



NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

Thomas A. Stith III

President

NUMBERED MEMO CC21-014

TO: Members of the State Board of Community Colleges
Community College Presidents
Chairs of the Boards of Trustees
Community College Chief Academic Officers, Chief Admissions Officers, Basic Skills Directors, Business Officers, Continuing Education Officers, Chief Financial Officers, Financial Aid Officers, Public Information Officers, Registrars, Student Development Administrators, & Other Interested Parties

FROM: Jonathan Harris
General Counsel

DATE: March 23, 2021

SUBJECT: Adoption of 1D SBCCC Subchapter 800 – Credit for Prior Learning

On March 19, 2021 the State Board of Community Colleges voted to adopt **1D SBCCC Subchapter 800 – Credit for Prior Learning**. This subchapter will codify common processes for awarding credit for college-level learning obtained through prior learning experiences.

The individual rules in this subchapter address the following categories of credit for prior learning:

- Apprenticeships
- Certifications and licenses
- Courses listed in high school to community college articulation agreements
- Military education and training
- Standardized examinations
- Challenges exams/proficiency
- Portfolio assessment
- Public safety training courses

The new subchapter will be effective 1 April 2021. The new rule will be published on the NC Community College System's website, www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/sbcccode. For your convenience, a copy of the subchapter in its final form is attached to this memorandum.



State Board of Community Colleges Code
TITLE 1. COMMUNITY COLLEGES

CHAPTER D. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

SUBCHAPTER 800. CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING

1D SBCCC 800.1 Definitions

- (a) Certification. An industry-recognized credential or designation that is obtained once the student has successfully passed a certification exam. Certification differs from licensure in that certification is a validation of specific industry-valued competencies and not a legal requirement for practicing a profession.
- (b) College-level learning. Knowledge, skills, and competencies equivalent to those expected of a student who successfully completes the corresponding curriculum course.
- (c) Continuing Education. Definition consistent with 1D SBCCC 300.1(a).
- (d) Continuing Education Course. Definition consistent with 1D SBCCC 300.1(b).
- (e) Credit for Prior Learning (CPL). Curriculum credit awarded for college-level learning obtained through prior learning experiences other than curriculum coursework. This definition does not include curriculum credit transferred from another accredited US institution of higher education.
- (f) Credit for Prior Learning standard. A designated amount of academic credit colleges shall award for college-level learning that fulfills established criteria.
- (g) Curriculum course. Definition consistent with 1D SBCCC 400.8.
- (h) Curriculum Course Review Committee (CCRC). Definition consistent with 1D SBCCC 400.8(h).
- (i) Curriculum program. Definition consistent with 1D SBCCC 400.3(a).
- (j) Licensure. A legal status granted by a government entity that provides permission to practice a profession. Licensure restricts practice of the profession to individuals who have met specific qualifications in education, professional experience, and/or have successfully passed an examination.

1D SBCCC Subchapter 800 is adopted as follows

- (k) Prior Learning Assessment. An evaluation of whether a student has obtained the requisite level of verifiable college-level learning outside of the traditional learning environment for curriculum credit.
- (l) Continuing Education Leadership Committee (CELC). Definition consistent with 1D SBCCC 300.5 (b)(2).

History Note: Authority G.S. 115D-5;

Eff. [April 1, 2021](#).

1D SBCCC 800.2 General Provisions

- (a) The purpose of this Subchapter is to guarantee that all North Carolina Community Colleges follow consistent academic conventions to ensure the integrity of the CPL process and to establish minimum standards for all NC community colleges.
- (b) Consistent with the provisions of this Subchapter colleges are authorized to award CPL using the following prior learning methods:
 - (1) Apprenticeship
 - (2) Certifications and licensures
 - (3) Courses listed in high school to community college articulation agreements
 - (4) Military education and training
 - (5) Standardized examinations
 - (6) Challenge exams/Proficiency
 - (7) Portfolio assessment
 - (8) Public Safety Training (PST) prefix courses
- (c) Colleges may award curriculum CPL when the documentation of prior learning meets or exceeds a demonstration of learning outcomes at the institutions' standards for awarding credit for the corresponding curriculum course. Institutions may award CPL that exceeds the minimum standards established in this Subchapter.
- (d) Colleges may only award curriculum CPL that is directly applicable to a student's declared curriculum program of study.
- (e) CPL for advanced courses does not negate the requirement to meet requisite learning outcomes.

- (f) CPL may be used to fulfill program requirements except for mandatory institutional requirements. Examples may include, but are not limited to, requirements of external agencies that specifically prohibited the use of CPL to fulfill the program requirements.
- (g) CPL cannot be used to satisfy the college's institutional credit requirements, which prescribes the minimum percentage of credit hours a student must earn through instruction offered by the institution awarding the credential. No greater than seventy-five percent (75%) of the credit hours required for graduation from a curriculum program of study may be earned through CPL.
- (h) Any CPL awarded by a college shall be reflected in the student's records by the college's Registrar Office without quality points assigned, except for allowances for graded military credit as described in 1D SBCCC 800.6.
- (i) Course Credit CPL standards approved by the CCRC shall be considered for transfer to any college in the North Carolina Community College System.
- (j) The local board of trustees shall adopt a policy governing the awarding of CPL. At a minimum, the local policy shall be consistent with standards established by this Subchapter. The local policy may include additional opportunities for students to receive CPL. Each college shall publish its CPL policy in the college's educational catalog.
- (k) Colleges shall establish a procedure that students must follow to request a prior learning assessment. This procedure shall be published in the college's educational catalog.
- (l) To be eligible to receive CPL, students must meet all of the following criteria:
 - (1) Meet all admission requirements for their program of study.
 - (2) Be enrolled in a curriculum program to which the credit will directly apply; and
 - (3) Request a prior learning assessment consistent with the college's CPL procedures and provide all documentation by the published deadlines.
- (m) Nothing in this rule shall be construed to supersede limitations imposed by an accreditation, credentialing, licensure, or other external agency on the application of CPL towards credentials under their purview. In such instances, the college shall document the applicable limitations in the student's file.

1D SBCCC Subchapter 800 is adopted as follows

- (n) It is possible that CPL from (b)(1), (b)(2), (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7), or (b)(8) may not be transferable to UNC System constituent institutions. Furthermore, UNC System institutions may request documentation to determine potential course credit. Colleges should encourage students to consult a UNC System transfer advisor before using these CPL sources to attain credit at a community college institution.

History Note: Authority G.S. 115D-5;

Eff. [April 1, 2021](#).

1D SBCCC 800.3 Apprenticeships

- (a) The NCCCS recognizes “Registered Apprenticeships” as defined by the U.S. Department of Labor.
- (b) At a minimum, colleges shall award CPL based on statewide articulation as approved by the CCRC for related instruction provided by external entities for registered apprenticeship programs. A college may award CPL for related instruction provided by external entities for which statewide articulations have not been established by the CCRC consistent with its local CPL policy.
- (c) Work-based learning (WBL) course credit may be granted for the experiential portion of a Registered Apprenticeship. Documentation including completed time on task shall be provided through an Apprenticeship Agreement and shall constitute the documentational requirements of a WBL experience.

History Note: Authority G.S. 115D-5;

Eff. [April 1, 2021](#).

1D SBCCC 800.4 State or Industry Recognized Credentials

- (a) The CCRC, based on recommendations from the CELC, shall have the authority to approve CPL standards for state or industry recognized credentials that document similar college-level learning as corresponding curriculum courses and, therefore, are eligible for articulated curriculum credit. Prior to approving CPL, the CCRC shall have written concurrence by two-thirds of colleges.

1D SBCCC Subchapter 800 is adopted as follows

- (b) At a minimum, colleges shall award CPL for successful completion of state or industry recognized credentials consistent with the CPL standards approved by the CCRC. A college may award CPL for state or industry recognized credentials for which statewide articulations have not been established by CCRC consistent with its local CPL policy.

History Note: Authority G.S. 115D-5;

Eff. [April 1, 2021](#).

1D SBCCC 800.5 Courses Listed in High School to Community College Articulation Agreements

- (a) The North Carolina High School to Community College Articulation Agreement is an agreement between the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and the North Carolina Community College System. The articulation agreement ensures that when a student is proficient in a high school course included in the agreement, the student can receive college credit for that course at any North Carolina community college.
- (b) Colleges shall award credit to students who have completed a high school course and met the criteria as outlined in the High School to Community College Articulation Agreement.
- (c) A college may award credit for successful completion of other high school courses consistent with any local high school to community college articulation agreements entered into by the college and an education entity providing secondary education.

History Note: Authority G.S. 115D-5;

Eff. [April 1, 2021](#).

1D SBCCC 800.6 Military Education and Training

- (a) Definitions.
 - (1) "United States Armed Forces" consists of the Air Force, Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Space Force, and Coast Guard.

- (2) "Military Education and Training". Education and training that has been documented on a transcript issued by one or more branches of the Armed Forces.
 - (3) Military Credit Advisory Council (MCAC). A joint council of faculty and staff members from the NC Community College System and the University of North Carolina, MCAC oversees the process for establishing uniform standards for awarding Credit for Prior Learning for military training and experience. MCAC also ensures the transferability of these credits among institutions of both systems.
 - (4) Military Prior Learning Academic Panels. Panels of academic faculty approved by MCAC are authorized to determine standards for awarding credit for identified subject areas.
- (b) Awarding of Credit.
- (1) At minimum, colleges shall award Credit for Prior Learning based on military education and training consistent with the standards adopted by the appropriate Military Prior Learning Academic Panel.
 - (2) A college may award Credit for Prior Learning for military training and education related to occupations and/or courses for which standards have not been established by an approved Military Prior Learning Academic Panel consistent with its local Credit for Prior Learning policy pursuant to the following:
 - (A) Air Force: Community College of the Air Force transcripts are evaluated by the college registrar or designated college official as a traditional college transcript.
 - (B) Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard: Colleges should refer to recommendations from the American Council on Education for occupations and courses not currently evaluated by the Military Prior Learning Academic Panels or documented on the Community College of the Air Force transcript.

History Note: Authority G.S. 115D-5;

Eff. [April 1, 2021](#).

1D SBCCC 800.7 Standardized Examinations

- (a) “Standardized examination”. Any form of examination that requires all test takers to answer the same questions, or a selection of questions from a common bank of questions following established protocol and that is scored in a standard or consistent manner.
- (b) Colleges shall award Credit for Prior Learning for the following standardized examinations consistent with the standards herein:
 - (1) Advanced Placement (AP). Advanced Placement is a program of college-preparatory courses for high school students administered by The College Board, an educational nonprofit organization. Standardized AP exams are used to assess student mastery of course content. Students receive scores on a “1” to “5” scale, with “5” being the highest.
 - (A) An AP exam score determines how many credits are awarded towards specific coursework.
 - (B) Colleges shall award credit to a student who earns a score of “3” or higher on an AP exam as approved by the CCRC. Course credit is awarded based upon the academic program of study.
 - (C) A college may award credit for AP scores and courses beyond those approved by the CCRC as determined by local college policy.
 - (2) Cambridge Assessment International Education Examinations. Cambridge Assessment International Examinations are a series of internationally recognized college-level examinations administered by Cambridge Assessment International Education, a unit of the University of Cambridge.
 - (A) Upon review and evaluation of student submitted documentation by the college designee, students may earn credit based on the AS and A Level exam(s) taken and grades(s) earned. An official grade report from Cambridge International must be provided to the college.
 - (B) Students shall earn college credit if a grade of e/E or better (which is the equivalent to a grade of C in the United States) is earned on the Cambridge International AS and A Level Examination.

- (C) Using the current Cambridge translation table, course credit is awarded and listed on the student's academic record. Course credit is awarded based upon the academic program of study.
 - (D) The course credit equivalency is documented on the student record.
- (3) College-Level Examination Program® (CLEP). The College-Level Examination Program® is a credit-by-examination program offered by the College Board, an educational nonprofit organization. The program allows students from a wide range of ages and backgrounds to demonstrate their mastery of introductory college-level material.
- (A) If a CLEP exam in a subject is offered by the College Board, colleges shall require a student to take the CLEP exam if he or she seeks to demonstrate proficiency in the subject area by examination.
 - (B) Colleges shall award credit to a student who scores at or above the credit-granting score recommended by the American Council on Education at the time the college evaluates the student's official score report. Colleges shall award the same amount of credit to a student who scores satisfactorily on the relevant CLEP exam as a student who successfully completes the related course.
 - (C) Students who perform satisfactorily on College-Level Examination Program exams shall receive a standardized code in the college's Student Information System.
 - (D) Students who did not receive a satisfactory score on a CLEP exam may retake the exam after three (3) months.
- (4) DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST). DANTES Subject Standardized Tests are credit-by-examination tests developed by the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES), a United States Department of Defense program.
- (A) Colleges shall award credit to a student who scores at or above the credit-granting score recommended by the American Council on Education at the time the college evaluates the student's official score report. Colleges shall award the same amount of credit to a student who scores satisfactorily on

the relevant DSST as a student who successfully completes the related course.

- (B) Students who did not receive a satisfactory score on a DSST may retake the exam after three (3) months.
- (5) International Baccalaureate® (IB) Diploma Programme. International Baccalaureate® Diploma Programme is a college-preparatory program for students age 16-19 administered by International Baccalaureate®, an international educational foundation. Standardized IB exams are used to assess student mastery of course content. Students receive scores on a “1” to “7” scale, with “7” being the highest.
 - (A) International credentials must be obtained from a recognized international institution that is validated by a US credentialing agency. A grade of (70) percent or higher must be earned for the courses being considered for credit.

History Note: Authority G.S. 115D-5;
Eff. [April 1, 2021](#).

1D SBCCC 800.8 Challenge Exams/Proficiency

- (a) Challenge Exam/Proficiency. A departmental or institutional exam for a community college course used to determine if a student’s subject matter proficiency is equal to or greater than the corresponding proficiency the student would have achieved had he or she completed the actual course.
- (b) Challenge Exam/Proficiency Standards
 - (1) Each college is responsible for ensuring the validity and reliability of institutional challenge exams/proficiency.
 - (2) Challenge exams/proficiency may be handwritten, computer-based, oral, practical, or a combination of these administration methods.
 - (3) Developmental courses (as defined in 1D SBCCC 400.3(b)) supplemental courses (as defined in 1D SBCCC 400.8(b)(1)), and courses including clinical

- practice (as defined in 1D SBCCC 400.1(c)(2)) are not eligible for challenge exams/proficiency.
- (4) Challenge exams/Proficiency that are administered for courses contained in the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement (CAA) may be provided when the exam is vetted, administered, and graded by a qualified instructor in the discipline.
- (c) Limitations on Students Eligible to Take Challenge Exams/Proficiency
- (1) A student must meet all pre-requisite requirements before he or she is eligible to take the challenge/proficiency examination for a course.
 - (2) A student may only attempt a challenge exam/proficiency once.
 - (3) A student may not take a challenge exam/proficiency if he or she has already earned a grade for the course. A challenge exam/proficiency may not be used to supersede a grade a student already earned in the applicable course.
 - (4) Career and College Promise (CCP) students, as defined in 1D SBCCC 400.11, may participate in challenge/proficiency examinations to earn college credit but may not earn dual high school credit. To earn dual credit, students must enroll and successfully complete the college course.
 - (5) If a CLEP exam in a subject is offered by the College Board, colleges may require a student to take the CLEP exam if he or she seeks to demonstrate proficiency in the subject area by examination.
- (d) Colleges shall award credit for the applicable course to a student who successfully earns a grade of “C” or higher on a challenge exam/proficiency.
- (e) If the college requires the student to enroll in the course to be challenged, for practical purposes the test should be administered and graded by the first week the course is offered but no later than course census. Individuals who are unsuccessful may choose to stay enrolled in the course to earn course credit.
- (f) If the college challenge/proficiency examination occurs outside of regular course enrollment, then an optional assessment fee may be charged to cover administrative cost per 1E SBCCC 700.6.
- (g) For students enrolled in the course, successful challenge/proficiency examination completion may result in the student falling below full-time student status which could

1D SBCCC Subchapter 800 is adopted as follows

negatively impact their financial aid status; therefore, students should consult with their advisors beforehand to discuss various options.

- (h) Federal Pell grant funds cannot be used to pay for challenge exams/proficiency.
- (i) Student hours shall not be reported for budget/FTE which result from challenge exams/proficiency except that the actual time required to take the exam may be counted in membership; students shall be registered in the class consistent with 1E SBCCC subchapter 300 or 1E SBCCC Subchapter 400 (1G SBCCC 200.95).
- (j) Challenge Exams/Proficiency are not calculated into a student's cumulative grade point average.

History Note: Authority G.S. 115D-5;
Eff. [April 1, 2021](#).

1D SBCCC 800.9 Portfolio Assessment

- (a) Portfolio for Life and Work Experiences. A collection of artifacts documenting competencies gained through prior learning experiences that a student formally submits to a college.
- (b) Portfolio assessment. The evaluation of a Portfolio for Life and Work Experiences by subject matter experts designated by the local college in its local policy to determine whether a student is awarded Credit for Prior Learning.
- (c) Colleges may award Credit for Prior Learning based on portfolio assessment as provided by their local policies.
- (d) If the college challenge examination occurs outside of regular course enrollment, then an optional assessment fee may be charged to cover administrative cost per 1E SBCCC 700.6.

History Note: Authority G.S. 115D-5;
Eff. [April 1, 2021](#).

1D SBCCC Subchapter 800 is adopted as follows

1D SBCCC 800.10 Public Safety Training (PST) Prefix Courses

- (a) Courses in the Combined Course Library with a Public Safety Training (PST) prefix can be used for awarding prior-learning credit for industry-recognized public safety training and/or credentials.
- (b) Consistent with 1D SBCCC 400.8(c), credit shall be considered for public safety training that meets the criteria outlined in the Public Safety Training (PST) course descriptions as listed in the Combined Course Library.
- (c) Official documentation from the training provider or credentialing entity shall be provided to the college that validates, at a minimum, the description and length of training.

History Note: Authority G.S. 115D-5;

Eff. [April 1, 2021.](#)