



# California State University Monterey Bay

100 Campus Center □ Seaside, CA 93955-8001

## Academic Credit and Prior Learning Assessment Policy

### 1.00 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define the variety of methods for earning academic credit at CSU Monterey Bay. This policy expresses the commitments of the faculty to an assets-based philosophy and recognition of the many ways that students learn and demonstrate their learning. Additionally, this policy complies with Executive Order 1036.

### 2.00 Definitions

**Examination** is a set of questions or exercises used to evaluate skill or knowledge in a particular area. Exam responses may be documented in hard copy, electronic, or multimedia format. For the purposes of this policy, types of examinations include:

- a. Challenge exam: refers to a campus-originated exam that is used to demonstrate knowledge of course content. It is developed by at least one CSU Monterey Bay faculty member, and is accepted by the department as satisfying the requirements of the course. A challenge exam provides credit for learning that is demonstrated
- b. Placement exam: establishes appropriate placement for learning and does not provide credit
- c. Standardized external examination: for example Advanced Placement (AP) Exams, College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), International Baccalaureate Exams (IB)

**Official Academic Records** are maintained by the Office of the Registrar. These records include, but are not limited to the admission application, high school and/or college transcripts, test scores, grades, transfer credit reports, degree audits, and academic standings.

**Outcomes-based Education** is an educational model in which the educators first identify the desired end results, identify and develop the means to achieve those results, and assess student learning. The results of the assessment are used to improve both instruction and curriculum. This means that faculty members publicly articulate learning outcomes and assessment criteria in advance of instruction. They also focus curriculum and instruction on the agreed-upon student learning outcomes. Student progress and completion of courses and programs of study are determined by proficiency in the articulated outcomes.

**Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)** is the evaluation of college-level knowledge or skills an individual has gained outside of the classroom for college credit. Evidence of prior learning successfully assessed by a CSUMB faculty member is accepted by the department as satisfying the requirements of a course.

**Standards and Criteria** are established specifications by which student achievement is determined.

### **3.00 Accepted Approaches to Admissions Eligibility and College Credit in the CSU<sup>1</sup>**

#### **3.10 Standardized External Exams**

CSUMB will award admission eligibility and/or baccalaureate credit to be applied to the degree for those students who pass any of the following standardized external examinations:

- Advanced Placement (AP) Tests
- College Level Entrance Program (CLEP)
- International Baccalaureate (IB) program<sup>2</sup>

The amount of credit awarded and the minimum passing scores for successful completion of AP, IB, and CLEP is distributed annually by the Chancellor's Office in a coded memorandum.

Students shall ensure official test scores and/or transcripts are sent to CSUMB for evaluation.

#### **3.20 Challenge Exams**

Departments may develop and provide challenge exams for major and elective courses to matriculated students. Courses meeting University Requirements (UR) and General Education (GE) requirements are not available for challenge exams, however, students may be able to provide evidence of prior learning for assessment of these courses (see section 3.50).

Courses available for challenge shall be identified in the catalog, department, and available in the Office of the Registrar.

Students who successfully complete a challenge exam for a course will be awarded academic credit that is documented in their academic record.

#### **3.30 Placement Exams**

Academic departments may develop and provide placement exams for specific academic areas in order to ensure proper student placement within the discipline. The placement exam provides no academic credit, but may result in a waiver of lower-level requirements.

---

<sup>1</sup> There are other factors that may impact admissions eligibility. Please contact the Office of Admissions for more detail.

<sup>2</sup> Section 1.2 of EO 1036

Students with background knowledge and experience are encouraged to request a placement exam, when available, to ensure proper placement in the discipline and to minimize the cost of and time to degree. Students should consult the appropriate Department Chair for more information.

### **3.40 Educational Experiences in the Armed Services**

CSU Monterey Bay will award students credit toward admissions eligibility and toward the baccalaureate degree for specific types of formal instruction in non-collegiate settings in the military<sup>3</sup>. The following guidelines apply:

- Completion of programs cited in the *Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services* will be accepted for undergraduate credit as recommended by the American Council on Education in its current publications. Further, CSU Monterey Bay will limit the number of units it allows to be counted toward the baccalaureate degree to the units recommended by the American Council of Education in its current publications.<sup>4</sup>
- Formal instruction in non-collegiate military settings may receive undergraduate credit for courses that are comparable to courses offered at most CSU campuses. (Credit will not be allowed for occupationally-oriented courses enabling one to operate as a technician.)<sup>5</sup>
- CSU Monterey Bay will make every effort to award the above credit for specific university requirements and/or a category of university degree requirements rather than as elective credit. For example, completion of basic military training may be used toward satisfaction of Area E in Title 5.<sup>6</sup>

### **3.50 Prior Learning Assessment of Course-based Learning**

CSU Monterey Bay may award credit toward the degree for matriculated students who bring knowledge, skills, and abilities to CSU Monterey Bay that enable them to satisfy all the learning outcomes of a course. Fees for PLA may be applied.

If available, course-level learning may be assessed in a variety of ways including, but not limited to, portfolio review, recorded performance, and/or committee review. Supporting information may be supplied by a field supervisor and/or employer if the learning occurred in a field setting. Satisfactory assessment shall be verified by faculty with expertise in the appropriate discipline(s).<sup>7</sup>

Students who successfully assess a course will be awarded academic credit that is documented in their academic record.

## **4.00 Limitations of Awarding Academic Credit**

### **4.10 Conditions for External Exams**

---

<sup>3</sup> Section 3.1 of EO 1036

<sup>4</sup> Sections 3.1 & 3.2.1 of EO 1036

<sup>5</sup> Section 3.1 of EO 1036

<sup>6</sup> Section 3.2.2 and 3.2.3 of EO 1036

<sup>7</sup> Section 2.3 of EO 1036

CSU Monterey Bay will use the list of standardized external and system-wide examinations maintained by the Chancellor's Office.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, CSU Monterey Bay accepts the uniform system passing scores and the minimum amounts of credit awarded for the calculation of admissions eligibility and toward the baccalaureate degree.<sup>9</sup>

#### **4.20 Conditions for Campus-Originated Challenge Exams**

Students may not challenge a course that is a prerequisite to a course for which academic credit has already been earned. Further, a student may not elect to challenge a course for which any grade (including "F", "WU", "IC", "NC", or "AU") was received in a previous semester, for which academic renewal has been granted, or for which a prior challenge or attempt to assess has been unsuccessful.

#### **4.30 Conditions for Credit of Prior Learning Assessment**

Students may not request PLA for a course that is a prerequisite to a course for which academic credit has already been earned. Further, a student may not request PLA for a course in which any grade (including "F", "WU", "IC", "NC", or "AU") was received in a previous semester, for which academic renewal has been granted, or for which a challenge or previous attempt to assess has been unsuccessful.

#### **4.40 Limit of 30 Undergraduate Units**

Academic credit awarded for external or system-wide examination, instruction in non-collegiate settings, and/or learning, skills and knowledge acquired through experience are limited to 30 units of a baccalaureate degree. Credits earned through Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate are excluded from this limit.<sup>10</sup>

#### **4.50 Exceptions to the Award of Credit**

Credit by examination may not be used to fulfill the university's residency requirement.

Successful completion of a challenge exam for a course for which the challenge was prohibited (as detailed in the section of "Conditions for Credit") will not receive credit.

Credit shall not be awarded twice for the same demonstrated university-level learning, unless otherwise specified in the Catalog; the rule is against duplication and credit. For example, credit for passage of standardized external exam or system-wide examination will not be awarded when equivalent degree credit has been granted for regular coursework, credit by assessment, or some other instructional process.<sup>11</sup>

Credit shall not be awarded for passage of an external examination when credit has already been awarded at a level more advanced than the content of the examination.<sup>12</sup>

### **5.00 Documenting Credit for the Academic Record**

---

<sup>8</sup> Section 1.2.4.1 of EO 1036; Coded Memo: 2008-28

<sup>9</sup> Section 1.2.2.1, 1.2.4.2 of EO 1036

<sup>10</sup> Section 1.2.3.4 of EO 1036

<sup>11</sup> Section 1.2.2.5 of EO 1036

<sup>12</sup> Section 1.2.2.4 of EO 1036



The University shall waive required coursework based on the score of a placement exam resulting in a lower division requirement being satisfied. This will be documented in the student's academic record as "satisfied," without awarded credit. The source of the placement exam and the student's score will be included in the record.

Credit earned through successful challenge exam and/or prior learning assessment, will be documented in the student's academic record as Credit/NoCredit (CR/NC). Credit earned by exam, prior learning assessment, or formal instruction in non-collegiate setting shall be clearly identified in the student's academic record<sup>13</sup>.

Completed military courses and the schools at which the work was completed must be documented on forms DD214, DD295, or other official documents such as:

- Army/ACE Registry Transcript System (AARTS)
- Sailor/Marine/ACE Registry Transcript (SMART)
- Community College of the Air Force or US Coast Guard Transcript.<sup>14</sup>

Procedures for awarding credit are described in the Catalog and on the University's web site.<sup>15</sup>

## 6.00 Continuous Renewal

This policy shall be reviewed ten years from its implementation date to determine its effectiveness and appropriateness. This policy may be reviewed before that time as necessary.



---

President Eduardo M. Ochoa

**Effective Date:** 1-18-19

### Certification of Process

**Reviewed by:** Matriculation Committee, Center for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, Policy Facilitation Team, Academic Affairs Council, Enrollment Services & Student Affairs Leadership Team, Associated Students, Academic Senate Executive Committee, Academic Senate, Educational Planning and Policy Committee, and Provost.

---

<sup>13</sup> Sections 1.2.3.5 and 3.4.3 of EO 1036

<sup>14</sup> Section 3.4.1 of EO 1036

<sup>15</sup> Section 2.5.3 of EO 1036

## Memorandum from Policy Facilitation Team

**To:** President Eduardo M. Ochoa  
**Date:** January 17, 2019  
**Subject:** Policy Recommendation  
**From:** Provost Bonnie Irwin  
**Policy:** Academic Credit and Prior Learning Assessment

This policy has been renewed in accordance with CSUMB policy.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Provost Bonnie D. Irwin

1-17-19  
Date