

Texas

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
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1) Does the state have an identifiable “P-16” effort visible? Who is in charge of this effort?
State law created the P-16 Councils with four members: Commissioner of Education, Commissioner of Higher Education, Executive Director of the Texas Workforce Commission, and Executive Director of the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services. The Council is charged with work related to improving public school students’ academic preparation, improvement in educator preparation, improved retention rates, and the coordination between public and higher education on career and technical education. Recently, new legislation was passed that requires the P-16 Council to recommend to the Commissioner of Education and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (CB) a college readiness and success strategic action plan to increase students success and decrease the number of students enrolling in developmental course work in institutions of higher education. The Council accomplishes much of its work through the use of advisory committees.

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?
The agency supports a website dedicated to providing students, parents, and educators with information about college and careers. The website is the cornerstone in the agency’s outreach efforts: <http://www.collegefortexans.com/>

2) Is a mandated or recommended college preparatory curriculum in place in the state’s public high schools?

Yes. Texas has instituted a rigorous, college preparatory curriculum — the Recommended High School Program (RHSP) — as the state’s default curriculum for all students. RHSP currently consists of 24 core credits distributed among the major disciplines. Beginning with the class entering ninth grade in 2004, students are automatically enrolled in the RHSP unless their parents explicitly choose a different curriculum for their children, and a school counselor approves the decision. The RHSP includes four units of English, three units of mathematics, three units of science, and three-and-a-half units of social studies, as well as economics, foreign languages, health, fine arts, and physical education requirements. Beginning with the class entering ninth grade in 2007, the RHSP consists of 26 core credits, adding a fourth unit of mathematics and a fourth unit of science to the 2004 RHSP.

This response quotes in part a summary of various state-level actions included in Recommendation #2 from the “Redesigning the American High School” initiative *Getting It Done: Ten Steps to a State Action Agenda – A Guidebook of Promising State and Local Practice*. Published by the National Governors Association (NGA) in 2005 when Virginia

Governor Mark Warner was chairing the NGA, the publication identified 10 steps governors can take to put their states on the right path toward redesigning high schools. The entire study is available: <http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/05warnerguide.pdf>

Relevant Texas Education Agency Rules can be found at:
<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter074/ch074d.html>

Legislation currently making its way through the 80th Session of the Texas Legislature (HB 3826) would require completion of the RHSP as a minimum admission requirement at all public colleges and universities in Texas for students qualifying for automatic admission under the “Top Ten Percent” Program.

- 3) Has the state articulated a set of explicit competencies or skills that define what it means to be “college ready?”

In June 2006, the Texas Legislature passed legislation that requires the establishment of discipline-specific vertical teams of faculty from public and higher education to recommend college readiness standards to the Commissioner of Education and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The work of the vertical teams is underway, and the college readiness standards for mathematics, English-language arts, social studies, and science are expected to be ready in late fall 2007.

- 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?

Yes. Texas has recognized four programs statewide that encourage high school students to accelerate progress by taking college-level courses while still enrolled in high school. Systematic programs in Texas include dual credit, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and the establishment of early college high schools.

New legislation has mandated that a minimum of 12 semester credit hours (SCH) of college-credit-bearing courses be available in every school district in the state, beginning with the fall 2008 school year:

<http://tlo2.tlc.state.tx.us/statutes/docs/ED/content/htm/ed.002.00.000028.00.htm#28.009.00>

The legislation has been interpreted to include each of these four programs, as well as tech-prep and advanced technical credit programs. (Legislation is currently under consideration by the 80th session of the Texas Legislature that would formalize this interpretation in statute.)

Dual credit programs in Texas allow qualified high school students to take college courses and receive high school credit at the same time. Dual credit programs are arranged locally between school districts and public institutions of higher education through Memoranda of Understanding that delineate which college courses will be available, what high school credit will be received for them, student eligibility, etc. Coordinating Board Rules on dual credit are available at:

http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/Rules/tac3.cfm?Chapter_ID=4&Subchapter=D

Texas Education Agency guidelines are:

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter074/ch074c.html>

The College Board's Advanced Placement (AP) Program is a widely utilized program in Texas high schools. Students may complete AP courses, take the exam, and receive college credit at public institutions of higher education based on the scores they earn. The International Baccalaureate Diploma is also recognized by the State of Texas as an advanced curriculum that can earn qualifying students college credit upon admittance to a public institution of higher education. Law regarding the award of college-level credit for these two programs (AP and IB college credit awards) can be found in statute:

<http://tlo2.tlc.state.tx.us/statutes/docs/ED/content/htm/ed.003.00.000051.00.htm#51.968.00>.

The Coordinating Board implemented the statutory requirements on schedule with assistance from the Texas International Baccalaureate Schools. Web site at:

<http://www.texasibschools.org>

Early college high school is a program that allows a school district and a public institution of higher education to jointly create a school that allows a student to earn up to 66 college credit hours, including associate degrees, while completing the requirements for the high school diploma. The program is directed at students who are either at-risk for dropping out of high school or wish to accelerate their progress toward a high school diploma. Eligible students entering the early college high school may take dual credit courses, AP courses, high school courses, and college courses. (Texas law establishing early college high schools:

<http://tlo2.tlc.state.tx.us/statutes/docs/ED/content/htm/ed.002.00.000029.00.htm#29.908.00>.

Coordinating Board Rules implementing the statute:

http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/Rules/tac3.cfm?Chapter_ID=4&Subchapter=G

- 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? Texas law established the Texas Success Initiative in 2003, replacing the 1987 Texas Academic Skills Program. The Coordinating Board is required to identify assessments and cut scores for public higher education institutions to use for determination of the "college readiness" of entering students. While the Coordinating Board establishes the state required score, each institution may require a higher score for enrollment in particular courses. These assessments may not be used for admissions purposes.

- 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? Yes. Texas and the Coordinating Board have developed a comprehensive infrastructure for the transfer of lower-division academic courses among all public colleges and universities in the state. Statute regarding the facilitation of lower-division transfer is part of the enabling

legislation establishing the Coordinating Board in 1965, and current policies are based on statutory mandates that apply to all public institutions of higher education in Texas.

The Coordinating Board Web site provides a “one-stop” resource with links for legislation, CB rules, policies and support documents for the statewide transfer and articulation resources that apply to all public undergraduate academic institutions statewide (colleges, universities, and health-science centers): <http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/AAR/UndergraduateEd/fos.cfm>.

Among the most significant policies are the establishment in the early 1990s of the Lower-Division Academic Course Guide Manual (ACGM) and a comprehensive inventory of fully-transferable academic courses pre-approved for community colleges to teach: <http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/AAR/UndergraduateEd/WorkforceEd/acgm.htm>

The ACGM is updated and maintained by a standing advisory committee made up of faculty and administrators from the public colleges and universities, with ad hoc members from the Texas Common Course Numbering System.

The Texas Common Course Numbering System (TCCNS) is identified in statute and approved by the Coordinating Board to be the official common course numbering system for all Texas institutions of higher education (<http://www.tccns.org>). The TCCNS is an independent consortium whose membership includes participation from all public and independent post-secondary colleges and universities in the state. TCCNS has its own by-laws and Board, whose members are appointed by the Texas Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (TACRAO); Texas Community College Instructional Administrators (TCCIA); Texas Council of Chief Academic Officers (CAO); and the Independent Colleges and Universities of Texas (ICUT). Two Coordinating Board staff members serve as ex-officio members of the board, and help coordinate the actions of the TCCNS with those of the ACGM Advisory Committee to ensure that all transferable lower-division academic courses approved for inclusion in the ACGM have been evaluated and assigned a Texas Common Course Number.

All community colleges throughout the state use the TCCNS system for numbering their courses; while universities are not required to convert their course numbering systems (which is appropriate for lower-division courses, but not necessarily to upper-division or graduate course identification). Each public university must identify lower-division courses that are equivalent to TCCNS-numbered courses in ways specified in Texas statute and Coordinating Board Rules (Statute establishing an official common course numbering system for Texas: <http://tlo2.tlc.state.tx.us/statutes/docs/ED/content/htm/ed.003.00.000061.00.htm#61.832.00>

CB Rules approving the Texas Common Course Numbering System and regulating its use by colleges and universities: http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/Rules/tac3.cfm?Chapter_ID=4&Subchapter=B,Section_4.35

Texas law requires the Coordinating Board to establish a lower-division transfer dispute resolution policy: <http://tlo2.tlc.state.tx.us/statutes/docs/ED/content/htm/ed.003.00.000061.00.htm#61.826.00>

The policy has been established in Board rules:

http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/Rules/tac3.cfm?Chapter_ID=4&Subchapter=B, Section 4.27

The transfer dispute resolution process was implemented during the 1990s. On average, less than one official transfer dispute is filed annually; most concerns never reach the level of an official “dispute,” and are resolved through institutional conference, sometimes with Coordinating Board staff assistance. The comprehensive infrastructure of policies implemented at the state level has greatly reduced the number of transfer disputes during the last decade.

- 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?

Yes. The Texas Core Curriculum was first implemented in statute in 1987, and was revised in 1997 to create a 42-SCH fully-transferable general education core curriculum applicable to all public colleges and universities -- Statutory mandate:

<http://tlo2.tlc.state.tx.us/statutes/docs/ED/content/htm/ed.003.00.000061.00.htm#61.821.00>

The Coordinating Board rules, which spell out the actual curricular design and related policies in much more detail, are available at:

http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/Rules/tac3.cfm?Chapter_ID=4&Subchapter=B.

The statute requires the Coordinating Board to “...develop a recommended core curriculum of at least 42 semester credit hours, including a statement of the content, component areas, and objectives of the core curriculum.” Thus, the state obligation extends to general content, component areas (including maximum and minimum semester credit hour limitations for each area), and exemplary educational outcome statements illustrating the required objectives for each component area. The statute reserves to each individual institution the responsibility to “...adopt a core curriculum of no less than 42 semester credit hours, including specific courses comprising the curriculum.”

Individual course selections are approved at the institutional level, and must be ratified by the Coordinating Board as falling within the exemplary educational outcome expectations in order to be compliant with the statewide core curriculum. The Texas General Education Core Web Center provides a resource for discovering and comparing the individual courses approved as fulfilling core curriculum requirements at each public college and university (<http://statecore.its.txstate.edu/>). Students who complete the general education core curriculum at one public institution of higher education and then transfer to a different institution know that their completed core curriculum will transfer and substitute for the core curriculum at the receiving institution. Students who have completed portions of the core curriculum prior to transfer receive credit for the requirements they have fulfilled, and may be held responsible only for those component area requirements that remain in the receiving institution’s core curriculum once all

previously earned core credit has been applied appropriately. It is illegal for a public college, university, or health science center to require a student to repeat a core curriculum course that the student has already completed satisfactorily.

Regarding Assessment: Each institution is required to submit a report evaluating the effectiveness of its core curriculum to the Coordinating Board (currently every five years). The last round of reports were submitted in October 2004, and were expected to include both an evaluation of the effectiveness of the core curriculum from 1999-2004, and a plan for assessment of the core curriculum during the next five-year reporting period. Because of the efficacy of the TCCNS in establishing a voluntary comprehensive system of equivalency for most core curriculum courses, institutions have been encouraged to develop evaluation/assessment procedures appropriate to the role and mission of the institution.

The Coordinating Board's standing Undergraduate Education Advisory Committee is currently considering information about standardized assessment for core curriculum outcomes collected by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AACSU) as part of their current project on developing a voluntary system of accountability (VSA) for student learning and skill outcomes in general education. Instruments currently being scrutinized include those from CLA, CAAP, ACT, *College BASE*, MAPP, and GRE.

- 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?

Yes. Generally, the AA, AS and AAT degree programs offered at Texas public community colleges include the entire 42-SCH general education core curriculum by statute, the completed core curriculum transfer, and substitutes for the core curriculum at the receiving institution. Some baccalaureate degree programs have extensive credit-hour requirements or elaborate course pre-requisite features within the first two years of the program (e.g. computer science, engineering, music) that make completion of the core curriculum difficult within the credit limitations of these degree plans. In these cases, students who pursue the programs beginning at a four-year university generally do not expect to complete their general education requirement within the first two years of study, but distribute the core responsibility throughout their four years of study. For these programs, the AA or AS degree might not include a completed general education core curriculum as a graduation requirement, if such a requirement would cause the associate degree to exceed 66 SCH.

Texas has implemented Field of Study Curricula (FOSCs) for popular or complex degree programs (including those mentioned here) partly in order to provide guidance for colleges and universities in determining what general education requirements may be postponed in favor of completing these intensive sets of freshman and sophomore degree program requirements. This flexibility allows students to plan their course selections in ways that will allow them to graduate in a timely manner. The Coordinating Board has approved over 50 Field of Study Curricula in the general areas of Business,

Communication, Computer Science, Criminal Justice, Early Childhood Education, Engineering, Engineering Technology, Grades 4-8 Teacher Certification, Mexican-American Studies, Music, and Nursing.

- 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?

Yes. Credit from transfer courses generally meets specific course requirements at the receiving/transfer institution. The various Field of Study Curricula developed for statewide transfer specify courses, as do the AAT degree and lower-division courses that are designated as equivalent though the TCCNS. The core curriculum courses fulfill content component area requirements and may also be specific. For example, Texas requires six SCH of US History (three SCH of which may be Texas History) and six SCH of American Government, including specific consideration of the US constitution and the constitutions of the states, with emphasis on the Texas Constitution, as mandated universal baccalaureate graduation requirements – twice as many credit hours as required by any other state. Courses in US History and American Government transfer in specific ways and meet these very specific requirements.

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

Yes. Students in grades 1 through 12 can accelerate progress toward completion of grade or high school graduation requirements through assessment of an academic subject for which the student has had no formal preparation through enrollment in classes. (Texas Education Agency rules regarding credit by examination:

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter074/ch074c.html>)

Post-secondary students can accelerate progress toward their degree through CLEP (College-Level Examination Program) exams as provided in Texas statute:

<http://tlo2.tlc.state.tx.us/statutes/docs/ED/content/htm/ed.003.00.000051.00.htm#51.968.00>

- 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?

Yes. The Electronic Campus located at the Texas Distance Education web site:

<http://www.txelectroniccampus.org/> has more than 3,400 online courses and 18 complete degree programs available for students. From this site students can search an inventory of online offerings, get complete course and program descriptions and requirements, and link to colleges and universities for enrollment services. The Coordinating Board provides a one-stop Web page with resources for institutions and individuals about distance education in Texas at <http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/AAR/DistanceEd/>.

- 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. The Virtual College of Texas (VCT at <http://www.vct.org/>) provides another statewide resource for distance education partnerships. VCT is a collaborative of Texas’ 50 community college districts and the Texas State Technical College system. Through VCT, students may register at their local colleges to take college credit distance learning courses from other colleges throughout Texas. The mission statement explains the role of VCT in Texas Community College Distance Learning: “VCT serves students who need distance learning courses that are not available at their home (Host) institutions at the point they need them. At times, VCT-hosted courses make it possible for students to graduate on schedule, as planned. From January through December, 2005, enrollments in VCT-hosted courses accounted for approximately 2.2 percent of the total semester credit hours of distance learning courses in which students enrolled through distance learning at Texas community colleges.”

- 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)?

Yes. Currently, Texas has a program called the Nursing Shortage Reduction Program that provides incentive funding for increases in the number of graduates produced in the nursing field. During the 80th Legislature, currently meeting, there have been numerous bills introduced that would provide incentive funding for increases in degrees, graduation rates, and other outcomes.

There are not any incentives for the institutions to minimize the number of excessive hours. However, there are incentives for the students. The 79th Texas Legislature (2005) passed legislation limiting the number of semester credit hours in a university may require to complete a baccalaureate degree program, unless the institution determines that there is a “compelling academic reason” to require a higher number for a particular degree program. The limit is set as the minimum number of credit hours required for a baccalaureate degree to be granted under the standards of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges, or its successor. Currently that limit is a minimum of 120 SCH. No baccalaureate degree program at a public university or health science center in Texas may exceed 120 SCH unless the institution has approved an exception as provided in the statute. This limitation goes into effect for students who enroll in higher education for the first time during the fall 2008 semester. The statute implementing the limitation on the number of credit hours in baccalaureate programs is:

<http://tlo2.tlc.state.tx.us/statutes/docs/ED/content/htm/ed.003.00.000061.00.htm#61.0515.00>

Because the statute applies directly to institutions, no Coordinating Board Rules have been adopted to implement it.

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)?

No. There is no tuition rebate or cash bonus for simply completing a degree. Texas has had a tuition rebate program for certain eligible students since 1997 (see next portion of this response).

If a student completes their degree within three SCH of the number required for their degree program and within four years, they receive a \$1,000 bonus. Texas resident students who enrolled in college for the first time in fall 1997 or later, and who graduate with no more than three semester credit hours attempted above the minimum number required for the completion of their degree program may claim a \$1000 tuition rebate. Beginning with the 2005-2006 academic year, first-time-in-college students must meet calendar requirements for timely graduation, as well as the limitation on the number of semester credit hours they have attempted. While the tuition rebate program is statutory, and meets the requirement of the state providing an incentive for students who successfully complete their degrees in a timely manner and without excessive credit hours, the statute is unfunded, so that rebates are paid to students directly from the general fund at each public university. The statute establishing tuition rebates is:

<http://tlo2.tlc.state.tx.us/statutes/docs/ED/content/htm/ed.003.00.000054.00.htm#54.0065.00>

Coordinating Board rules implementing the tuition rebate are:

http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/Rules/tac3.cfm?Chapter_ID=13&Subchapter=F
in Section 13.108.

Yes there are financial disincentives for students who take more than the number of credits needed to graduate. If a student takes more than 45 or 30 SCH (depending on when they started college) over the number of SCH required for their degree program, the state no longer funds the SCH for the institution, and the institution has the authority to charge that student the additional amount. Texas statute regarding the limitation on excessive credit hours for undergraduate students is:

<http://tlo2.tlc.state.tx.us/statutes/docs/ED/content/htm/ed.003.00.000054.00.htm#54.014.00>.

Coordinating Board Rules implementing the statute are:

http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/Rules/tac3.cfm?Chapter_ID=13&Subchapter=F.