

Academic Senate Statements on  
**Reciprocity, Course Substitution, and Credit by Exam—in light of  
AA-T and AS-T degrees**  
September 2013

**Substitution and Reciprocity**

The passage of SB 1440 (Padilla, 2010) and the resulting faculty-designed Transfer Model Curriculum (TMC) system have altered the way colleges operate. Today, a higher level of coordination exists across the community colleges and with the universities. This new system affects traditional practices regarding course substitutions and reciprocity.

In the interest of best serving students and establishing an efficient transfer route, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC) encourages colleges to apply courses successfully completed as part of a TMC-aligned degree at one college for requirements within their own degrees to the greatest extent deemed possible and reasonable (See ASCCC resolution 15.01 Spring 2011). While course substitution decisions remain a matter of local control, students often earn credit at multiple colleges during the course of their academic careers and, therefore, are best served when courses that are taken in good faith as part of a TMC-aligned degree at one college are accepted as part of a TMC-aligned degree at other colleges. Therefore, **the ASCCC strongly urges community colleges to establish policies to allow and encourage acceptance of the courses students have taken at other colleges in a TMC-aligned degree.** While the C-ID system establishes course-to-course reciprocity, where C-ID descriptors are not in place and/or where the substitution does not involve deeming two courses comparable, substitution decisions must be informed by the judgment of discipline faculty. When an AA-T or AS-T is being conferred any substitutions made must result in the awarding of a degree that is consistent with the parameters defined by the TMC.

This recommendation is in the spirit of SB 1440 and the TMC-based statewide solution that faculty developed in response to SB 1440. The ideal case is for colleges and universities to widely accept the courses identified in the TMC and contained within TMC-aligned degrees. The TMC process establishes a transfer pathway that is based on the package of courses that comprise a TMC-aligned degree. Furthermore, the C-ID system identifies course content and standards, and most courses specifically identified and required in TMCs have or will soon have C-ID descriptors.

**Example:** The TMC for psychology includes three courses in List A: Introduction to Biology, Human Biology, and Introduction to Biological Psychology. Students are required to complete one of these three courses. College X may choose to allow all three of these List A options in their local psychology AA-T degree. However, College Y might decide that Human Biology is necessary for all students and thus might eliminate the other two List A options. A student who took Introduction to Biology at College X, expecting that course to fulfill the List A requirement, but who then enrolled at College Y to complete the associate degree for transfer would have taken a course not included or not fulfilling the same requirements in the local AA-T for psychology at College Y. In such a case, because the student has acted in good faith and the course taken falls within the requirements of the TMC, the ASCCC (and the language of SB 1440) would strongly encourage College Y to accept Introduction to Biology as fulfilling the List A requirement or, at the least, to accept the Introduction to Biology course as fulfilling a List B or C requirement as is allowed by the TMC.

Every TMC (and every discipline) is different, so the extent to which courses can be moved between lists is dependent upon the parameters defined in the individual TMC. The Psychology TMC offers maximum flexibility, permitting any course in the first list of options to be used in one of the later lists, but other TMCs may not permit the same level of flexibility. The Early Childhood Education TMC, for example, specifies all courses in the TMC without options, allowing no substitutions or local variations. Many

TMCs fall somewhere between these extremes, allowing flexibility in some areas but not in all. While the ASCCC encourages course reciprocity and substitution where possible and reasonable, substitutions should only be made in instances where the TMC allows flexibility, as the local AA-T or AS-T degree awarded must remain consistent with parameters of the TMC for the specific discipline.

Local policies and practices may need to be revisited in light of the TMC system; senates and curriculum committees should lead such discussions, ensuring that discipline faculty are responsible for making decisions regarding course substitutions within the TMC-aligned degree requirements. While existing practices may permit colleges to substitute (or not) in any way they choose, for the sake of the TMC system and in the spirit of SB 1440, **the ASCCC urges colleges to allow all reasonable course substitutions that are consistent with the parameters of the TMCs.**

Once all the specifically identified and required courses in TMCs have C-ID descriptors, all colleges have their courses approved in C-ID, and colleges use E-transcripts, the identification of comparable courses will be much simpler. The complicated aspect of reciprocity will continue to be the substitution of non-comparable courses when permitted by the parameters of the TMC. It should be noted that this document pertains to the courses that are specified in the TMC; existing processes related to determining course applicability for general education are not impacted.

If a student transferring in from another community college took a course required for an AA-T or AS-T, but the course does not have a C-ID number or did not have one at the time it was taken, local course substitution processes should be employed. Note that this presumes that the local course does have a C-ID designation. In the event the local course does not have a C-ID number and is in process with respect to C-ID approval, the local review process should incorporate the C-ID descriptor expectations. For instance, if a local course was submitted to C-ID lacking a required prerequisite the local process for review should incorporate that C-ID descriptor requirement into the local review process.

### **External Sources of Credit**

In addition to allowing reciprocity for courses earned toward a transfer degree at other institutions, colleges should continue to allow students to apply course credit earned through external exams or processes, including AP, CLEP, and IB, to the major requirements for transfer degrees. **Education Code clearly grants the authority to community colleges for the content of the AA –T and AS-T degrees, and this authority extends to community colleges the right and responsibility for granting credit they deem appropriate in the AA/S-T degrees.**

The ASCCC has passed numerous resolutions endorsing the use of external credit and has even created statewide templates to recommend the use of external credit in manners consistent with policies regarding CSU GE and IGETC (see ASCCC Resolutions 9.01 S10, 9.05 F10, 9.06 S07, 9.03 S05, 4.02 S08, 4.03 S08, 4.04 S08, 4.01 S09, 9.04 F10, 9.01 S11). The reasoning in these resolutions applies to AA-T and AS-T degrees as fully as it does to all other applications of their intent and can also include other methods of earning external credit, such as the units often granted to veterans for their experience in military service.

### **Credit by Exam:**

Title 5 provides regulations for community colleges regarding credit by exam (section 55050). Once again, because **Education Code grants community colleges the authority for the content of the AA – T and AS-T degrees, and Title 5 spells out the regulations for credit by exam, colleges retain these authorities when granting AA-T and AS-T degrees.** In other words, **colleges retain the existing authority and responsibility for granting credit they deem appropriate in the AA/S-T degrees, including credit earned through internal credit by exam processes.** In short, the existing credit by exam policies remain in place for the new associate degrees for transfer.

## REFERENCES

### **What SB 1440 said:**

CEC section 66746. *Community colleges are encouraged to facilitate the acceptance of credits earned at other community colleges toward the associate degree for transfer pursuant to this section.*

### **ASCCC Resolution**

#### **Reciprocity for TMC Courses in Associate Degrees for Transfer 15.01 Spring 2011**

Whereas, Senate Bill (SB) 1440 (Padilla, 2010) mandates the creation of associate degrees for transfer (AA-T and AS-T) that include a minimum of 18 units in a major or field of emphasis, and community colleges throughout California are currently in the process of developing these degrees;

Whereas, The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, in coordination with California State University, is developing Transfer Model Curricula (TMCs) that local colleges can use in the creation of the AA-T and AS-T degrees in order to provide some consistency and structure, and the TMCs allow local colleges freedom to make appropriate alterations within that structure and to include transferable local courses within the discipline that may not exist at other colleges;

Whereas, Many students take courses at multiple community colleges or start at one college and finish at another, and therefore students may begin a transfer degree at one community college and then find that courses they have taken in good faith toward that degree no longer apply when they move to another college, which is a significant issue given the 60-unit restriction for the AA-T and AS-T degrees; and

Whereas, A reciprocity policy regarding major requirements for the AA-T and AS-T degrees would eliminate unnecessary repetitions of classes and thereby reduce college costs, would allow students broader educational opportunities given that different colleges possess differing course offerings, would reduce the amount of local workload created by the circulation of student petitions, and would help students complete their degrees in a more expeditious and effective manner;

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges urge local senates and curriculum committees to adopt a reciprocity policy for courses contained in the TMC for the associate degrees for transfer.

### **Title 5—credit by exam**

Article 5. Alternative Methods for Awarding Credit

#### **§ 55050. Credit by Examination.**

(a) The governing board of each community college district shall adopt and publish policies and procedures pertaining to credit by examination in accordance with the provisions of this section.

(b) The governing board may grant credit to any student who satisfactorily passes an examination

approved or conducted by proper authorities of the college. Such credit may be granted only to a student who is registered at the college and in good standing and only for a course listed in the catalog of the community college.

(c) The nature and content of the examination shall be determined solely by faculty in the discipline who normally teach the course for which credit is to be granted in accordance with policies and procedures approved by the curriculum committee established pursuant to section 55002. The faculty shall determine that the examination adequately measures mastery of the course content as set forth in the outline of record. The faculty may accept an examination conducted at a location other than the community college for this purpose.

(d) A separate examination shall be conducted for each course for which credit is to be granted. Credit may be awarded for prior experience or prior learning only in terms of individually identified courses for which examinations are conducted pursuant to this section.

(e) The student's academic record shall be clearly annotated to reflect that credit was earned by examination.

(f) Grading shall be according to the regular grading system approved by the governing board pursuant to section 55023, except that students shall be offered a "pass-no pass" option if that option is ordinarily available for the course.

(g) Units for which credit is given pursuant to the provisions of this section shall not be counted in determining the 12 semester hours of credit in residence required for an associate degree.

(h) A district may charge a student a fee for administering an examination pursuant to this section, provided the fee does not exceed the enrollment fee which would be associated with enrollment in the course for which the student seeks credit by examination.

Note: Authority cited: Sections 66700 and 70901, Education Code. Reference: Sections 70901 and 70902, Education Code.