



Guidelines on Award of Academic Credit for Military Education, Training and Experience by Virginia Public Higher Education Institutions

Approved by Council: January 10, 2023

The Commonwealth of Virginia is committed to fostering an educated and skilled workforce, which is essential for economic prosperity and meaningful work for its citizens. Increased enrollment in – and successful completion of – postsecondary education programs is critical to achieving that goal. The Commonwealth of Virginia is also committed to serving the needs of its military and veteran population. Virginia Code §23.1-904, established by the 2012 General Assembly and amended in 2022, states:

The governing boards of each public institution of higher education shall, in accordance with guidelines developed by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, implement policies for the purpose of awarding academic credit to students for education, experience, training and credentials gained from service in the armed forces of the United States.

This document (henceforth referred to as the “Guidelines”) was developed in fulfillment of the General Assembly’s charge to SCHEV and the public institutions of higher education. It is intended to promote the goal of having a military-friendly system of higher education while preserving the unique missions and autonomy of the institutions.

Statement of Principles

The following principles form the foundation of these Guidelines:

1. The implementation of policies that provide flexibility and clarity to students in regard to the award of credit for military education, experience, training, and credentials will help to increase degree and certification completion among this population, thus contributing to attainment goals of Virginia’s strategic plan for higher education: <https://www.schev.edu/research-publications/strategic-plan>.
2. Students who have served in the armed forces, or who continue to serve while enrolled in a higher education program, are particularly reliant upon the flexible transfer of credits, because many of those completing a degree or certificate do not do so at the institution at which they first enrolled. Such students are entitled to

transparency, consistency, and clarity with regard to institutions' program requirements and the availability of credit for prior learning and experience.

3. Virginia's system of public higher education has a duty to ensure that military related students are able to access the full range of federal and state educational benefits to which they are entitled according to their military status. Institutions should preserve their overall eligibility for participation in federal programs. Institutional credit transfer policies should not cause students to repeat coursework unnecessarily and thus jeopardize their ability to complete a program prior to the expiration of their individual eligibility for military education benefits.

Guidelines for Institutional Policies

A. Elements of Guidelines:

Each two- and four-year public institution of higher education shall develop and implement processes for awarding credit to students for military education and training through prior learning assessment (the award of credit for learning that occurs outside of the academic setting).

1. Each institution shall develop a process for academic record evaluation and the awarding of directly equivalent transfer credit, and elective credit as beneficial to the student, for military education, experience, training, and credentials. This review process should be transparent and may include, but not be limited to:
 - a. Awarding credit for appropriate learning acquired in military service at levels consistent with the American Council on Education (ACE) Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services and/or those transcribed by the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF).
 - b. Awarding credit for a qualifying score on a national for-credit examination. 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 (<https://www.schev.edu/home/showpublisheddocument/1624/6378260495644000>). Prior learning includes, but is not limited to, course credit for Advanced Placement, Cambridge, CLEP, IB, or DSST exams. Credit awarded for prior learning is not guaranteed and subject to review upon enrollment at the four-year institution.
 - c. Awarding credit based upon individualized portfolio evaluation, which may be conducted by faculty at the individual colleges.
2. Institutional policies shall provide for disclosure to students of any academic residency requirements pertaining to the student's program of study, including total and any final year or final semester residency requirement, at or before the time the student enrolls in the program. If an institution has a residency requirement that

exceeds the minimum required by SACS-COC, there should also be a process for waiver, on a case-by-case basis—e.g., when a student would be compelled to continue enrollment past the expiration of his or her military education benefits.

3. Awarding of credit is ultimately the purview of each individual institution. Institutional policies should (i) respect credit awarded by other accredited institutions to the greatest extent possible; (ii) describe the process by which the institution evaluates such credit; and (iii) provide that any denials of credit will include documentation of an educationally grounded rationale.
4. Nothing in these Guidelines shall be construed to require institutions to award credit for coursework that is not offered, or is not reasonably comparable to coursework offered, by the institution.

B. Implementation:

1. Following adoption of policies addressing the Guidelines listed above, each institution shall provide a transparent method of disclosing its policies to current and prospective students, including posting on its website whether methods of prior learning assessment listed in Guideline 1 are or are not utilized by the institution.
2. Each institution shall designate a staff member or office who will serve as the responsible party in matters regarding transfer credit for military education and training. The contact information for this function shall be made available to students, through posting on an appropriate page on the institution's website.
3. Each institution shall upload to the Transfer Virginia Portal, and map to programs, any currently established course equivalents, beginning immediately; going forward, new course equivalents shall be uploaded as they are established.
4. Each institution shall review its policies and processes and make any changes necessary for compliance with the January 2023 update to these Guidelines.
5. SCHEV staff will perform a periodic review of these Guidelines and of institutional compliance with the assistance of the Military Education Advisory Committee and the State Committee on Transfer.