



## **Transfer Virginia Dual Enrollment Student Guide**

*Make the most out of transferring your dual enrollment classes and credentials.*

**Developed in collaboration with the Virginia Department of Education, the Virginia Community College System, and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia**

This document provides you, the student, with transparent and consistent information related to dual enrollment coursework and offers details about how your studies can apply to future work on an associate or a bachelor's degree. The guide is designed to help you to make informed decisions as you plan for your future.

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## *Student Guide*

***Make the most out of transferring your dual enrollment classes and credentials.***

### *Why do students take dual enrollment classes?*

Each year, over 25,000 students enroll in dual enrollment courses through the Virginia Community College System and Richard Bland College. Reasons for this enrollment include the following:

- 50.6% of students participate in dual enrollment to reduce time to degree completion and to save money. (Among these students, 47% intend to take four years to complete a bachelor's degree.)
- 14.4% of students participate in dual enrollment to increase the academic rigor of the high school curriculum.
- 12.3% of students participate in dual enrollment to become familiar with the expectations of college-level coursework.
- 13.5% of students participate in dual enrollment to increase educational opportunities in college (e.g., double major, study abroad).
- 9.2% of students participate in dual enrollment to gain admission to a specific college.

*(SCHEV, P. Smith, 2019)*

### *What are the different dual enrollment opportunities and their benefits?*

Dual enrollment opportunities vary at schools across Virginia. There are four primary options – individual courses, Passport, Uniform Certificate of General Studies (UCGS), and associate degrees.

Knowing what options are available at your school can help guide your choices.

- **Individual Courses** – a dual enrollment course completed during high school provides you with an opportunity to experience college level course content and rigor and to earn credits that may meet general education and/or degree requirements at a college or university. The course transfers to the college or university based on the equivalency defined for the partnering community college by the four-year institution. Selecting courses that meet degree requirements will save you time and money as well as create an opportunity for you to explore different areas of study. A minimum grade of C is required for a dual enrollment course to transfer to a college or university. Transferability of courses can be confirmed by visiting the [Transfer Virginia Portal](#) and websites of the four-year schools.

**The Passport and UCGS programs allow you carefully select courses that are completed through dual enrollment and/or upon completion of high school. See [Passport and UCGS College List](#) for participating institutions.**

- **Passport** – Successful completion of the Passport gives you confidence that 16 credits of coursework will transfer to Virginia's public and participating private institutions and satisfy 16 credits of general education requirements. The course bundle must be completed by selecting one course from the [Passport roster](#) in the following areas: written communications, humanities/fine arts, social/behavioral

science, natural science, mathematics, and history. The key to the Passport is a balanced portfolio demonstrating your educational experience. All grades must be C or higher to transfer.

- **Uniform Certificate of General Studies (UCGS)** – The UCGS program expands on the Passport to satisfy 31 credits of college-level general education requirements. Like the Passport, you can complete this 10-course bundle by selecting courses from the [UCGS roster](#) in written communications (2 courses), humanities/fine arts/literature (2 courses), history (1 course), social/behavioral science (1 course), natural science (1 course), and mathematics (1 course). Two additional courses are completed from the specialized general education block. All grades must be C or higher to transfer.
- **Associate Degree** – When you earn an associate degree while in high school you may be able to complete your baccalaureate degree in less time than the traditional four-year degree can take. It may also offer opportunities for you to select a double major or it can free up time for you to explore study abroad or similar academic experiences. With a solid plan in place, you can save time and money. The key is to complete a transfer associate degree that aligns with future academic plans so that coursework will apply to requirements for a bachelor’s degree. Consultation with both the two-year college and the receiving four-year colleges will support your creation of a successful plan by mapping out courses needed to complete a degree.

### **Which option is best for me?**

Great question! The key is to complete what you start – *COMPLETION LEADS TO COMPLETION!* There are benefits to each of these opportunities. Ask yourself which option best aligns with your educational goals and gives you the best chance to achieve those goals, then work to fully complete that option. For example, if you want to go into a specific field and have the opportunity to complete an associate degree in that area, you may be able to enter college as a sophomore or junior. Or you may want to get a jump start on classes and focus on some of your general education courses. The other three options (individual courses, Passport and UCGS) give you different ways to take general education courses and apply those to your college requirements when you arrive as a freshman or sophomore.

### *Differences between dual enrollment and AP/Cambridge/IB Courses – What is the best choice?*

Schools in Virginia offer different types of courses through which you may earn college credits. The dual enrollment opportunities are based on partnerships between high schools and two-year colleges. The AP/Cambridge/IB options include courses and examinations that are then evaluated by each college and university for credit. Understanding your options and making informed decisions can maximize your academic potential.

- **Dual Enrollment** - you can earn course credit for the completion of each course with a grade of C or higher, based on the course equivalency established between the university and your community college. No post-course testing is required to earn credit since you take college-level courses when you’re in a dual enrollment program.
- **AP/Cambridge/IB Testing** - you have one opportunity to take post-course examinations, and you may earn course credit based on your scores, as determined by each college. For example, an AP score between 3 and 5 can earn college credits at most institutions. Awarding of credit for completion of AP, Cambridge or IB examinations varies by institution. Transferability of AP and IB tests can be confirmed

by visiting the Transfer Virginia Portal where you can enter the test and learn what credit is awarded for the participating schools. ([Transfer Virginia Portal](#)) To review required scores for colleges not in the portal, visit [SCHEV](#).

- Dual Enrollment vs AP/Cambridge/IB
  - Courses offered in each of these areas mirror college-level rigor in content and pace of learning.
  - Dual enrollment courses assess your college readiness and subject matter proficiency throughout the semester while AP/Cambridge/IB courses assess readiness and proficiency via a formal examination process.
  - The acceptance of both dual enrollment and advanced courses by colleges and universities depends on the individual four-year institution.
  - Tuition costs (DE) and testing fees (AP/Cambridge/IB) may be the responsibility of the individual student or may be covered by the school system.

### *What are Some Student Practices that Promote Success?*

- Have a plan for your dual enrollment or AP/IB courses. Research the general education requirements for your college destination(s) and become familiar with the requirements of your intended major.
- Know why you are taking dual enrollment courses. Sometimes it is for personal satisfaction or to open the opportunity to double major in college – both are good reasons, especially if they are part of your overall plan.
- Balance your credit portfolio. Take general education courses across the categories of composition, literature/humanities/fine arts, social sciences, history, mathematics, and sciences. One course in each of these areas can meet general education requirements at your selected institution(s).
- Take general education classes that will apply to both a general education requirement and a major requirement for the associate and bachelor's degrees. For example, ECO 201 is a general education social science course that typically meets a business major requirement. This provides the benefits of time and money in meeting the two-year and four-year college degree requirements.
- Work to earn an associate degree in a specific area of study that best aligns with the four-year program of study you intend to pursue.
- Grades matter! Earning a grade of C or better is required for courses to transfer to any college or university. You may be required to repeat a course in which you earned a D if that course is a pre-requisite or a sequential course required in your college major.
- Ask questions of your high school counselor, career coach or navigator from the college providing the dual enrollment course, and check with your destination college to be sure you're on the right track.

### *Did you know?*

You may not be aware of some key information related to dual enrollment credit and your ability to meet college requirements with these courses. Here are some hints about this:

- Completing six credits within a sequence of courses will transfer to your college but may result in only three of those credits counting towards your program. Many dual enrollment classes fall into the general education category, which creates opportunities for you to study a wide range of course topics. The UCGS provides guidance on the balanced portfolio that will most effectively serve students.
- The accumulation of too many dual enrollment credits may impact your college financial aid package if those credits do not apply directly to your academic plan.
  - All college credits taken through dual enrollment or after high-school graduation impact your financial aid eligibility.

- Financial aid eligibility is determined by such things as maximum credits earned (150% of the program credits), maximum time allowed (150% of the time permitted for a degree), completion rate (67% of all courses attempted are completed with a passing grade), and grade point average achieved. Examples of the percentage rule include the following:
  - An associate degree is typically 60 credits. You would become ineligible for financial aid if your total credits earned exceeded 90 credits (150% of 60.)
  - A bachelor's degree is typically 120 credits. You would become ineligible for financial aid if your total credits earned exceeded 180 credits (150% of 120.)
  - Example: If you completed 16 credits, you would need to pass 11 of those credits (67% of 16.)
  - Repeating a course to improve a grade is permitted under Federal Aid if the credit totals meet above criteria. If you have passed a class, you may retake it one time under financial aid if attempting to improve the score. It is important to know if the college or university will apply the grade from the highest or last attempt at the course and if all attempts factor into GPA calculations. A grade of W/D "withdraw" does not count as an attempt of the course in financial aid calculations.
  - When credit is earned for a course by submitting credit for prior learning credentials (ex: AP exam), the awarded course counts in Federal Aid calculations as a completed course.
- What does this mean to you as a dual enrollment student? It means that all coursework completed through dual enrollment or AP/IB that earns credit counts towards the credit limits. So be sure to establish a solid plan for completing your four-year degree with good grades and reduced excess credits to remain in good standing for financial aid during your college experience.
- It does not matter if financial aid was not used to cover the expense of the dual enrollment courses. All courses, whether funded by you/your family, the school, scholarships, the government, or loans, count toward the maximum credits allowed.
- If you are notified of a loss of financial aid eligibility, you have the right to appeal for more aid and should contact your financial aid office to understand the process.
- Misunderstanding the benefits of dual enrollment can lead to disappointment, frustration and loss of time/money.
  - High school students take dual enrollment for many reasons. Students and their families often believe that completing an associate degree, for example, typically leads to opportunities such as guaranteed admission to college or satisfaction of general education requirements. However, not all of these benefits are available for students completing a degree while in high school. It is important for you to research options by reviewing the fine print of agreements. (Agreements and access to college sites are available in the [Transfer Virginia portal](#).)
  - Students often think that a 60-credit associate degree is half of a 120-credit bachelor's degree and thus upon college enrollment expect to have two years and 60 credits remaining. In addition to credit hours, there are specific degree requirements related to types of courses. Typically, about 30 credits of general education courses apply to your major if those courses are balanced across different disciplines. Excessive credits in one area (sciences, history, etc.) may result in credits not applying to your degree. Aligning course selection with degree requirements can reduce this credit loss. The extra courses may count as elective credits when available in a program.

## *Student Resources*

- **Transfer Virginia Portal** (<https://www.transfervirginia.org>) This portal provides transparent and equitable information related to transfer, including course equivalencies, applicability of courses to degree programs, comparison of programs, transfer steps and resources, and college and career exploration.
- VCCS Application <https://apply.vccs.edu>. Dual enrollment students must complete an application to the college prior to enrollment. Completing this application accurately will help the VCCS best serve the students.
- myVCCS Login <https://my.vccs.edu> or access your college link through the college webpage. You can look for a link at “myCollege Name.” This link gives you access to your student information system (student records), CANVAS (student course site), student GMAIL account, and other resources available to students.

## *What does it mean?*

You may benefit from knowing terminology when exploring college opportunities. The following descriptions relate to colleges and students.

- Transfer vs First-Time Freshman
  - **Transfer Students** are those who enroll in a college or university after completion of high school or a GED program and then enroll in a different college or university. The courses that are taken at the first college/university may transfer to the second as credits toward the degree requirements. While dual enrollment students who enroll directly in a four-year institution from high school are not considered transfer students, their dual enrollment classes earned through a college are considered transfer classes.
  - **First-Time Freshmen** are those who enroll for the first time in any college after completion of high school or a GED program. They are considered traditional first-year college students.
  - **Academic Sophomores or Juniors** are those who have completed college credits (Dual Enrollment, AP, IB, Cambridge) while enrolled in high school, then enrolled as first-time freshman at a college or university with enough college credits to place them at the sophomore (30 credits) or junior level (60 credits). These students are usually part of the first-year cohort regarding housing assignments and first-year student engagement activities.
- Transferability vs Acceptance vs Applicability
  - **College credits** are how courses are described at the college level. Typically, a college course is 3 or 4 credits. A 3-credit course offered during a 16-week semester generally means students meet with the instructor for 3 hours each week and complete another 6-9 hours of academic work outside of class. Science courses with labs are usually 4-credit courses. In this case, students typically meet with an instructor for 3 hours a week and complete another 3 hours per week in a lab setting. A full-time student takes a minimum of 12, and typically 15-16, credit hours per semester or about 5 classes. Dual enrollment students may be enrolled in courses that are condensed (example: 8-week class) or that align with the high school calendar (example: 18-week class) at which point the weekly expectations would be adjusted to meet the same standards.
  - **Transferability** refers to the credits a student receives for coursework transferred to a different college. For example, a course such as BIO 158 at college A receives equivalent credit for a course such as BIO 101 at college B. This is referred to as **acceptance** of the course and its associated credit. When there is not a direct equivalency, a student may receive transfer elective



credit for the course. Students are best served with direct equivalencies that count toward degree completion.

- **Applicability** refers to courses that count for transfer credit AND that fulfill degree/graduation requirements. If a course provides transfer credit but does not apply to program requirements, the student may graduate with more college credits than are needed. Careful selection of courses that apply to a student's program of study is the best method to avoid unused credits.
- Types of Credentials and Academic Programs
  - **Career Studies Certificates and Certificates** are typically offered by two-year colleges and provide students an opportunity to earn credentials that prepare them for immediate employment and/or to prepare them for further studies in a program. Examples: welding, LPN, and engineering technology. Career Studies Certificates require 9-29 credits, and Certificates require 30 - 59 credits.
  - **Associate of Arts, Associate of Fine Arts, Associate of Science, Associate of Arts and Sciences** are referred to as two-year transfer degrees because they prepare students for earning a bachelor's degree in a particular area of study at a four-year institution. Transfer programs guide students in meeting required general education coursework and lower-level major requirements. In most cases, these degrees require 60-63 credits. (Common terminology: transfer programs)
  - **Associate of Applied Arts and Associate of Applied Sciences** are two-year degrees that prepare students directly for the workforce. Students are employable in their desired field upon completion. Sometimes students in these programs can transfer to universities to earn a bachelor's degree through special agreements that often require students to complete additional freshman- and sophomore-level coursework beyond the associate degree. In most cases, these degrees require 60-69 credits. (Common terminology: applied programs or **Career-Technical Education [CTE]**)
  - **Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science** are four-year degree programs in which students can select majors from a vast number of areas. Some majors are unique to a university, but many majors are offered across all institutions. Completion of this degree leads to direct employment as well as preparation for further studies through master's and doctoral programs. In most cases, these degrees require 120 credits which can include transfer credits from another college, if applicable.
  - **Bachelor of Liberal or Interdisciplinary Studies** is a four-year degree with opportunities for students to apply a variety of coursework in a way that customizes their program. Examples: Integrated Science and Technology Degree, Bachelor of Liberal Studies.
- Passport and Uniform Certificate of General Studies (UCGS)
  - The goal with both the Passport and UCGS is to maximize credit acceptance and application toward general education requirements for students transferring prior to earning an associate degree. The Passport and UCGS are designed to improve transparency and simplify the transfer process for students. Ideally, both the Passport and UCGS offer a variety of courses to maximize the student's educational experience and increase the opportunity for students to earn the Passport or UCGS while also preparing for their program of study.
  - The **Passport** is a 16-credit block of coursework and the UCGS is a 31-credit block of coursework. Students who successfully complete the appropriate courses through a Virginia two-year college will have 16 and 31 credits, respectively, of the institution's general education program and/or other requirements satisfied and applicable to the 120 credit hours needed to earn a bachelor's degree.



- General Education vs Electives vs Major Requirement
  - **General Education** coursework provides students with broad foundational knowledge across many subject areas. Its purposes are to reshape how students look at the world around them and to introduce them to a variety of disciplines and skills. It expands upon the basic skills learned through a student’s K-12 experience. Many colleges and universities have developed robust integrated general education programs that engage students in learning that crosses different subject areas and contextualizes the learning experience. Introductory courses in English, history, and science are examples of general education courses.
  - **Electives** are courses that give students a chance to select a few areas that interest them or that support earning a second degree. Some programs do not have any space for electives, while some may provide for students to take several elective courses. Electives may be required within the major or they may be taken outside the major.
  - **Major Requirements** are courses that must be completed to earn a degree and directly relate to the knowledge needed to work or study in a specific field. Business majors, for example, must take economics while nursing majors must take anatomy and physiology.
  
- College Agreements: The agreement types below present opportunities for transfer students to improve their transfer experience, to increase opportunities for admittance into a university of choice, and to complete an associate degree. Based on the university, not all agreements are opportunities for students enrolled in high school but become available upon enrolling at a two-year college.
  - **Articulation Agreements** are arrangements between two or more colleges or universities that specify opportunities for students to transfer courses, gain admittance and select majors. They demonstrate that the college or university welcomes students transferring from two-year colleges.
  - **Guaranteed Admission Agreements** are arrangements that define the expectations students must meet to be guaranteed admission into a college or university. Generally, they do not guarantee admission to competitive programs. For example, a student may be admitted to a university, but not admitted to a specific program, like engineering.  
<https://www.vccs.edu/transfer-programs/>
  - **Guaranteed Program Admission Agreements** are arrangements that define the expectations students must meet to be guaranteed admission into a college and university and into a specific major. These are set up primarily between local or regional two-year and four-year colleges, but they are expanding statewide. Established statewide agreements include direct admissions into nursing and engineering programs. Specific course paths are prescribed in these agreements.  
<https://www.vccs.edu/transfer-programs/>
  - **Dual Admission Agreements** are arrangements that take the guaranteed admission agreements to the next level by having students admitted to both the two-year and four-year colleges at the same time. As part of this agreement, students may have access to advisors, resources such as libraries, and student activities at both institutions. Specific course paths are typically prescribed in these agreements.
  - **Concurrent Enrollment** is an agreement between two local institutions through which students can enroll in a limited number of courses at the four-year institution while attending regularly at the two-year institution. Often, tuition rates within these agreements are based on the two-year institution. (Note: In some systems “concurrent enrollment” may refer to dual enrollment courses.)

- **Reverse Transfer** provides students the opportunity to transfer four-year coursework back to the two-year institution in order to complete an associate degree or other credential. This gives any students the option of completing their associate degree while enrolled at a four-year college or university. Students who complete at least 16 credits (25% of associate degree) from a two-year college are eligible for reverse transfer.