board of each public institution of higher education shall implement policies that provide students called to active military duty during an academic semester with the opportunity to earn full course credit. Such policies shall provide, as one option, that such students who have completed 75 percent of the course requirements at the time of activation and who meet other specified requirements receive full course credit.*
- B. *The governing board of each public institution of higher education shall, in accordance with guidelines developed by the Council, implement policies for the purpose of awarding academic credit to students for educational experience gained from service in the Armed Forces of the United States.*
- C. *The governing board of each public institution of higher education shall, in accordance with guidelines developed by the Council, implement policies that recognize the scheduling difficulties and obligations encountered by active duty members of the Armed Forces of the United States.*

§ 23.1-906. Course credit; Advanced Placement, Cambridge Advanced, College-Level Examination Program, and International Baccalaureate examinations.

- A. *The Council, in consultation with the governing board of each public institution of higher education, shall establish a policy for granting undergraduate course credit to entering freshman students who have taken one or more Advanced Placement, Cambridge Advanced (A/AS), College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), or International Baccalaureate examinations. The policy shall:*
 - 1. *Outline the conditions necessary for each public institution of higher education to grant course credit, including the minimum required scores on such examinations;*

2. *Identify the course credit or other academic requirements of each public institution of higher education that the student satisfies by achieving the minimum required scores on such examinations; and*
 3. *Ensure, to the extent possible, that the grant of course credit is consistent across each public institution of higher education and each such examination.*
- B. *The Council and each public institution of higher education shall make the policy available to the public on its website.*

§ 23.1-907. Articulation, dual admissions, and guaranteed admissions agreements; admission of certain comprehensive community college graduates.

- A. *The board of visitors of each baccalaureate public institution of higher education shall develop, consistent with Council guidelines and the institution's six-year plan as set forth in § [23.1-306](#), articulation, dual admissions, and guaranteed admissions agreements with each associate-degree-granting public institution of higher education.*
- B. *The Council and each public institution of higher education shall develop a one-year uniform certificate of general studies program as set forth in subdivision 20 of § [23.1-203](#). All credits earned in academic subject coursework by students attending an associate-degree-granting public institution of higher education who complete the one-year uniform certificate of general studies program are transferrable to a baccalaureate public institution of higher education in accordance with Council guidelines.*
- C. *The Council shall prepare an annual report on the pertinent aspects of the pipeline of students transferring from comprehensive community colleges to baccalaureate public institutions of higher education.*
- D. *The Council, consistent with its responsibility to facilitate the development of articulation, dual admissions, and guaranteed admissions agreements set forth in §§ [23.1-203](#) and [23.1-908](#), shall develop guidelines for such agreements.*
- E. *Each comprehensive community college shall develop agreements for postsecondary degree attainment with the public high schools in the school divisions that such comprehensive community college serves specifying the options for students to complete an associate degree or a one-year Uniform Certificate of General Studies concurrent with a high school diploma. Such agreements shall specify the credit available for dual enrollment courses and Advanced Placement courses with qualifying exam scores of three or higher.*

§ 23.1-908. State Transfer Tool.

- A. *The Council shall develop, in cooperation with each public institution of higher education, a State Transfer Tool that designates each general education course that is offered in an associate degree*

program at an associate-degree-granting public institution of higher education and transferable for course credit to a baccalaureate public institution of higher education.

- B. In developing the State Transfer Tool, the Council shall also seek the participation of private institutions of higher education.*
- C. The Council shall develop guidelines to govern the development and implementation of articulation, dual admissions, and guaranteed admissions agreements between associate-degree-granting public institutions of higher education and baccalaureate public institutions of higher education. Dual admissions agreements shall set forth (i) the obligations of each student accepted to such a program, including grade point average requirements, acceptable associate degree majors, and completion timetables, and (ii) the extent to which each student accepted to such a program may access the privileges of enrollment at both institutions while he is enrolled at either institution. Such agreements are subject to the admissions requirements of the baccalaureate public institutions of higher education.*
- D. The Council shall develop and make available to the public information identifying all general education courses offered at associate-degree-granting public institutions of higher education and designating those that are transferable for course credit at baccalaureate public institutions of higher education and baccalaureate private institutions of higher education.*