EXAMPLES AND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (December 20, 2018)

This document is intended to provide additional guidance regarding the Policy on Awarding Undergraduate Credit on the Basis of Advanced Placement Exam Scores, 700.10.1 of the UNC Policy Manual, and 700.10.1[R], Regulation on Awarding Undergraduate Credit on the Basis of Advanced Placement Exam Scores.

Course Catalogs

Section III of the regulation specifies that undergraduates may “[elect] into all standards documented in an institution’s catalog (and/or other sources of information for students and potential students) for the 2019-20 academic year or thereafter.” What does this mean, and why must a student opt into all standards?

Accepted practice in higher education entails that a student may opt into a course catalog, which may function as a contract, wholly but not partially. In other words, a student may not “cherry-pick” which standards from which course catalogs will apply to her or him. Electing into a course catalog that reflects AP standards that a student deems favorable or desirable will require the student to abide by (or be governed by) all policies and standards in that course catalog.

Appropriate Credit

Section IV.A. of the regulation states that “[a]n institution may offer Appropriate Credit that varies by different scores for the same AP Exam.” What is an example as to how this practice might be enacted?

For instance, a score of three on an AP Biology Exam may qualify a student to receive four credit hours for an introductory course in Biology, such as Biology 101. A score of four on the AP Biology Exam may qualify a student to receive four credit hours for a Subsequent Course, such as Biology 102. A score of five on the AP Biology exam may qualify a student to receive four credit hours for Biology 103. (This example is fictional and may not reflect credit-hour equivalencies or course numbering at your institution. In a scenario similar to the one described here, it is possible that an institution could offer credit for multiple courses or combinations/permutations of courses, depending on the Qualified AP Exam Score.)

AP Exam Subscores

Neither the policy nor the regulation addresses AP Exam subscores. How should institutions manage subscores?

The College Board explains the purpose and utility of subscores here: https://apscore.collegeboard.org/scores/about-ap-scores/.
It is recommended that UNC institutions manage AP Exam subscores as suggested by the College Board.

Regarding the Calculus AB subscore for the Calculus BC Exam, the College Board states, “Although each college and university sets its own policy for awarding credit and/or placement for AP Exam scores, it is recommended that institutions apply the same policy to the Calculus AB subscore that they apply to the Calculus AB score. Use of the subscore in this manner is consistent with the philosophy of the courses, since common topics are tested at the same conceptual level in both Calculus AB and Calculus BC.”

Regarding the Music Theory subscores, the College Board states, “Although each college or university sets its own policy for awarding credit and/or placement for AP Exam scores, it is recommended that for students continuing study in music, subscores be considered along with the overall score. It is further recommended that the college or university use the overall score to set policy for students seeking general humanities credits.”

Elective Credit

Section IV.B. of the regulation suggests that institutions may offer credit for elective courses on the basis of AP Exam scores. Should these elective courses contribute to a student’s progress toward a degree? How can an institution control the number of credit hours accrued by a student, in excess of what is desired according to the policy and regulation?

The definition of and requirements related to “elective courses” vary across UNC institutions. Appropriate Credit may correspond to elective credit provided that the credit contributes to a student’s progress toward a degree. That is, the credit awarded must count toward a degree requirement.

The policy and regulation acknowledge, however, that some students may later accrue credits in excess of degree requirements, of their own choosing.

Policy Exceptions

Section V of the regulation addresses potential exceptions to the policy. What are some examples of Academic Outcomes that institutions should consider analyzing when petitioning for an exception to the policy?

Among the Academic Outcomes that constituent institutions may elect to cite in petitioning for an exception to the policy are the following:

- course grades;
- DWF rates (for students who receive grades of “D” or “F” or withdraw);
● student performance on an objective, normed instrument designed to assess preparedness for the Subsequent Course of a degree sequence;
● student learning outcomes (such as content topics for mastery) as specified by the College Board for the AP course/exam in question; and
● student learning outcomes (such as content topics for mastery) as specified by the institution’s course.

The above list of examples is not comprehensive and is not intended to limit Academic Outcomes cited in institution’s Compelling Reasons for petitioning for exceptions.

Exception Timeline

My institution will not have sufficient time and resources to petition for exceptions to the policy before July 1, 2019. My institution plans to petition for exceptions for the 2020-21 academic year. How should my institution award AP credit in the meantime?

_Not petitioning to have an exception to this policy approved in advance of the 2019-20 academic year does not preclude an institution from petitioning for an exception to the policy thereafter. Until an exception is granted by an institution’s board of trustees and reported to the president, however, an institution shall comply with the policy and regulation as if no exceptions have been granted._

Resources for Conducting Analyses of Compelling Reasons

My institution may not have sufficient resources to analyze and generate the evidence necessary for Compelling Reasons on its own. What options are available to my institution?

_The System Office can connect institutions with various resources to assist in these analyses._

● The College Board offers data analysis services and advice for colleges and universities conducting validity studies, along with AP data that institutions can pair with their own data. See [https://aphighered.collegeboard.org/research-reports/conducting-ap-research-studies](https://aphighered.collegeboard.org/research-reports/conducting-ap-research-studies).

● The UNC System Office’s Student Success Innovation Lab is accepting applications for in-kind opportunities to evaluate existing initiatives at constituent institutions. Assessment and evaluation of the appropriate standard for granting credit for AP Exam scores is a relevant use of this opportunity (although opportunities will be offered on a competitive basis and opportunities are not guaranteed). Because the number of applications that any institution may submit for this particular cycle of consideration is limited, interested persons should consult their respective chief academic officers regarding the possibility of submitting an application.
Evidence from a Discipline that is Analogous to the Content Area of AP Exam

Section V of the regulation states that “[e]vidence in support of an institution’s Compelling Reasons for an exception to the policy shall be supported by the most recently available and practicable data on Academic Outcomes of that constituent institution’s own students, from the undergraduate discipline most analogous or relevant to the content area of the AP Exam in question. . . .”

What are the parameters for “the undergraduate discipline most analogous or relevant to the content area of the AP Exam in question” when it comes to competencies that cross disciplines? For example, writing competencies as reflected by an AP English Exam score may affect student performance in disciplines other than college-level English courses (such as writing-intensive coursework in other humanities disciplines). Similarly, computation skills as reflected by an AP Calculus Exam score may affect student performance in disciplines other than college-level calculus (including but not limited to other computation-intensive disciplines in science and mathematics).

If an institution wishes to submit a petition for an exception to AP standards relative to the AP English Exam on the basis of writing competencies for disciplines other than English, then institutions should provide Compelling Reasons on the basis of Academic Outcomes accordingly. Similarly, if an institution wishes to submit a petition for an exception to AP standards relative to the AP Calculus Exam on the basis of computation skills for disciplines other than calculus, then institutions should provide Compelling Reasons on the basis of Academic Outcomes accordingly.

Student Choice

Section VI of the regulation states that “a student may decline to accept the offered credit, audit the course aligned with the AP Exam in question, or enroll in the course aligned with the AP Exam in question, depending on institutional practice.” Must a constituent institution offer all three options listed?

No. An institution may offer the option to decline credit, to audit the course aligned with the AP Exam in question, or to enroll in the course aligned with the AP Exam in question. The institution should offer the option that is consistent with its own practice and with the intent that a student should be able, if she or he chooses, to experience the course content (aligned with the AP Exam in question) at the institution.

Sections VI.A. and VI.B. of the regulation address academic advice for students who may elect to pursue enrolling in a course at the institution rather than (or in addition to) accepting AP credit. The sections mention “potential benefits and disadvantages.” What are some examples of these “potential benefits and disadvantages”?
The UNC System Office defers specifics of advising to institutions and to advisors. The topics that may be at issue in framing “potential benefits and disadvantages” may include but are not necessarily limited to effects on time to degree, grade point averages, preparedness for a major, preparedness for a career or graduate/professional school, financial aid, workloads, employment outside of school, etc.

If a student who received a score of three or higher on the Calculus AB Exam receives Appropriate Credit for Calculus 101 and enters the Subsequent Course (Calculus 102), only to find Calculus 102 too challenging, how do the policy and regulation direct decisions to be made at this point by the student and the institution?

The policy and regulation do not direct decisions to be made at the point illustrated in this scenario, for either the student or the institution. Whether or not the student should or may drop Calculus 102, “retake” Calculus 101, and sacrifice the Appropriate Credit earned by the student on the basis of a Calculus AB Exam score are matters that the policy and regulation defer to institutions to manage on the basis of specific student needs and on the basis of institutional practice. (This example is fictional and may not reflect credit-hour equivalencies or course numbering at your institution.)

Placement Tests

Section VII (“Prohibition Against Additional Requirements for Awarding Undergraduate Credit on the Basis of AP Exam Scores”) of the regulation states that a placement test may be required in some instances. What is an example of such an instance?

After awarding Appropriate Credit for a qualifying AP Exam score, a placement test or other assessment may be required to determine the Subsequent Course for which a student is eligible—for example, in an instance when a student receives a score of three on the AP Calculus Exam, thereby qualifying the student to receive three credit hours for Calculus 101 at a UNC institution. The institution may require the student to complete a placement test—not to verify the awarding of credit for Calculus 101 but to determine if the student is best qualified to enter Calculus 102, Calculus 103, or Calculus 104, if the student elects to pursue Subsequent Coursework in calculus. (This example is fictional and may not reflect credit-hour equivalencies or course numbering at your institution.)

Discontinuance

What are some examples of Compelling Reasons relevant to Section VIII (“Prohibition Against Discontinuance of Awarding Undergraduate Credit on the Basis of Scores for an AP Exam”) of the regulation?

An institution may choose to discontinue awarding credit on the basis of scores for an AP Exam in the event, for example, that the relevant academic department or degree program ceases to exist or that faculty in the relevant discipline are no longer employed—no longer available to provide curricular oversight for courses for which students might otherwise receive credit on the basis of Qualified AP Exam Scores.
An institution may choose to discontinue awarding credit on the basis of scores for an AP Exam in the event, to cite a separate example, that the course content for an AP Exam is no longer congruent with the content of any courses in an institution’s relevant academic department or degree program. Such a case may be documented or demonstrated through descriptive or qualitative methods, rather than (or in addition to) through Quantitative Study.

Notification

Section IX (“Documenting and Communicating Institutional AP Standards to Undergraduate Students and Potential Undergraduate Students”) of the regulation specifies how students and potential students should be notified of the policy. Exceptions may be approved and reported to the president by July 1, 2019, after many resources for incoming students and potential students have been printed for the 2019-20 academic year. How should constituent institutions manage this issue?

The UNC System Office suggests that constituent institutions should make best and most reasonable efforts to ensure that online and printed resources devised for incoming and potential undergraduate students for the fall of the 2019-20 academic year reflect the policy and regulation, so as to allay any potential confusion due to modifications to institutional AP standards. Similarly, the UNC System Office suggests that constituent institutions should notify (by electronic and/or postal mail) relevant incoming and potential students for the fall of the 2019-20 academic year of any modifications to institutional AP standards, in accordance with the policy, so as to allay any potential confusion.

Financial Aid Implications

If a student retakes a course for which she or he received AP credit, is this considered a repeated course for financial aid purposes?

According to the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA ASKREGS: KA-33968): “No. If a student receives college credit for an AP course... and then retakes that course in college, that course does not count as a repeated course for purposes of the enrollment status limitation on repeated coursework in 34 CFR 668.2(b), Full-time student. The course counts as the student's first attempt of the course at the postsecondary level. Under the definition of full-time student, a previously passed course may be included in enrollment status and paid with Title IV aid only once.”
Tuition Surcharge

Do credits awarded for Qualified AP Exam Scores count toward the UNC System’s tuition surcharge?

No. AP credits are not counted in the credits considered for the tuition surcharge (1000.1.5[R]):

“However, the following credit hours shall be excluded from the calculation: (1) those earned through the College Board’s Advanced Placement (AP) and College Level Examination Program (CLEP) or similar programs, (2) those earned through institutional advanced placement, course validation, or any similar procedure for awarding course credit, (3) those earned through summer session or extension programs on the campus or at another institution, (4) Military Science courses required to earn a military commission, and (5) credits earned from private and out of state colleges and universities transferred prior to August 15, 2013. In addition, and consistent with this regulation, credit hours taken while enrolled as a high school student shall be excluded from the tuition surcharge calculation.”

AP Credit Earned at NC Community Colleges

What does the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement with NC Community Colleges say about credit awarded at the community college based on AP Exam scores?

“Advanced Placement (AP) course credits, awarded for a score of three or higher, are acceptable as part of a student’s successfully completed Associate in Arts or Associate in Science degree under the CAA. Students who receive AP course credit at a community college but do not complete the Associate in Arts or Associate in Science degree will have AP credit awarded on the basis of the receiving institution’s AP policy.”

https://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/sites/default/files/basic-pages/academic-programs/attachments/caa_tac_08.2016.pdf

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