



Virginia Public Higher Education Policy on Passport and Uniform Certificate of General Studies Programs

Adopted by Council: July 16, 2019

(Updated August 8, 2021)

Code of Virginia §23.1-203 states:

The Council shall: Develop, pursuant to the provisions of [§ 23.1-907](#), guidelines for articulation, dual admissions, and guaranteed admissions agreements, including guidelines related to a one-year Uniform Certificate of General Studies Program and a one-semester Passport Program to be offered at each comprehensive community college. The guidelines developed pursuant to this subdivision shall be developed in consultation with all public institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth, the Department of Education, and the Virginia Association of School Superintendents and shall ensure standardization, quality, and transparency in the implementation of the programs and agreements. At the discretion of the Council, private institutions of higher education eligible for tuition assistance grants may also be consulted.

The policy guidelines offered here apply to implementation of the Passport and Uniform Certificate of General Studies (UCGS) Programs required by [§ 23.1-907 \(B\)-\(C\)](#).

- 1) The Passport is a 16-credit hour two-year college program in which all courses are transferable and shall satisfy a lower-division general education requirement at any public institution of higher education. Passport courses may satisfy a general education requirement without having a specific course equivalent at the receiving institution.
- 2) The Passport shall be a component of the UCGS.
- 3) The UCGS is a 30 to 32 credit hour program where all courses shall be transferable and satisfy a lower-division general education requirement at any public institution of higher education. UCGS courses may satisfy a general education requirement without having a specific course equivalent at the receiving institution.
- 4) A grade of C or better is required on all coursework for students to earn a Passport or UCGS.

* This policy applies to all four-year public institutions of higher education except Virginia Military Institute, as per Code of Virginia § 23.1-907(H).

- 5) Credit awarded for prior learning assessment may be included in both the Passport and UCGS. Four-year review of prior learning is in accordance with the [Virginia Public Higher Education Policy on Course Credit for AP, Cambridge, CLEP, and IB](#). Prior learning includes, but is not limited to, course credit for Advanced Placement, Cambridge, CLEP, IB, or military training. Credit awarded for prior learning is not guaranteed and subject to review upon enrollment at the four-year institution.
- 6) According to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges' accreditation standards, institutions are required to have a general education component to their undergraduate programs that ensures a breadth of knowledge in the areas of humanities/fine arts, social/ behavioral sciences, and natural science/mathematics. A general education course should be taught at college-level and in a manner that does not focus on skills, techniques, or procedures specific to any particular occupation or profession.
- 7) Math requirements differ depending on whether students are pursuing degree programs requiring the study of calculus. Therefore, math offerings included in the Passport and UCGS are divided into two groupings depending on whether they support degree programs requiring calculus or quantitative/statistics pathways. Two-year colleges shall ensure that students receive advisement as to which math course(s) they should take, given the degree program(s) they intend to pursue.
- 8) The Passport and UCGS course roster are approved through a process administered by SCHEV. The roster is included here in Appendix A, and will be posted publicly. Upon completion of the initial Passport and UCGS course roster, any changes are subject to SCHEV approval. Institutions wishing to add, remove, or review a course in the Passport or UCGS roster must submit a request to SCHEV. The *"Request for Modification of Passport or Uniform Certificate of General Studies Course Roster"* can be found in Appendix B.
- 9) For purposes of the Passport and UCGS transferability, four-year institutions will honor the catalog in effect at the time of the student's first enrollment at the two-year institution. For students maintaining continuous enrollment, this entitlement will be in effect for three years from the time of the student's first enrollment at the two-year institution.

- 10) Both the Passport and UCGS shall be made available on the Online Virginia Network.
- 11) SCHEV will prepare a comprehensive annual report on the effectiveness of transfer, elements of that report are listed below;
- completion rates,
 - average time to degree,
 - credit accumulation,
 - post-transfer student academic performance, and
 - comparative efficiency.
- 12) Two-year colleges shall include the Passport and the UCGS in dual enrollment agreements made with school districts.
- 13) § 23.1-907(C) allows institutions to seek a waiver “from the Council from accepting the transfer of a UCGS Program or Passport Program course to satisfy the requirements for the completion of a specific pathway or degree.” Any such waiver must be approved by SCHEV and shall not apply across the board to all programs or pathways, i.e. each waiver request must be tailored to a specific program or pathway.
- Applicability of the Waiver Provision. Generally, the need for a waiver will arise when the same course is accepted toward a general education requirement for one program or pathway but not for another program or pathway. Therefore, waivers must be sought for, and only for, programs or pathways that do not accept a course toward general education that is otherwise normally accepted as a general education course at the institution.
 - Waiver Elements. The waiver request shall provide the name of the institution; institutional contact and title; Passport or UCGS course for which the waiver is requested; an alternative course or courses offered through the two-year institution; and a justification for the waiver in terms of a specific program or pathway.
 - Process. The institution shall submit the “Waiver Request Form” found in Appendix C. Completed forms will be submitted to SCHEV’s Director of Academic Affairs. SCHEV will provide official notice that the waiver has been approved, and the waiver shall remain in effect unless and until the institution notifies SCHEV it is no longer necessary. Two-year institutions will be notified upon approval.

APPENDIX: Code Sections

Code of Virginia:

§ 23.1-203 (20). Duties of Council

20. Develop, pursuant to the provisions of [§ 23.1-907](#), guidelines for articulation, dual admissions, and guaranteed admissions agreements, including guidelines related to a one-year Uniform Certificate of General Studies Program and a one-semester Passport Program to be offered at each comprehensive community college. The guidelines developed pursuant to this subdivision shall be developed in consultation with all public institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth, the Department of Education, and the Virginia Association of School Superintendents and shall ensure standardization, quality, and transparency in the implementation of the programs and agreements. At the discretion of the Council, private institutions of higher education eligible for tuition assistance grants may also be consulted.

§ 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. Such guaranteed admissions agreements may provide for the guaranteed admission of a student who earns an associate degree concurrently with a high school diploma through a dual enrollment program, in addition to any guaranteed admission for a student who earns an associate degree post-high school.

B. The System, in cooperation with the Council and each public institution of higher education, and consistent with the guidelines developed pursuant to subdivision 20 of [§ 23.1-203](#), shall establish a one-semester Passport Program and a one-year Uniform Certificate of General Studies Program. The Passport Program shall consist of 15 course credit hours and shall be a component of the 30-credit-hour Uniform Certificate of General Studies Program. Each Uniform Certificate of General Studies Program and Passport Program course shall be transferable and shall satisfy a lower division general education requirement at any public institution of higher education. The Uniform

Certificate of General Studies Program and Passport Program shall be available at each comprehensive community college and through the Online Virginia Network.

C. The Council shall establish procedures under which a baccalaureate public institution of higher education may seek a waiver from the Council from accepting the transfer of a Uniform Certificate of General Studies Program or Passport Program course to satisfy the requirements for the completion of a specific pathway or degree. A waiver shall not be granted allowing a baccalaureate public institution to (i) generally reject the transfer of all coursework that is a part of the Uniform Certificate of General Studies Program or Passport Program or (ii) generally reject the transfer of a course from the Uniform Certificate of General Studies Program or Passport Program for all pathway maps and degrees. An application for a waiver shall identify with particularity the course for which the institution is seeking a waiver and the particular pathway or degree to which the waiver would apply. The application shall provide justification for the waiver and shall designate alternative courses offered through the System that may be completed by a student in order to complete a transferable, 30-credit-hour Uniform Certificate or 15-credit-hour Passport. The Council shall adopt guidelines regarding the criteria to be used to review and issue decisions regarding waiver requests. Such waiver requests shall only be granted if the baccalaureate public institution of higher education provides evidence that the specified pathway or degree requires a specialized, lower division course not available through the System. Once approved, notice of a waiver granted by the Council shall be included in the online portal established pursuant to [§ 23.1-908](#).

D. The Council shall develop guidelines for associate-degree-granting and baccalaureate public institutions of higher education to use in mapping pathways for the completion of credits in particular programs of study, including the courses recommended to be taken in a dual enrollment, comprehensive community college, and baccalaureate public institution setting in order to pursue a specific degree or career. Such guidelines shall define the elements of a pathway map and identify the pathway maps to be developed. Initial guidelines adopted for mapping such pathways shall establish a multiyear schedule for the development and implementation of pathway maps for all fields of study.

E. Each baccalaureate public institution of higher education, in cooperation and consultation with the System, shall develop pathway maps consistent with the guidelines established pursuant to subsection D. Such pathways maps shall clearly set

forth the courses that a student at a comprehensive community college is encouraged to complete prior to transferring to the baccalaureate institution. The goal of the career education pathway maps shall be to assist students in achieving optimal efficiencies in the time and cost of completing a degree program. Such program map shall also clearly identify the courses, if any, for which the baccalaureate institution has received a waiver from transfer pursuant to subsection C.

F. The Council shall prepare a comprehensive annual report on the effectiveness of transferring from comprehensive community colleges to baccalaureate public institutions of higher education, including a review of the effectiveness of the use of pathway maps in achieving efficiencies and cost savings in the completion of a degree program. The report shall include the following elements: completion rates, average time to degree, credit accumulation, post-transfer student academic performance, and comparative efficiency. The Council shall adopt guidelines for data submission from public institutions of higher education necessary for such report, and all institutions shall report such data in accordance with the guidelines. The report shall be made publicly available on the Council website and on the online portal maintained pursuant to [§ 23.1-908](#).

G. Each comprehensive community college shall develop agreements for postsecondary 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, the Passport Program, or the Uniform Certificate of General Studies Program 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.

H. The provisions of this section shall not apply to any public institution of higher education established pursuant to Chapter 25 ([§ 23.1-2500](#) et seq.).