

## Public Higher Education Policy Guidelines for the Development of Transfer Agreements

(Adopted by Council: October 27, 2020)

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 the development and implementation of articulation, dual admission, and guaranteed admission agreements required by [§ 23.1-908 \(B\)](#). These guidelines are intended to support a framework for an efficient and effective system of transfer that provides clarity to students, so they can maximize their ability to complete a baccalaureate program within the designed timeframe and with no loss of credit. These guidelines should be used in conjunction with the *State Policy on College Transfer* when developing transfer agreements between two- and four-year institutions. Private institutions wishing to develop transfer agreements with public two-year institutions will need to create agreements based on these guidelines.

### **I. 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 the agreement to optimize the completion of a four-year degree after transfer.

**Continuous Enrollment** – Enrollment not interrupted by non-attendance for consecutive terms. 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 (or specified 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.

**Statewide Transfer 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, and the Associate of Arts and Sciences. Under specific articulation agreements, some institutions may develop articulation agreements for the transfer of the Associate of Fine Arts, 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-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.

## **II. Guidelines Applicable to all Transfer Agreements**

- 1) Pursuant to Code of Virginia §23.1-907(A), each public four-year institution shall develop articulation, dual admission, and guaranteed admission agreements with each public two-year institution. To the extent possible, articulation and guaranteed program admission agreements should be between the VCCS and the four-year institution to ensure uniform application to all community colleges.
- 2) Transfer agreements are intended to reduce the time-to-degree for students with an approved transfer associate degree by providing students with specific information on the transferability of programs and courses as well as the applicability of courses within a given program.
- 3) Students completing a transfer associate degree earned concurrently with high school may be classified as first-time in college students upon enrollment at a public four-year institution. Any distinction on student classification or additional institutional requirements should be specified in any applicable transfer agreements and student advisory materials. Evaluation of dual enrollment coursework is subject to the requirements outlined in the [\*Virginia Public Higher Education Policy for Dual Enrollment Transferability\*](#).
- 4) Pursuant to Code of Virginia § 23.1-908(C), each public institution shall re-negotiate its transfer agreements upon catalog publication of any program modifications that affect the terms of such agreements. Re-negotiated transfer agreements (and any other relevant transfer-related documents and resources) shall be provided to the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) and Richard Bland College (RBC).
- 5) Public four-year institutions shall develop transfer agreements that address the general education and programmatic requirements for admission into the senior institution and specific program(s) of study.
- 6) Consistent with the State Policy on College Transfer, transfer students following a prescribed transfer agreement will be assured equitable treatment by the senior institution and afforded the same academic program opportunities provided to native students in similar circumstances.
- 7) Each transfer agreement shall include the following components if and when applicable:

- (i) the obligations of each student accepted in such program or institution, including admission grade point average requirements, acceptable associate degree majors, and completion timetables;
  - (ii) four-year pathway maps outlining a four-year sequence of courses, transfer-course equivalents, the inclusion of the Passport and Uniform Certificate of General Studies, and any waivers granted by SCHEV consistent with the *Virginia Public Higher Education Policy on Passport and Uniform Certificate of General Studies Programs*;
  - (iii) information on the application of the agreement to dual enrollment students completing a transferable associate degree concurrently with high school; and
  - (iv) any other information required by law or deemed relevant by the institution.
- 8) Students completing a SCHEV-recognized transferrable associate degree under a transfer agreement shall be considered to have met the lower-division general education requirement of the senior institution.
- 9) For the purposes of the transfer agreement, four-year institutions will honor the catalog in effect at the time of the student's first post high school enrollment at the two-year institution. For students maintaining continuous enrollment, this entitlement will be in effect for a minimum of four years from the time of the student's first enrollment at the two-year institution. Students must enroll at the four-year institution within one year of completing their associate degree.
- 10) The transfer agreement should have a simplified student-facing document that clearly articulates the admission criteria and a four-year pathway map. This document will follow a standardized format defined as the Transfer Guide (Appendix A).
- 11) Institutions should allow students to declare, via the online-portal, their intent to transfer to the four-year institution(s) of their choosing.
- 12) Transfer agreements, documents, and other transfer-related resources will be housed in Virginia's Statewide Transfer Portal, as required by Code of Virginia § 23.1-908(C).

### **III. Agreement Specific Guidelines**

#### **A. Articulation Agreements**

- 1) Articulation agreements with the VCCS and RBC guarantee all articulated credit defined within the program's pathway map will be awarded by the four-year institution and apply to programmatic and institutional graduation requirements.
- 2) Each articulation agreement should clearly outline the necessary requirements for a student to gain direct admission into a specific program of study.

- 3) Articulation agreements shall provide a detailed pathway map that corresponds to a four-year program of study at the senior institution.
- 4) Admission to specific degree programs will be afforded equitably to native and transfer students. Transfer students following the prescribed four-year pathway map as set forth in the articulation agreement shall be evaluated the same as native students for admission to competitive admission programs.

### **B. Dual Admissions Agreements**

- 1) Consistent with Code of Virginia § 23.1-907(A), four-year institutions shall develop dual admission agreements.
- 2) In accordance with Code of Virginia § 23.1-908(B) dual admission 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 enrolled at either institution.
- 3) Students taking advantage of a dual admission agreement shall not be subject to any other admission requirements of the four-year institutions if all provisions of the dual admissions agreement are satisfied

### **C. Guaranteed Admission Agreements**

- 1) GAA's should provide students with certainty in their plans to transfer seamlessly from a two- to four-year institution and clearly articulate necessary qualifications for students to gain admission. There should be no additional admission requirements beyond what is in the GAA.
- 2) The GAA shall guarantee admission to a public senior institution for students earning a SCHEV-recognized transfer associate degree and who meet established institutional admission requirements.
- 3) To maximize transfer efficiency and student benefit, institutions should develop guaranteed program admission agreements (GPAA) where possible.
- 4) GAA's with the VCCS and RBC should be structured so that if a student follows the parameters of the GAA, all course credit taken at the two-year institution will count toward completion of the baccalaureate degree. GAA's shall make explicit any conditions or exceptions (e.g., prior learning credit or program-specific requirements)

that could result in loss of credit. These exceptions or conditions shall be publicized and included in the Transfer Guide as well as the GAA.

- 5) As per Code of Virginia [§ 23.1-907\(A\)](#) GAA's 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. The GAA's will state whether the four-year will or will not guarantee admission to high school students earning a transferable associate degree through dual enrollment, and if not, outline the terms of transfer that will be honored.

### **Reverse Transfer Agreements:**

- 1) Reverse transfer agreements are not mandated by code. However, institutions that opt to develop reverse transfer agreements are subject to the general transfer agreement provisions of this policy in addition to the reverse transfer specific guidelines below.
- 2) Reverse transfer agreements will retroactively apply the benefits of a transferable associate degree as identified in these policy guidelines and the State Policy on College Transfer to students having completed a minimum of 45 credits prior to transfer. Four-year institutions may elect to apply the same benefits to any reverse transfer student completing an associate degree. These include, but are not limited to, awarding satisfaction of lower-division general education requirements and qualification for transfer-specific state-level financial aid.
- 3) Institutions opting to develop reverse transfer agreements should consult the [Virginia Reverse Transfer Tool Kit and Resource Guide](#) and apply given recommendations whenever possible to promote consistent application of reverse transfer and maximize the number of students served.



## TRANSFER GUIDANCE

### <<AGREEMENT TYPE & NAME>>

By meeting the following criteria, you are <<Agreement Descriptor>>:

- <<Agreement Criteria 1>>
- <<Agreement Criteria 2>>
- <<Agreement Criteria 3>>
- <<Agreement Criteria 4>>

### IMPORTANT LINKS & DATES:

- University Transfer Center: <<transferURL>>
- Register Intent to Transfer: By <<Intent Date>> at [Portal Link]
- Admission Application: By <<Application Date> at <<Application Link>>
- Financial Aid: <<Financial Aid Link>>
- FAFSA - Free Application for Federal Student Aid: <<FAFSA Date>> at studentaid.gov

### WHAT SHOULD I CONSIDER WHEN SELECTING COURSES?

- <<Course Selections>>
- Create a schedule for all required courses, pay attention to prerequisites and when courses are offered, complete your first math and English courses in your first year: [Portal Worksheet Link]
- Connect with an advisor at your community college and <<University Name>> within your first year: [Portal Register Intent link]

### IS THIS DEGREE RIGHT FOR ME?

- <<Is Degree Right for Me Criteria 1>>
- <<Is Degree Right for Me Criteria 2>>
- <<Is Degree Right for Me Criteria 3>>
- <<Is Degree Right for Me Criteria 4>>

### WHAT IS THE IMPACT ON MY DEGREE OF WORK I HAVE ALREADY COMPLETED?

- Associate Transfer Degree Completion: <<AssocDegreeTransfer>>
- Credit for Prior Learning: <<acceptsCPL>>
- Catalog Year: <<ferStudentCatalog>>
- Dual Enrollment – Completion of Associate Degree in HS: <<Dual Enrollment – Completion of Associate Degree concurrent with HS>>

### IS THIS COLLEGE RIGHT FOR ME?

- <<Collegent Criteria 1>>
- <<Collegent Criteria 2>>
- <<Collegent Criteria 3>>
- <<Collegent Criteria 4>>

Learn more at: [Portal University Profile Link]

### DID YOU KNOW THAT...

- Completing your Associate transfer degree post-high school satisfies all lower division general education requirements and increases the chance of completing your bachelor's degree?
- Exceeding 3 years or 90 credits at your community college means you may have exhausted your financial aid at that college and have limited your future financial aid at <<University Name>>?

### WHAT CAN I DO WITH THIS DEGREE?

Explore possible careers, salaries, and job outlook at: [Portal Careers Link]

### PROGRAM SUCCESSES & HIGHLIGHTS

- <<Program Successes & Highlights 1>>
- <<Program Successes & Highlights 2>>
- <<Program Successes & Highlights 3>>

### WHAT ARE MY CHANCES FOR GETTING ACCEPTED?

- <<TransferAcceptPercent>>
- <<Transfer Profile Info 1>>
- Learn more at: [Portal University Profile Link]

### DO MORE WITH YOUR DEGREE!

- <<Do More With Degree 1>>
- <<Do More With Degree 2>>
- <<Do More With Degree 3>>

### OTHER THAN CLASSES, ARE THERE OTHER PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS?

- <<Program Requirement 1>>
- <<Program Requirement 2>>
- <<Program Requirement 3>>

## Appendix B: 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.).