



Executive Memorandum 23-033

December 20, 2023

From: Stephen Perez, President 

Subject: Policy on Credit for Prior Learning

Upon the recommendation of the Academic Senate and with the concurrence of the Provost, I approve the Policy on Credit for Prior Learning.

Policy Title:	EM 23-033: Policy on Credit for Prior Learning
Contact:	
Supersedes:	EM 89-015 (pertained only to internal challenge exams)
Revision:	
Enabling Legislation or Executive Order:	EO 1036 Credit for Prior Learning Policy

Scope of the Policy

In accordance with EO 1036, this policy articulates the means by which prospective and current students may earn academic credit by demonstrating prior learning through (1) external standardized exams, (2) internal “challenge” exams, (3) prior experience, (4) non-traditional higher education, and/or (5) training and service in the United States Armed Forces.

Eligibility and Credit Limits

Undergraduate and graduate credit for prior learning may be applied toward degree and credential program requirements. No more than 25% of total program units (30 units for a 120-unit undergraduate degree) may be awarded for prior learning. Academic credit earned for prior learning does not count toward residence requirements of degree and credential programs.

I. Credit by External Standardized Examination

Students may earn credit toward degree and/or admission eligibility by passing standardized examinations such as Advanced Placement (AP) Tests, International Baccalaureate (IB), and College-Level Entrance Program examinations. The passing scores and minimum credit to be awarded for admissions eligibility and toward degrees are determined at the CSU system level.

Departments may award specific Chico State course credit based on faculty review of the content of the standardized examination and recommendations of the testing organization. Awarded course credit shall not exceed the unit equivalency established by the Chancellor's Office without review and approval by the Provost.

Pursuant to EO 1036, no student may apply more than 30 units of credit toward a bachelor's degree for passing standardized exams, excluding credit for Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate Tests.

The review and evaluation of General Education credit for international external examinations shall be the responsibility of International Education & Global Engagement, in consultation with the Curriculum Advisory Board subject to the approval of the Provost.

II. Credit by Internal Challenge Examination

Students may apply to challenge specific University courses by passing a campus-originated examination on the course content. Credit by challenge examination will result in a credit/no credit grade except by advance approval of the Provost. Credit by challenge examination will not count toward the residence requirement for degrees and credentials. Students may not challenge a course if they have previously received credit for a more advanced course dealing with the same concepts.

Students must be enrolled in the course they wish to challenge by examination. The application to challenge a course must be submitted to the chair of the department that offers the course within the first two weeks of the semester. Departments shall determine the criteria for approving or denying these requests.

If the application is approved, the course instructor will administer a written examination on course content. Where skills are involved which are not easily demonstrated by a written examination, a performance test will be required in addition to the written examination and will be counted toward the credit/no credit grade.

If the examination is passed, the course will be recorded on the student's record as "passed by examination." If the examination is failed, the student may receive a letter grade upon successful completion of the course. If appropriate, the student may change to a credit/no credit option in accordance with established university procedures.

Credit by challenge examination will generate FTE for the department administering the exam. The application form and the examination will be retained in the department office for at least one year.

III. Credit for Prior Experience

Students may petition to have previous non-classroom experiences evaluated for possible academic credit, up to a maximum of 30 units. Awarded credit may be applied to a particular course, to a specific general education or other graduation requirement, or as elective credit.

In order to apply for credit earned through prior experience, the student must be a matriculated Chico State student, have completed in residence at least 15 units of credit toward a bachelor's degree or 3 units toward a master's degree, and be enrolled in the University for the semester in which credit is awarded. Students are responsible for any increase in fees associated with the additional units of credit.

The evaluation of prior experiential learning is conducted by faculty in the academic department in which credit is sought. Review should be done by faculty with specific relevant disciplinary expertise. In cases in which no single discipline comprises the credit area (e.g. writing, General Education Area E, U.S Diversity), the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Academic Success evaluates the application in consultation with chairs of at least two relevant academic departments.

Students may submit a variety of forms of evidence to demonstrate prior learning, including portfolios, professional licensure, interviews, or other appropriate means. Departments may request additional information before recommending credit be awarded. Collectively, the evidence presented must demonstrate a level of competence equivalent to that achieved by a passing grade in a course that would typically confer such credit.

IV. Credit for Learning Outside of Traditional Higher Education

Students can also earn credit for learning acquired outside of traditional higher education, through workforce training, certifications, and other non-traditional learning. The University relies on recommendations provided by national organizations that conduct evaluations of such learning experiences, such as the National College Credit Recommendation Service (NCCRS) and the American Council on Education (ACE).

The University shall accept course credit as recommended by the [ACE National Guide](#), as appropriate to a student's academic objectives. Upon receipt of an ACE transcript, the University awards the appropriate number of elective baccalaureate units. Students may petition the relevant academic unit to have credit awarded toward specific courses or degree requirements.

Course credit recommended by other organizations may be approved by the campus articulation officer in consultation with the relevant disciplinary experts. Independent of these recommendations, students may also petition for course credit for learning acquired in non-traditional settings following the procedures outlined in Section III above.

V. Credit for Training and Service in the United States Armed Forces

In accordance with EO 1036, Chico State follows the recommendations of the [American Council on Education \(ACE\) Military Guide](#) to award undergraduate or graduate credit for learning acquired through education, training and service provided by the Armed Forces of the United States. Such credit shall be applied as appropriate towards the completion of students' academic programs. Specific guidance relating to General Education credit for basic military training (Area E) and the Defense Languages Proficiency Test (Area C2) can be found in EO 1036.

VI. Appeals

Students shall be allowed to appeal decisions regarding credit for prior learning through existing campus grade appeal procedures.