



**WEST VIRGINIA SECRETARY OF STATE**

**MAC WARNER**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW DIVISION**

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Office of West Virginia  
Secretary Of State

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**NOTICE OF FINAL FILING AND ADOPTION OF A LEGISLATIVE EXEMPT, INTERPRETIVE OR PROCEDURAL  
RULE**

AGENCY: Community And Technical College Education TITLE-SERIES: 135-59

RULE TYPE: Procedural Amendment to Existing Rule: Yes Repeal of existing rule: No

RULE NAME: Awarding Undergraduate College Credit for Prior Learning, Advanced Placement Credit, College-Level Examination Program, Nursing Career Pathway, and Micro-Credentials

CITE STATUTORY AUTHORITY: §18B-1-6, 18B-2B-6(c)(19)

This rule is filed with the Secretary of State. This rule becomes effective on the following date:

August 25, 2024

**BY CHOOSING 'YES', I ATTEST THAT THE PREVIOUS STATEMENT IS TRUE AND CORRECT.**

**Yes**

**Angela S Kerns -- By my signature, I certify that I am the person authorized to file legislative rules, in accordance with West Virginia Code §29A-3-11 and §39A-3-2.**

TITLE 135  
PROCEDURAL RULE

WEST VIRGINIA COUNCIL FOR COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE EDUCATION

SERIES 59

AWARDING UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING, ADVANCED  
PLACEMENT CREDIT, COLLEGE-LEVEL EXAMINATION PROGRAM, NURSING CAREER  
PATHWAY, AND MICRO-CREDENTIALS

**§135-59-1. General.**

1.1. Scope. -- This rule establishes guidelines for West Virginia public community and technical colleges awarding college credit for prior college-level learning through Credit for Prior Learning (CPL), for acceptance of advanced placement credit, for the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), for completion of the Nursing Career Pathway, and for recognizing skill sets earned through micro-credentials.

1.2. Authority. -- W. Va. Code §§18B-1-6 and 18B-2B-6(c)(19)

1.3. Filing Date. -- July 25, 2024.

1.4. Effective Date. -- August 25, 2024.

**§135-59-2. Purpose of Prior Learning Credit.**

2.1. This procedural rule details the responsibilities of the state community and technical colleges regarding the awarding of college credit for prior college-level learning gained outside the higher education academic environment.

2.2. The West Virginia Council for Community and Technical College Education (Council) recognizes that some students, particularly adults and non-traditional students, may have acquired prior college-level learning through the development of skills or knowledge that closely parallel those outcomes taught in college-level courses. It is important that the State's community and technical colleges evaluate learning that has taken place outside the higher education academic environment and award academic credit when appropriate.

2.3. The purpose of this rule is to set out the terms and conditions under which West Virginia public community and technical colleges award and/or transfer credits toward a degree or certificate based upon CPL and to provide consistent and accessible methods for students to earn these credits.

2.4. It is the intent of the Council to permit community and technical colleges to award undergraduate academic credit for prior learning through a variety of assessment methodologies that will ensure the academic credibility of such credit. Under these guidelines, in accordance with institutional policies and procedures, each institution shall award academic credit for prior learning that is equivalent to coursework which satisfies the requirements for the degree program in which the student is enrolled.

2.5. The Board of Governors Associate of Applied Science degree program and the Skilled Trades Apprenticeship Nontraditional Degree (STAND) program authorized by W. Va. Code § 18B-3D-7 maintain specific guidelines and requirements for the use of credit for prior learning. This rule does not replace those existing guidelines.

**§135-59-3. Definitions.**

3.1. “Credit for Prior Learning (CPL)” is defined as the assessment of college-level learning for college credit gained outside the higher education academic environment. For example, individuals may acquire college-level knowledge or skills through work, employee training programs, military service, independent study, non-credit courses, or community service. Only documented and demonstrated college-level learning will be awarded college credit.

The community and technical colleges may assess prior college-level learning through a variety of assessment methods including, but not limited to, the following:

- 3.1.1. Advanced Placement Exams.
- 3.1.2. American Council on Education (ACE) Guides.
- 3.1.3. College Level Examination Program (CLEP) Exams.
- 3.1.4. DANTES Subject Standardized Test (DSST).
- 3.1.5. Excelsior College Examination Program (ECE).
- 3.1.6. Institutional Course Challenge Examination Credit.
- 3.1.7. International Baccalaureate Program (IB).
- 3.1.8. Institutional Evaluation of Industry and Workforce Training such as apprenticeships, certifications, and licensure.
- 3.1.9. Portfolio Assessment/Review Credit.
- 3.1.10. Prior Military Training Credit.
- 3.1.11. Nursing Career Pathway.
- 3.1.12. Micro-credential.

3.2. “Chancellor” means the Chancellor for Community and Technical College Education as defined in W. Va. Code § 18B-1-2 or his or her designee.

3.3. “Council” means the Council for Community and Technical College Education established by W. Va. Code § 18B-2B-3.

3.4. “Secondary school” or “high school” includes traditional public or private high school, charter school, home school, learning pod, microschool, or other educational program authorized by the Legislature that encompasses education commonly received in grades 9 through 12.

3.5. “Micro-credential” is a short, focused credential designed to provide in-demand skills, knowledge, and experience. Micro-credentials may be earned through a course or short series of courses that culminate in a “digital badge,” which offers verified proof of competency and documentation of specific skills gained through the coursework, which is assessed against transparent and clearly defined criteria.

**§135-59-4. Principles.**

4.1. Students have unique experiences, interests, and intellectual pursuits that may lead to the acquisition of college-level learning. The acquisition of college-level learning is validated by assessment methods that are academically sound and rigorous.

4.2. West Virginia public community and technical colleges shall employ credit for prior learning (CPL) aligned with their respective missions, the principles of academic integrity, resources, and student educational attainment and success.

4.3. West Virginia public community and technical colleges may offer credentialing through micro-credentials that allow for career advancement without full stops for additional degrees; however, credentials may be credit or non-credit.

**§135-59-5. Institutional Policies Regarding Awarding Credit for Prior Learning.**

5.1. State community and technical colleges shall develop institutional policies for evaluating prior learning and for awarding credit consistent with this rule.

5.1.1. Each institution shall develop appropriate policies and procedures for awarding credit for a student's prior college-level learning in accordance with this rule, accrediting bodies' guidelines for prior learning assessment, and principles of good educational practice.

5.1.2. Institutional policy shall apply to all academic programs.

5.2. Institutions shall identify the forms of CPL credits that the institution will award, the processes for acquiring such credit, and make that information publicly available to students, faculty, and other stakeholders.

5.3. Institutions may award academic credit for prior learning that is equivalent to coursework which meets the requirements for the degree program in which the student is enrolled.

5.4. Credit for prior learning may apply toward majors, minors, general education requirements, and electives that count toward the student's chosen degree or certificate. Credit for Prior Learning may also satisfy prerequisite requirements. College credit awarded through CPL shall not be treated differently in its application and use than its course equivalencies or appropriate block credit.

5.5. Colleges shall award credit for prior learning only to students who are admitted to the institution.

5.6. Credit awarded through CPL shall not count toward institutional residency requirements.

5.7. The institution's faculty with appropriate professional credentials shall evaluate a student's portfolio and course-specific examinations to determine whether it meets the standards to award academic credit. The faculty member shall make a recommendation for credit to the appropriate academic officer at the institution in accordance with the institution's CPL guidelines.

5.8. Institutions must accept CPL credit up to 30 credits for associate degrees and up to nine credits for certificate programs.

5.8.1. Institutions may set a higher limit not to exceed 45 credits for associate degrees or 15 credits for certificate programs.

5.8.2. If a program accrediting body has a specific maximum for CPL credit, then the institution shall honor that maximum for that particular program.

5.9. Credit awarded through Credit for Prior Learning shall be clearly identified as such on a student's official transcript according to institutional CPL guidelines. The institution shall not use such credit to determine a student's grade point average or in the calculation of graduation honors. The institution shall record the credit as "Credit" only.

5.10. Students shall submit requests for awards of academic credit for prior learning in accordance with the guidelines established by the institution. Institutions shall establish a written record of their decisions and the basis for the decisions to accept or deny Credit for Prior Learning (whether it is portfolio evaluation or other type of assessment) for academic credit. Institutional policies shall ensure the transparency of the award or denial of CPL credit. Additionally, institutions shall develop and communicate to students a process for appealing CPL decisions.

5.11. The community and technical colleges may charge fees for assessment of Credit for Prior Learning requests, which fees may vary based upon the type of assessment performed. The institutions shall clearly publish and make available to students CPL credit and transcription fees.

5.12. Institutions shall regularly review their CPL policies to ensure that they are consistent with accreditation CPL guidelines and State, regional, and national practices.

#### **§135-59-6. Transferability of Credit for Prior Learning.**

6.1. Credits earned through CPL shall be transferable in accordance with 135 C.S.R. 17: *Transferability of Credits and Grades at West Virginia Colleges and Universities*. Once on a student's transcript, credits earned through prior learning shall be treated no differently than other credit coursework on a student's transcript.

6.2. CPL credit awarded at one institution that meets the West Virginia Core Coursework Transfer Agreement or other statewide articulation agreements shall be accepted as transfer credit toward the degree if the student transfers to another West Virginia public college or university in accordance with the guidelines of that particular policy or agreement.

#### **§135-59-7. Reporting the Awarding of Credit for Prior Learning Credits.**

7.1. Each institution shall maintain records of the number of students awarded credit for prior learning, the number of credits for prior learning awarded, the type of assessment method(s) used, and other recipient data, which they shall report to the Council on an annual basis. The Chancellor shall develop specific reporting guidelines and advise each institution of those guidelines.

#### **§135-59-8. Policy for Acceptance of Advanced Placement Credit.**

8.1. The community and technical colleges shall accept advanced placement credits according to the following guidelines:

8.1.1. High school students completing advanced placement examinations of the College Board with a minimum score of 3 shall receive credit at any state community and technical college, as indicated in the list of advanced placement exams offered by the College Board. The Chancellor maintains a list of all College Board advanced placement exams and the minimum number of credits that each institution shall grant. The college shall award credit solely on the basis of satisfactory performance of a score of 3 or higher on the advanced placement examinations.

8.1.2. When the examination is in the area of the student's major, the institution shall award credit toward the major or the core curriculum.

8.1.3. An academic department within the institution may, upon approval of the institutional faculty, require a higher score than 3 on an advanced placement test if the credit is to be used toward meeting a course requirement for a major in the department.

8.1.4. Credits awarded by regionally or nationally accredited institutions of higher education in West Virginia for successful completion of advanced placement exams are transferable to West Virginia state colleges and universities in accordance with the advanced placement policy of the receiving institution.

**§135-59-9. Institutional Responsibility.**

9.1. Each institution shall develop guidelines for acceptance of advanced placement credits that are consistent with the provisions of this rule and publish the guidelines in the college bulletin and/or other appropriate institutional publications.

**§135-59-10. Policy for the College-Level Examination Program.**

10.1. Credit awarded by an institution in conformity with this rule shall be transferable to all West Virginia state colleges and universities. Further, the community and technical college shall award credit only once to recognize mastery of course content. The community and technical college shall not award credit for equivalent courses in which students have already earned such credit through course work, CLEP, institutional challenge examinations, life experience, or other mechanisms.

**§135-59-11. Subject CLEP Examinations.**

11.1. Community and technical colleges may award credit for the student successfully completing any or all of the CLEP Subject Examinations presently offered or developed in the future. The student must achieve a score equal to or above the required score of the Commission on Educational Credit and Credentials of the American Council on Education for CLEP Exams current at the time the student takes the examination. The college shall award credit in an amount not exceeding the number of semesters for which the examination was designed. The college shall not assign a grade or include the credit in the computation of the student's grade-point average. The institution shall equate the CLEP credit earned with existing course offerings. If no equivalent course is offered by the institution, the college shall consider the credit earned by CLEP examination elective credit. The colleges shall not award CLEP Subject Examination credit for equivalent courses in which a student has already earned credit.

**§135-59-12. General CLEP Examinations.**

12.1. As of the effective date of this rule, an institution may award credit within the limits of the most recent recommended CLEP scores posted by The College Board.

12.2. Colleges shall clearly advise students that such credit in general education may not meet specific program requirements of the institution awarding the credit or of other institutions to which the student may later transfer. The credit shall then be used as elective credit. Colleges shall not award CLEP General Examination credit for equivalent courses in which a student has already earned credit.

12.3. An institution awarding credit through CLEP may establish scores higher than specified above for Subject and General Examinations if the institution establishes that the higher scores equate to a satisfactory level of performance by students actually enrolled in the equivalent course(s) at that institution.

**§135-59-13. Academic Record.**

13.1. The permanent academic record of the student shall indicate which credit was earned by CLEP examination.

**§135-59-14. Enrollment.**

14.1. Students must be enrolled in an institution in order to receive credit from the institution. Students who have taken CLEP examinations prior to enrollment must submit an official CLEP transcript.

**§135-59-15. Nursing Career Pathway Policy.**

15.1. The goal of the nursing career pathway is to give students a clear picture of how to enter the profession and a shorter, more affordable way to progress through the education they need. The pathway includes dual or advanced placement credit for high school students when admitted to nursing programs in community and technical colleges, seamless transition to bachelor's completion degrees in nursing as needed, and employment opportunities as nursing assistants, licensed practical nurses, and registered nurses along the pathway.

15.2. The community and technical colleges shall accept student course credit earned through dual credit as part of the Nursing Career Pathway as higher education credits counting toward credits specific to the major of nursing or nursing science. The student's secondary school shall identify completion of the nursing pathway on the high school transcript. Students completing the nursing pathway shall also receive the Therapeutic Services Certificate.

15.3. Dual credit courses in the Nursing Career Pathway are developed as required course credit according to West Virginia Board of Education Policy 2510, *Assuring Quality of Education: Regulations for Education Programs*, and Policy 2520.13, *West Virginia College- and Career-Readiness Programs of Study/Standards for Career and Technical Education*. These courses include college-level freshmen English, college algebra or statistics, anatomy and physiology, and general psychology. A list of approved dual credit courses may be found on the West Virginia Department of Education's website.

15.4. Students may also earn college-level credit for the Nursing Career Pathway and specific to the major of nursing or nursing science through Advanced Placement courses (AP) as set out in Section 8 of this rule.

15.5. Nothing in this rule shall prevent institutions from awarding additional dual credit or AP credit toward the Nursing Career Pathway as allowed by the institution's approved policies for awarding such credit.

**§135-59-16. Micro-Credentials.**

16.2. Institutions may offer micro-credentials for credit or non-credit to currently enrolled students (internal) or to transient students (external) enrolling for a specific set of courses.

16.3. Micro-credentials awarded to a student may be stackable and grouped or aggregated to provide a pathway to larger credentials. That is, micro-credentials may be used as credits for the awarding of a traditional degree. Non-credit micro-credentials may be converted to credit via the CPL process as outlined in Section 5 of this rule.

16.4. Students who successfully complete a micro-credential, whether credit or non-credit, will earn a digital badge or institutionally recorded and approved credential for verification to students, whether full-

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time, part-time, or non-credit. Upon successful completion of the micro-credential, institutions shall keep records of all earned non-credit badges or credentials.