

Noncredit Mobility Academy Internal Articulation Guide

A practical step-by-step plan for articulating noncredit workforce training into credit-bearing programs of study within your college that support students' career goals and academic progress.

Process for Internal Articulation of Learning

Set the Foundation: Strategic Alignment

Start by defining why articulation matters for your college. Align your efforts with the institution's mission and goals.

- **Clarify your purpose.** Explain how noncredit-to-credit pathways support student success and workforce development. Recognize that noncredit and credit programs serve different student needs. Both are valuable.
- **Identify alignment to college's goals.** Show how articulation supports your college's goals and fits into broader state and national efforts to improve student success and workforce outcomes.
- **Engage leadership.** Get support from provosts, deans, and presidents. Discuss availability of resources, such as faculty time, and communicate the importance of this work. Decide priority fields of study and pace of implementation based on workforce need, institutional priorities, faculty readiness, and resource availability.
- **Form a team.** Include faculty, workforce program staff, advisors, registrars, and institutional researchers from within the institution. Also consider the presence of employers and workforce development organizations, such as MassHIRE, in your work groups or review process. Start small with one department or industry focus. Identify initiative lead or co-leads to own the process from beginning to end.
- **Set up milestone goals and communication points.** Create a high-level cadence to celebrate progress; identify and mitigate barriers to implementation; and communicate about the work throughout the college.



Overcoming Barriers to Articulation: Key Challenges and Solutions

Operational Differences and Siloed Governance Structures

Challenge: Credit and noncredit programs often operate independently, with different leadership, information systems, budgets, and instructional cycles.

Solution: Create cross-functional working groups that include leaders and faculty from non-credit and credit operations. Share decisions and responsibilities, especially during curriculum mapping and policy creation. Include administrative perspectives on how both programs operate. Appreciate the differences between the design of credit and noncredit operations. Seek alignment and efficiency without forcing fit that would be to the detriment of students and program objectives.

- **Inventory what you have.** List all noncredit training designed for workforce outcomes. Note which programs already use industry-recognized credentials and track existing articulation agreements. Update this list every semester or year.
- **Learn with peer institutions.** Consider reaching out to fellow colleges on the same journey and share best practices and ways to navigate challenges.

Align Curriculum and Map Credit

Use faculty expertise and existing frameworks to match noncredit training with credit-level outcomes.

- **Use faculty judgment.** Faculty from both credit and noncredit areas should evaluate program alignment, preferably in joint retreats or workshop to build relationships and mutual understanding of noncredit and credit programs.
- **Map competencies.** Compare noncredit learning outcomes and industry-recognized credential domains to credit course objectives. Collect syllabi, assessments, and rubrics from noncredit training and the credit courses to which they may articulate.
- **Look for alignment gaps.** Identify opportunities to improve curriculum so that learning outcomes can match. Adjust teaching materials and assessments as needed. Considerations may apply to both the noncredit and credit-bearing courses. Engage employer partners to enhance curriculum to address current and future career needs.
- **Create crosswalks.** Clearly define which noncredit courses link to which credit courses. Include the number of credits and assessment method (e.g., passing grade, industry certification earned).
- **Set credit-award rules.** Decide how students prove their learning, preferably with grades or certifications earned from the noncredit workforce training to capitalize on demonstrations of learning already performed and validated. Award rules should also prioritize automatic designations based on standards instead of case-by-case assessment of credit worthiness after the student completes the noncredit training.

Communication Gaps

Challenge: Inconsistent or unclear messaging about articulation efforts confuses staff and stalls progress.

Solution: Develop and share a consistent communications toolkit. This should include student stories, program value, and articulation pathways for use in orientations, employer outreach, and internal briefings.

Faculty Concerns about Academic Quality

Challenge: Some credit faculty question the rigor or relevance of noncredit training.

Solution: Position noncredit faculty and instructors as partners, not competitors. Highlight where industry-recognized credentials and employer-driven content exceed current course standards. Acknowledge the role of academic and accreditation standards in the process. Involve the voice of employers and industry professionals in curriculum design while honoring the autonomy of faculty and boundaries of collective bargaining agreements.

Document and Formalize Policies

Make your work official through governance, documentation, and communication.

- **Go through governance.** Submit your articulation proposals to the curriculum committee or other relevant bodies for approval.
- **Ensure accreditation compliance.** Review policies with your academic affairs office and legal team.
- **Update tools and systems.** List the pathways in marketing materials, course catalogs, advising tools, and student systems and My Experience Counts credit for prior learning web site.

Build Student-Centered Pathways

Make it easy and fair for students to receive credit for what they already know.

- **Simplify the process.** Offer a single point of contact and automate parts of the process where possible. Train staff on processes.
- **Promote the opportunity.** Share information with students during advising, orientations, and while in the noncredit training courses. Engage employer partners to share the message.
- **Focus on economic mobility.** Use articulation to support working adults and underserved communities in advancing in high-demand career pathways.

Improve and Expand Over Time

Once your first pathway is in place, keep building and refining.

- **Track results.** Record how many students receive credit and how that credit helps them move forward. Monitor for potential gaps among various student populations and adjust your strategies.
- **Gather feedback.** Ask students, administrative staff, and faculty for input on how to improve the process. Consider an annual review or self-study of the entire pathway.
- **Scale successful models.** Expand articulation to other fields where alignment is strong.
- **Work with employers.** Partner with businesses to continue to refine and expand career pathways based on workforce demand.

Partiality Toward Traditional Degree Paths

Challenge: College culture has historically placed greater emphasis and prestige on degrees than on credentials.

Solution: Educate internal stakeholders that students have diverse goals. Stackable credentials and noncredit options can lead to degrees, and they can also offer immediate economic mobility. Frame both pursuit of degrees and workforce certifications as valid, student-centered outcomes.

Organizational Perceptions of Learners

Challenge: Credit and noncredit programs may view learners as “different kinds of students.”

Solution: Treat all students as students while acknowledging their various academic and career goals. Use consistent onboarding, advising, and support services whenever possible. This promotes student mobility and equity. Consider using the same student identification between credit and noncredit programs or a process to link IDs for students across systems.

Additional Resources

University of Pittsburgh CPL Framework (2025):

https://www.education.pitt.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Reach-Guidebook-Series-Framework-for-Advancing-Equitable-Credit-for-Prior-Learning-compressed_1.pdf

NCAL Spotlight: Making Noncredit Programs Credit-Worthy (2023):

<https://edstrategy.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/NCAL-Spotlight-4.pdf>

My Experience Counts, credit for prior learning portal:

<https://myexperiencecounts.mass.edu/home>

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Articulation Checklist

Task	Status
Define purpose and align with college's goals	<input type="checkbox"/>
Engage leadership and secure resources	<input type="checkbox"/>
Form cross-functional team	<input type="checkbox"/>
Set up milestones and communication points	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learn with peer institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inventory noncredit programs and industry-recognized credentials	<input type="checkbox"/>
Map competencies through faculty teams	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify and plan for curriculum updates	<input type="checkbox"/>
Draft crosswalks and credit mapping	<input type="checkbox"/>
Set credit award criteria and rules	<input type="checkbox"/>
Submit for governance approval	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure accreditation alignment	<input type="checkbox"/>
Update catalogs, marketing channels, and advising systems	<input type="checkbox"/>
Simplify student-facing processes with single points of contact and automation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Train advisors and staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promote pathways to students and partners, particularly for economic mobility	<input type="checkbox"/>
Track outcomes and disaggregate to monitor potential gaps	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gather feedback from faculty, staff, and students	<input type="checkbox"/>
Expand successful models and refine pathways with employers	<input type="checkbox"/>