

Campus Administrative Policy

Policy Title: Credit for Prior Learning

Policy Number: [TBD]

Functional Area: Academic Affairs

Effective:

Date Last Amended/Reviewed:

Date Scheduled for Review:

Supersedes: N/A—New Policy (CU Boulder has existing policy on Credit for Standardized Exams)

Approved by:

Prepared by: Assistant Vice Provost and University Registrar; Assistant Director of Compliance

Reviewing Office:

Responsible Officer: Assistant Vice Provost and University Registrar

Applies to: CU Boulder

A. INTRODUCTION

Credit for prior learning, or CPL, is a term that broadly describes the various methods that institutions of higher education use to evaluate learning that has occurred outside of the traditional academic environment.

This policy outlines the framework for how the University of Colorado Boulder considers and awards CPL for various experiences. Prior learning may be demonstrated through standardized examinations; individual course challenges; and through assessments of learning experiences in settings other than institutions of higher education.

This policy does not cover the application of transfer credit from institutions accredited by agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or from international institutions of higher education. It also does not cover transfer credit for military experience as documented on Form DD 214, Service Separation Certificate, a Joint Services Transcript or Community College of the Air Force transcript. See CU Boulder Transfer Credit Policy <https://catalog.colorado.edu/undergraduate/admissions/transfer-college-level-credit/>

B. POLICY STATEMENT

1. *Institutional Requirements:*
Standards for awarding credit are rigorous and must comply with the policies of the

University, the State of Colorado, and the Higher Learning Commission (with particular attention to the definition of credit hour and where appropriate, assessment of learning). In addition to this policy, academic units must provide transparent mechanisms by which prior learning experiences are evaluated for their relevance to the degree, the acquisition of student learning and their applicability toward degree requirements.

Academic units must also provide oversight, including periodic review, of these practices within their programs and include a description of their practices and assessment methods in the Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee (ARPAC) self-study. The Office of the Provost may also examine programs awarding credit for prior learning when concerns are brought to its attention.

At a minimum, the university must publicly disclose this information on its appropriate websites, including the university's Student Consumer Information page and in the University Catalog.

2. *Student Requirements:*

To be eligible for prior learning credit, students must be currently enrolled at CU Boulder in a degree or certificate program.* Students may not be enrolled in (or must be officially withdrawn from) the course(s) for which CPL is being considered or evaluated. Prior completion of a course at CU Boulder or any other institution renders students ineligible to receive CPL for the same (or equivalent, including cross-listed) course.

*Exception: Credit earned through standardized exams is typically evaluated and posted to academic records prior to initial enrollment; however, such credit is removed from academic transcripts for students who do not matriculate to CU Boulder.

3. *Academic Requirements:*

CPL does not replace credits or grades already awarded for the same course.

CPL may apply to **undergraduate** degree or certificate requirements, but students must still fulfill the following university residency requirements:

- A minimum of 45 credits applied to baccalaureate degrees must be from coursework completed at CU Boulder.
- A minimum of 30 credits applied to post-baccalaureate degrees must be from coursework completed at CU Boulder.
- A minimum of 6 credits applied to undergraduate certificates at CU Boulder must be from coursework completed at CU Boulder.

Graduate level Credit for Prior Learning is limited to master's degree programs and is subject to prior approval. Graduate students may apply a maximum of 3 CPL toward a master's degree; credits *may not* be applied toward a doctoral degree or a graduate certificate.

When applied to a master's degree, CPL decreases the number of transfer credits

allowed, so that the combined total of CPL and Transfer Credit does not exceed 9 credits.

4. *Categories and Standards for Credit for Prior Learning offered by CU Boulder:*

1. Credit from Standardized Exams

Undergraduate students may be awarded credit through achievement of minimum scores on select nationally recognized standardized exams (CLEP, AP, IB, DANTES). See full list of standardized exams, minimum required scores and CU Boulder courses equivalents at <https://catalog.colorado.edu/undergraduate/admissions/credit-examination/>

In accordance with University of Colorado Administrative Policy Statement [8006](#): Acceptance of Credit for Prior Learning, credit awarded through standardized exams is evaluated for equivalent credit at CU Boulder by university faculty. As such, it may apply to academic programs of study either as elective or required credit. Credit earned through standardized exams is not considered resident credit at CU Boulder.

2. Credit from Course Challenges

Undergraduate students may receive resident credit for undergraduate courses in the current University Catalog without enrolling in the actual course. Course challenges are individual comprehensive assessments of material presented through a standard offering of a course. The assessment provides the opportunity to establish academic credit for knowledge and competencies gained outside the classroom for which academic credit has not already been earned.

Per CDHE §23-1-125(4), C.R.S., "...each public institution of higher education shall grant full course credits to students for the core [GT Pathways] courses they successfully test out of, free of tuition for those courses." Non-GT Pathways CU Boulder courses may not all lend themselves well to course challenges. Academic departments determine if non-GT Pathway undergraduate courses are suitable for course challenges, and if approved, ultimately set the requirements, assessment methods and standards.

Course challenges may consist of a final exam or may include other requirements based on the nature of the course, including research papers, computer programs, individualized assessment (eg., portfolios), recordings or other documents that can demonstrate and assess the knowledge and competencies for which credit is being sought.

Course challenge assessments are typically developed on an individual basis. Timelines for review and assessment may vary, but should be completed within the term the challenge is administered.

Students must earn an equivalent of C- or better to in order to earn credit through course challenge (Note: Course challenges do not automatically satisfy requisites that require grades of C or better; if approved, manual overrides are required). Course challenge credits

are considered resident credit and may apply to undergraduate programs of study either as elective or required credit. Students may only attempt a challenge for a particular course one time.

3. Credit from Learning Experiences in Settings Outside Accredited Institutions of Higher Learning

Prior learning may occur in settings outside of institutions of higher learning, such as in the workplace, business or industry, or the community. Such programmatic arrangements must be proposed by the academic department and approved in advance by the academic college/school/program and the Dean of Undergraduate Education (for undergraduate programs), the Dean of the Graduate School (for graduate programs), or the Dean of the Law School (for law programs). They must clearly define expected learning outcomes and have an associated assessment plan to monitor achievement of the learning objectives. Work-related experience is defined by CDHE in §23-5-145.5(1)(f), C.R.S., as “experience acquired within the past ten years...that may lead to or result in a business credential, an industry credential, a technical certificate, or a professional license.

The academic unit is responsible for determining how CPL applies to program requirements, either as direct equivalents or exceptions (substitutions). If a student with earned CPL changes academic programs at CU Boulder, the new academic unit determines if/how the CPL applies to the new program requirements.

Programs must maintain a record of the evaluation process and make it available to the provost or other entities, such as accrediting bodies, upon request.

C. PROCEDURES

1. Credit through Standardized Exams

- Process: A student must request their official score report(s) be sent directly from the exam source to CU Boulder for evaluation.
- Transcripts: Credit awarded through standardized exams is recorded on CU transcripts as a block of Test Credit. It is calculated in credit totals, but not in GPAs.
- Fees: CU does not assess fees for credit earned through standardized exams; rather, students pay the respective organization administering the exam.

2. Credit through Course Challenge

- Process: A student initiates a course challenge request with their academic unit or college/school dean’s office to determine eligibility. If a course is deemed suitable and the student meets the criteria to challenge the course, the academic unit determines the appropriate assessment methods and minimum requirements or standards.

The student completes a formal Course Challenge Petition form and pays the Course Challenge surcharge. The form is then routed to the academic unit

authorizing them to proceed with administration of the course challenge. Academic units may not administer course challenge exams or begin other assessments until notified of student approval/payment.

After the course challenge has been completed, assessed and graded, the academic unit returns the form, along with a final grade to the Office of the Registrar for processing.

Note: In lieu of course challenge assessments, academic units may direct students to standardized exams, where available. See Credit Through Standardized Exams.

- **Transcripts:** Successful course challenges are recorded as resident credit with a grade of CR (credit earned) within the term the challenge was completed. CR grades are calculated in credit totals, but not in GPAs. Unsuccessful challenge exams are recorded on academic transcripts with a U (Unsuccessful). U grades are not calculated in credit totals or in GPA calculations.
- **Fees:** CU Boulder assesses a per-credit administrative surcharge for Course Challenges. The current rate is listed on the Course Challenge form. Refunds are not issued for unsuccessful course challenge attempts.

3. Credit for Learning Experiences in Settings other than Accredited Institutions of Higher Learning

- **Process:** External experiences proposed by an academic unit or student to fulfill requirements or intended learning outcome for an academic credential requires approval by either the Dean of Undergraduate Education, the Dean of the Graduate School or the Dean of the Law School, as well as the Office of the Registrar. (At the graduate level, external experiences may only be proposed by an academic unit.) The proposal must include an academic rationale, learning outcomes, and assessment plan as well what requirements or electives may be fulfilled.

This category of CPL does not replace established courses that represent learning experiences under the direction of a CU Boulder faculty member, such as independent studies, field experiences, practicums or clinicals.

When an approved external experience has been successfully completed by a student, the academic unit must promptly notify the Office of the Registrar so it may be recorded in a student's academic record.

- **Transcripts:** Earned credit for learning experiences outside of accredited institutions of higher learning is awarded as a block of external Credit for Prior Learning. It is calculated in credit totals, but not in GPAs.
- **Fees:** Fees for external learning experiences are based on the experience and subject to approval.

Notes

1. Dates of official enactment and amendments:
2. History:
3. Initial Policy Effective Date:
4. Cross References/Appendix:
 - CDHE PLA Policy:
<https://cdhe.colorado.gov/sites/highered/files/documents/SECTION%20I%20-%20Part%20X%20-%20Revised%2012-02-2021.pdf>
 - University of Colorado Administrative Policy Statement:
<https://www.cu.edu/sites/default/files/8006.pdf>