

## COUNSELOR GUIDANCE

# Credit for Prior Learning and Financial Aid

A Guide for Counselors

Prepared by **Leslie Alarcon, DSW**

## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) can help students meet academic requirements and progress toward program completion, but it may also affect how units are counted when determining financial aid eligibility. Counselors can help students understand how the credit applies to their program by collaborating with Financial Aid and Admissions and Records, while following the institution's established procedures. **Confirm local policies** when reviewing an individual student's circumstances.

## SECTION 1:

### How CPL Counts Toward SAP

Under the institutional practices summarized here, **CPL units count as both attempted and completed units** for Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) once evaluated and posted. Military credit, industry certifications, portfolio assessment, credit by examination, and AP are treated alike. Confirm the treatment of each method under the college's SAP policy.

For credits from another institution, inclusion in the calculation can depend on completion of the college's transcript evaluation process rather than receipt of the transcript alone. Automatically awarded credit, including basic training credit, also enters the calculation once posted under these policies.

**CPL units are different from enrollment units.** They count toward academic progress and program completion but do not count as current enrollment for determining a financial aid award.

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Confirm that credits have been evaluated and posted. Explain the distinction between SAP units and the enrolled units used to calculate aid.

**SECTION 2:****Maximum Timeframe and Program Applicability**

Transcribed CPL counts toward SAP maximum timeframe under these practices. The impact depends on the student's accumulated units, remaining program requirements, and the college's SAP policy.

For example, a student with 60 existing units who receives 30 CPL units reaches the 90-unit threshold used for a 60-unit degree. This can trigger financial aid ineligibility and the need for a maximum-timeframe appeal.

At colleges that evaluate SAP at the end of each semester, CPL posted before the evaluation is included when determining eligibility for the next term.

Credit that does not satisfy remaining requirements increases counted units without reducing the coursework needed to graduate. This can also occur when a student changes programs after receiving CPL.

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Compare the credit with the student's current program and accumulated units. Consult Financial Aid about maximum-timeframe concerns and prepare an updated comprehensive educational plan if an appeal is needed.

**SECTION 3:****SAP Reassessment and Appeals**

Newly posted CPL does not automatically trigger an immediate SAP recalculation. Depending on institutional procedures, the credit is included at the next scheduled evaluation. Certain record changes can receive case-by-case review.

**An approved appeal may restore assistance.** Maximum-timeframe appeals can be easier to support than appeals involving low GPA or poor completion rates, particularly when circumstances involve a program change or learning about CPL later in the student's education. Approval remains an individual institutional decision.

***The appeal process can include***

- Meeting with a counselor.
- Obtaining an updated comprehensive educational plan.
- Ensuring the declared program in the college system matches the plan.
- Identifying the courses still needed for completion.
- Explaining why additional time or units are necessary.

Following approval, aid can be limited to courses required for the approved program. Continued eligibility depends on meeting the college's requirements and the conditions of the appeal.

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Confirm the college's appeal requirements and help the student document remaining coursework and circumstances. Explain the process without promising immediate recalculation or reinstatement of grant assistance.

#### SECTION 4:

### CPL During an Active Semester

CPL can satisfy a requirement that a currently enrolled course was intended to fulfill. This can involve different courses satisfying the same requirement within the student's Course Program of Study (CPoS).

If CPL makes an enrolled course unnecessary, the student's financial aid award could be affected.

**Repayment may be required if an enrollment change results in an overpayment.** Financial Aid should review the student's circumstances before any courses are dropped.

| Area                        | Potential impact                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Current-term aid</b>     | Dropping courses can reduce a later disbursement or create an overpayment, depending on when aid was paid and how many enrolled units remain.                                              |
| <b>Future aid</b>           | Dropping courses can lower the completion rate and affect eligibility at the next SAP evaluation, particularly for students already on warning or near the required completion percentage. |
| <b>Complete withdrawal</b>  | Withdrawing from all courses involves a separate Return of Title IV Funds calculation.                                                                                                     |
| <b>Continued enrollment</b> | If the student remains enrolled after a course becomes unnecessary, Financial Aid must determine the effect on the award.                                                                  |

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- Consult Financial Aid before recommending an enrollment change, including after the withdrawal deadline.
- Review both current-term aid and future SAP consequences.
- Coordinate with Admissions and Records regarding available enrollment options.
- Do not assume an excused withdrawal prevents a SAP impact; some colleges count EW units as attempted.
- Begin CPL review before the semester when possible.

Requests to adjust withdrawal dates because of delayed CPL processing require individual review through Admissions and Records.

**SECTION 5:****Transfer and Changes in Educational Goals**

A change in major or transfer destination does not automatically remove earlier credits from the community college's SAP calculation.

Under policies that count all posted CPL and accepted transfer credits, those units remain in the calculation even when they do not transfer or no longer apply to the student's current goal. For example, automotive CPL can continue to count after a student changes to a chemistry transfer pathway.

The automated SAP calculation and an individual appeal serve different purposes:

| Process                | Purpose                                                                                                                |
|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>SAP calculation</b> | Counts credits according to the college's established policy.                                                          |
| <b>Appeal review</b>   | Uses the comprehensive educational plan and supporting explanation to assess continued aid for remaining requirements. |

At the receiving institution, do not assume that credits rejected for degree applicability are excluded from SAP. Obtain confirmation from the institution's Financial Aid Office. GPA treatment also requires separate confirmation from unit-count and maximum-timeframe treatment.

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Update the declared program and educational plan when goals change. Confirm local treatment of credits that no longer apply, document remaining coursework for an appeal, and obtain separate guidance from the receiving institution.

**SECTION 6:****Changes to Posted CPL**

Removal practices vary. Some colleges do not allow removal, while others may permit requests or review limited circumstances through Admissions and Records.

A review can include checking whether the credit has already supported an awarded degree or appeared on a transcript sent to another institution. Removal and later restoration should not be assumed.

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Confirm local procedures and ask Admissions and Records and Financial Aid whether an approved record change would affect SAP.

**QUICK REFERENCE:****Counselor Checklist**

- ☐ Confirm the declared program matches the educational plan.
- ☐ Identify which requirements the CPL satisfies.
- ☐ Review accumulated units and existing SAP concerns.
- ☐ Check whether CPL affects currently enrolled courses.
- ☐ Coordinate with Financial Aid before advising enrollment changes.
- ☐ Document remaining requirements and circumstances supporting an appeal.
- ☐ Explain local procedures without guaranteeing approval or a particular aid outcome.