

# **BOARD OF REGENTS BRIEFING PAPER**

## **Credit for Prior Learning**

June 25, 2025

### **BACKGROUND & POLICY CONTEXT OF ISSUE:**

The Board adopted the 2025-31 Strategic Plan, *Success by Design*, in January 2025. Among other things, the plan includes the expansion of credit for prior learning (CPL) policies and practices to improve access, recognize nontraditional learning, and better align credentials with workforce needs. Initial CPL priorities were identified within the context of the Workforce Committee. Subsequently, a presentation highlighting the current challenges and opportunities in CPL was shared with the Board's Workforce Committee and Academic, Research, and Student Affairs (ARSA) Committee in February and March 2025, respectively, with a commitment to bring policy revisions back to the Committees in June 2025. In May 2025, it was determined that the policy revisions should proceed through a single committee for approval. Given that the Workforce Committee initiated the CPL policy work, it will retain responsibility for final approval.

Existing policy (Title 4, Chapter 14, Section 21) provides for institutions to issue credit by examination. Credit by examination is a mechanism employed as a means of evaluating and granting credit for student learning outside of the traditional classroom. Credit by examination is only one method however of earning CPL. Since the inception of this *Handbook* provision, higher education has come to recognize various ways for students to demonstrate to institutions their skills and knowledge gained outside of traditional coursework to demonstrate mastery, not just through a standardized examination.

The Chancellor's Office recommends a revision to Title 4, Chapter 14, Section 21 to update existing credit by examination language by expanding provisions to include the various and most commonly practiced avenues for students to earn CPL. The proposed revisions were shared through the NSHE Academic Affairs Council, Registrars, and Faculty Senate Chairs. Additionally, a revision is proposed to:

- Title 4, Chapter 14, Section 18 – Transfer Courses and Student Appeals – creates a provision to transfer CPL awarded at one institution to another NSHE institution as if the credit was earned through regular study.
- Title 4, Chapter 14, Section 20 – System General Education Requirements – makes conforming changes.
- Title 4, Chapter 16, Section 20 – Community College Admissions to Advanced Standing – removes a duplicative provision.

### **SPECIFIC ACTIONS BEING RECOMMENDED OR REQUESTED:**

Revise Title 4, Chapter 14, Section 21 (Credit by Examination) to expand provisions to include various ways students can earn CPL beyond just that of the traditional examination. Revise Title 4, Chapter 14, Section 18 (Transfer Courses and Student Appeals) to provide transferability of CPL. Revise Title 4, Chapter 14, Section 20 (System General Education Requirements) for conforming changes. Additionally, remove a duplicative provision from Title 4, Chapter 16, Section 20 (Community College Admissions to Advanced Standing).

### **IMPETUS (WHY NOW?):**

Expanding the provisions of CPL aligns with the 2025-31 NSHE Strategic Plan, *Success by Design*, which was approved by the Board in January 2025. The Strategic Plan outlines CPL as a mechanism to combat the sharp drop in adult student population enrolling in NSHE and to support degree attainment for those students who do enroll.

**5. CHECK THE NSHE STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL THAT IS SUPPORTED BY THIS REQUEST:**

- ☒ Access (Increase access to higher education)
- ☒ Success (Improve student success)
- ☒ Close Institutional Performance Gaps
- ☒ Workforce (Meet workforce needs in Nevada)
- ☐ Research (Increase solutions-focused research)
- ☐ Coordination, Accountability, and Transparency (Ensure system coordination, accountability, and transparency)
- ☐ Not Applicable to NSHE Strategic Plan Goals

**INDICATE HOW THE PROPOSAL SUPPORTS THE SPECIFIC STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL**

- CPL increases access to higher education certificates and degrees for non-traditional, returning, and adult learners.
- By awarding credit for the mastery of knowledge and skills obtained outside of the traditional classroom, a student may reduce time to completion and cost of a program.
- Expanding policy to recognize various avenues to award such credit allows students to align experience with programs that propel them into the workforce or further into their careers.

**BULLET POINTS TO SUPPORT REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:**

- Supports the newly adopted NSHE Strategic Plan.
- Provides for a cost effective and time efficient way to complete a program.
- Creates a more inviting climate for returning and adult students.

**POTENTIAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:**

None have been presented.

**ALTERNATIVE(S) TO WHAT IS BEING REQUESTED/RECOMMENDED:**

None have been presented.

**RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE:**

The Chancellor's Office supports the proposal.

**COMPLIANCE WITH BOARD POLICY:**

- ☐ Consistent With Current Board Policy: Title # \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter # \_\_\_\_\_ Section # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☒ Amends Current Board Policy: Title 4, Chapter 14, Sections 18, 20, and 21; Title 4, Chapter 16, Section 20
- ☐ Amends Current Procedures & Guidelines Manual:
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Fiscal Impact: Yes No ☒ X
- Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

**POLICY PROPOSAL**  
**TITLE 4, CHAPTER 14, SECTION 18**  
**System General Education Requirements**

Additions appear in ***boldface italics***; deletions are [~~stricken~~ and bracketed]

Section 18. Transfer Courses and Student Appeals

1. A transfer course is one that is acceptable by a receiving NSHE institution to apply toward an approved degree program at that institution.
2. All upper and lower division baccalaureate level courses are transferable. In general, a baccalaureate level course is one that is commonly offered by a regionally accredited educational institution as being applicable toward a bachelor's degree. Institutions cannot limit the number of transfer credits applicable to degree requirements based on institution type.
3. Each institution shall determine the acceptability of general elective transfer courses, and departmental, college, or other requirements or equivalents shall be forwarded to the appropriate department or college for course evaluation. If general elective credit from a non- NSHE institution is granted by one NSHE institution, then all NSHE institutions shall accept the credit unless the facts on which the original decision was based have changed. Appropriate consultation with the faculty is required throughout the evaluation process.
4. ***Credit for Prior Learning (CPL), once transcribed by an NSHE institution, is transferable on the same basis as if the credit had been earned through regular study at the awarding institution. CPL shall apply toward appropriate general education, degree, or certificate requirements and should not be awarded if it duplicates credit already earned.***
- 5.[4.] A receiving institution shall not require a transfer student to take examinations to validate credit in those courses that are approved as transferable. ***However,*** [~~[-~~  
~~5. Application of credits toward degree requirements is the responsibility of the college and department in which the student is seeking a degree. V]~~validation of course content may be required when lower-division courses are used to satisfy upper-division curricular requirements.
6. Pursuant to *Nevada Revised Statutes* 396.568, an NSHE institution shall not require a student to repeat a course on transfer to a university or State College if an equivalent course was taken and successfully completed at any other NSHE institution, except for programs that have defined a time limit for completion.

- a.** Each NSHE institution shall evaluate military transcripts pursuant to Title 4, Chapter 14, Section 21.
- b.** Student Appeals
  - i. If the institution denies the transfer of credit or the articulation of the credit to the student's degree requirements, the student may appeal the institutional decision.
    - 1. Each institution shall establish an appeal process that must be made available to all students and posted on the institution's website.
    - 2. Courses identified as non-transferrable in the student information system or the originating institution's catalog are not subject to appeal.
    - 3. The institution shall notify the student in writing of the final outcome of the appeal and, if transfer credit or the articulation of credit is denied, the reason for the denial.
  - ii. After all institutional appeal processes are exhausted, a student may submit a request for review of the final institutional decision to the NSHE Articulation Coordinating Committee in accordance with Section 14 of this Chapter.

**POLICY PROPOSAL**  
**TITLE 4, CHAPTER 14, SECTION 20**  
**System General Education Requirements**

Additions appear in ***boldface italics***; deletions are [~~stricken~~ and bracketed]

Section 20. System General Education Requirements

....

3. Courses taken toward the System general education requirements shall not be applied to more than one general education requirement defined in Subsection 1. Credits ***for Prior Learning (CPL)*** [~~earned by examination~~] may apply toward any of the general education requirements defined in Subsections 1 and 2.

....

**POLICY PROPOSAL**  
**TITLE 4, CHAPTER 14, SECTION 21**  
***New Title: Credit for Prior Learning*** [~~by Examination~~]

Additions appear in ***boldface italics***; deletions are [~~stricken~~ and bracketed]

Section 21. Credit ***for Prior Learning*** [~~by Examination~~]

***Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) is defined as the methods used to evaluate and formally recognize learning, knowledge or skills that have been attained outside the traditional academic environment.***

***Institutions shall advise a student regarding the expectations and limitations of CPL, including but not limited to, identifying possible alignment of the student's previous experiences with academic programs and the process for requesting prior learning assessments.***

1. ***Institutionally Reviewed Nationally Recognized Exams*** [~~The following examinations and transcript evaluation are permissible for determining credit for prior learning:~~]
  - a. ***Exams for Postsecondary Credit. Institutions shall evaluate the competencies measured in nationally recognized exams and award credit when the competencies are comparable to the learning outcomes of the college course. Exams include, but are not limited to:***
    - [~~a. College Board Advanced Placement Examination (CBAPE);~~
    - b. ~~College Level Examination Program (CLEP);~~
    - i. [~~e.~~] Excelsior College Exam;
    - ii. [~~d.~~] National League for Nursing Placement Examination (NLN), Profile II;
    - iii. [~~e.~~] National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI);
    - [~~f. International Baccalaureate Diploma Program (IB);~~ ]
    - iv. [~~g.~~] Dantes Subject Standardized Tests (DSST) [~~;~~]; ***and***
    - v. [~~h.~~] ***Other exams as deemed appropriate by the institution.*** [~~American Council on Education (ACE) Corporate Credit; and~~
    - i. ~~Special examinations administered by an academic department.~~]
2. ***System Reviewed Nationally Recognized Exams***

Except as otherwise provided in these Subsections for the CBAPE and IB, each institution shall establish procedures for administering and accepting credit by examination that must be outlined in the course catalog.

a. *The Chancellor's Office shall establish procedures for a collaborative process with faculty for the periodic recommendation to set systemwide course equivalencies for exams including, but not limited to, College Board Advanced Placement Examination (CBAPE), College Level Examination Program (CLEP), and International Baccalaureate Diploma Program (IB), to be presented for consideration by the Academic Affairs Council. A final determination shall be made by the Academic Affairs Council and published on the NSHE website.*

i.[a.] ~~Beginning with the 2016-2017 academic year,~~ S[s]cores of 3, 4, and 5 on the CBAPE shall be accepted for credit ~~[to satisfy electives, general education requirements, or major requirements. Each institution shall publish the CBAPE score course granting policy in accordance with the requirements of this Section in its course catalog and on its Internet website [before the beginning of the 2016-2017 academic year].~~

ii.[b.] ~~[Beginning with the 2020-2021 academic year,~~ S[s]cores of 4, 5, 6, and 7 on the IB higher- level examination and scores of 5, 6, or 7 on the IB standard-level examination shall be accepted for credit ~~[to satisfy electives, general education requirements, or major requirements. Each institution shall publish the IB score course granting policy in accordance with the requirements of this Section in its course catalog and on its Internet website before the beginning of the 2020-2021 academic year].~~

iii. *A score of 50 or higher on a CLEP assessment shall be accepted for credit.*

3. ~~The maximum number of credits that may be earned to apply toward a degree may not exceed one half of the minimum number of credits required for that degree.~~

*Institutionally Prepared Assessments. Institutionally prepared assessments may be used to award credit when the competencies are comparable to the learning outcomes of the college course. Assessments shall be developed by an appropriately credentialed faculty.*

4. ~~Other national testing organizations may be considered for the awarding of credit subject to institutional procedures.~~ *Industry Recognized Credentials. Institutions may award credit for industry certifications and professional licensure that demonstrate comparable learning outcomes to postsecondary courses.*

5. *Career and Technical Education Program Articulated Credit. High school graduates identified as Career and Technical Education (CTE) Program Completers who have earned a State Certificate of Skill Attainment may be awarded college credits for high school work based on written, articulated program agreements with the Department of Education.*

6.[5.] ~~Special Department Examinations: An admitted student in good standing may earn credits by a special department examination subject to institutional procedures.~~ *Credit Recommendation Services. Institutions may follow the recommendations for course equivalences provided by nationally recognized credit recommendation*

*services and award credit when the learning outcomes are comparable to those of the institution's postsecondary courses. Credit recommendations services include but are not limited to:*

- a. American Council on Education (ACE) National Guide to College Credit for Workforce Training;*
- b. American Council on Education (ACE) Military Guide;*
- c. National College Credit Recommendation Services (NCCRS); and*
- d. Other credit recommendation services deemed appropriate by the institution.*

- 7. Individual Portfolio Assessments. Institutions may provide portfolio assessment options to award credit. Assessed portfolios shall be evaluated by criteria established by appropriately credentialed faculty.*
- 8. [6.] The posting of **CPL** [~~satisfactorily completed credit by examinations~~] to the student's permanent academic record shall clearly identify that the credit was earned by **CPL type** [~~examination, name of the testing program, date of the examination~~], number of credits, and a grade of S (satisfactory) or P (pass).*
- 9. [7.] **CPL** [~~Credit earned by examination~~] does not apply toward satisfying the minimum on-campus resident credit requirement of the institution from which graduation is sought and does not constitute an interruption of the resident credit requirement.*
- 10. Institutions shall publish the course granting policy and approved course equivalencies in its course catalog.*
- 11. The Chancellor's Office shall establish procedures for the transcription of CPL awarded as well as reporting metrics.*



**POLICY PROPOSAL**  
**TITLE 4, CHAPTER 16, SECTION 20**  
Community College Admissions to Advance Standing

Additions appear in *boldface italics*; deletions are [~~stricken~~ and bracketed]

[Section 20. ~~Community College Admission to Advanced Standing~~

- ~~1. Community colleges shall accept a maximum of 45 semester credits or 75 percent of the total credits required for a degree, whichever is greater, of previous training, education or credit by examination toward an Associate degree, with the following limitations:~~
  - ~~a. not more than of 75 percent of the credits required for a degree may be applied from other colleges and universities.~~
  - ~~b. not more than 30 semester credits from credit by examination.~~
  - ~~c. not more than 16 semester credits from nontraditional sources.~~
- ~~2. Community colleges may accept a maximum of 15 semester credits from credit by examination for a certificate of achievement.~~
- ~~3. Acceptance of various types of credit will be governed by the college's transfer credit policy or by the entity designated to govern and evaluate such matters.]~~

**Renumber Sections 21 through 39 as 20 through 38**