

Massachusetts

Massachusetts Board of Higher Education
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CONTEXT: Massachusetts is home to 140 degree-granting institutions. Just 29 of these are in the public sector and comprise 15 community colleges, 9 state colleges and 5 University of Massachusetts campuses. The policies referenced below apply to Massachusetts public education only.

- 1) Does the state have an identifiable “P-16” effort visible? Who is in charge of this effort?
The Massachusetts Advisory Committee on Education Policy meets periodically to discuss P-16 policy concerns. The Committee comprises the Commissioner of Education, Chancellor of Higher Education, Commissioner of Early Education and Care, Chair of the Board of Education, Chair of the Board of Higher Education, and the Governor's Special Advisor on Education. The Chancellor of Higher Education has initiated each meeting of the Committee.
 - a) Does the agency include a utility or function on its website designed explicitly to help potential students locate an appropriate college or university to attend?
Please see: www.readyssetgotocollege.com .
- 2) Is a mandated or recommended college preparatory curriculum in place in the state’s public high schools?
Since, Massachusetts is a local control state, there is no statewide curriculum mandate. There is current legislation that recommends endorsement of a MassCore curriculum that would prepare students for college and career. The curriculum was proposed by the Department of Education with input from the higher education and business sectors.
- 3) Has the state articulated a set of explicit competencies or skills that define what it means to be “college ready?”
The Massachusetts Board of Higher Education articulated college ready competencies in the 1989 report, "The Undergraduate Experience" and again in 1998 when it developed common assessment for the three higher education segments.
- 4) Are systematic programs in place in the state that encourage students to accelerate progress by taking college-level courses while still enrolled in high school?

The statewide dual enrollment program was defunded by the Massachusetts legislature approximately five years ago. The Board has requested \$2 million to reinstate dual enrollment without success. The legislature elected instead to provide \$2 million to fund a concurrent enrollment program to allow severely cognitively impaired students who had reached age 18 to enroll in college courses. The cost during Spring 2007 averaged \$8,000 per student. Each student enrolled in a single course during the Spring semester at a Massachusetts community college.

5) Is there a statewide policy present that governs placement into college-level courses or remedial courses? Is a standard set of placement tests recommended or required? If yes, are common cut scores for placement decisions in place or do institutions get to set their own? **Yes, The Board adopted common assessment policy, tests (Accuplacer) , and cut scores for reading, writing and math in 1998 for the three higher education segments.**

6) Is there a visible statewide transfer and articulation policy? Does this cover all institutions or only public institutions? What are the specifics of this policy? **Massachusetts has several policies to help students transfer easily from a community college to a state college or to a University of Massachusetts campus. These policies are accessible on the Board of Higher Education's website as well as at the individual campuses.**

A. The Commonwealth Transfer Compact This agreement states that the courses and credits of a student who graduates from a Massachusetts community college will be transferred and will be applied toward his or her bachelor's degree if the student completes his or her associate's degree with a minimum of 60 credits (exclusive of developmental course work); achieve a cumulative grade point average of not less than 2.0 (in a 4.0 system); and complete the following minimum general education core:

English Composition / Writing

· 6 credit hours

Behavioral and Social Science

· 9 credit hours

Humanities and Fine Arts

· 9 credit hours

Natural or Physical Science

· 8 credit hours

Mathematics

· 3 credit hours

B. Joint Admissions If a student graduates from a community college in a joint admissions program and has earned at least a 2.5 GPA, he or she will be automatically admitted into the state college or University campus with which there is an agreement. Visit <http://www.mass.edu/jointadmissions> to view all of the joint admissions agreements in Massachusetts. There are over 2,300 joint admissions agreements.

C. Tuition Advantage Program TAP allows a student a 33% reduction off in-state tuition at a state college or the University of Massachusetts as a day student. To be eligible, a student must graduate from a Massachusetts community college in a joint admissions program with a 3.0 GPA. TAP students are entitled to this tuition reduction for the two years (or four consecutive semesters) he or she attends the state college or university campus immediately following community college enrollment as long as the student maintains a 3.0 grade point average at the four-year institution.

D. Articulation Agreements. Every community college has formal agreements with various 4-year institutions (public and private) that specify admissions requirements guaranteeing acceptance and/or transfer of community college courses. Requirements may vary from school to school, and agreement to agreement.

E. Early Childhood Education Compact and Elementary Education Compact. These compacts specify coursework that fulfills professional child care qualifications; prepare students for entry into bachelor's degree licensure programs; guarantee admission into equivalent programs at Massachusetts state colleges or university campuses offering; and guarantee that 60 credits earned by students who fulfill the core requirements and other provisions of the compact will be accepted as transfer credits by the receiving institution and applied to the students' baccalaureate degrees.

a) Is the transfer/articulation policy accompanied by a statewide transferable general education requirement? Does this name actual courses and/or credits? Are specific competencies identified that the student should meet through this coursework? Is testing used to guarantee student competency for progress or transfer?

Please see the information provided in the Commonwealth Transfer Compact in question 9 regarding the general education core. At this time, specific competencies are not identified and each individual campus determines student progress.

b) More specifically, does an AA or AS degree from a community college in the state meet general education requirements at public four-year institutions? What mechanisms are in place to make sure this actually happens?

If the student meets the conditions of the Commonwealth Transfer Compact, the general education requirements will be satisfied at the public four-year institutions. Each transcript that meets the Commonwealth Transfer Compact is stamped so that admissions and transfer staff at the four-year institutions are aware.

c) Does credit from transfer courses meet specific course requirements at the transfer institution (e.g. American History counts for American History) or do just the credits transfer to count against the total needed for graduation?

Each institution determines how transfer credits apply if a student does not qualify for the Commonwealth Transfer Compact.

7) Are there statewide test-out or competency-based provisions that will allow a student to accelerate progress toward a degree?

No, there are no statewide test-out or competency-based provisions that will allow a student to accelerate progress.

- 8) Does the state have an easily-accessible state-supported alternative institution that allows students to complete their degrees more quickly or conveniently than through attendance at a traditional public institution?

Massachusetts does not have an alternative institution however students may earn degrees online through the two public institution online consortia. See Massachusetts Colleges Online <http://www.mco.mass.edu/> and UMassOnline <http://www.umassonline.net/>.

- a) Does the state have an accessible central bank or catalog of on-line courses contributed by many institutions that enable students to do “one-stop shopping” for electronic courses?

Yes. Please see Massachusetts Colleges Online <http://www.mco.mass.edu/> and UMass Online <http://www.umassonline.net/>.

- 9) Does the state provide incentives to institutions for improvements in degree production or graduation rates? For minimizing the number of students graduating with excessive numbers of credits (e.g. more than 120 SCH)?

No. The state does not provide incentives to institutions for improvements in degree production or graduate rates, nor for minimizing the number of students graduating with excessive numbers of credits.

- 10) Does the state provide incentives for students who successfully complete their degrees (e.g. tuition rebates or cash bonuses)? For students who complete their programs without amassing additional credits (e.g. within 120 SCH)? Are there financial disincentives for students to take more than the number of credits needed to graduate (e.g. full or out-of-state tuition)?

Students who complete their associate degree with a minimum GPA of 3.0 and who are part of the joint admissions program earn a 33% tuition discount when they transfer to their baccalaureate program.