

SOUTH DAKOTA BOARD OF REGENTS

Full Board

AGENDA ITEM: 25

DATE: June 10-11, 2015

SUBJECT: Credit by Examination Guidelines

During the [April 2015](#) AAC meeting, the councils reviewed a set of Credit by Examination Administration Guidelines which were developed in response to a set of questions that emerged from the campuses regarding procedural approaches to awarding credit for Advanced Placement (AP) coursework. Currently, this practice is guided by the BOR [Policy 2:5 Transfer of Credit](#) which specifies that “Credit for college level courses granted through nationally recognized examinations such as CLEP, AP, DAN TES, etc. will be evaluated and accepted for transfer if equivalent to Regental courses and the scores are consistent with Regental policies.” Despite this policy framework that provides for a common approach to accepting credit by examination course equivalencies, a set of administrative guidelines have not been established to guide institutional practices related to AP, or many of the other credit by examination options that are presented to students. Currently, guidelines take the form of exam and course equivalencies matrixes that institutional personnel and students/parents rely on to determine whether credit will be awarded consistently across the campuses. These “guidelines” or matrixes lack much of the procedural structure that is necessary to ensure consistent practice across testing/assessment offices in the Regental system.

To address this issue, the set of Credit by Examination Administration Guidelines (see Attachment I) were developed and reviewed by AAC in April. AAC representatives brought forward minor modifications and were asked to further vet these guidelines with campus personnel responsible for testing students and to bring back additional issues or modifications that are necessary to ensure consistent usage throughout the system. AAC approved the guidelines during their [May 2015](#) meeting. Once these guidelines have been advanced to the Board of Regents for review, they will be posted on the AAC website.

RECOMMENDED ACTION OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Information only.

**South Dakota Board of Regents
Credit by Examination Administration Guidelines**

I. Purpose & Background

Credit by examination falls within [Board of Regents Policy 2:5 Transfer of Credit](#) which specifies that “Credit for college level courses granted through nationally recognized examinations such as CLEP, AP, DANTES, etc., will be evaluated and accepted for transfer if equivalent to Regental courses and the scores are consistent with Regental policies.” Board practice specifies that when new examinations are accepted under this policy, or when modifications are made to existing examinations, faculty in the respective disciplines are asked to evaluate course materials and make an equivalency recommendation. These recommendations are considered by the Academic Affairs Council and forwarded to the Board of Regents for approval and subsequent addition to the Regental system equivalency matrix for the various examinations.

II. Approved Equivalency Matrix

A. The Board of Regents has approved a number of system equivalency matrixes for a series of examinations that reflect scores that are routinely brought forward by students. Examinations developed by the following companies or organizations are eligible for inclusion in the equivalency matrixes.

1. Advanced Placement (AP) – College Board

- a. Program that offers college-level curricula and examinations to high school students. High school teachers are required to meet standards set by the College Board in order to deliver the coursework.
- b. AP Tests are scored on a 1 to 5 scale indicating that students scoring a 3 or higher are “qualified” with multiple choice components of the exam scored by computer, while the free response and essay portions are scored by trained Readers assigned by College Board.

2. College Level Examination Program (CLEP) – College Board

- a. Standardized exams that assess college-level knowledge in designated subject areas with the intent of awarding credit to students meeting minimum qualifying scores.
- b. Exams are primarily multiple-choice and scored on a scale of 20 to 80 and credit awards dependent upon course equivalencies established at the institutional and system level.

3. Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES)

- a. Testing service designed originally to provide service members and veterans pursue educational goals through assessments designed to measure skills acquired through military service or training. The service has grown to provide testing opportunities for non-military testers.

4. International Baccalaureate (IB)

- a. Curriculum opportunities with assessment options designed to measure student proficiency in a series of middle year, diploma, and career-related programs.
- b. Only diploma and career related program coursework/assessments are evaluated for inclusion in the Board of Regents equivalency matrixes.

5. Project Lead the Way

- a. A national program supported by the South Dakota Department of Education that provides high school equivalent coursework in the areas of science and engineering.
- b. Tracks in the area of engineering and biomedical sciences have been established in South Dakota to align with approved school district engineering curriculum.

- B. Students seeking to earn credit for an examination that does not have an established course equivalency matrix may do so on a course-by-course basis at the institutional level through the academic petition process.

III. Examination Review Process

- A. An examination review process can be facilitated resulting from the creation of a new exam, modifications to an existing exam, or a request from campus personnel/students to review an exam that has not yet been added to the equivalency matrix.
- B. Once a request is advanced to the Board of Regents central office, campus personnel from each Regental institution are asked to advance examination materials to the appropriate faculty in the discipline most closely aligned to the exam.
- C. Faculty representatives are asked to assess the materials and determine the alignment of the examination with an equivalent course in the Regental system.
- D. Recommendations from faculty representatives are forwarded to the Academic Affairs Council for consideration and approval.
 - 1. Affirmative support from the majority of faculty representatives will warrant inclusion on the equivalency matrix.
 - 2. Assenting recommendations from the majority of faculty representatives will warrant inclusion of a “no credit” designation on the equivalency matrix.
 - 3. Score assignments will align with recommendations set forth by the American Council on Education (ACE).
- E. Recommendations from AAC will be advanced to the Board of Regents for consideration and become active upon approval.

IV. Transcription & Accepting of Credit

A. Grade Assignment

- 1. Students earning the necessary score approved by the Board of Regents recognized on the equivalency matrix will be awarded credit. All course credit earned through credit by examination will be assigned an “EX” grade.
- 2. “EX” grades may not be used in the calculation of a student Cumulative GPA calculation in accordance with BOR Policy 2:10 Use of Grades & Grade Point Averages.
- 3. Students taking an examination that awards credit for multiple courses who has already earned credit for one of the courses in the recognize matrix, will only be granted the “EX” credit for the additional course(s).
- 4. Credit earned through validation methods other than nationally recognized exams may not exceed 30 credits for students seeking a bachelor’s degree, or 15 credit hours for those seeking an associate’s degree.

B. Score Acceptance Timeline

- 1. Valid test scores must be received within five years from the date of testing to earn credit for one of the recognized credit by examination services.

C. Transfer for Credit by Examination Coursework

- 1. If a valid test score was transcribed at an accredited postsecondary institution within this five year timeframe, then approved credit by examination scores may be transferred among institutions without requiring additional testing or course completion by students.
- 2. Coursework earned through credit by examination by one Regental institution will transfer automatically to all Regental institutions.
- 3. An institution granting “challenge exam credit” or “credit through prior learning assessment” will accept the grade and course equivalency assigned by the awarding institution.
- 4. Students may transfer in coursework from an institution outside the Regental system that has been awarded through the institution’s credit by examination policy. Institutional policies for assigning course credit must align with the scores approved by the South Dakota Board of Regents. This applies only to nationally normed examinations, and credit by exam or

challenge examinations developed at the institutional level must be evaluated on a one-to-one basis upon transfer.

D. Repeat Courses

1. Credit by validation can be used to repeat a prior course if the student had earned an unsatisfactory grade in the initial attempt.
2. Meeting the qualifying score for the credit by validation examination is used to establish proficiency for the course, and the “EX” grade will still be applied with the earned grade from the initial attempt still calculated in the student’s cumulative grade point average.