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OFFICE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Colorado Statute Related to Prior Learning Assessment

Colorado Legislation Pertaining to Credit for Prior Learning

Colorado law (CRS 23-1-125) requires the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) to work with public institutions of higher education to define a process for students to test out of core courses. This may include specifying use of a nation test or criteria for approving institutional exams. Law also requires that each institution make public its policy for determining credit for prior learning.

Colorado law does not: 1) give the CCHE authority to determine standards for awarding credit; 2) set conditions for the transferability of credit for by exam; 3) require a process or policy for awarding credit for courses outside the core curriculum.

Sections 3, 4 and 4.5 of CRS 23-1-125 are provided below. The full text of CRS 23-1-125 is provided at the end of this document.

(3) Core courses. The department, in consultation with each Colorado public institution of higher education, is directed to outline a plan to implement a core course concept that defines the general education course guidelines for all public institutions of higher education. The core of courses shall be designed to ensure that students demonstrate competency in reading, critical thinking, written communication, mathematics, and technology. The core of courses shall consist of at least thirty credit hours but shall not exceed forty credit hours. Individual institutions of higher education shall conform their own core course requirements with the guidelines developed by the department and shall identify the specific courses that meet the general education course guidelines. Any such guidelines developed by the department shall be submitted to the commission for its approval. In creating and adopting the guidelines, the department and the commission, in collaboration with the public institutions of higher education, may make allowances for baccalaureate programs that have additional degree requirements recognized by the commission. If a statewide matrix of core courses is adopted by the commission, the courses identified by the individual institutions as meeting the general education course guidelines shall be included in the matrix. The commission shall adopt such policies to ensure that institutions develop the most effective way to implement the transferability of core course credits.

(4) Competency testing. On or before July 1, 2010, the commission shall, in consultation with each public institution of higher education, define a process for students to test out of core courses, including specifying use of a national test or the criteria for approving institutionally devised tests. Beginning in the 2010-11 academic year, each public institution of higher education shall grant full course credits to students for the core courses they successfully test out of, free of tuition for those courses.

(4.5) Prior learning. Beginning in the 2013-14 academic year, each public institution of higher education shall adopt and make public a policy or program to determine academic credit for prior learning.

Colorado law (CRS 23-1-113.2) specifically addresses the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma. It requires each public institution of higher education to have a policy for the acceptance of first-time freshmen who have successfully completed the IB diploma program. The institution's governing board determines the level of performance needed to grant credits and the number of credits to be granted, but an institution must award at least 24 credit hours unless the student received a score of less than 4 on an exam. The governing board determines the specific general education or elective requirements that are satisfied by successfully completing the IB diploma and the conditions that must be met to receive credits. Application of credits to gtPathways courses is not specified.

Although the law sets a minimum number of credits that must be awarded for students who complete the program and score at least a 4 on all exams, it explicitly state that governing boards determine the standards for awarding credit and the course requirements that can be met with IB credit.

Sections 2c and 2d of CRS 12-1-113.2 are provided below. The full text of CRS 23-1-113.2 is provided at the end of this document.

(c) Each governing board shall set the number of credits the institution may grant to a student who has successfully completed an international baccalaureate diploma program. Except as otherwise provided in paragraph (d) of this subsection (2), the number of credits granted by an institution shall be, at a minimum, twenty-four semester credits or their equivalent. Each governing board shall identify the specific general education or elective requirements that the student satisfies by having successfully completed the international baccalaureate diploma program and shall outline the conditions necessary to award the credits.

(d) Each institution may determine the level of student performance necessary to grant the credits, as measured by a student's exam performance in the specific courses constituting the international baccalaureate diploma program. An institution may only grant less than twenty-four semester credits or their equivalent if the student has received a score of less than four on an exam administered as part of the international baccalaureate diploma program, in which case the number of semester credits or their equivalent granted by the institution shall be reduced accordingly.

TITLE 23. POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION
STATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES
ARTICLE 1. COLORADO COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION

C.R.S. 23-1-125 (2015)

23-1-125. Commission directive - student bill of rights - degree requirements - implementation of core courses - competency test - prior learning

(1) Student bill of rights. The general assembly hereby finds that students enrolled in public institutions of higher education shall have the following rights:

(a) Students should be able to complete their associate of arts and associate of science degree programs in no more than sixty credit hours or their baccalaureate programs in no more than one hundred twenty credit hours unless there are additional degree requirements recognized by the commission;

(b) A student can sign a two-year or four-year graduation agreement that formalizes a plan for that student to obtain a degree in two or four years, unless there are additional degree requirements recognized by the commission;

(c) Students have a right to clear and concise information concerning which courses must be completed successfully to complete their degrees;

(d) Students have a right to know which courses are transferable among the state public two-year and four-year institutions of higher education;

(e) Students, upon completion of core general education courses, regardless of the delivery method, should have those courses satisfy the core course requirements of all Colorado public institutions of higher education;

(f) Students have a right to know if courses from one or more public higher education institutions satisfy the students' degree requirements;

(g) A student's credit for the completion of the core requirements and core courses shall not expire for ten years from the date of initial enrollment and shall be transferrable.

(2) Degree requirements. The commission shall establish a standard of a one-hundred-twenty-hour baccalaureate degree, not including specific professional degree programs that have additional degree requirements recognized by the commission.

(3) Core courses. The department, in consultation with each Colorado public institution of higher education, is directed to outline a plan to implement a core course concept that defines the general education course guidelines for all public institutions of higher education. The core of courses shall be designed to ensure that students demonstrate competency in reading, critical thinking, written communication, mathematics, and technology. The core of courses shall consist of at least thirty credit hours but shall not exceed forty credit hours. Individual institutions of higher education shall conform their own core course requirements with the guidelines developed by the department and shall identify the specific courses that meet the general education course guidelines. Any such guidelines developed by the department shall be submitted to the commission for its approval. In creating and adopting the guidelines, the department and the commission, in collaboration with the public institutions of higher education, may make allowances for baccalaureate programs that have additional degree requirements recognized by the commission. If a statewide matrix of core courses is adopted by the commission, the courses identified by the individual institutions as meeting the general education course guidelines shall be included in the matrix. The commission shall adopt such policies to ensure that institutions develop the most effective way to implement the transferability of core course credits.

(4) Competency testing. On or before July 1, 2010, the commission shall, in consultation with each public institution of higher education, define a process for students to test out of core courses, including

specifying use of a national test or the criteria for approving institutionally devised tests. Beginning in the 2010-11 academic year, each public institution of higher education shall grant full course credits to students for the core courses they successfully test out of, free of tuition for those courses.

(4.5) Prior learning. Beginning in the 2013-14 academic year, each public institution of higher education shall adopt and make public a policy or program to determine academic credit for prior learning.

(5) Nonpublic institutions of higher education. (a) (I) A nonpublic institution of higher education may choose to conform its core course requirements with, or adopt core course requirements that meet, the general education course guidelines developed by the department pursuant to subsection (3) of this section and identify the specific courses that meet the general education course guidelines. The nonpublic institution of higher education may require all of the students enrolled in the institution to take the core course requirements that are conformed or adopted as provided in this paragraph (a) or may require only those students who are concurrently enrolled, pursuant to article 35 of title 22, C.R.S., in a high school and in the nonpublic institution of higher education to take said core course requirements.

(II) The core course requirements that a nonpublic institution of higher education conforms or adopts pursuant to this paragraph (a) shall comply with the number of credit hours required by the department and shall include courses in each of the subject areas identified by the department. The nonpublic institution of higher education shall submit to the department a description of its core course requirements with the initial review fee established pursuant to paragraph (c) of this subsection (5), and the department shall determine whether the nonpublic institution's core course requirements comply with the department's general education course guidelines. If the department determines that the nonpublic institution of higher education's core course requirements comply with the guidelines, then the nonpublic institution's core course credits shall be transferable to public institutions of higher education, and the nonpublic institution of higher education shall accept transfers of core course credits from the public institutions of higher education.

(b) A nonpublic institution of higher education that chooses to seek transferability of its core course credits pursuant to paragraph (a) of this subsection (5) shall, prior to the beginning of each academic year in which it seeks transferability, allow the department to review its general education core course requirements and its general education courses to ensure that they continue to meet the general education core course guidelines. The department may assess a fee as provided in paragraph (c) of this subsection (5) to offset the costs of the annual review.

(c) The commission, in consultation with the department, shall establish the amounts of the initial review fee and the annual review fee of a nonpublic institution of higher education's general education core course requirements and core courses, which amounts shall not exceed the direct and indirect costs incurred by the department in initially reviewing and in annually reviewing the nonpublic institution's general education core course requirements and core courses. The department is authorized to collect the fees from nonpublic institutions of higher education as provided in paragraphs (a) and (b) of this subsection (5).

(d) On or before March 1, 2016, the commission shall submit to the education committees of the senate and the house of representatives, or any successor committees, a report concerning the implementation of this subsection (5). At a minimum, the report shall include:

(I) The names of the nonpublic institutions of higher education that are participating in the general education core course requirements;

(II) The number of students who have transferred core course credits to or from a nonpublic institution of higher education;

(III) Any issues that have arisen in the course of implementing this subsection (5); and

(IV) Any recommendations for changes to this subsection (5).

(e) As used in this subsection (5), "nonpublic institution of higher education" means an educational institution operating in this state that:

(I) Does not receive state general fund moneys in support of its operating costs;

(II) Admits as regular students only persons having a high school diploma or the recognized equivalent of a high school diploma;

(III) Is accredited by an accrediting agency or association approved by the United States department of education;

(IV) Provides an educational program for which it awards a bachelor's degree or a graduate degree;

(V) Is authorized by the department of higher education to do business in Colorado pursuant to section 23-2-103.3;

(VI) Maintains a physical campus or instructional facility in Colorado; and

(VII) Has been determined by the United States department of education to be eligible to administer federal financial aid programs pursuant to Title IV of the federal "Higher Education Act of 1965", as amended.

HISTORY: Source: L. 2001: Entire section added, p. 1473, § 1, effective June 6. L. 2008: (3) amended, p. 1478, § 17, effective May 28. L. 2010: (4) amended and (5) added, (SB 10-108), ch. 301, p. 1427, § 1, effective May 27. L. 2012: (3) amended, (HB 12-1155), ch. 255, p. 1281, § 8, effective August 8; (4.5) added and (5)(e)(III) amended, (HB 12-1072), ch. 62, p. 223, § 2, effective August 8.

Cross references: For the legislative declaration in the 2012 act adding subsection (4.5) and amending subsection (5)(e)(III), see section 1 of chapter 62, Session Laws of Colorado 2012.

TITLE 23. POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION
STATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES
ARTICLE 1. COLORADO COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION

C.R.S. 23-1-113.2 (2015)

23-1-113.2. Department directive - admission standards for students holding international baccalaureate diplomas

(1) (a) The general assembly hereby finds and declares that:

(I) It is in the best interests of the state to encourage the development and adoption of innovative and effective curricula for high school students;

(II) The international baccalaureate diploma program is an established and well-respected program designed to provide innovative curricula world-wide;

(III) In most other Western educational systems, secondary education includes the equivalent of a thirteenth grade, and the international baccalaureate diploma program conforms to this approach with its rigorous course of study over two years;

(IV) A student who has successfully completed the international baccalaureate diploma program is viewed as a highly attractive student by institutions of higher education due to the student's ambition, work habits, and scholarship;

(V) Nationwide, institutions of higher education recognize the high level of academic sophistication of international baccalaureate students and many offer considerable college credit as an inducement for those students to attend their institutions;

(VI) Many Colorado international baccalaureate students leave the state to attend institutions of higher education that provide attractive offers of credit; and

(VII) It is in the best interests of Colorado to retain the state's best and brightest students who can establish permanent residency and subsequently contribute to the intellectual and economic vitality of the state.

(b) It is therefore the intent of the general assembly in enacting this section that Colorado institutions of higher education be required to adopt comprehensive and reasonable policies to offer credit to international baccalaureate students.

(2) (a) The department shall ensure that each governing board of a state-supported baccalaureate and graduate institution of higher education in the state adopt and implement, for each of the institutions under its control, a policy for the acceptance of first-time freshman students who have successfully completed an international baccalaureate diploma program.

(b) Each governing board shall report the policy adopted and implemented pursuant to paragraph (a) of this subsection (2) to the department and shall make the policy available to the public in an electronic format.

(c) Each governing board shall set the number of credits the institution may grant to a student who has successfully completed an international baccalaureate diploma program. Except as otherwise provided in paragraph (d) of this subsection (2), the number of credits granted by an institution shall be, at a minimum, twenty-four semester credits or their equivalent. Each governing board shall identify the specific general education or elective requirements that the student satisfies by having

successfully completed the international baccalaureate diploma program and shall outline the conditions necessary to award the credits.

(d) Each institution may determine the level of student performance necessary to grant the credits, as measured by a student's exam performance in the specific courses constituting the international baccalaureate diploma program. An institution may only grant less than twenty-four semester credits or their equivalent if the student has received a score of less than four on an exam administered as part of the international baccalaureate diploma program, in which case the number of semester credits or their equivalent granted by the institution shall be reduced accordingly.

(3) The provisions of this section shall not apply to any institution of higher education that has entered into a performance contract with the commission as an exemplary institution of higher education.

HISTORY: Source: L. 2003: Entire section added, p. 1213, § 1, effective August 6. L. 2008: (2)(a) and (2)(b) amended, p. 1474, § 12, effective May 28.