Board of Trustees of the Nebraska State Colleges

Policy Category

POLICY NAME: Examination-Based Credit

POLICY NUMBER: 4135

A. PURPOSE

In recognition of prior learning and demonstrated academic achievement, the Colleges award examination-based credit for approved standardized examinations, including but not limited to Advanced Placement (AP), College Level Examination Program (CLEP), International Baccalaureate (IB), DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST), and other examinations approved by the Colleges. This Policy establishes how examination-based credit is awarded and applied toward degree requirements, transfer evaluations, and academic transcripts.

B. DEFINITIONS

1. **Academic Program:** A defined course of study leading to the award of a certificate, diploma, associate degree, bachelor's degree, or other academic credential.
2. **Approved Examination:** A standardized examination recognized by the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education (CCPE) for purposes of awarding academic credit, including examinations subsequently added to the Commission's approved list.
3. **Credit Equivalency:** The determination that an approved examination corresponds to a specific College course, subject area, or credit amount.
4. **Degree Requirements:** The academic requirements that must be completed for the award of a certificate, diploma, associate degree, or bachelor's degree, including general education, major, minor, elective, and prerequisite requirements.
5. **Examination-Based Credit:** Academic credit awarded by the College based on a student's performance on an approved standardized examination rather than completion of a college course.
6. **General Education Requirement:** A degree requirement consisting of foundational coursework intended to develop broad knowledge and essential academic competencies across disciplines.

7. **Official Score Report:** A score report transmitted directly to the College by the testing organization or other authorized source designated by the examination provider.
8. **Official Transcript:** The permanent academic record issued by the College that documents courses, credits, grades, credentials awarded, and examination-based credit accepted or awarded by the institution.
9. **Prior Learning Assessment (PLA):** A process by which the College evaluates learning acquired outside of traditional college coursework for the purpose of awarding academic credit. Examination-based credit is one form of prior learning assessment.
10. **Qualifying Score:** The minimum examination score established by CCPE for awarding examination-based credit, or a higher score established by the College and approved by CCPE as permitted by law.
11. **Residency Requirement:** The minimum number of credits or courses that must be completed through the College in order to earn a degree or credential from the institution.
12. **Transfer Credit:** Academic credit accepted by the College that was originally awarded by another institution or educational provider and is determined to meet the College's transfer evaluation standards.

C. POLICY

1. Awarding of Examination-Based Credit

- The Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education (CCPE) maintains and publishes a list of recognized exams and their minimum passing scores (“cut scores”). The CCPE makes this list accessible to students and families.
- Examination-based credit shall be granted only upon receipt of official examination score reports from the appropriate testing organization.
- A College shall award examination-based credit for an examination recognized by CCPE when the student achieves the applicable CCPE minimum cut score, subject to the College's determination of the appropriate course or credit equivalency and application of the credit toward the student's program of study. The appropriate College academic unit shall determine the course equivalency and applicability of the examination-based credit to degree and program requirements consistent with this Policy and applicable law.
- A College may establish a cut score higher than the CCPE minimum only when the higher cut score has been approved by the CCPE in accordance with state law.

2. Application Toward Degree Requirements

- Examination-based credit may be applied toward degree, certificate, general education, major, minor, elective, or prerequisite requirements when the awarded credit is determined to be equivalent to College coursework and is applicable to the student's program of study. The applicability of examination-based credit to specific degree requirements may vary by academic program and accreditation requirements.
- Credits awarded through examination-based assessment count toward degree completion requirements to the same extent as equivalent institutional coursework, unless otherwise restricted by programmatic, licensure, accreditation, or residency requirements.

3. Transfer of Examination-Based Credit

- Examination-based credit presented by transfer student shall be evaluated consistently with this Policy, the College's transfer credit policies, and applicable CCPE requirements. The College shall determine the equivalency and applicability of such credit to the student’s degree or program requirements.
- Examination-based credit appearing on another institution's transcript shall be evaluated based upon the examination, score, and applicable College or CCPE credit equivalency requirements and shall not necessarily be accepted solely on the basis that another institution previously awarded the credit. The College shall determine how accepted examination-based credit applies toward the student's degree requirements.
- Students transferring examination-based credit are subject to the academic policies and degree requirements in effect at the time of admission or catalog selection.

4. Transcript Recording

- Credits awarded through examination-based assessment shall be clearly identified on the student's official academic transcript. The transcript record shall include the examination or equivalent course designation, credits awarded, and notation that the credit was earned through examination rather than classroom instruction.
- Examination-based credit shall not be assigned a letter grade and shall not be included in the calculation of the student's grade point average unless otherwise authorized by institutional policy.

5. Publication and Review

- Each College shall publish this Policy and information explaining how examination-based credit is awarded and applied toward degree requirements, evaluated for transfer purposes, and recorded on academic transcripts. Each College shall also publish its current examination-based credit equivalencies and any College-specific qualifying scores and shall provide students and the public with access to, or a link to, CCPE's current list of recognized examinations and minimum cut scores.

FORMS/APPENDICES:

None

SOURCE:

Policy Adopted: September 2026 – Effective October 1, 2026