

# **Effective Practices for Determining Course Substitution for Associate Degrees for Transfer**

## **C-ID Articulation Subgroup**

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## Introduction

The challenges surrounding Associate Degrees for Transfer (ADT) course substitutions have become very complicated with the number of ADT degrees now available and an ever-increasing number of transfer students desiring an ADT degree. Even with course descriptors developed as part of the Course Identification Numbering System project (C-ID) in place for the ADTs, there are still many ADT course substitution challenges associated with C-ID-approved courses. These challenges only increase when the substitution of community college non-C-ID approved courses or comparable courses not from community colleges are proposed for an ADT course substitution. Therein lies the ADT course substitution challenges being faced by articulation officers, transfer center directors, counselors, faculty and, especially, transcript evaluators.

To assist the field to make these determinations, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC) produced the document “Reciprocity, Course Substitution, and Credit by Exam—in light of AA-T and AS-T degrees” (Appendix A) in 2013 to assist colleges with ADT course substitutions. The Reciprocity Document has been the guide that colleges have used for ADT course substitutions for the past several years, but some in the field still struggle with applying the broad statements made in the document to the variety of situations that arise at local campuses and have requested more guidance.

### Justification for the Paper

At the spring 2016 plenary session, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC) was directed by resolution 9.11 “Academic Senate Guidelines on Course Substitutions for Associate Degrees for Transfer” to create resources for the field that provide guidance to local senates on effective practices for the appropriate use of course substitutions by students who have transferred between colleges and who intend to earn an Associate Degree for Transfer. At the ASCCC Executive Committee in September 2017, the committee determined that a position paper would serve the body best given the need to establish standards that impact the relationships between local colleges and feeder colleges in the California State University system.

Resolution S16 9.11 “Academic Senate Guidelines on Course Substitutions for Associate Degrees for Transfer”

Whereas, Community college districts have traditionally established local policies and procedures that permit students to request course substitutions for degree major requirements to allow students to complete their degrees without being required to repeat or complete additional coursework, including cases where students have transferred between community colleges;

Whereas, The creation of Associate Degrees for Transfer (ADTs) has led to questions about the appropriate use of course substitution for ADTs for students who have transferred between colleges having already completed similar courses at their former colleges that are not identical to the ADT requirements of their current college, such as the following:

- Completing a course at the former college that does not have a C-ID designation but is otherwise equivalent to a required ADT course at the current college
- Completing a course that was included in the list of acceptable courses to meet ADT requirements at the former college but is not included in the list of acceptable courses in the same ADT at the current college; and

Whereas, The Academic Senate Statements on Reciprocity, Course Substitution, and Credit by Exam—in Light of AA-T and AS-T Degrees[1] was released in September 2013, in response to resolution 15.01 S11 to provide guiding principles for local senates on the use of course substitutions that adheres to the spirit

and intent of SB 1440 (Padilla, 2010) but lacks detailed guidance for local senates on the appropriate application of course substitutions;

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges develop by Spring 2017 resources that provide guidance to local senates on effective practices for the appropriate use of course substitutions by students who have transferred between colleges and who intend to earn an Associate Degree for Transfer while ensuring that the integrity of the degree is not compromised.

### **How to Use the Document**

The purpose of this ADT Course Substitution paper is to provide guiding principles for local academic senates to consider when developing or modifying their course substitution policies and practices in light of the Transfer Model Curriculum (TMC) and ADTs. In addition, this paper will identify and provide guidance for specific ADT course substitution scenarios, such as courses taken prior to C-ID approval, courses that are not C-ID-approved or are from non-California community colleges or universities, advanced subject area courses substituted for respective introductory courses, and so forth. Appendix A includes the 2013 “Reciprocity, Course Substitution, and Credit by Exam—in light of AA-T and AS-T degrees” document. Appendix B includes scenarios that faculty may face when reviewing a request for a course substitution on an ADT and the associated guideline that will help faculty make the determination. Finally, Appendix C includes links and references to additional resources to assist faculty in this process.

## **ADTs and C-ID Designation**

### **Background**

The Student Transfer Achievement Reform (STAR) Act (Padilla, 2010) also referred to as SB 1440 and SB 440 (Padilla, 2013), which amended the STAR Act (Education Code 66745 - 66749.5), established the Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT), which is a community college degree that requires community colleges to grant an associate degree for transfer to a student once a student has met specified general education and major requirements for the degree. Upon completion of the associate degree, the student is eligible for transfer with junior standing into the California State University (CSU) system.

The STAR Act established the basic requirements of the ADT:

- Completion of 90 quarter or 60 semester CSU transferable units
- Completion of all courses in the major with a “C” or better (Note: CCCCCO Memo “P” or “CR” acceptable if College defines by “C” or better)
- Completion of either the CSU GE or IGETC general education pattern
- A cumulative GPA of 2.0 (Note: The 2.0 GPA requirement applies to transferable courses only)
- Colleges are not permitted to add “local requirements” when creating the ADT

The purpose of the STAR Act was to provide a clear California Community College (CCC) to California State University (CSU) pathway for the attainment of a bachelor’s degree within 120 units. Students complete 60 units at the CCC and an additional 60 units at the CSU, without having to repeat coursework. The CSU and CCC academic senates collaborated to develop Transfer Model Curriculum (TMC) to create a common framework within which community college campuses could develop ADTs. Additional legislation SB 440 (Padilla) further required community colleges to create an ADT in every major and area of emphasis offered by that college for any approved TMC.

C-ID, the Course Identification Numbering System, is a faculty-driven system that was initially developed to assign identifying designations (C-ID numbers) to significant transfer courses. The C-ID number is a designation that ties a course to a specific course “descriptor” that was developed by intersegmental discipline faculty and reviewed statewide. In the case of associate degree C-ID descriptors in career technical education disciplines, typically only community college discipline faculty create descriptors. SB

440 expanded the relationship between C-ID and ADTs by requiring that all courses in an ADT have a C-ID designation.

### **How A Course Receives C-ID Designation**

Local college discipline faculty interested in or required to submit their courses for a C-ID designation work with their college's articulation officer to determine if the course is equivalent to the C-ID descriptor. If it is determined that the course does align with the C-ID descriptor, the articulation officer submits the course outline of record (COR) to the C-ID review process for a determination. If the C-ID review results in a conditional approval or denial, recommendations are provided for modification(s) to make the course approvable. Faculty make the appropriate modification(s) and submit the revised COR to their college's curriculum committee. When the curriculum committee approves the modifications, the articulation officer submits the revised COR to the C-ID for additional review.

### **Receiving a C-ID Designated Course from Another College**

If a receiving college has the same course C-ID designation as a course coming from the sending college, the receiving college must automatically accept it as equivalent to the local course. The automatic acceptance is required not only for the application of the course within the context of the ADT, but for every application of the local comparable course.

Websites and additional resources for C-ID are available in Appendix C The Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senates "C-ID Common Course Numbering" policy statement is available in Appendix C.

## **ADT Course Substitution Guiding Principles**

The two basic criteria to consider when deciding on Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) course substitutions are legislative and regulatory directives, and ASCCC guidance documents. In addition, there have been several statewide discussions regarding specific applications of the directives and guidance documents. The most common topics and any resulting guidelines or clarification have been included in this section; however, the basic principle advocated by the ASCCC 2013 "Reciprocity, Course Substitution, and Credit by Exam—in light of

AA-T and AS-T degrees" continues to be the foundation for these guiding principles and practices: **the ASCCC urges colleges to allow all reasonable course substitutions that are consistent with the parameters of the TMCs.**

### **Legislative and Regulatory Directives for Course Substitutions in ADTs**

The primary criteria for determining course substitution are the legislative and regulatory directives. In addition, California Education Code, section 66746, states, "Community colleges are encouraged to facilitate the acceptance of credits earned at other community colleges toward the associate degree for transfer pursuant to this section."

Given this framework, the following criteria supported by legislation should guide college personnel as they make ADT course substitution decisions:

- Accept courses included in another community college's approved ADT
- Accept courses from another community college's ADT if the colleges share the same C-ID number and/or listed in the Transfer Model Curriculum (TMC)
- Accept courses to satisfy your ADT requirements even if they are not listed in another community college's ADT if the course fits the intent of the TMC, and the discipline faculty should make the decision regarding substitutions

## **Academic Senate for California Community Colleges Criteria for Course Substitutions in ADTs**

Additional criteria to consider in approving course substitutions is guidance provided by the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC). The September 2013 “ADT Reciprocity, Course Substitution, and Credit by Exam” statement provides the foundation for the following six guidelines:

- Substitute/accept courses that are part of another college’s ADT where deemed reasonable
- Honor C-ID articulation between California community colleges
- Where C-ID descriptors are not in place and/or where the substitution does not involve deeming two courses comparable, the discipline faculty should make the decision regarding substitutions
- Ensure substitutions are consistent within the TMC parameters (some TMCs allow more flexibility in course substitutions than others)
- Allow substitutions based on external examinations for credit (e.g. AP, IB, CLEP) and apply those substitutions toward GE requirements and major requirements using statewide documents and local policies for such determinations (e.g., CCC GE AP Policy, CSU memo ASA-2017-13 and IGETC Standards)
- Utilize existing local credit by exam policies

If the above options are not applicable, employ local policies and practices for course substitutions

Regarding the use of external credit, the ASCCC has passed numerous resolutions endorsing the use of external credit and has even created statewide templates to recommend the use of external credit in manners consistent with policies regarding CSU GE and IGETC (see ASCCC Resolutions 9.01 S10, 9.05 F10, 9.06 S07, 9.03 S05, 4.02 S08, 4.03 S08, 4.04 S08, 4.01 S09, 9.04 F10, 9.01 S11). The reasoning in these resolutions applies to AA-T and AS-T degrees as fully as it does to all other degrees and include other methods of earning external credit, such as credit for prior learning (e.g. military service). Recent legislation such as AB 1985 (Williams, 2016) also provides additional requirements for accepting AP scores when applied to general education credit that may be relevant to course substitution conversations.

### **Other Guidelines/Considerations**

While the legislative directives and ASCCC documents provide broad guidance for making course substitution decisions for ADTs, statewide discussions have delved deeper into the application of the guiding principles for other degrees as well. These discussions have included:

#### **Minimum Grade Requirement for Associate Degree Graduation Requirements in English and Math and Courses in the Major:**

California Community Colleges must award a grade of C or better (“P” or “CR” acceptable if College defines as “C” or better) for the Associate Degree graduation requirements in English, Math and/or toward major courses per Title 5 § 55063 (d). Some colleges have determined that California Community Colleges cannot apply (“Pass Along”) an incoming C- grade from another accredited institution toward satisfaction of the Associate Degree graduation requirements in English, and Math or toward major courses based on the Title 5 § 55063 (d). Other colleges have been allowing C- course from another accredited institution for the English and Math graduation requirements if the course “would reasonably be expected to meet or exceed the standards of section 55002(a)”. There was language in the recent Title 5 revision of section 55063 that addressed this issue, but it was taken out. So, as it stands now, C- grades from another accredited institution are not directly addressed in Title 5. For now, it will have to be left to local interpretation. However, the C- minus grade could be applied toward satisfaction of other graduation requirements wherever a grade of D is permissible.

**CSU GE-Breadth and IGETC:** The guidelines established by CSU and UC also apply to verifying completion of CSU GE-Breadth and IGETC requirements for ADTs. However, there is an inconsistency between CSU GE-Breadth and Title 5 guidelines when accepting a C- grade for “Freshman Composition” to meet a requirement for the associate degree. CSU GE-Breadth certification guidelines allow a C- to meet the Area A2 requirement, but Title 5 § 55063 states that the “Freshman Composition” graduation

requirement must be completed with a satisfactory grade. Because the CSU **will** accept a grade of C- to satisfy a Golden Four class, including math and English, a student with a C- in those courses could receive CSU GE certification; however, that student could not earn an associate degree prior to transfer (unless the course was subsequently completed with a C or better) because awarding the associate degree is the purview of the CCC, not of the CSU. Please note that a grade of C- still may not be used to satisfy IGETC.

**Internal Substitutions:** When a course at a college has not been included in an ADT at that college, it may still be possible for it to meet an ADT requirement. This substitution should be done carefully, based on the guiding principles indicated in this document. Allowable course substitutions could include:

- A course approved for a C-ID descriptor that is listed in the TMC, and a course without a C-ID descriptor and not required in the TMC that fits the intent of the TMC.

If a course is frequently used as an internal substitution, the college should revise the ADT to add the course and submit a program non-substantial change proposal to the Chancellor's Office for approval.

**Quarter Units and C-ID Descriptors:** C-ID descriptors establish minimum unit requirements in semester units. However, 4-quarter-unit courses are common. While 4 quarter units translates to 2.66 semester units, a 4-quarter-unit course may be substituted for a 3-unit C-ID-approved course as indicated by the following guidance given to C-ID reviewers:

- For the purposes of reviewing courses, you may use the standard application of one additional unit for the quarter than the semester, rather than a strictly mathematical unit conversion.

**Referencing Existing Articulation on ASSIST:** When uncertain if a course should be substituted, existing articulation may further inform the decision. A substitution should be considered when the following conditions apply:

- A course substitution should be considered if a course was articulated to a CSU identified "similar" major before the C-ID process was in place. A course substitution should be considered if the course is articulated to a CSU identified "similar" degree at the CSU campus.

The California State University maintains a website to assist articulation officers and faculty to identify TMCs that are similar to existing CSU degrees. See Appendix D for this link to this and other resources.

**Upper Division Courses:** It is a local Community college's decision to permit the substitution of upper division courses for lower division requirements for the ADT. Guidelines outlined above should be used to determine allowable course substitutions.

## Appendix A

### Academic Senate Statements on Reciprocity, Course Substitution, and Credit by Exam—in light of AA-T and AS-T degrees September 2013

#### Substitution and Reciprocity

The passage of SB 1440 (Padilla, 2010) and the resulting faculty-designed Transfer Model Curriculum (TMC) system have altered the way colleges operate. Today, a higher level of coordination exists across the community colleges and with the universities. This new system affects traditional practices regarding course substitutions and reciprocity.

In the interest of best serving students and establishing an efficient transfer route, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC) encourages colleges to apply courses successfully completed as part of a TMC-aligned degree at one college for requirements within their own degrees to the greatest extent deemed possible and reasonable (See ASCCC resolution 15.01 Spring 2011). While course substitution decisions remain a matter of local control, students often earn credit at multiple colleges during the course of their academic careers and, therefore, are best served when courses that are taken in good faith as part of a TMC-aligned degree at one college are accepted as part of a TMC-aligned degree at other colleges. Therefore, **the ASCCC strongly urges community colleges to establish policies to allow and encourage acceptance of the courses students have taken at other colleges in a TMC-aligned degree.** While the C-ID system establishes course-to-course reciprocity, where C-ID descriptors are not in place and/or where the substitution does not involve deeming two courses comparable, substitution decisions must be informed by the judgment of discipline faculty. When an AA-T or AS-T is being conferred any substitutions made must result in the awarding of a degree that is consistent with the parameters defined by the TMC.

This recommendation is in the spirit of SB 1440 and the TMC-based statewide solution that faculty developed in response to SB 1440. The ideal case is for colleges and universities to widely accept the courses identified in the TMC and contained within TMC-aligned degrees. The TMC process establishes a transfer pathway that is based on the package of courses that comprise a TMC-aligned degree. Furthermore, the C-ID system identifies course content and standards, and most courses specifically identified and required in TMCs have or will soon have C-ID descriptors.

**Example:** The TMC for psychology includes three courses in List A: Introduction to Biology, Human Biology, and Introduction to Biological Psychology. Students are required to complete one of these three courses. College X may choose to allow all three of these List A options in their local psychology AA-T degree. However, College Y might decide that Human Biology is necessary for all students and thus might eliminate the other two List A options. A student who took Introduction to Biology at College X, expecting that course to fulfill the List A requirement, but who then enrolled at College Y to complete the associate degree for transfer would have taken a course not included or not fulfilling the same requirements in the local AA-T for psychology at College Y. In such a case, because the student has acted in good faith and the course taken falls within the requirements of the TMC, the ASCCC (and the language of SB 1440) would strongly encourage College Y to accept Introduction to Biology as fulfilling the List A requirement or, at the least, to accept the Introduction to Biology course as fulfilling a List B or C requirement as is allowed by the TMC.

Every TMC (and every discipline) is different, so the extent to which courses can be moved between lists is dependent upon the parameters defined in the individual TMC. The Psychology TMC offers maximum flexibility, permitting any course in the first list of options to be used in one of the later lists, but other TMCs may not permit the same level of flexibility. The Early Childhood Education TMC, for example, specifies all courses in the TMC without options, allowing no substitutions or local variations. Many TMCs fall somewhere between these extremes, allowing flexibility in some areas but not in all. While the ASCCC encourages course reciprocity and substitution where possible and reasonable, substitutions should only be made in instances where the TMC allows flexibility, as the local AA-T or AS-T degree awarded must remain consistent with parameters of the TMC for the specific discipline.

Local policies and practices may need to be revisited in light of the TMC system; senates and curriculum committees should lead such discussions, ensuring that discipline faculty are responsible for making decisions regarding course substitutions within the TMC-aligned degree requirements. While existing practices may permit colleges to substitute (or not) in any way they choose, for the sake of the TMC system and in the spirit of SB 1440, **the ASCCC urges colleges to allow all reasonable course substitutions that are consistent with the parameters of the TMCs.**

Once all the specifically identified and required courses in TMCs have C-ID descriptors, all colleges have their courses approved in C-ID, and colleges use E-transcripts, the identification of comparable courses will be much simpler. The complicated aspect of reciprocity will continue to be the substitution of noncomparable courses when permitted by the parameters of the TMC. It should be noted that this document pertains to the courses that are specified in the TMC; existing processes related to determining course applicability for general education are not impacted.

If a student transferring in from another community college took a course required for an AA-T or AS-T, but the course does not have a C-ID number or did not have one at the time it was taken, local course substitution processes should be employed. Note that this presumes that the local course does have a C-ID designation. In the event the local course does not have a C-ID number and is in process with respect to CID approval, the local review process should incorporate the C-ID descriptor expectations. For instance, if a local course was submitted to C-ID lacking a required prerequisite the local process for review should incorporate that C-ID descriptor requirement into the local review process.

### **External Sources of Credit**

In addition to allowing reciprocity for courses earned toward a transfer degree at other institutions, colleges should continue to allow students to apply course credit earned through external exams or processes, including AP, CLEP, and IB, to the major requirements for transfer degrees. **Education Code clearly grants the authority to community colleges for the content of the AA –T and AS-T degrees, and this authority extends to community colleges the right and responsibility for granting credit they deem appropriate in the AA/S-T degrees.**

The ASCCC has passed numerous resolutions endorsing the use of external credit and has even created statewide templates to recommend the use of external credit in manners consistent with policies regarding CSU GE and IGETC (see ASCCC Resolutions 9.01 S10, 9.05 F10, 9.06 S07, 9.03 S05, 4.02 S08, 4.03 S08, 4.04 S08, 4.01 S09, 9.04 F10, 9.01 S11). The reasoning in these resolutions applies to AA-T and AS-T degrees as fully as it does to all other applications of their intent and can also include other methods of earning external credit, such as the units often granted to veterans for their experience in military service.

### **Credit by Exam:**

Title 5 provides regulations for community colleges regarding credit by exam (section 55050). Once again, **because Education Code grants community colleges the authority for the content of the AA – T and AS-T degrees, and Title 5 spells out the regulations for credit by exam, colleges retain these authorities when granting AA-T and AS-T degrees.** In other words, colleges retain the existing



**authority and responsibility for granting credit they deem appropriate in the AA/S-T degrees, including credit earned through internal credit by exam processes.** In short, the existing credit by exam policies remain in place for the new associate degrees for transfer.

## REFERENCES

### **What SB 1440 Said:**

CEC section 66746. *Community colleges are encouraged to facilitate the acceptance of credits earned at other community colleges toward the associate degree for transfer pursuant to this section.*

### **Reciprocity for TMC Courses in Associate Degrees for Transfer** 15.01 Spring 2011

Whereas, Senate Bill (SB) 1440 (Padilla, 2010) mandates the creation of associate degrees for transfer (AA-T and AS-T) that include a minimum of 18 units in a major or field of emphasis, and community colleges throughout California are currently in the process of developing these degrees;

Whereas, The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, in coordination with California State University, is developing Transfer Model Curricula (TMCs) that local colleges can use in the creation of the AA-T and AS-T degrees in order to provide some consistency and structure, and the TMCs allow local colleges freedom to make appropriate alterations within that structure and to include transferable local courses within the discipline that may not exist at other colleges;

Whereas, Many students take courses at multiple community colleges or start at one college and finish at another, and therefore students may begin a transfer degree at one community college and then find that courses they have taken in good faith toward that degree no longer apply when they move to another college, which is a significant issue given the 60-unit restriction for the AA-T and AS-T degrees; and

Whereas, A reciprocity policy regarding major requirements for the AA-T and AS-T degrees would eliminate unnecessary repetitions of classes and thereby reduce college costs, would allow students broader educational opportunities given that different colleges possess differing course offerings, would reduce the amount of local workload created by the circulation of student petitions, and would help students complete their degrees in a more expeditious and effective manner;

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges urge local senates and curriculum committees to adopt a reciprocity policy for courses contained in the TMC for the associate degrees for transfer.

### **Title 5—Credit by Exam**

Article 5. Alternative Methods for Awarding Credit

#### **§55050. Credit by Examination.**

(a) The governing board of each community college district shall adopt and publish policies and procedures pertaining to credit by examination in accordance with the provisions of this section.

(b) The governing board may grant credit to any student who satisfactorily passes an examination approved or conducted by proper authorities of the college. Such credit may be granted only to a student who is registered at the college and in good standing and only for a course listed in the catalog of the community college.

(c) The nature and content of the examination shall be determined solely by faculty in the discipline who normally teach the course for which credit is to be granted in accordance with policies and procedures approved by the curriculum committee established pursuant to section 55002. The faculty shall determine that the examination adequately measures mastery of the course content as set forth in the outline of record. The faculty may accept an examination conducted at a location other than the community college for this purpose.

(d) A separate examination shall be conducted for each course for which credit is to be granted. Credit may be awarded for prior experience or prior learning only in terms of individually identified courses for which examinations are conducted pursuant to this section.

(e) The student's academic record shall be clearly annotated to reflect that credit was earned by examination.

(f) Grading shall be according to the regular grading system approved by the governing board pursuant to section 55023, except that students shall be offered a "pass-no pass" option if that option is ordinarily available for the course.

(g) Units for which credit is given pursuant to the provisions of this section shall not be counted in determining the 12 semester hours of credit in residence required for an associate degree.

(h) A district may charge a student a fee for administering an examination pursuant to this section, provided the fee does not exceed the enrollment fee which would be associated with enrollment in the course for which the student seeks credit by examination.

Note: Authority cited: Sections 66700 and 70901, Education Code. Reference: Sections 70901 and 70902, Education Code.

## Appendix C

### Weblinks and Additional Resources

Course Identification Numbering System website: <https://c-id.net/>

Course Identification Numbering System website for Articulation Officers:

<https://c-id.net/articulation-officers>

California State University website for degrees and TMCs identified as a “similar”:

[https://eswlprdp.calstate.edu/tmcp/faces/TmcSchP?\\_afWindowMode=0&\\_afLoop=4512653351567867&\\_adf.ctrl-state=h077n6llg\\_4](https://eswlprdp.calstate.edu/tmcp/faces/TmcSchP?_afWindowMode=0&_afLoop=4512653351567867&_adf.ctrl-state=h077n6llg_4)

Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senate's Statement on the Course Identification Numbering

System: <http://icas-ca.org/cid>