Policy Statement for Ontario's Credit Transfer System

VISION

More choices and opportunities exist today in postsecondary education. Labour market needs are rapidly changing making life-long learning a necessity. For college or university students making a change in program or institution or for those with a degree or diploma wanting to enter a new area or level of study, it is not always easy to know what credit can be granted for previous learning.

The government's vision for credit transfer will make it easier for students to navigate the postsecondary education system, reach their preferred educational destination faster and enter or re-enter the labour market sooner:

> **Ontario will have a comprehensive, transparent and consistently applied credit transfer system that will improve student pathways and mobility, support student success and make Ontario a postsecondary education destination of choice. The credit transfer system will assist qualified students to move between postsecondary institutions or programs without repeating prior, relevant learning.**

GOALS

Our goals for a province-wide Credit Transfer system are to:

- Expand and improve student transfer pathways that respond to student demand
- Improve transparency and access to information about pathways and credit transfer
- Support student success

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The credit transfer system will:

1. Build on the foundation of student mobility and accessibility for all students and is one strategy for including underrepresented groups in the postsecondary education system.

2. Provide a high degree of consistency across the province in the review of transfer credit for students applying for transfer between Ontario institutions

3. Provide explicit and transparent information for students about transfer credit, credential recognition and mobility agreements for Ontario colleges and universities.

4. Recognize the time and resources required by both colleges and universities to participate in a transfer process.

5. Realize cost savings for students and their families, government and the public through the elimination of credit duplication.

6. Improve Ontario's ability to meet the demand for a skilled and flexible workforce by increasing the capacity and flexibility of the postsecondary education sector.

7. Build on, but not be limited to, successful experiences, strengths and strategies already in place in Ontario.

8. Include participation by all postsecondary institutions, with the nature and extent of institutional participation to be determined by individual institutions.

9. Adopt a collegial approach among participating institutions that:

    - Maintains the academic integrity of individual institutions and their programs and credentials; respects and acts within the boundaries of the required regulatory frameworks of the regulated professions

    - Requires institutions to optimize pathways for students and minimizes barriers to their mobility by basing agreements on maximum recognition of students' previous learning experiences, while taking into account the background and knowledge required for academic success post-transfer; recognizes student success is paramount

    - Awards qualifying students transferring between Ontario's publicly assisted colleges and universities with credit for relevant learning already demonstrably completed at the appropriate level of mastery

- Maintains fairness and equity for all students by entitling any student who gains admission to an institution under a transfer agreement to the samerights and privileges as students who began their studies at the institution.

10. Include and/or facilitate processes to support consistency of application, continuous improvement, access to research, ongoing accountability, performance measurement and review and regular reporting to measure and enhance the performance of Ontario's credit transfer system.

STRATEGY

The government, in partnership with colleges, universities and an Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer is committed to putting in place a credit transfer system that is student/learner-centred. To progress towards the vision, the new system will be implemented in phases over five years. It will:

- Implement a well-established, province-wide credit transfer system by 2015 that will expand and improve student pathways between postsecondary institutions
- Provide up-to-date information on credit transfer and pathways for students through a new credit transfer website
- Support new partnerships and a variety of new types of agreements among multiple partner institutions that respond to student demand with an initial focus on the college to university pathway
- Promote the value of the credit transfer system through educational events, research on best practices and recognition of institutions that develop successful student pathways
- Measure and report on progress

BENEFITS

Students: With the help of the credit transfer website, students will be able to explore postsecondary education pathways, identify a range of choices based on their starting point, find out about entry requirements and determine the credits they could get for

prior post-secondary learning. Qualified students will be able to steer their way across an increasingly diverse range of institutions and programs, and optimize their time to complete studies without unnecessary costs.

Institutions: The strategy recognizes and supports institutions' leadership role in improving transfer pathways. New pathways and choices will enhance the attractiveness of institutions to students and foster a positive student experience

Postsecondary Education System: A province-wide Credit Transfer system will lead to increased efficient and effective use of available postsecondary resources. The system will build on the strong foundation in place and take advantage of lessons learned from other jurisdictions. It will also align with other postsecondary initiatives under the **Open Ontario** plan such as the Ontario Online Institute.

CREDIT TRANSFER SYSTEM

Improving Student Pathways: Priorities

Pathways are routes that students take to move between and among levels of educational credentials, institutions, types of institutions and programs. In part, pathways have been created through credit transfer agreements between institutions. While pathways already exist, the strategy seeks to increase and improve student transfer pathways. The initial priority will be to expand the college (diploma) to university (degree) pathway. Then the focus will broaden to include university to university, university to college and college to college pathways.

Currently, the majority of agreements are bi-lateral, between one college and one university, for advanced standing in a program. To improve pathways and increase student choice, new agreements should be multilateral*, between multiple receiving and sending institutions. There is an opportunity to build on agreements that are already in place and, where possible, revise some to establish multilateral agreements. In addition, new agreements that are either regionally-based, college system-wide* or language-based, i.e. between French programs/institutions or English and French institutions, will be important to improve student pathways. Government is committed to investing in innovative projects that result in expanded or new transfer pathways that support these priorities. The Transfer Model Framework* will set out the building blocks for new agreements.

* See Definitions For Policy Statement for Ontario's Credit Transfer System

HOW IT WILL WORK

The Credit Transfer system will require shared commitment and collaboration between colleges, universities, the Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer and the ministry. Each party will have a critical role to play.

- **Ministry**: The government's role is to clearly set out the vision, goals, strategy, system roles and accountability measures for credit transfer in Ontario informed by postsecondary institutions and students.

- **Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer:** The government will establish and fund an arm's length Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer (ONCAT) that will be responsible for central coordination of the credit transfer system. The credit transfer website will be managed by a coordinating body. The website will provide accessible information to students, parents and guidance counsellors/advisors on postsecondary education pathways, credit transfer and agreements. The ONCAT will support innovation and growth in the number and types of student transfer pathways and promote consistency across the province for students who transfer between Ontario institutions. It will also help foster the development of effective policies, programs and agreements based on research and best practices.

- **Institutions:** Colleges and universities will provide leadership in credit transfer through their participation in the new system and by building and implementing new pathways and agreements consistent with the policy statement. Institutions will work with students/learners and provide information and advice to them about currently articulated pathways and applicable credit transfer. In addition, where no formal pathway currently exists, institutions will determine credit transfer based on an assessment of relevant student learning. Colleges and universities will report on results achieved.

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE ARE MAKING PROGRESS

To monitor progress towards our goals, government will put in place accountability measures for credit transfer. Interim measures will be used at first until data systems are available to support mature state indicators.

Indicators will be tracked with the help of existing accountability mechanisms such as Multi-Year Accountability Agreements (MYAAs) and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Definitions for

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Transfer Model Framework

The transfer model framework provides colleges and universities with a structure fromwhich to design and implement new or expanded student transfer pathways. The new framework is currently designed to build the college diploma to university degree pathway. However, it will also serve as a starting point for other pathways, including university to university, college to college and university to college.

The framework sets out models for pathways that include the number of partners, a process to determine any learning equivalency and the way that credits will be applied. The potential for rapid innovation in credit transfer in Ontario is significant as the framework moves pathways from bilateral to multilateral, with many sending and receiving partners. Multilateral includes multiple partners, college system-wide, regional or language-based pathways and benefits students by building clear pathways that respond to their needs. In addition, determining learning equivalency using program standards rather than course by course comparison is innovative. Program standards have clearly defined learning outcomes for programs across the province so it is an efficient way to improve pathways and provide more students with choices.

A multilateral agreement

A multilateral agreement refers to a formal articulation or credit transfer agreement between more than two institutions.

College-system wide

College-system wide is a multilateral agreement that applies to all colleges within a system, it may be all colleges to one university or all colleges to all or multiple universities.