

## SECTION I

### PART L STATEWIDE TRANSFER AND gtPATHWAYS POLICY

#### 1.00 Introduction

The Statewide Transfer and gtPathways Policy<sup>1</sup> pertains to the state general education courses, known as Guaranteed Transfer Pathways (gtPathways); Statewide Transfer Articulation Agreements; transfer of course credits from one higher education institution to another; intra-institutional transfer; and reverse transfer. The policy applies to most Colorado public higher education undergraduate degree programs.<sup>2</sup> The policy applies to student transfer from two-year to four-year institutions, four-year to four-year institutions, four-year to two-year institutions, two-year to two-year institutions, or within four-year institutions. This policy does not address transfer issues where the state has limited legal authority: the transfer of credits from private, non-accredited, or out-of-state institutions or the awarding of credit for non-credit bearing courses.

The policy is divided into the following sections:

- 1.00 Introduction
- 2.00 Statutory Authority
- 3.00 Definitions
- 4.00 Policy Goals
- 5.00 Roles and Responsibilities
- 6.00 Other Statutory Provisions that Affect Transfer
- 7.00 General Education and gtPathways Courses
- 8.00 Transfer Options for Students
- 9.00 Notification of Transfer Credit
- 10.00 Student Complaints

#### 2.00 Statutory Authority

This policy is based on the following Colorado Revised Statutes:

- 2.01 §23-1-108(7)(a), C.R.S. “The commission shall establish, after consultation with the governing boards of institutions, and enforce statewide degree transfer agreements between two-year and four-year state institutions of higher education and among four-year state institutions of higher education...”
  
- 2.02 §23-1-108.5(1), C.R.S. “...The general assembly finds, therefore, that it is in the best interests of the state for the commission to oversee the adoption of the guaranteed transfer pathway matrix, which includes all higher education

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<sup>1</sup> Additional resources related to gtPathways and transfer of courses are available [online](#).

<sup>2</sup> A listing of degrees that have been waived of gtPathways requirements can be found [online](#) including all bachelor’s degrees at the Colorado School of Mines, and professional degrees at other public institutions subject to specialty accreditation criteria (e.g., nursing, engineering, business, music).

institutions and will ensure that the quality of the guaranteed transfer pathways matrix courses are comparable and transferable systemwide.”

- 2.03 §23-1-125 et seq., C.R.S. Commission directive – student bill of rights – degree requirements – implementation of core courses – competency test – prior learning – prior work-related experience – policies – definition – repeal.
- 2.04 §23-1-125(3), C.R.S. “In creating and adopting the [guaranteed transfer pathways matrix] guidelines, the department and the commission, in collaboration with the public institutions of higher education, may make allowances for baccalaureate programs that have additional degree requirements recognized by the commission.”
- 2.05 §23-1-131(3)(a), C.R.S. “The commission shall collaborate with the governing boards of the two-year and four-year institutions to develop and coordinate a process to notify students concerning eligibility for the award of an associate degree. The notification process shall apply to students at a four-year institution who have accumulated seventy credit hours at a four-year institution<sup>3</sup> and who transferred to the institution after completing the residency requirements for an associate degree at a two-year institution.”
- 2.06 §23-5-122(1), C.R.S. “...the governing board of every state-supported institution of higher education shall have in place and enforce policies regarding transfers by students between undergraduate degree programs which are offered within the same institution or within the same institutional system.”
- 2.07 §23-5-150, C.R.S. Transfer credit review process and nontransferable credit – notice – definition.
- 2.08 §23-60-802, C.R.S. Area technical colleges – credits – transfer.

### **3.00 Definitions**

- 3.01 “Commission” means the Colorado Commission on Higher Education created pursuant to section Title 23, Article 1 of the Colorado Revised Statutes.
- 3.02 “Core courses” means the thirty-one credit lower division gtPathways curriculum to which “...Individual institutions of higher education shall conform their own core course requirements...” (i.e., general education requirements). “The core of courses shall be designed to ensure that students demonstrate competency in reading, critical thinking, written communication, mathematics, and technology.

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<sup>3</sup>Note that statute has been interpreted to mean that students must have accumulated 70 credit hours in total, at all two- and four-year institutions attended, not just at a four-year institution.

The core of courses shall consist of at least thirty credit hours but shall not exceed forty credit hours” [§23-1-125(3), C.R.S.].<sup>4</sup>

- 3.03 “Course numbering system” means the common system of numbering used by all institutions for gtPathways courses, such as GT-CO1 for an introductory written communication course, GT-CO2 for an intermediate written communication course, GT-MA1 for a mathematics course, and so on, pursuant to §23-1-108.5(2)(b), C.R.S.
- 3.04 “Degree with Designation” means a two-year degree with academic designation in a particular discipline or interdisciplinary field, and that is part of a Statewide Transfer Articulation Agreement (with the exception of dental hygiene), as described in §23-60-211, C.R.S. A Degree with Designation is a 60-credit Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree that includes the 31-credit GT Pathways curriculum, plus a collection of required and elective courses that provides students with a solid foundation for further study in a given discipline or program area. Exceptions to the 60-credit limit, and to the GT Pathways requirement, may be made by the Commission to facilitate transfer in certain disciplines or fields, including where the associated bachelor’s degree program has received a waiver from the 120-credit cap and/or GT Pathways curriculum requirements.
- 3.05 “Department” means the Colorado Department of Higher Education created and existing pursuant to section §24-1-114, C.R.S.
- 3.06 “GE Council” means the General Education Council convened pursuant to §23-1-108.5(3)(a), C.R.S.
- 3.07 “gtPathways” means the guaranteed transfer pathways matrix as described in §23-1-108.5, §23-1-125(3), and §23-1-125(6), C.R.S.
- 3.08 “gtPathways content criteria” means the sets of criteria for the six content areas that make up the gtPathways curriculum: 1) written communication, 2) mathematics, 3) arts and humanities, 4) social and behavioral sciences, 5) history, and 6) natural and physical sciences.<sup>5</sup>
- 3.09 “gtPathways competency criteria” means the ten competencies embedded in the gtPathways content criteria in which students must demonstrate proficiency: 1) civic engagement, 2) creative thinking, 3) critical thinking, 4) diversity & global learning, 5) information literacy, 6) inquiry & analysis, 7) oral/presentational communication, 8) problem solving, 9) quantitative literacy, and 10) written

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<sup>4</sup> Note that this does not apply to every degree program at every institution; §23-1-125(3) gives the Commission authority to “...make allowance for baccalaureate programs that have additional degree requirements...” A list of degrees that have been waived of gtPathways requirements is maintained on the Department’s [website](#).

<sup>5</sup> Available on the Department’s [website](#).

communication, pursuant to §23-1-125(3), C.R.S.<sup>6</sup>

- 3.10 “‘General education courses’ means the group of courses offered by an institution of higher education that every student enrolled in the institution must successfully complete to attain an associate’s or bachelor’s degree” [§23-1-108.5(2)(c), C.R.S.] and that meet the requirements of §23-1-125(3), C.R.S. It should be noted that besides a general education core, degrees also have major, elective and other requirements (see Table 1 under section 7.00). It should also be noted that general education requirements may differ between degree programs at the same institution and that some degree programs at some institutions have received waivers from the Commission not to have to include the 31 credit gtPathways curriculum in the general education cores for some baccalaureate degrees.<sup>7</sup> Institutions may designate certain upper division courses as fulfilling requirements in their general education curriculum, but only lower division courses can be identified as part of gtPathways, with the exception of courses designated as GT-CO3 (Advanced Written Communication), which are often numbered as 300/3000-level courses.
- 3.11 For the purposes of this policy, “native student” means a student at a Colorado public four-year institution who did not transfer from a Colorado community or local-district college under a statewide transfer agreement.
- 3.12 “Prior Learning Assessment” is the evaluation—using approved practices—of learning that occurs outside of the institution where a student is enrolled or may enroll. Learning can be demonstrated by a student through achieving a certain score on a national exam; through achieving a certain score or rating on an institutionally-devised exam or other assessment; through performance in a course taken at another institution; through completion of certain military training, education, and occupational programs; and through work products and other professional achievements included in a student’s portfolio.
- 3.13 “Reverse Transfer” means the process whereby a student who begins his or her postsecondary education at a two-year institution and transfers to a four-year institution prior to receiving an associate degree, or who has left the four-year institution prior to completing a bachelor’s degree, and has accumulated at least 70 credits and completed the residency requirements at the two-year institution, may be eligible to receive an associate of arts or associate of science degree.
- 3.14 “Statewide Transfer Articulation Agreement” means a transfer agreement between two-year and four-year state institutions of higher education and among four-year institutions, which includes provisions under which state institutions of higher education shall accept all credit hours of acceptable course work for automatic transfer from an associate of arts or associate of science Degree with Designation, pursuant to §23-1-108(7)(a), C.R.S. Further guidance is found in 23-1-108(7)(g)(III), C.R.S., which defines a Statewide Transfer Articulation Agreement

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<sup>6</sup> Available on the Department’s [website](#).

<sup>7</sup> A list of degrees that have been waived of gtPathways requirements is maintained on the Department’s [website](#).

as a “Statewide degree transfer agreement,” which “...means an agreement among all of the state institutions of higher education for the transfer of an associate of arts or an associate of science degree. A statewide degree transfer agreement applies to common degree programs and specifies the common terms, conditions, and expectations for students enrolled in statewide degree transfer programs.”

- 3.15 “Transfer” means transferring the credit for courses taken at one institution of higher education to another. It is important to note that while most coursework can transfer, not all credit can be applied to a student’s chosen major. That is, the receiving institution will usually *accept coursework in transfer* and list those courses on the student’s transcript but may not be able to *apply the credit* for those courses to any of the requirements in the student’s degree program.
- 3.16 “Transfer Student” means a student entering the reporting institution for the first time but known to have previously attended a postsecondary institution at the same level (e.g. undergraduate, graduate) after high school graduation (or passing an equivalency exam). The student may transfer with or without credit. This excludes students who completed remedial coursework and students who completed college-level coursework as a high school student through Concurrent Enrollment or as their homeschool curriculum.

#### 4.00 Policy Goals

The policy goals are to provide guidance on each entity’s role in the implementation of:

- 4.01 gtPathways, “that includes all state-supported institutions of higher education and that will ensure that the quality of and requirements that pertain to general education courses are comparable<sup>8</sup> and transferable system wide,” [§23-1-108.5(1), C.R.S.]; and
- 4.02 The Student Bill of Rights, which states that:
- 4.02.01 “(a) Students should be able to complete their associate of arts and associate of science degree programs in no more than sixty credit hours or their baccalaureate programs in no more than one hundred twenty credit hours unless there are additional degree requirements recognized by the commission;”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that gtPathways is not about course equivalencies and that “comparable” does not mean “equivalent.” That is, gtPathways are guaranteed to meet gtPathways requirements of most Liberal Arts & Sciences degrees but may not meet other general education or major requirements of degrees that received waivers because those degrees have additional requirements.

<sup>9</sup> At its April 1, 2004 meeting, the Commission granted waivers to exceed the 120 credit cap to the following degree programs (new credit limits in parentheses): nursing (126 cr.); teacher preparation (126 cr. with the stipulation that students can complete the program in 4-years); engineering, engineering technology, computer science and related programs (exempt from the 120 credit limit but with the stipulation that all programs must “guarantee that students will be able to complete the program requirements in 4 years”); all degree programs at Colorado School of Mines (exempt from the 120 credit limit); and landscape architecture at CSU (132 cr.). At its June 4, 2009 meeting, the

- 4.02.02 “(b) A student can sign a two-year or four-year graduation agreement that formalizes a plan for that student to obtain a degree in two or four years, unless there are additional degree requirements recognized by the commission;”
- 4.02.03 “(c) Students have a right to clear and concise information concerning which courses must be completed successfully to complete their degrees;”
- 4.02.04 “(d) Students have a right to know which courses are transferable among the state public two-year and four-year institutions of higher education;”
- 4.02.05 “(e) Students, upon successful completion of core general education courses, regardless of the delivery method, should have those courses satisfy the core course requirements of all Colorado public institutions of higher education;”
- 4.02.06 “(f) Students have a right to know if courses from one or more public higher education institutions satisfy the students’ degree requirements;”
- 4.02.07 “(g) A student’s credit for the completion of the core requirements and core courses shall not expire for ten years from the date of initial enrollment and shall be transferable;”
- 4.02.08 “(h) Students have a right to transparency of the cost of postsecondary education programs, including information on fees, associated expenses, and financial aid in the form of scholarships, grants, and loans;”
- 4.02.09 “(i) Students have the right to seamless transfer of courses in the guaranteed transfer pathway matrix, transparency in the process for transferring credits, a timely response on applications for transferring credits, and transparency in how and why a credit is accepted or rejected by an institution and how and why a credit is or is not applied toward degree requirements;”
- 4.02.10 “(j) Students have the right to appeal an institution’s failure to accept the student’s request for transfer credit; and”
- 4.02.11 “(k) Students have the right to know what work-related experiences or prior learning opportunities are awarded postsecondary academic credit at the institution in which the student is enrolled, pursuant to section 23-5-145.5.”  
[§23-1-125(1), C.R.S.]

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Commission approved a credit waiver of 138 credits and lifted the 4-year graduation agreement requirement for all science teacher preparation programs.

## 5.00 Roles and Responsibilities

### 5.01 Students

Students are responsible to act in their own best academic interests and to seek the information necessary for making informed transfer choices, including:

- 5.01.01 Contacting academic advisors at both the sending and receiving institutions to understand the limitations on transfer;
- 5.01.02 Checking with the receiving institution for the availability of Statewide Transfer Articulation Agreements, Transfer Guides, other inter-institutional transfer agreements that may exist, and graduation requirements of the institution and the degree program into which the student hopes to transfer;
- 5.01.03 Understanding the limits in applying transfer credits within general education, major requirements, and elective categories for the institution and degree program into which the student hopes to transfer; and
- 5.01.04 Filing an appeal with the institution in a timely manner to resolve transfer disputes.

### 5.02 Governing Boards of Public Institutions or Systems

All Governing Boards of public institutions or systems:

- 5.02.01 “...shall implement the statewide degree transfer agreements and the commission policies relating to the statewide degree transfer agreements.” [23-1-108(7)(a), C.R.S.]
- 5.02.02 “...shall implement the [student transfer] agreements [between degree programs offered on the same campus or within the same institutional system] and commission policies relating to the agreements.” [23-1-108(7)(f), C.R.S.]
- 5.02.03 “...shall modify its existing policies as may be necessary to accept the transfer of these [gtPathways course] credits.” [23-1-108.5(5), C.R.S.]
- 5.02.04 “...shall have in place and enforce policies regarding transfers by students between undergraduate degree programs which are offered within the same institution or within the same institutional system. Such policies shall include, but shall not be limited to, the following provisions:
  - (a) If, not more than ten years prior to transferring into an undergraduate degree program, a student earns credit hours which are required for graduation from such undergraduate degree program, such credit hours shall

apply to the completion of such student's graduation requirements from such undergraduate degree program following such transfer;

(b) A student who transfers into an undergraduate degree program shall not be required to complete a greater number of credit hours in those courses which are required for graduation from such undergraduate degree program than are required of students who began in such undergraduate degree program, nor shall there be any minimum number of credit hours required post-transfer other than the normal degree requirements for non-transferring students; and

(c) The grade point average which is required for a student to apply for and be fully considered for transfer into an undergraduate degree program shall be no higher than that which is required for graduation from such undergraduate degree program.” [23-5-122(1), C.R.S.]

5.02.05 “...shall adopt policies to ensure that, if a student completes a program of study at an area technical college and subsequently enrolls in an institution within the state system of community and technical colleges, or transfers from an area technical college to an institution within the state system of community and technical colleges, any postsecondary course credits earned by the student while enrolled in the area technical college will apply in full at another area technical college or to an appropriate program leading to a certificate or to an associate degree at a community or technical college. Postsecondary credits earned by a student at an area technical college may be transferred into an associate degree program at a community college or into a degree program at a four-year institution of higher education as provided in section 23-1-108(7) and the state credit transfer policies established by the Colorado commission on higher education.” [23-60-802, C.R.S.]<sup>10</sup>

### 5.03 Public Institutions of Higher Education

All public institutions:

5.03.01 Shall publish the Student Bill of Rights [23-1-125(1)(a-k), C.R.S.] in course catalogs and advising centers.

5.03.02 Shall honor the Student Bill of Rights.

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<sup>10</sup> Community colleges and 4-year institutions may accept credits earned from an area technical college as long as that school is accredited to offer the credit. Area technical colleges are not accredited to offer general education (gtPathways). As of February 7, 2019, the three area technical colleges in Colorado are Emily Griffith Technical College (Denver), Pickens Technical College (Aurora), and Technical College of the Rockies (Delta; formerly Delta-Montrose Technical College).



- 5.03.03 Shall comply with "...the intent of the general assembly that academic degree programs at state-supported institutions of higher education be designed and implemented to assure and emphasize that undergraduate students have the maximum range of opportunities and assistance to complete their course of study and obtain their degree in a reasonable amount of time." [23-1-108(13)(a), C.R.S.]
- 5.03.04 "...Each higher education institution shall submit its list of identified courses in the guaranteed transfer pathways matrix, including course descriptions and, upon request of the commission, summaries of course syllabi, for review and approval by the commission on or before March 1, 2003, and on March 1 of each odd-numbered year thereafter." [23-1-108.5(4)(a), C.R.S.]<sup>11</sup>
- 5.03.05 "...shall publish, and update as necessary, a list of course offerings that identifies courses offered by the institution that correspond with the courses included in the guaranteed transfer pathways matrix." [23-1-108.5(4)(b), C.R.S.]
- 5.03.06 Shall re-evaluate the application of transfer credits to a student's new major or program requirements "if a student changes the student's major or declared program of study" and "...shall participate in the course numbering system." [23-1-108.5(5), C.R.S.]
- 5.03.07 Shall develop effective transfer advising systems, including but not limited to, training faculty and academic advisors, providing freshman students with planning information, and providing transfer students with appeals information.
- 5.03.08 Shall develop advising partnerships among all four-year and two-year public institutions to jointly advise students.
- 5.03.09 "...shall implement the [student transfer] agreements [between degree programs offered on the same campus or within the same institutional system] and commission policies relating to the agreements." [23-1-108(7)(f), C.R.S.]
- 5.03.10 "...shall implement the statewide degree transfer agreements and the commission policies relating to the statewide degree transfer agreements." [23-1-108(7)(a), C.R.S.]
- 5.03.11 "...shall conform their own core course requirements with the guidelines developed by the department and shall identify the specific courses that meet the general education course guidelines." [23-1-125(3), C.R.S.]
- 5.03.12 "...shall grant full course credits to students for the core courses they successfully test out of, free of tuition for those courses." [23-1-125(4), C.R.S.]

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<sup>11</sup> This process was completed.

- 5.03.13 “...shall adopt and make public a policy or program to determine academic credit for prior learning.” [23-1-125(4.5), C.R.S.]
- 5.03.14 Shall accept in transfer from within the institution and from other state institutions of higher education prior learning assessment credit awarded for GT Pathways requirements and shall not prohibit students from attempting to meet general education/GT Pathways requirements with prior learning assessment credit.
- 5.03.15 To approve degrees with designation, the Colorado Community College System shall “...submit the degree program designation to the board for its review and approval. The community college may offer the degree program only after it has been approved by the board and by the Colorado commission on higher education. The community college shall exclusively use the degree program designation name in official publications, course catalogs, diplomas, and official transcripts” [23-60-211(1), C.R.S.] and Colorado Mountain College and Aims Community College shall “...submit the degree program designation to the board of trustees for its review and approval. The local district college may offer the degree program only after it has been approved by the board of trustees and by the Colorado commission on higher education.<sup>12</sup> The local district college shall exclusively use the degree program designation name in official publications, course catalogs, diplomas, and official transcripts” [23-71-123(3), C.R.S.].<sup>13</sup>
- 5.03.16 “...should work in collaboration with the commission to develop a process that reduces a potential barrier to degree completion by providing students with information about the student’s eligibility for an associate degree” [23-1-131(1)(b)]. “The two-year and four-year institutions shall agree upon the contents of the notification to eligible students. At a minimum, the notification shall include the requirements for the degree audit by the two-year institution and information concerning the process for a student to be awarded an associate degree in the future if the degree requirements are not met or the student declines the associate degree at the time of the notification” [23-1-131(3)(b), C.R.S.]. “Each two-year and four-year institution shall provide students with information concerning the process developed pursuant to this section” 23-1-131(4), C.R.S.].
- 5.03.17 Shall follow their standard teach-out provisions for academic programs when statewide transfer articulation agreements are revised or when an institution discontinues a program that is part of a statewide transfer articulation agreement.

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<sup>12</sup> Refer to CCHE Policy I, V for more information on approval of new degree programs.

<sup>13</sup> GE Council agreed that if a two-year institution is unable to offer all coursework required for a Statewide Transfer Articulation Agreement, that institution should not offer the corresponding Degree with Designation.

#### 5.04 Participating Private Institutions of Higher Education

Private institutions of higher education may choose to participate in gtPathways, provided an institution meets the statutory criteria outlined in 23-1-125(5)(e), C.R.S., including accreditation by an accrediting agency or association approved by the United States Department of Education; provision of an educational program for which it awards a bachelor's degree or a graduate degree; and determination by the United States Department of Education to be eligible to administer federal financial aid programs pursuant to Title IV of the federal Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended. Participation by private institutions of higher education in gtPathways may include conforming their general education curricula to include the gtPathways curriculum; being guaranteed their approved gtPathways courses will transfer to all public and other participating nonpublic institutions, and agreeing to accept in transfer and apply credit for gtPathways courses from other participating nonpublic and public institutions of higher education, pursuant to §23-1-125(5), C.R.S.

#### 5.05 Colorado Commission on Higher Education

The Commission, with the Colorado Department of Higher Education acting as its staff:

5.05.01 “...shall establish, after consultation with the governing boards of institutions, and enforce statewide degree transfer agreements between two-year and four-year state institutions of higher education and among four-year state institutions of higher education.” [23-1-108(7)(a), C.R.S.]

5.05.02 “...shall establish and enforce student transfer agreements between degree programs offered on the same campus or within the same institutional system.” [23-1-108(7)(f), C.R.S.]

5.05.03 Shall, “...within existing resources, ...implement and revise appropriate policies, including financial incentives, to assure that students at state-supported institutions of higher education complete their academic degree programs in the most efficient, effective, and productive manner. The policy implementation and review shall include:

(I) Academic advising and counseling at such institutions and consideration of methods for the improvement of early and continuous availability of such academic advising and counseling in order to assist students with the completion of degree programs;

(II) The frequency and availability of courses essential to completion of degree programs at such institutions and evaluation of what changes may be necessary to assure that the course scheduling for degree programs by such institutions maximizes the opportunities for students to complete their course of study efficiently, effectively, and productively;

(III) Measures for minimizing and eliminating the restrictions against automatic transfer of credit hours of acceptable course work between such institutions and whether the provisions of transfer agreements between two-year and four-year institutions and among four-year institutions entered into pursuant to subsection (7) of this section are directed at easing such transfer restrictions;

(IV) Methods for minimizing the loss of credit hours when a student changes degree programs at such institution and assurance that such credit hours are transferred or substituted for appropriate course work in the other degree program;

(V) The review of possible solutions for access of nontraditional and part-time students to complete programs within the student's time frame goals;

(VI) What effect, if any, the reduction of degree programs would have on the increased availability of classes within existing degree programs;

(VII) What effect increases in educational costs may have on the average length of time for a student to complete a degree program; and

(VIII) The implementation of core curricula as a measure for assisting students to graduate.” [§23-1-108(13)(a), C.R.S.]

- 5.05.04 “oversee the adoption of a guaranteed transfer pathways matrix, which includes all higher education institutions and will ensure that the quality of the guaranteed transfer pathway matrix courses are comparable and transferable systemwide.” [23-1-108.5(1), C.R.S.]
- 5.05.05 Consider for approval gtPathways courses recommended by GE Council, pursuant to §23-1-108.5(3), C.R.S.
- 5.05.06 “...shall consult with the governing boards when convening representatives from the higher education institutions [to serve on GE Council].” [23-1-108.5(3)(a), C.R.S.]
- 5.05.07 “...shall review the [GE] council's recommendations and adopt a guaranteed transfer pathway matrix for general education courses, including criteria for the courses...” [23-1-108.5(3)(c)(I), C.R.S.]
- 5.05.08 “...shall adopt and implement such procedures [recommended by GE Council to document students’ success in transferring among higher

education institutions].” [23-1-108.5(6)(a), C.R.S.]

- 5.05.09 “...in consultation with the governing boards and the higher education institutions, shall design and implement a statewide database to [document students’ success in transferring among higher education institutions].” [23-1-108.5(6)(b), C.R.S.]
- 5.05.10 Resolve student complaints regarding the requirements of this policy, pursuant to CCHE Policy I, T Student Complaint Policy. “The Commission shall have final authority in resolving transfer disputes.” [23-1-108(7)(a), C.R.S.]
- 5.05.11 “...shall adopt such policies to ensure that institutions develop the most effective way to implement the transferability of core course credits.” [23-1-125(3) C.R.S.]

## 5.06 General Education (GE) Council

The GE Council:

- 5.06.01 “...shall create a process through which it shall seek input from and consult with various higher education student organizations for each articulation agreement and for the review of general education courses and the course numbering system as required in [23-1-108.5(3)(c)].” [23-1-108.5(3)(a), C.R.S.]
- 5.06.02 “...shall recommend to the commission a guaranteed transfer pathway matrix to which the general education courses for each higher education institution may be mapped.” [23-1-108.5(3)(b), C.R.S.]<sup>14</sup>
- 5.06.03 “ ...shall recommend to the commission a list of courses to be included in the guaranteed transfer pathway matrix. In identifying the courses, the council shall review the course descriptions and may request summaries of course syllabi for review, focusing on lower division general education courses.” [23-1-108.5(3)(c)(I), C.R.S.]<sup>15</sup>
- 5.06.04 “...shall annually review the list of courses and the guaranteed transfer pathway matrix, including the criteria, adopted by the commission and recommend changes necessary to maintain the accuracy and integrity of the guaranteed transfer pathway matrix. The council's annual review shall include consideration of the course descriptions, and the council may

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<sup>14</sup> This process was completed and the common course numbering system for gtPathways courses is linked on the Department’s [website](#).

<sup>15</sup> This process was completed per initial requirements of H.B. 01-1298 (the “Berry Bill”) and is ongoing.

request summaries of course syllabi for further review.” [23-1-108.5(3)(c)(II), C.R.S.]<sup>16</sup>

- 5.06.05 “...shall devise and recommend to the commission procedures for exchanging information to document students’ success in transferring among higher education institutions.” [23-1-108.5(6)(a), C.R.S.]
- 5.06.06 Shall act as their respective institutions’ liaisons to assist the Department in: the creation, adoption, and revision of statewide transfer articulation agreements; the review of proposed gtPathways courses; training of academic advisors and other institutional staff members on the requirements of this policy; and providing guidance to the Department in the resolution of transfer disputes.
- 5.06.07 Shall assist the Department in reviewing and revising statewide transfer articulation agreements no less frequently than every five years; facilitating meetings for discipline-specific faculty to negotiate revisions to their agreement; recruiting discipline-specific faculty to participate in revision negotiations; and facilitating institutional adoption of revisions to statewide transfer articulation agreements.

## **6.00 Other Statutory Provisions that Affect Transfer**

- 6.01 Credit cap for degrees.
  - 6.01.01 “Students should be able to complete their associate of arts and associate of science degree programs in no more than sixty credit hours or their baccalaureate programs in no more than one hundred twenty credit hours unless there are additional degree requirements recognized by the commission” [23-1-125(1)(a), C.R.S.]; and
  - 6.01.02 “The commission shall establish a standard of a one-hundred-twenty-hour baccalaureate degree, not including specified professional degree programs that have additional degree requirements recognized by the commission” [23-1-125(2), C.R.S.]<sup>17</sup>
- 6.02 Course/credit limitations and requirements: transfer students and native students.

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<sup>16</sup> Standard practice has been that gtPathways courses continue to carry that designation unless the institution chooses to withdraw the course from general education, the course is not offered within a two-year period, or evaluations indicate that a course does not meet the state content and competency criteria, which are linked on the Department’s [website](#).

<sup>17</sup> See earlier footnote on Commission waivers to institutions to exceed the 120-credit cap for certain degree programs.

- 6.02.01 “A state institution of higher education that admits as a junior a student who holds an associate of arts degree, associate of applied science degree, or associate of science degree that is the subject of a statewide degree transfer agreement shall not require the student to complete any additional courses to fulfill general education requirements” [23-1-108(7)(b)(II)(A), C.R.S.]; and
  - 6.02.02 “A student who transfers under a statewide degree transfer agreement may be required to complete lower-division courses that are part of the major, but are not part of the statewide degree transfer agreement, if taking the courses does not require the transfer student to take more total credit hours to receive the degree than a native student and does not extend the total time required to receive the degree beyond that required for a native student”<sup>18</sup> [23-1-108(7)(b)(II)(A), C.R.S.]; and
  - 6.02.03 “A state institution of higher education...is responsible for the total cost of tuition, without participation by the student in the college opportunity fund...for any credit hours that exceed the total credit hours required for a native student or that extend the total time to receive the degree beyond that required for a native student” [23-1-108(7)(b)(II)(A), C.R.S.].
- 6.03 Competency testing.
- 6.03.01 “...the commission shall, in consultation with each public institution of higher education, define a process for students to test out of core courses, including specifying use of a national test or the criteria for approving institutionally devised tests. Beginning in the 2010-11 academic year, each public institution of higher education shall grant full course credits to students for the core courses they successfully test out of, free of tuition for those courses.” [23-1-125(4), C.R.S.]
  - 6.03.02 Standard practice is that institutions do not have to allow students to test out of every core course but there must be a means to test out of every gtPathways category (e.g., GT-CO1, GT-MA1, and so on).
  - 6.03.03 Institutions may choose the assessment instruments. Portfolio review and prior learning assessment are allowable instruments.
- 6.04 Credit for prior learning.
- 6.04.01 “...each public institution of higher education shall adopt and

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<sup>18</sup> “Total time to receive the degree” presumes that the transfer student and the native student demonstrate substantially similar enrollment patterns in the same program of study.

make public a policy or program to determine academic credit for prior learning.” [23-1-125(4.5), C.R.S.]

6.04.02 Institutions shall accept in transfer from within the institution and from other state institutions of higher education prior learning assessment credit awarded for GT Pathways requirements and shall not prohibit students from attempting to meet general education/GT Pathways requirements with prior learning assessment credit.

**7.00 General Education and gtPathways Curriculum**

The gtPathways curriculum is the core of the general education requirements of most Liberal Arts & Sciences bachelor’s degrees. This takes some of the guesswork out of transfer because gtPathways courses, in which the student earned a C- or higher, will always transfer<sup>19</sup> and the credit will apply<sup>20</sup> to gtPathways requirements in every Liberal Arts & Sciences bachelor’s degree at every public Colorado institution. Depending on the bachelor’s degree, gtPathways course credit may also be applied to major and elective requirements at the receiving institution’s discretion. gtPathways courses taken beyond the required 31-credit gtPathways curriculum will transfer (and be listed on the student’s transcript) but the credit is not guaranteed to apply to general education or major requirements or to electives (or count towards the 120 required credits for the bachelor’s degree). Table 1 below highlights where gtPathways courses fit in a bachelor’s degree.

**Table 1: The Parts of a Bachelor’s Degree**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Bachelor’s Degree</b><br/>(usually 120 credits)</p> <p>Examples:<br/>Bachelor of Arts<br/>Bachelor of Science</p> | <p><b>General Education Requirements</b>, includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• gtPathways (31 credits) and/or</li> <li>• other courses specified by the institution or major department, not to exceed 40 credits<sup>21</sup></li> </ul> |
|   | <p><b>Major Requirements</b> (number of credits varies)</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biology</li> <li>• English</li> <li>• Political Science</li> </ul>  |
|   | <p><b>Electives</b> (number of credits varies)</p>  |
|   | <p><b>Other graduation requirements</b></p>   |

As shown in Table 2 below, the gtPathways curriculum is organized into six categories: 1) written communication, 2) mathematics, 3) arts and humanities, 4) history, 5) social and behavioral

<sup>19</sup> Transfer of credit means the receiving institution notes on its own transcript the credit earned at another institution. Credits that transfer do not reduce time to degree completion unless they are applied to degree requirements at the receiving institution.

<sup>20</sup> Application of credit means the receiving institution applies credit earned at another institution to its own degree requirements, whether as general education, major requirements, or electives. Application of credit to degree requirements reduces time to degree completion.

<sup>21</sup> §Per 23-1-125(3), C.R.S.



sciences, and 6) natural and physical sciences, and several sub-categories.

**Table 2: gtPathways Curriculum**

| <b>Semester<br/>Credit<br/>Hours</b> | gtPathways Curriculum   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 6                                    | <p><b>Written Communication:</b><br/>           GT-CO1: Introductory Writing course (minimum 3 credits)<br/>           GT-CO2: Intermediate Writing course (minimum 3 credits)<br/>           GT-CO3: Advanced Writing Course (minimum 3 credits)<br/>           *Students may take GT-CO1 and GT-CO2 or they may take GT-CO2 and GT-CO3.</p>   |
| 3                                    | <p><b>Mathematics:</b><br/>           GT-MA1 (minimum 3 credits)</p>  |
| 15                                   | <p><b>Arts &amp; Humanities</b> – 2 courses (minimum 6 credits); courses can be from different sub-categories or from the same sub-category:<br/>           GT-AH1: Arts and Expression<br/>           GT-AH2: Literature and Humanities<br/>           GT-AH3: Ways of Thinking<br/>           GT-AH4: World Languages</p> <p><b>History</b> – 1 course (minimum 3 credits)<br/>           GT-HI1</p> <p><b>Social and Behavioral Sciences</b> – 1 course (minimum 3 credits)<br/>           GT-SS1: Economic or Political Systems<br/>           GT-SS2: Geography<br/>           GT-SS3: Human Behavior, Culture, or Social Frameworks</p> <p>*Students must select one more course from any of the above categories/sub-categories to equal at least 15 credits. (Multiple courses from the same sub-category are allowed.)</p> |
| 7                                    | <p><b>Natural and Physical Sciences</b> – 2 courses, at least one of which must be GT-SC1<br/>           GT-SC1: Course with Required Laboratory<br/>           GT-SC2: Lecture Course without Required Laboratory</p>  |
| <b>31</b>                            | <b>TOTAL MINIMUM CREDITS</b>  |

To complete the gtPathways curriculum, students are required to complete the minimum 31 semester credit hours and earn a C- grade or better in each course. The guarantee of applicability of credit of gtPathways coursework to the receiving institution's general education requirements is limited to the minimum number of semester credit hours in each category. So, for instance, if a student takes two GT-MA1 courses and then transfers, the receiving institution must apply only one of the GT-MA1 courses. The remaining GT-MA1 course may be applied to major or elective credit at the discretion of the institution.

## 7.01 Limitations to gtPathways

Students and academic advisors should note that not all of a degree's general education courses may be gtPathways approved. Courses that are gtPathways approved are designated as such in each institution's Course Catalog. Generally speaking, as long as a student does not take more general education courses than are required for his or her degree or change his or her major, then gtPathways courses completed at one public or participating private institution with a C- or better shall be applied to the degree's general education requirements or the requirements of the declared major at the receiving institution, given that the degree's general education core contains gtPathways courses. These limitations are explained below in more detail.

### 7.01.01 Limitation #1: Not All Degrees Contain the gtPathways Curriculum.

Some degrees do not contain the gtPathways curriculum in whole or in part. These degrees have waivers from the Commission not to have to include gtPathways in their general education cores.<sup>22</sup> It should be noted that although the general education cores of these degrees do not contain the gtPathways curriculum, they are still in line with the general education course guidelines in §23-1-125(3), C.R.S. That is, they are "...designed to ensure that students demonstrate competency in reading, critical thinking, written communication, mathematics, and technology". It is also important to note that institutions are still required to accept gtPathways courses in transfer and apply the credit when these degrees contain gtPathways courses in their general education cores. Since not every degree contains the gtPathways curriculum, this has several implications for students who will, or believe they may, transfer:

1. The gtPathways curriculum will satisfy at least 31 credits of general education requirements in most degrees, but not all degrees.
2. If the bachelor's degree into which the student intends to transfer contains the gtPathways curriculum, or an academic advisor for that degree affirms that the student's gtPathways courses will apply to major or elective requirements, then gtPathways courses are a good choice for that student.
3. If the degree does not contain the gtPathways curriculum, and the academic advisor indicates that none or few gtPathways courses will apply to the degree requirements, then the student should be advised that, although all coursework will *transfer*, it may

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<sup>22</sup> A list of degrees that have been waived of gtPathways requirements is maintained on the Department's [website](#).

not *apply* so it won't get the student closer to completing the bachelor's degree. Early transfer may be a good option in these instances.

#### 7.01.02 Limitation #2: Similarly Named Courses May Not Be Equivalent.

It is important to note that gtPathways courses are not based on course equivalencies but meet content and competency criteria. Same or similarly-named gtPathways courses at different institutions are not guaranteed to be equivalent to one another. Students should not presume that because they took a gtPathways course at one institution that the same or similarly-named gtPathways course at a different institution contains the same material. This is important because receiving institutions will sometimes advise students to take a course at their institution that has the same or similar name to a course they previously took at a different institution. Institutions advise students to do this when it has been determined that the student's previous coursework has not prepared them for subsequent coursework at the receiving institution. All gtPathways courses that are a part of the degree's general education will still transfer and apply to general education requirements.

#### 7.02 Waivers of gtPathways Curriculum Requirements

Per §23-1-125(3), C.R.S., the Commission “may make allowances for baccalaureate programs that have additional degree requirements recognized by the commission”, thereby enabling institutions to develop academic programs that do not contain the full gtPathways curriculum. Institutions that seek a waiver from gtPathways curriculum requirements for a particular academic program must submit a formal request to the Department that includes responses to the following questions:

1. Why it is important that a gtPathways waiver be granted for this program (address the nature of the degree relative to the profession, if applicable, including work pathways for students entering the program)?
2. Which specific components of the gtPathways curriculum are requested to be waived or modified?
3. How will the institution ensure that the program includes a “core of courses” that provide a general education through which “students demonstrate competency in reading, critical thinking, written communications, mathematics, and technology”, as articulated in Colorado Revised Statutes 23-1-125(3)? How will the general education provided respond to the 10 competencies of the gtPathways curriculum?
4. What additional degree requirements, such as those associated with accreditation and licensure, make it impossible to include the full gtPathways in the program curriculum?
5. How will the absence of a gtPathways waiver potentially harm students (if, for example, it extends the time to degree beyond four years, or results in certain critical courses being left out of a program)?
6. How will the institution ensure that the gtPathways waiver will not create barriers to student transfer?

Upon receipt of an institutional request for a gtPathways waiver, Department staff will place the request on the agenda of an upcoming meeting of the General Education Council and invite

institutional representatives to attend the meeting to answer questions. The General Education Council may offer a recommendation to the Department based on information provided by the requesting institution. Department staff will then determine whether to recommend to the Commission 1) a full/blanket waiver of gtPathways curriculum requirements; 2) a modified/limited waiver; or 3) no waiver. In the event a modified/limited waiver is recommended by staff and approved by the Commission, the staff would enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the institution or system to include details on the parameters of the curriculum variation, the waiver duration, and the verification process.

### 7.03 Colorado GenEd Foundational Skills Credential

The *Colorado GenEd Foundational Skills Credential* is a mechanism to formally recognize students when they have fulfilled all gtPathways requirements. The credential rewards students for achieving a significant milestone in their degree pathways and highlights the in-demand skills and competencies that are developed through general education – competencies that employers indicate regularly are foundational for workplace success, including civic engagement, creative thinking, critical thinking, diversity and global learning, information literacy, inquiry and analysis, problem solving, quantitative literacy, and written communication.

The *Colorado GenEd Foundational Skills Credential* is designed to be awarded to students who have completed all gtPathways requirements and appear on the academic transcript similar to other academic credentials including degrees, certificates, minors, and areas of concentration. Recognizing that some institutions require additional general education courses that go above and beyond gtPathways, institutions may require students to meet the institution’s full general education requirements before issuing the award. It is the prerogative of institutions to determine whether to award the credential, as well as the credential name, documentation, and method of award.

## 8.00 Transfer Options for Students

The following parts of this Section 8.00 describe the options for students to transfer coursework among Colorado’s public and participating private institutions of higher education. To be effective, these transfer options require institutions of higher education to advise students on which courses are most appropriate for their intended major programs of study. Also, students need to consult with their academic advisors when registering for courses to make informed decisions if planning to transfer to another institution. Informed decision-making is the best strategy for successfully transferring coursework among institutions and ensuring this policy’s effectiveness.

### 8.01 Transfer of gtPathways Courses

When evaluating a transfer student’s transcript, each public higher education institution will apply gtPathways credits to its general education requirements (where the degree’s general education core contains gtPathways courses), subject to the limitations listed above. In some cases, an institution, at its own discretion, may apply gtPathways courses to both general education and major requirements. Receiving institutions may not require students to demonstrate that the gtPathways courses they took at another institution adequately prepared

the student for subsequent coursework at the receiving institution.

## 8.02 Statewide Transfer Articulation Agreements

A Statewide Transfer Articulation Agreement (STAA) is an agreement among Colorado community colleges, junior colleges and four-year public institutions that offer a degree program in common, such as a Bachelor of Arts in History. Statewide Transfer Articulation Agreements allow students to:

- 8.02.01 Graduate from a two-year institution with a 60-credit Associate of Arts (A.A.) or Associate of Science (A.S.) Degree with Designation, such as an Associate of Arts in Business [§23-60-211 and §23-71-123(3), C.R.S.]. Exceptions to the 60-credit limit may be made by the Commission to facilitate transfer in certain disciplines or fields, including where the associated bachelor's degree program has received a waiver from the 120-credit cap and/or GT Pathways curriculum requirements.
- 8.02.02 Enroll, with junior status, at a 4-year institution if the student successfully completes the A.A. or A.S. degree that is the subject of the Statewide Transfer Articulation Agreement. It is important to note, however, that successful completion of the A.A. or A.S. degree does not guarantee admission into the four-year institution or the degree program at the four-year institution [§23-1-108(7)(b)(I), C.R.S.]. Students should always seek advising from the appropriate advisor at their two-year institution and the four-year institution into which they plan to transfer.
- 8.02.03 Complete the bachelor's degree in no more than 60 additional credits at the receiving four-year institution (for a total of 120 credits) [§23-1-108(7)(b)(II), C.R.S.], except where the degree program has received a waiver from the Commission to exceed 120 credits [§23-1-125(1)(b), C.R.S.].

Statewide Transfer Articulation Agreements and other Degree Transfer Agreements are listed on the Department's [website](#).

## 8.03 Institutional Transfer Guides

Institutional Transfer Guides ensure that a student who completes an A.A. or A.S. degree with a grade of C- or better in all courses will have at least 60 credits of his or her A.A. or A.S. degree applied to the bachelor's degree requirements at the receiving institution and the students will be granted junior status if admitted. Because most liberal arts and sciences degrees are designed to be completed in 120 credit hours, a transfer student can complete many degrees in 120 credit hours and 4 years, given that the transfer student follows the degree plan outlined in the transfer guide and does not take courses that are not required. It should be noted, however, that not all degrees for which there are transfer guides can be completed in an additional 60 credits. Completion of the curriculum prescribed within

Institutional Transfer Guides does not guarantee admission to a participating receiving institution. Students must meet all admission and application requirements at the receiving institution including the submission of all required documentation by stated deadlines.

Institutional Transfer Guides for each four-year institution are linked on the Department's [website](#).

#### 8.04 Transfer of Associate of Arts and Associate of Science Degrees that are not Degrees with Designation

A student who earns an Associate of Arts (A.A.) or Associate of Science (A.S.) degree (that is not a Degree with Designation) at a Colorado public institution, including completing the Pathways curriculum with a grade of C- or better in all courses, will transfer, upon admission, with junior standing into all liberal arts and sciences bachelor degree programs offered by a Colorado public four-year university. The credits earned in the associate degree program will apply at minimum to 31 credit hours of lower division general education and 29 credit hours of additional graduation credits. The receiving institution will evaluate credit for prior learning following its standard policy, and in alignment with the Commission's Prior Learning Assessment policy (Section I, Part X). Students should follow the Statewide Transfer Articulation Agreement (if one exists for the chosen bachelor's degree) or the receiving institution's Transfer Guide while considering what courses to complete as part of the A.A. or A.S. degree.

#### 8.05 Colorado Reverse Transfer (formerly known as "Degree within Reach")

Students who have some college completed but who have not yet attained a degree, may be eligible for an associate's degree if they meet the following criteria:

- The student has completed 15 credit hours at a community college in Colorado;
- The student has a minimum of 70 credit hours, including coursework at the four-year institution;
- The student has completed those 70 credit hours within 10 years of enrollment at any institution;
- The student's completed credit hours meet the requirements for an Associate of Science, Associate of Arts or Associate of General Studies, to be determined via degree audit at the community college; and
- The student has not requested that her or his data be withheld at either institution.

For more information, see the Department's [website](#).

#### 8.06 Transfer of Credits from Area Technical Colleges

Students who successfully complete Career and Technical Education (CTE) coursework may be able to transfer the credit for those courses into an Associate of General Studies (A.G.S.) degree, an Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) degree or a related certificate program. In regards to coursework completed at Area Technical Colleges, (including, but not limited to, Emily Griffith Technical College, Pickens Technical College, and Technical College of the

Rockies) pursuant to §23-60-802, Colorado Revised Statutes:

...if a student completes a program of study at an area technical college and subsequently enrolls in an institution within the state system of community and technical colleges, or transfers from an area technical college to an institution within the state system of community and technical colleges, any postsecondary course credits earned by the student while enrolled in the area technical college will apply in full at another area technical college or to an appropriate program leading to a certificate or to an associate degree at a community or technical college. Postsecondary credits earned by a student at an area technical college may be transferred into an associate degree program at a community college or into a degree program at a four-year institution of higher education as provided in [section 23-1-108 \(7\)](#) and the state credit transfer policies established by the Colorado commission on higher education.<sup>23</sup>

### **9.00 Notification of Transfer Credit**

Per § 23-5-150(1), students (undergraduate and graduate) who apply for admission and are accepted into an institution of higher education have the right to a timely response regarding the acceptance or denial of transfer credit. Institutions of higher education shall provide students with a determination of the acceptance or denial of transfer credit within 30 calendar days after the student has met the following criteria (if the last day of the 30-day period is a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday, the period is extended to include the next day which is not a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday):

- The student is admitted; and
- The institution receives official college transcripts and/or official documents for course credit (including official transcripts and documents received after admission); or
- An admitted and enrolled student who has an approved major, or program of study change, is equally entitled to the right to a timely response regarding how their transfer credits will be re-evaluated and applied toward their new major or program of study. Institutions of higher education must conduct a re-evaluation of a student's transfer credits within 30 calendar days of a student's approved request to change a major or program of study.

Per §23-5-150(2), an institution shall publish the institution's process and timeline for reviewing and making a decision regarding transfer credit requests on the institution's website. The institution shall update its website within thirty days after making a change to its process and timeline for reviewing and issuing decisions regarding transfer credit requests.

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<sup>23</sup> Community colleges and 4-year institutions may accept credits earned from an area technical college as long as that school is accredited to offer the credit. Area technical colleges are not accredited to offer general education (gtPathways).

## 10.00 Student Complaints

If disagreement regarding the transferability of credits for coursework or a degree occurs between a student and a receiving institution, or disagreement regarding courses required of students transferring under a Statewide Transfer Articulation Agreement that result in the transfer student taking more total credit hours to receive the degree than a native student in the same academic program, the Department will facilitate an expeditious review and resolution of the matter pursuant to Commission Policy, Section I, Part T: Student Complaint Policy. Complaints can be filed [online](#). Per §23-1-108(7)(a), “The Commission shall have final authority in resolving transfer disputes”.

HISTORY: CCHE Agenda Item V, D – March 14, 2014; CCHE Agenda Item III, I – April 11, 2014; CCHE Agenda Item V, B – February 7, 2019; CCHE Agenda Item III, B – March 8, 2019; CCHE Agenda Item III, A – May 3, 2019; CCHE Agenda Item IV, A – May 1, 2020; CCHE Agenda Item IV, E – October 22, 2020; CCHE Agenda Item III, A – December 3, 2020; CCHE Agenda Item III, D – June 6, 2024; CCHE Agenda Item III, A – January 3, 2025; CCHE Agenda Item II, A – March 7, 2025.