

Virginia Public Higher Education Policy on Course Credit for AP, Cambridge, CLEP, and IB

(Approved by Council action March 21, 2016; revised by Council October 27, 2020)

Virginia Code §23.1-906, enacted by the 2015 General Assembly, states:

- A. The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (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 each public institution of higher education's course credit or other academic requirements 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.

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) promulgates the policy guidelines below in fulfillment of the duty described by §23.1-906, and in accord with its general responsibility to establish policies for public higher education in the commonwealth, as per §23.1-203:15¹.

Prologue

The purpose of the Virginia Public Higher Education Policy on Course Credit for AP, Cambridge, CLEP, and IB (the Policy) is to facilitate consistency, to the extent possible, across institutions in credit granting policies related to the referenced assessments.

¹ “The State Council of Higher Education shall . . . adopt such rules and regulations as the Council believes necessary to implement all of the Council's duties and responsibilities as set forth in this Code. The various public institutions of higher education shall comply with such rules and regulations.”

In keeping with priorities of the General Assembly, Governor, and Council, this Policy intends to

- maximize students' ability to earn college credit consistent with institutions' academic standards;
- enhance transparency for Virginia students seeking course credit for prior learning;
- contribute to lower costs for Virginia families by enhancing students' ability to complete a degree in a timely manner;
- improve the college transfer environment; and
- support quality of undergraduate education at Virginia public institutions.

Guidelines

I. Each public institution of higher education shall approve a policy or policies governing the granting of course credit to entering first year students according to their performance on the following assessments:

- Advanced Placement
- Cambridge International AS and A Levels
- College-Level Examination Program (CLEP)
- International Baccalaureate

Institutional policies shall conform to parameters delineated under section II below.

II. Parameters of Institutional Review and Policy-Setting

A. Each institution shall review AP, Cambridge International, CLEP, and IB exams in comparison to its course offerings and curricular requirements to determine the proper grant of credit for each level of performance at or above the minima specified:

1. (3) or higher on an Advanced Placement examination
2. (4) or higher on a higher level (HL) International Baccalaureate examination
3. (5) or higher on a standard level (SL) International Baccalaureate examination
4. (50) or higher on a CLEP examination
5. (E) or higher on a Cambridge International AS or A Level examination

- B. Institutional policies shall grant the maximum credit for each level of performance on each assessment consistent with the faculty's review of the content of the assessment and its alignment with the following criteria:
1. institutional curriculum and academic standards;
 2. qualitative and quantitative student success data; and
 3. institutional persistence and completion patterns.
- C. Each institution shall make a submission to SCHEV of its final policies, specifying grants of credit, if any, for each level of performance on each assessment, and providing justification for each case where the minimum threshold for granting credit is above the minimum indicated under II.A above.
- D. Each institution shall review and determine the proper grant of credit for new AP, Cambridge International AS and A Level, CLEP and IB exams, as indicated under II.A and II.B above, at such time as those exams are introduced and evaluation materials become available. Institutions shall provide justification for each case where the minimum threshold for granting credit is above the minimum indicated under II.A above. Such justifications must be approved by SCHEV.
- E. Each institution shall inform SCHEV of any changes to previously-approved credit policies. Changes that eliminate credit or raise the minimum threshold for credit in any exam subject must be accompanied by justification and approved by SCHEV before taking effect.
- F. Additional considerations
1. Students should be given the opportunity to earn the maximum credit consistent with the likelihood of student success and with the faculty's judgment of consistency with the institution's curriculum and academic standards.
 2. The faculty shall have responsibility for specifying all curricular equivalencies for each level of performance on each assessment, to include (but not necessarily to be limited to) the following considerations:
 - a. number of course credits granted;

- b. course designation(s) for which credit is granted;
 - c. general education, program, or other degree requirements satisfied; and
 - d. program-based exceptions to a-c.
3. An institution is not required to award course credit for performance on an assessment whose subject matter is not offered in its curriculum.

III. Process

- A. This Policy takes effect immediately. SCHEV staff and institutional staff and faculty shall cooperate to facilitate approval of institutional policies as expeditiously as possible.
- B. The Director of SCHEV may provide further guidance to institutions and establish whatever processes or advisory groups he judges necessary to facilitate institutions' conformance with this Policy.
- C. Each institution shall make its final policy or policies available on its web site in a format that is easily understood by the general public. SCHEV shall maintain a web resource that includes links to institutional policies.