

BOARD OF REGENTS  
BRIEFING PAPER  
**Credit by Examination – College Board Advanced Placement Examination Scores**

**BACKGROUND & POLICY CONTEXT OF ISSUE:**

Existing Board policy under *Title 4, Chapter 14, Section 22* authorizes institutions to establish procedures for administering and accepting credit for many different examinations, including the College Board Advance Placement examinations (CBAPE or “AP Exams”). The College Board’s Advanced Placement program provides high school students with the opportunity to take college-level courses while in high school and then take the College Board’s AP exam for that course at the end of the high school course. Students receive a score on these national tests from 1 to 5.

Each year millions of students across the country take the AP exams. In 2014, 2.3 million students took one or more of these exams (4.2 million exams taken overall). Students may submit these scores to colleges and universities for consideration. The American Council on Education (ACE) and the College Board recommend that colleges and universities award credit for AP scores of 3 (“qualified”) or higher on any AP Examination. According to the College Board, a score of 3 is the college course grade equivalent of a B-, C+ or C. Institutions often accept scores of 3, 4, or 5 on these exams for credit in specified courses, but institutions vary on the acceptable minimum score. All NSHE institutions currently accept AP exam scores but the minimum scores accepted for credit vary by the exam topic (biology, calculus, history, etc...) and by institution. For example, a 3 on the U.S. History AP exam is acceptable for course credit at UNLV, NSC, CSN and TMCC, but a 4 is required at GBC and UNR.

According to research by the College Board, AP students who earn credit and advanced placement for the corresponding introductory college course perform well in subsequent courses within the same discipline; take more, not fewer, courses in the discipline for which they’ve received AP credit; tend to earn higher GPAs than non-AP students; and are more likely to graduate from college in four or five years. In addition, more than 5,800 college faculty participate in AP work on an annual basis, including AP course and exam development, AP exam scoring and score setting, and professional development for high school AP teachers. For more information, see the College Board’s website at <https://aphighered.collegeboard.org/>.

**SPECIFIC ACTIONS BEING RECOMMENDED OR REQUESTED:**

Amend Board policy under *Title 4, Chapter 14, Section 22* to provide that beginning with the 2016-2017 academic year, scores of 3, 4, and 5 on the CBAPE shall be accepted for credit to satisfy electives, general education requirements, or major requirements. Each institution shall publish the CBAPE score course granting policy in accordance with these requirements in its course catalog and on its Internet website before the beginning of the 2016-2017 academic year. (See attached policy proposal.)

**IMPETUS (WHY NOW?):**

Based on the variation of minimum AP scores between NSHE institutions, System staff recommends a policy revision to provide consistency in the minimum score accepted for credit on the CBAPE exam.

**BULLET POINTS TO SUPPORT REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:**

- Granting course credit for students who score a minimum 3 on AP exams is consistent with goals of the Board and NSHE to promote policies that help and encourage qualified students to graduate on-time.
- While the proposed policy requires that scores of 3, 4 and 5 be accepted for credit to satisfy degree requirements, institutions and their faculty still have the discretion to determine to award the type of credit based on the score (electives, general education requirements, etc...). Institutions may also, for example, decide to award 3 credits for a score of 3 on an AP exam in a particular subject area but 6 credits for a score of 4 or 5 in that same subject area. This discretion rewards both the students who meet the minimum score of 3 and also the higher achieving students who a 4 or 5 on the exam.
- Most high schools in Nevada offer Advanced Placement courses. Establishing a minimum score across NSHE institutions will encourage students to take AP courses in high school which helps prepare them for the rigor of college-level courses regardless of their score on the exam.

- The 2015 Legislature approved \$1.2 million over the biennium to expand student participation in Advanced Placement courses through additional teacher preparation and targeted grants to improve participation and passage rates among key population groups.

**POTENTIAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:**

Requiring acceptance of a minimum score of 3 for course credit at all institutions takes away faculty discretion to set a higher minimum score (4 or 5) for a particular subject matter.

**ALTERNATIVE(S) TO WHAT IS BEING REQUESTED/RECOMMENDED:**

Retain existing policy that allows institutions to set minimum scores.

**COMPLIANCE WITH BOARD POLICY:**

- Consistent With Current Board Policy: Title #\_\_\_\_ Chapter #\_\_\_\_ Section #\_\_\_\_
- X Amends Current Board Policy: Title 4, Chapter 14, Section 22
- Amends Current Procedures & Guidelines Manual: Chapter #\_\_\_\_ Section #\_\_\_\_
- Other:\_\_\_\_\_
- Fiscal Impact: Yes\_\_\_\_ No X\_\_\_\_  
Explain:\_\_\_\_\_

**POLICY PROPOSAL**  
**TITLE 4, CHAPTER 14, SECTION 22**

Credit by Examination – College Board Advanced Placement Examination Scores

Additions appear in *boldface italics*; deletions are [~~stricken~~ and bracketed]

Section 22. Credit by Examination

1. The following examinations are permissible for determining credit for prior learning:
  - a. College Board Advanced Placement Examination (CBAPE);
  - b. College-Level Examination Program (CLEP);
  - c. Excelsior College Exam;
  - d. National League for Nursing Placement Examination (NLN), Profile II;
  - e. National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI);
  - f. International Baccalaureate (IB);
  - g. Dantes Subject Standardized Tests (DSST);
  - h. ACE Military Credit;
  - i. ACE Corporate Credit; and
  - j. Special examinations administered by an academic department.
2. *Except as otherwise provided in this subsection for the CBAPE, each* [~~Each~~] institution shall establish procedures for administering and accepting credit by examination that must be outlined in the course catalog.

*Beginning with the 2016-2017 academic year, scores of 3, 4, and 5 on the CBAPE shall be accepted for credit to satisfy electives, general education requirements, or major requirements. Each institution shall publish the CBAPE score course granting policy in accordance with the requirements of this Section in its course catalog and on its Internet website before the beginning of the 2016-2017 academic year.*

3. The maximum number of credits that may be earned by examination to apply toward a degree may not exceed one half of the minimum number of credits required for that degree.
4. Other national testing organizations may be considered for the awarding of credit subject to institutional procedures.
5. Special Department Examinations: An admitted student in good standing may earn credits by a special department examination subject to institutional procedures.
6. The posting of satisfactorily completed credit by examinations to the student's permanent academic record shall clearly identify that the credit was earned by examination, name of the testing program, date of the examination, number of credits, and a grade of S (satisfactory) or P (pass).
7. Credit earned by examination does not apply toward satisfying the minimum on-campus resident credit requirement of the institution from which graduation is sought and does not constitute an interruption of the resident credit requirement.