

**Title: Evaluation of Prior Learning and Experience**

- Initial Action:**
  - Board Agenda:** 13-039, 17-016
  - Last Revised**
    - **Policy:** 4/1/2020
    - **Procedure:** 5/3/2023
  - Last Reviewed:** 5/3/2023
  - Effective:**
  - Next Review:** May 2026
  - Responsibility:** Academic Programs
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**POLICY:**

Cecil College believes that learning is a lifelong process and is acquired in many different ways. In addition to the traditional classroom setting, mastery of college-level knowledge and skills may occur as a result of other learning experiences. Therefore, it is the policy of Cecil College to award credit/s for prior learning obtained through various learning environments.

**PROCEDURE:**

Before evaluation of prior learning occurs, students must:

- 1) complete all admissions procedures;
- 2) submit all relevant documentation; and
- 3) pay all required fees as delineated in the course schedule.

While credits earned through various prior learning methods count towards graduation, neither credits nor grades are used in the calculation of the grade point average.

**Traditional Prior Learning**

***College and University Credit***

Credit may be granted for coursework completed at accredited colleges and universities and those institutions recognized by the United States Department of Education. College credits earned at accredited institutions will be accepted for transfer if the course content is equivalent to that offered at Cecil College. Transfer credits from accredited institutions will be evaluated by the Records and Registration Office in collaboration with the appropriate department chair or designee, and will be accepted subject to the following guidelines:

1. A student whose cumulative grade point average is at the 2.00 level or higher at an in-state accredited institution will receive credit for all transferable course work in which a grade of “D” or better is achieved. For out-of-state institutions, a “C” or higher is required.
2. A student whose cumulative grade point average is below 2.00 level at an accredited institution will receive credit for transferable coursework in which a grade of “C” or better was achieved.
3. Transferable coursework must be applicable to the student’s declared program of study.

Students who have previously attended Cecil College but have not earned a degree or certificate in a program area may be eligible to transfer applicable credits through Reverse Transfer. The Reverse Transfer option allows students to transfer credits from a four-year institution back to Cecil College to earn an Associate's Degree and/or Certificate. The courses may count toward the completion of the Associate's Degree and/or Certificate, and also the Bachelor's Degree at the four-year institution. Students should consult with their Academic Advisor to determine the appropriate course selection for reverse transfer credits.

### ***Foreign College and University Credit***

Cecil College does not evaluate foreign transcripts. Students seeking credit for coursework completed at foreign colleges and universities must have their transcripts evaluated by the Educational Credential Evaluators (ECE) or World Education Services (WES). Students will not be granted credit for Freshman Composition unless extensive English credits are awarded by ECE or WES and students place into college-level English after completing Cecil College's skills assessment. Additional information is available from the Director of Records and Registration.

### ***Alternative Prior Learning***

The College may give credit for demonstrated proficiency in areas related to college-level courses. Sources used to determine such proficiency are College Level Examination Program (CLEP); Advanced Placement Examination; Cambridge Exams; International Baccalaureate (IB) Exams; Defense Activity for Nontraditional Education Support (DANTES); United States Armed Forces Institute (USAFI); Office of Education Credit and Credentials of the American Council on Education (ACE); Credit by Cecil College Departmental Examination; Advanced Prior Learning (APL by Portfolio Review); articulation agreements with approved high schools; and Credential Assessments. A maximum of 30 credit hours may be earned by alternative prior learning methods with a maximum of 15 credits through institutional credit by examination and portfolio assessment. In assigning credits of this nature, the recommendations of the American Council on Education (ACE) and written articulation agreements will be used as guidelines. Applicants who seek credit for prior learning should contact the Records and Registration Office at the time of application to the College.

- ***Credit by Advanced Placement Exams***

Advanced Placement (AP) Exams are usually taken at the high school level, after completing a specially designed advanced placement course. The list of course equivalences and minimum scores is based on Cecil College's evaluation, and is subject to change. Please refer to the college catalog for the most up to date information.

Students must have official Advanced Placement score reports sent to Cecil College. The list of course equivalences and minimum scores is based on Cecil College's evaluation. Students transferring to other colleges or universities should consult the admissions office at that institution to determine course equivalencies and acceptable scores.

- ***Credit by College Level Examination Program***

The College Level Examination Program (CLEP) provides nationally recognized credit for

learning gained through experience or independent learning. Cecil College will award credit for the CLEP exams provided the minimum passing score of 50 (computerized version) has been met. The list of course equivalences and minimum scores is based on Cecil College's evaluation, and is subject to change. Please refer to the college catalog for the most up to date information.

Students interested in learning more about CLEP should contact an academic advisor. Students must have official CLEP score reports sent to Cecil College.

- ***Credit by Departmental Assessment***

An academic department may award course credit to students who document learning comparable to that required in specific college courses. There are two ways learning can be evaluated: departmental examination (credit-by-exam) and portfolio assessment. A maximum of 15 credits may be earned by credit by exam and portfolio. The following guidelines apply:

1. Students must be enrolled at Cecil College and have EGL 101 eligibility;
2. Fees are nonrefundable;
3. Students cannot prepare a portfolio for which there is a CLEP examination available;
4. Students may not satisfy general education requirements, except for the computer literacy requirement, through the institutional credit-by-exam process or by portfolio assessment;
5. Students are required to meet the graduation residency requirement as listed in the College catalog;
6. Credits granted through the assessment option are subject to the same procedures used by Cecil College for coursework completed at colleges and universities in the United States and are inclusive of the fifteen credits.

The College will maintain file copies of examinations, test results and portfolio reviews and credential assessment reviews in accordance with the institution's Records and Retention Schedule. Documentation granting the awarding of credits will be retained in the student's permanent record files in accordance with the College's Record Retention Schedule. In accordance with COMAR regulations, faculty of the College in the appropriate discipline shall conduct the assessments.

- ***Departmental Examination (Institutional Credit-by-Exam)***

A departmental examination is created by the appropriate College department and administered by a faculty member. A passing grade on an examination is recorded with a grade of "S" on the permanent record. Examinations that are attempted but not passed are not recorded on the student's permanent record. Students who fail may not repeat credit-by-exam, but may take the actual course.

Credit-by-Examination fees are calculated according to the specific examination. Fees collected for this process are nonrefundable.

- ***Portfolio Assessment***

Credit for prior learning acquired through employment and experience may be awarded

through the portfolio assessment option. To earn credit through this method, students must enroll in APL 270 Assessment for Prior Learning: Portfolio Construction, a 1-credit course specifically designed to assist in the development of a portfolio in a format that enables faculty to assess eligibility for academic credit. The portfolio must provide documentation that course outcomes, as outlined in the course syllabus, have been mastered. A passing grade on the portfolio assessment is recorded with a grade of “S” on the student’s permanent record. Portfolios submitted for assessment that are deemed unsatisfactory are not recorded on the student’s permanent record.

Upon completion of the portfolio, the appropriate department chair or designee will conduct the portfolio assessment and make a recommendation to award credits, if applicable. A passing grade on the portfolio assessment is recorded with a grade designation of “S” (satisfactory) on the student’s transcript. Portfolios submitted for assessment that are deemed unsatisfactory are not recorded on the student’s permanent record. Students whose portfolios are unsatisfactory may not repeat the portfolio process but may enroll in the relevant course. Portfolio fees are calculated according to the credit value of the course and the College’s current per credit hour tuition rate based on the residency status of the student. Fees collected for this purpose are nonrefundable.

- ***Credit by Articulation Agreements***

Cecil County Public Schools and other approved high schools cooperate with Cecil College in a program designed to ensure that high school students acquire more rigorous academic and technical competencies. A coordinated sequence of courses prepares students for lifelong learning and provides a choice of career options leading to employment or advanced study at Cecil College. Cecil County high school students who have completed coursework in specific subject areas may be eligible to receive academic credit for this experience.

Credits will be awarded to students once the evaluation criteria and the validation process have been met. Further information may be obtained from the College’s advisors or from high school guidance counselors.

- ***Credit and Continuing Education Partnerships***

The College has a co-listed course program between its non-credit and credit divisions that allow students to be awarded credit for successful completion of selected continuing education courses. The College matches the instructional outcomes of these selected courses to ensure that rigorous academic and technical competencies are part of the desired outcomes. There are two ways for a student to receive credit once they have successfully completed the course for non-credit: petition for evaluation of prior learning, and departmental examination (credit-by- exam).

- ***Evaluation of Prior Learning (Portfolio)***

A student who has successfully completed one of the selected courses through the continuing education division may petition for the award of credits by submitting the necessary paperwork to the Registrar within three weeks of the end date of the course. Credits will be awarded upon submission of the required paperwork and payment of all applicable charges.

- ***Departmental Examination (Credit-by-Exam)***

A departmental examination is created by the appropriate College department and administered by a faculty member. A passing grade on an examination is recorded with a grade of “S” on the permanent record. Examinations that are attempted but not passed are not recorded on the student’s permanent record. Students who fail may not repeat credit-by-exam, but may take the actual course.

Calculating the CEU

One Continuing Education Unit is defined as 10 contact hours of participation in an organized education experience under responsible sponsorship, capable direction, and qualified instruction (includes classroom, self-paced instruction, pre/post assignments, and/or homework) in support of a learning outcome.

- In computing the number of continuing education units to be awarded, only the number of instructional hours or the equivalent shall be considered. Breaks and lunch are not to be included. Approval procedures for “equivalent” activities shall be the same as procedures for program approval.
- Determine the number of contact hours by adding all countable portions of the learning event. Example: A learning event has six 50-minute sessions with 10 minutes between for set-up. The number of contact hours would be computed as:  $6 \times 50 = 300$  total minutes / 60 minutes in an hour = 5 contact hours.
- Divide the number of contact hours by 10 to get the number of CEU(s).  
Following the above example:  $5 \text{ contact hours} / 10 = .5 \text{ CEU}$ .
- CEU may be expressed in tenths of a CEU (i.e., 17 contact hours equate to 1.7 CEUs; 3 contact hours equate to .3 CEU). Do not express the CEU past the tenths place (i.e., if your calculation is 1.78, express this as 1.8 CEU).
- When the fractional part of an hour is at least  $5/6$  (50 minutes or more), the fractional portion should be counted as a whole hour. Any portion of an hour between 30 and 49 minutes should be counted as 30 minutes. Any part of an hour less than 30 minutes should be discarded.

- ***Credits from Military Training and Experience***

Credits granted for military training and experiences are subject to the same procedures used by Cecil College for coursework completed at colleges and universities in the United States. Credit may be granted for a variety of formal military training based on the student’s declared program of study. Official military transcripts, including Community College of the Air Force (CCAF), AARTS, SMART, DD214, DD295, or other military transcripts, must be submitted to the Registrar for evaluation of credits. Credits awarded through this process will be recorded on the student’s transcript with a grade designation of “TR” (transfer).

- ***Credits from Training Received in Business/Industry***

Academic credits may be awarded for the completion of training programs that have been evaluated by the American Council on Education (ACE) or are recognized through an articulation agreement between the College and a business/industry. Credits granted from business/industry training are subject to the same procedures used by Cecil College for

coursework completed at colleges and universities in the United States. Credits awarded through this process will be recorded on the student's transcript with a grade designation of "TR" (transfer).

- ***Credits from Credential Assessment***

Credits for prior learning may be awarded for:

1. Educational diplomas, certificates and degrees;
2. Registered apprenticeship certificates;
3. Occupational licenses (typically awarded by State government agencies);
4. Professional certifications from industry or professional associations; and
5. Other skill certificates for specific skill sets or competencies within one or more industries or occupations (e.g. writing, leadership, etc.)

To earn credits through this option, students must submit documentation validating their credentials. Such documentation must be current and demonstrate that the student is in good standing with the agency awarding the credential. Credit awarded through this process will be noted on the student's transcript with a grade designation of "TR" (transfer). See Appendix A for more information regarding credentials and credential stacking.

## **Appendix A**

### **1.0 Credentialing**

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta>

A Stackable Credential is part of a sequence of credentials that can be accumulated over time to build up an individual's qualifications and help them to move along a career pathway or up a career ladder to different and potentially higher-paying jobs.

Within the context of education, workforce development, and employment and training for the labor market, the term credential refers to a verification of qualification or competence issued to an individual by a third party with the relevant authority or jurisdiction to issue such credentials (such as an accredited educational institution, an industry recognized association, or an occupational association or professional society). The range of different types of credentials includes:

1. Educational diplomas, certificates and degrees;
2. Registered apprenticeship certificates;
3. Occupational licenses (typically awarded by State government agencies);
4. Professional certifications from industry or professional associations; and
5. Other skill certificates for specific skill sets or competencies within one or more industries or occupations (e.g. writing, leadership, etc.)

Educational credentials include: diploma, certificate, and degree. Credit hours are the building block components of these educational credentials.

The following definitions are provided:

Certificate	A formal award certifying the satisfactory completion of a postsecondary education program.
High school diploma or recognized equivalent	A document certifying the successful completion of a prescribed secondary school program of studies, or the attainment of satisfactory scores on the General Educational Development (GED) test or another state specified examination.
Postsecondary award, certificate, or diploma (less than 1 academic year)	An award that requires completion of an organized program of study at the postsecondary level (below the baccalaureate degree) in less than 1 academic year (2 semesters or 3 quarters), or designed for completion in less than 30 semester or trimester credit hours, or in less than 45 quarter credit hours, or in less than 900 contact or clock hours by a student enrolled full time.
Postsecondary award, certificate, or diploma (at least 1 but less than 2 academic years)	An award that requires completion of an organized program of study at the postsecondary level (below the baccalaureate degree) in at least 1 but less than 2 full-time equivalent academic years, or designed for completion in at least 30 but less than 60 semester or trimester credit hours, or in at least 45 but less than 90 quarter credit hours, or in at least 900 but less than 1,800 contact or clock hours, by a student enrolled full time.
Postsecondary award, certificate, or diploma (at least 2 but less than 4 academic years)	An award that requires completion of an organized program of study at the postsecondary level (below the baccalaureate degree) in at least 2 but less than 4 full-time equivalent academic years, or designed for completion in at least 60 but less than 120 semester or trimester credit hours, or in at least 90 but less than 180 quarter credit hours, or in at least 1,800 but less than 3,600 contact or clock hours, by a student enrolled full time.

## 2.0. Attributes of Career-Enhancing Credentials

Four attributes of educational and workforce credentials that strengthen the value of credentials to individuals are industry-recognition, stackability, portability and accreditation. Accreditation by an independent quality review body is a valuable attribute, but at present, the majority of certain types of credentials are not accredited.

- **Industry-Recognized:** An industry-recognized credential is one that either is developed and offered by, or endorsed by a nationally-recognized industry association or organization representing a sizeable portion of the industry sector, or a credential that is sought or accepted by companies within the industry sector for purposes of hiring or recruitment which may include credentials from vendors of certain products. Consumer should be aware that in some industry sectors there may be more than one major industry association and that they may endorse or promote different credentials, and that the credentials that are sought by individual companies in an industry can vary by geographic region, by company size, or based on what product or equipment the company uses and needs workers to be able to operate. This is merely to point out that there may not be a single readily identifiable national credential for all industry sectors or occupations. The hundreds of certifications that exist within the information technology (IT) industry are a very good example. There are multiple industry associations, and there are multiple product vendors that offer personnel certifications. The workforce investment system operating in a local area needs to interface with employers to determine what IT credentials are in demand by local employers that are hiring.
- **Stackable:** A credential is considered stackable when it is part of a sequence of credentials that can be accumulated over time to build up an individual's qualifications and help them to move along a career pathway or up a career ladder to different and potentially higher- paying jobs. For example, one can stack a high school diploma, an associate's degree, and then typically obtain two more years of appropriate postsecondary education to obtain a bachelor's degree. An individual can also stack an interim career/work readiness or pre- apprenticeship certificate, then complete an apprenticeship, and later earn a degree or advanced certification. Information on identifying career ladders and lattices and related credentials is covered in a later section of this paper, along with examples of some existing industry sectors that are working to identify stackable credentials.
- **Portable:** A credential is considered portable when it is recognized and accepted as verifying the qualifications of an individual in other settings - either in other geographic areas, at other educational institutions, or by other industries or employing companies.
- **Accredited:** The goal of accreditation of educational programs is to ensure that the education provided by institutions of higher education meets acceptable levels of quality. The U.S. Department of Education maintains a website on "Accreditation



in the United States” that provides lists of regional and national accrediting agencies recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education as reliable authorities concerning the quality of education or training offered by the institutions of higher education or higher education programs they accredit. Students using federal financial aid must enroll in institutions or programs that are accredited by the appropriate regional or national accrediting agency. Accreditation exists in the realm of personnel certification but is less common.