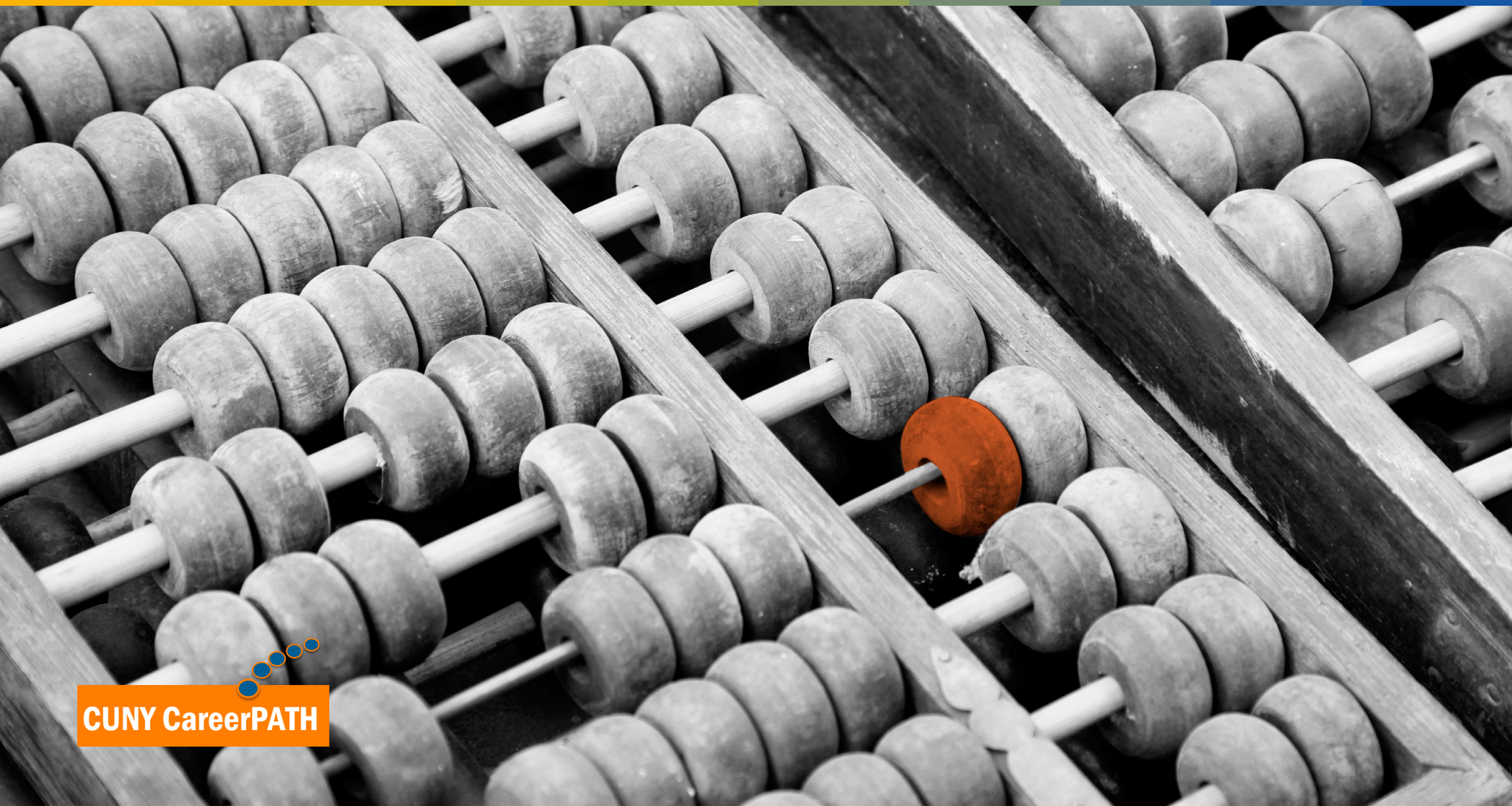


# CUNY CareerPATH: Alternative Credit Granting Strategies Guide



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April 2015

[www.cuny.edu](http://www.cuny.edu)

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## Alternative Credit Granting Strategies

Throughout the country, post-secondary educational institutions are working to create coursework, certificates and credentials that link to one another and form education pathways with the goal of helping students advance in the labor market<sup>1</sup>. Connections between occupational training and college degree programs form an essential means for students to build sustainable, growing careers.

In line with nationwide trends, the New York City Mayor's Office of Workforce Development's policy agenda<sup>2</sup> urges colleges to "align post-secondary education and credential training with specific career advancement opportunities." Multiple strategies can help colleges and universities to create meaningful alignment. One that the Mayor's Office calls on CUNY to adopt is an improved alternative credit system.

Many colleges in the City University of New York (CUNY) system have expressed interest in expanding opportunities for students to earn college credit for learning done outside of a degree program. CUNY has some experience in doing so. For example, in the CUNY Career Preparation for Adults through Training and Higher Education (CUNY CareerPATH) program, all eight participating colleges offered students in traditionally non-credit trainings the opportunity to earn college credit. The number of credits awarded varied widely by college and by occupational training track. Other CUNY schools that did not participate in the PATH program, such as Lehman College, also offer similar opportunities for students.

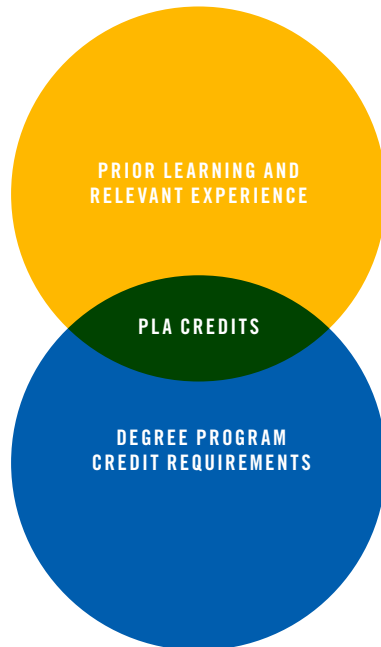
This document outlines sample strategies used by CUNY colleges to award credit in continuing education programs. Because each strategy's impact is affected by differences in college leadership, policies, and precedent, this document is meant as a starting point for colleges to develop credit articulation strategies which will best serve their unique environments.

1

See Career Pathways Toolkit: Six Key Elements for Success (2011)  
<http://www.workforceinfodb.org/PDF/CareerPathwaysToolkit2011.pdf>

2

<http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/careerpathways/downloads/pdf/career-pathways-full-report.pdf>



## I. Prior learning assessment (PLA)

### Explanation:

A student's knowledge built outside of an academic institution – through work, military service, training, apprenticeships, internships, independent study, and online learning – is measured and its worth in college credits is determined.

### Assessments include:

- Challenge exams
- Standardized exams (for example, Advanced Placement exams)
- Portfolio assessment
- Evaluation of non-college training (for example, corporate or military training)
- Evaluation of non-credit instruction

### CUNY example:

Lehman College's Adult Degree Program (ADP) offers an array of services and opportunities to adults seeking their bachelor's and master's degrees. One of ADP's features is the opportunity for students to earn college credits for prior learning from life, work, volunteer experience, or US military service. Students can earn up to 15 credits through PLA after they participate in a portfolio development class - itself worth 3 credits. Lehman has a pool of faculty who perform portfolio assessments to ensure students meet learning objective standards. ADP students can be awarded both general education and elective credits through PLA.

### Further resources:

<http://www.cael.org/what-we-do/prior-learning-assessment>

[http://www.cael.org/pdfs/124\\_degree\\_completion\\_beyond\\_borders](http://www.cael.org/pdfs/124_degree_completion_beyond_borders) (p. 22)

## II. Credit articulations

Through articulations, credits can take two forms.

- “Banked” or future college credits are not accessible until a student applies to and matriculates into CUNY. These credits are not part of a student’s official academic record or transcript. A “banked” credit arrangement requires information about articulation to be shared with a college’s academic affairs, admissions, and registrars’ offices so that a student can access the credits when s/he enrolls at CUNY. These credits typically do not carry a grade.
- “Earned” or current college credits appear on a student’s official academic record and transcript. In order to “earn” credits, a student must enroll in CUNY as part of his/her workforce program or continuing education course. The college registrar’s office will be able to see the credits and grades in CUNY’s enrollment database when a student reenrolls in college.

Credit articulations can be created using a variety of different strategies. Here are three methods. In each approach, credits could either be banked or earned.

Note: This method can provide a degree department with otherwise unavailable funding and time to create and offer a new course.

Courses can be introduced into the degree department as special topics classes.

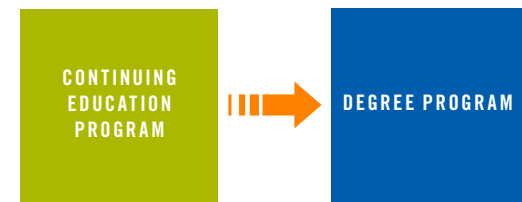
Faculty members are often involved in the creation of the curriculum so that the course is more easily approved by a degree department.

Negotiation of the amount of credit a course is worth should be done as early as possible in the process in order to guarantee the class meets degree program requirements.

### Method 1: Development of new credit courses through continuing education

#### Explanation:

Continuing education or workforce programs develop a new course or courses to be later adopted by a degree department.



#### CUNY example:

Hostos Community College’s CareerPATH program funded several semesters of course release time for an academic faculty member with expertise in community health worker (CHW) training. The faculty member was responsible for recruiting and collaborating with curriculum development consultants. Together, they co-wrote a 2-part CHW training curriculum comparable to 3 required courses in the community health major. The Hostos faculty member also recruited instructors to teach the curriculum; observed in the classroom; and met with instructors regularly to discuss teaching and assessment, and ensure that the courses met the standards of the community health/health education unit. Students completing the CHW training were able to “bank” 9 credits that can be applied if they choose to matriculate into the community health major at Hostos.

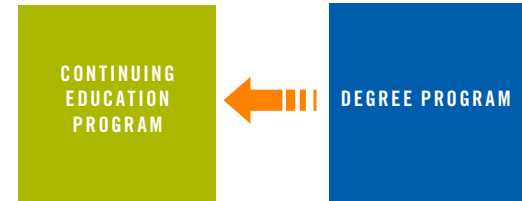
Note: Degree faculty members often teach the courses in order to ensure the course is credit-worthy.

Typically, Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degrees or occupationally focused classes are good options for this strategy.

### Method 2: Conversion of degree courses to continuing education courses

#### Explanation:

Existing degree courses are offered within workforce programs or as continuing education classes.



#### CUNY example:

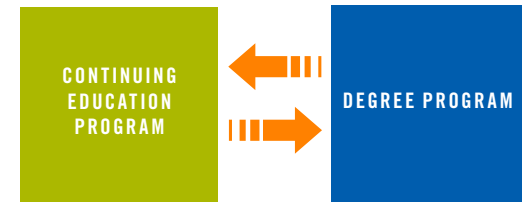
Kingsborough Community College (KCC) created an agreement to offer several specific community health and tourism and hospitality courses as part of workforce development programs. College faculty members taught the classes for and were paid by the workforce development grants. Credits were “banked” by students, meaning credits would be inaccessible until students applied to and matriculated into Kingsborough. Please see Appendix 1 for KCC’s credit agreement; it can be used as a sample template for similar agreements.

Note: Continuing Ed courses that prepare students for an industry-recognized credential – such as many trainings in health care- are good options for this strategy.

### Method 3: Crosswalk of continuing education courses to existing degree courses

#### Explanation:

The content, competencies, learning objectives, and learning standards of an existing continuing education course or internship program are compared to a degree course, demonstrating that students learn equivalent material in both courses.



#### CUNY example:

LaGuardia’s Division of Adult and Continuing Education (ACE) is in the process of reviewing existing courses to identify those that could be eligible for “banked” credits. Faculty and department chairs will then determine if these non-credit curricula are currently credit-worthy or if, with some changes, the curricula can be made so. It is ultimately the decision of the faculty to grant credit.

ACE also studies the degree courses and designs new training curricula with degree course objectives in mind. Additionally, department chairs and faculty participate in the course development process to ensure new courses are created in a way that will allow them to be part of an articulation agreement in the future.

### Beyond the credit granting policy agreement

Policy alone is not enough to create and maintain a strong credit granting arrangement. Both PLA and credit articulations need to be supported in implementation in order to be a truly effective strategy. Colleges are encouraged to explore these questions as part of their planning<sup>3</sup>:

- **Process:** How smooth is the process for awarding credit? What are the steps a student needs to complete? Where are these steps explained?
- **Infrastructure and Support:** What are the key resources in the college that support alternative routes to gaining college credits?
- **Staff and Faculty Involvement and Awareness:** Are key staff members – including administrators and faculty - at the college aware of agreements? Do they know how the agreement affects their work?
- **Promotion:** To what extent are potential and current students aware they can earn college credits through alternative routes?

3

Taken from Trish Paterson of Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL)'s presentation at the East Coast TAACCCT Summit, December 11, 2014.

## Appendix 1: Sample Credit Articulation Agreement



### Credit Banking Agreement

Center for Economic and Workforce Development and Health, Physical Education and Recreation Department

#### Rationale:

Since 2007, the Center for Economic and Workforce Development at Kingsborough Community College has offered grant-funded occupational training programs that support unemployed and underemployed individuals in their pursuit of higher education, as a means of educational and career advancement. Programs including Project Welcome and the CUNY Young Adult Program have worked closely with the Department of Tourism and Hospitality (TAH) to offer training programs based on existing college courses. This allowed participants to “bank” college credits, applicable towards a degree in TAH once the participant enrolled at KCC and registered for TAH classes.

In 2011, KCC was awarded nearly \$20M to administer the CUNY CareerPATH program under the USDOL’s TAA-CCCT program. CEWD expanded offerings to include a 12-credit Community Health Worker occupational training program, as well as a 1-credit Student Development course, to be integrated into the CCP Seminar (a pre-training career exploration module).

As a result of offering bankable credits, CEWD has attracted hundreds of dedicated participants, committed to pursuing higher education beyond completion of their occupational training program. Dozens of successful training graduates have gone on to study at KCC and become active and engaged members of the Kingsborough community.

#### Purpose:

The purpose of this agreement is to ensure that credits earned in CEWD occupational training programs will be applied directly to a participant’s college transcript once enrolled at KCC. The following stipulations apply to a participant successfully banking credits as part of an occupational training program (or related CEWD programs):

1. Occupational Training program must offer identical courses to those offered in the department
2. Participant must complete coursework, exams, projects, etc. and fulfill expectations identical to those applied to matriculated students, as enforced by the instructor
3. Participant must earn a passing grade in order to bank credits
4. Participant can only apply credits towards the department/program in which their occupational training program is based (i.e. Tourism and Hospitality, Community Health, Student Development)
5. CEWD staff will prepare a transcript reflecting the participant’s courses (using department issued course numbers and titles), grades and dates. CEWD will provide a letter supporting the transcript and copy signed by the program director will be delivered to the appropriate department chairperson.
6. Credits will be valid and applicable as long as the course is offered and/or recognized by the department.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson, Health, Physical Education and Recreation

\_\_\_\_\_  
Executive Director, CEWD

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date