

## Academic Credit for Prior Learning Policy

### I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define the variety of methods for earning academic credit at Fresno State. This policy expresses the commitments of the faculty to the recognition of the many ways that students learn and demonstrate their learning. Additionally, this policy complies with Executive Order 1036.

### II. Definitions

A. *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:

1. Challenge exam: refers to a campus-originated exam that is used to demonstrate knowledge of course content. It is developed by at least one Fresno State faculty member with expertise in the appropriate discipline(s) from the department or program of the course, in consultation with the program or department chair, and is accepted by the department as satisfying the requirements of the course. A challenge exam provides credit for prior learning that is demonstrated.
2. Placement exam: establishes appropriate placement for learning and does not provide credit.
3. Standardized external examination: for example, Advanced Placement (AP) Exams, College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), International Baccalaureate Exams (IB)

B. *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 as satisfying the requirements of a course will be assessed by, when possible, at least two Fresno State faculty members with expertise in the appropriate discipline, in consultation with the department or program chair, and reviewed by the department or program.

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

D. *Academic renewal* is understood as the process for removing previously substandard academic grades from a student's record.

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

#### A. Standardized External Exams

Fresno State 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:

1. Advanced Placement (AP) Tests that meet California and CSU educational criteria
2. College Level Entrance Program (CLEP)
3. 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. Credits earned by passing standardized examinations shall be applicable as GE and/or major credits as determined by departments or programs.<sup>3</sup>

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

#### B. Challenge Exams

Departments or programs 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.

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

#### C. Educational Experiences in the Armed Services

Fresno State will award students credit toward admissions eligibility and toward the degree for specific types of formal instruction in non-collegiate settings in the military<sup>4</sup>. The following guidelines apply:

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

<sup>2</sup>Article 1.B of EO I036

<sup>3</sup>Article 1.B.3.a of EO I036

<sup>4</sup> Article 4 of EO I036

1. Completion of programs cited in the Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services will be accepted for undergraduate or graduate credit as recommended by the American Council on Education in its current publications. Further, Fresno State will limit the number of units it allows to be counted toward the degree to the units recommended by the American Council of Education in its current publications.<sup>5</sup>
2. 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>6</sup>
3. Fresno State 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>7</sup>
4. Students shall ensure official military transcripts (CCAF or JST) are sent to Fresno State for evaluation.

#### D. Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)

Fresno State may award credit toward the degree for matriculated students who bring knowledge, skills, and abilities to Fresno State that enable them to satisfy all the learning outcomes of a course.

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>8</sup>

Students who are assessed as successfully meeting course learning outcomes through prior learning will be awarded academic credit that is documented in their academic record.

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<sup>5</sup> Articles 4.A & 4.B.1 of EO 1036

<sup>6</sup> Article 4.A of EO 1036

<sup>7</sup> Articles 4.B.2 and 4.C of EO 1036

<sup>8</sup> Articles 3.A.2 & 2C of EO 1036

#### IV. Limitations of Awarding Academic Credit

##### A. Conditions for External Exams

Fresno State will use the list of standardized external and system-wide examinations maintained by the Chancellor's Office.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, Fresno State accepts the uniform system passing scores and the minimum amounts of credit awarded for the calculation of admissions eligibility and toward the degree.<sup>10</sup>

##### B. 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 exam or prior learning assessment has been unsuccessful.

##### C. 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", or equivalent) was received in a previous semester, for which academic renewal has been granted, or for which a challenge exam or prior learning assessment has been unsuccessful. Further, the assessment of experiential learning shall be appropriate to the applicant's degree objectives and/or general education requirements. Academic credit for such experiential learning shall be awarded only when it is academically creditable and verifiable through a prior learning assessment methodology. Before academic credit earned for experiential learning becomes a part of the student's academic record, the student shall complete at least 15 units, or a sufficient number of units as determined by the department or program in consultation with the registrar, to establish evidence of a satisfactory learning pattern at Fresno State.<sup>11</sup>

##### D. Limit of Units

Academic credit awarded for external or system-wide examination, educational experience in the armed services, instruction in non-collegiate settings, and/or learning, skills and knowledge acquired through experience are limited to the lesser of 25% of total program units or a maximum of 30 units of a baccalaureate

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<sup>9</sup>Article 1.B.4.b of EO 1036; Coded Memo: 2008-28

<sup>10</sup>Articles 1.B.2.a & 1.B.4.b of EO 1036

<sup>11</sup>Articles 2.B.2 & 2.B.3 of EO 1036

degree earned at Fresno State, excluding International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Placement Examination (AP). Procedures for awarding credit, including unit limitations for addition of minors and double majors, are further described in the Catalog and on the University's web site<sup>12</sup> and as referenced in APM 201.

E. 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 course equivalency, 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>13</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>14</sup>

- F. For students who enter with an Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) with full or partial certification in General Education (GE) Breadth, Fresno State shall honor certifications that apply credits earned by passing standardized examinations as authorized by CSU policy and set forth in Section IV.A of this policy.<sup>15</sup>

V. Documenting Credit for the Academic Record

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/No Credit (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>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup>Articles 1.A.3, 2.E.2, & 4.D.2 of EO 1036

<sup>13</sup>Article 1.B.2.c of EO 1036

<sup>14</sup>Article 1.B.2.d of EO 1036

<sup>15</sup>Article 1.B.3.b of EO 1036

<sup>16</sup>Article 2.E.1 of EO 1036

Students shall be allowed to appeal decisions regarding credit for demonstrated learning, knowledge, or skills acquired through experience through existing campus grade appeal procedures.<sup>17</sup>

VI. 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.

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Approved by the Academic Senate  
December 4, 2023

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Approved by the President  
December 8, 2023

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<sup>17</sup> Section 2.D of EO 1036