

State Policy on College Transfer

Approved by Council: May 17, 2022

I. Introduction:

Two to four-year transfer within the Commonwealth is established as an essential pathway 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 goals of improving the transfer process for Virginia's students and increasing access and affordability to a bachelor's degree. 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. This supports equitable access for all students, regardless of the origin of credits within Virginia's diverse public higher education community.

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

- All capable students in the Commonwealth should have equitable 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.

II. Definitions:

Articulation Agreement – A formal agreement between two- and four-year institutions outlining the transfer policies for a specific academic program or degree and specification of course-by-course equivalencies. Articulation agreements enable students following the terms of a transferable associate degree to optimize the completion of a four-year degree after transfer.

Continuous Enrollment – Enrollment for consecutive terms not interrupted by non-attendance. Some institutions may choose to have a more flexible definition of continuous enrollment.

Dual Admissions Agreement – An agreement between two- and four-year institutions granting qualified students simultaneous admission at both institutions of higher education, and specifying applicable co-curricular requirements and privileges.

Dual Enrollment – Coursework taken by high school students under the aegis of an agreement between a public school or district and a public institution of higher education, wherein a student takes coursework that both (i) counts toward high school graduation requirements and (ii) is designed to result in earned college credits.

Guaranteed Admission Agreement (GAA) – An agreement between a two- and a four-year institution according to which a student is guaranteed admission to the four-year institution by earning a transferrable associate degree and satisfying specified academic benchmarks and criteria. A GAA may guarantee general admission to the institution only, or to a specific program of study at the institution. Students transferring under a general admission GAA are not necessarily entitled to be admitted to a specific program.

Guaranteed Program Admission Agreement (GPAA) – An agreement between two- and four-year institutions guaranteeing students earning a transferrable associate degree and reaching specified academic benchmarks admission to a specific program of study.

Passport – 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.

Pathway Map – A planned curriculum between two- and four-year institutions that identifies coursework needed to complete a specified associate degree and its applicability to a specific baccalaureate degree. The map will specify academic requirements for finishing the target baccalaureate program at the four-year institution.

Reverse Transfer Agreement – An agreement specifying the process of retroactively awarding associate degrees to students who did not complete the requirements for an associate degree before transferring from a two- to four-year institution.

Transfer Virginia Portal – An online resource for public access that provides students with transfer-related information, to include transfer agreements, transfer-related resources, course equivalencies, and pathway maps.

Transfer Agreement – Any formal agreement between institutions of higher education that relates to the requirements and privileges that obtain when students move from one institution to another. Transfer agreements include but are not limited to articulation agreements, dual admission agreements, and GAAs.

Transfer Associate Degree – An associate degree that follows a baccalaureate-oriented sequence of courses. In Virginia, transfer degrees are the SCHEV-recognized Associate of Arts, the Associate of Science, the Associate of Arts and Sciences, and the Associate of Fine Arts (AFA). Under specific articulation agreements, some institutions may develop articulation agreements for the Associate of Applied Arts and the Associate of Applied Sciences for specified degree programs.

Transfer Guide – A statewide template serving as the front-facing student document including the pathway map, requirements and responsibilities for successful transfer as defined through transfer agreements, and pertinent information related to transfer.

Uniform Certificate of General Studies – 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.

University Parallel Coursework – A course at one institution of higher education which has comparable learning outcomes or objectives as those at another higher education institution. These are baccalaureate-level courses designed for transfer and satisfy accrediting body quality standards for courses taught at the baccalaureate-level.

III. Equitable Access and Opportunity

Two to four year transfer is an important pathway to the baccalaureate that supports the pursuit of economic opportunity for disadvantaged Virginians, including Virginians living with disabilities. However, the mere existence of a pathway is not sufficient to realize this opportunity as fully as possible. Pathways must be implemented effectively and relevant information routinely gathered to support transfer student success. Therefore, institutions should routinely review data to assess equity and opportunity in student access and identify barriers to degree completion for transfer students. This review should include disaggregated data where available, to reveal trends by student groups, programs and/or institutions.

IV. Admissions

1. Senior institutions have authority over institutional and programmatic admission decisions. Each senior institution shall have an institutional 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 access to students graduating from Virginia's associate-degree granting institutions who meet admission requirements.
3. Admissions priority shall be given to transfer 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, including programs with competitive admission, shall provide an 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. Guaranteed program admission agreements may exist for specific programs or majors which outline the parameters for admission. Any specific program, major, minor, or concentration of study admission requirements shall be included in all transfer agreements, pathway maps, and transfer guides. Additionally, this information shall be included in the Transfer Virginia Portal.
5. Virginia's senior institutions shall develop policies addressing the admission of transfer students not completing a transferable associate degree. These policies should consider course completion, earned credit, academic standing, and whether the student possesses an applied associate degree, Passport, or Uniform Certificate of General Studies (UCGS). 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 transferable associate degree concurrent with high school, in accordance with Code of Virginia § 22.1-253.13:1(D)(10), § 23.1-907(E), and the *Virginia Public Higher Education Policy Guidelines for the Development of Transfer Agreements*.
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 *Virginia Public Higher Education Policy Guidelines for the Development of Transfer Agreements* (further referred to as Guidelines for Transfer with the Virginia Community College System and Richard Bland College.
9. Institutional admission policies should be included in the Transfer Virginia Portal resource center.

V. 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 specific requirements for all students.
2. Policies addressing the acceptance and application of credits earned via dual enrollment will be in accordance with the *Virginia Public Higher Education Policy for Dual Enrollment Transferability*.
3. 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 shall be considered to have met the lower division general education requirements of the senior institution 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.
4. The acceptance and application of credits for students earning a Passport or UCGS shall be in accordance with the *Virginia Public Higher Education Policy on Passport and Uniform Certificate of General Studies Programs*.
5. Development of programmatic pathways shall follow the policy guidelines established by the *Public Higher Education Policy Guidelines for the Development of Pathway Maps*.
6. All Virginia public institutions shall develop policies addressing. Policies addressing CPL should provide a clear description of the CPL review process, address the acceptance of CPL awarded by other institutions prior to transfer, address student expectation of credit acceptance, and address the application of credits toward general education when CPL is included as part of the Passport, UCGS, or an associate degree.

7. 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*.
8. With regard to courses offered in distance education modalities:
 - 1) Course content, not method of course delivery (pedagogy), should be the primary determining factor in the acceptance of credit in transfer between Virginia's two- and four-year public colleges and universities.
 - 2) For students completing online courses at a public two-year Virginia college prior to transfer, the two-year and four-year institutions will accept and apply the course work for all subject areas, including lab sciences, toward meeting general education requirements. Students majoring in the natural sciences may be required to complete in-person labs for lower division science courses.
9. Institutional policies governing the acceptance and application of credits should be included in the Transfer Virginia Portal resource center.

VI. Communication and Information

1. Code of Virginia § 23.1-908 requires the creation of an online state transfer portal that allows public access to transfer agreements, documents, and other transfer-related resources. All institutions shall maintain and update information housed in the State Transfer Portal in accordance with agreed upon portal practices. The online portal shall be available to the public on the websites of the Council, the System, and each public institution of higher education.
2. 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.

VII. 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.

- Serves as the initial point of contact for the development and modification of transfer agreements.
 - 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.
 4. Two- and four-year institutions shall participate in SCHEV coordinated review and maintenance of program pathways maps in accordance with the *Public Higher Education Policy Guidelines for the Development of Pathway Maps*.

VIII. 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 should register with the online Transfer Virginia Portal to plan their course of study and explore institutional options. Students are encouraged to identify as early as possible the senior institution and program into which they would like to transfer. Subsequently, students should contact that institution by filling out the notification of intent to transfer within the Transfer Virginia Portal. 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.

IX. 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. SCHEV will prepare a comprehensive annual report on the effectiveness of transfer which includes completion rate, average time to degree, credit accumulation, post-transfer student academic performance, and comparative efficiency.