

Adopted: March 10, 2026

**ACADEMIC SENATE
Of
CALIFORNIA POLYTECHNIC STATE UNIVERSITY
San Luis Obispo, CA**

AS-1002-26

RESOLUTION ON EXTERNAL EXAM CREDIT

Impact on Existing Policy:

- **Replaces AS-331-90/1C (Resolution on the International Baccalaureate Program)**
- **Replaces AS-468-96/1C (Resolution on Credit for Advanced Placement Exams)**

1 WHEREAS, Cal Poly will convert from quarters to semesters beginning in Fall 2026; and
2
3 WHEREAS, the CSU requires Cal Poly to update its policies on external exam credit effective
4 Fall 2026 to convert to semester units and to match CSU policy for the minimum
5 GE credit earned for each exam—as described in the CSU Systemwide Credit for
6 External Examinations policy; and
7
8 WHEREAS, Cal Poly’s current policy awards 9 quarter units (6 semester units) credit for each
9 Advanced Placement (AP) exam passed and 8 quarter units (5 semester units)
10 credit for each International Baccalaureate (IB) exam passed, which is typically
11 more than the credit for the equivalent courses and the CSU-mandated units;
12 and
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14 WHEREAS, the current policy creates inequities by offering these excess units for AP and IB
15 exams, which may only be used as free electives, but not for external credit from
16 other sources; and
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18 WHEREAS, some Cal Poly majors have no free elective units and cannot use the excess units
19 currently offered for AP and IB exams, which creates additional inequity for
20 students in those majors; and
21
22 WHEREAS, most other CSU institutions grant no excess free elective credit for external
23 exams, and only award credit for articulated courses or CSU mandates; and
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25 WHEREAS, Cal Poly students who have received excess degree-applicable free electives
26 from external exams gain advantages in earlier registration and earlier access to
27 upper-division courses compared to other students; and
28
29 WHEREAS, the start of the semester curriculum offers a timely opportunity to implement a
30 more equitable external exam credit policy for students; therefore, be it
31
32 RESOLVED: that Cal Poly Academic Senate adopts the attached Policy on External Exam
33 Credit to begin in Spring 2026.

Proposed by: Academic Senate Curriculum Committee and the General
Education Governance Board

Date: February 17, 2026

POLICY ON EXTERNAL EXAM CREDIT

1. This policy will take effect for exams taken in Spring 2026 or later. Cal Poly credit for external exams taken prior to Spring 2026 will be awarded according to the previous Cal Poly policy.
2. Cal Poly will follow the minimum passing score, minimum semester credits earned for admission, semester credits toward GE certification, and the GE area for all external exams listed in the CSU Systemwide Credit for External Examinations policy (the CSU policy).
3. Individual departments/areas will decide what specific course(s) articulate for each exam and may award credit in different courses for exam scores above the CSU minimum passing score if they wish.
4. If a department articulates course(s) that award more than the CSU-mandated minimum exam credit, then the student will receive the higher number of credits.
5. If a department articulates course(s) that award fewer credits than the CSU-mandated minimum, the student will receive the balance of the CSU minimum credits as free elective units or GE units if the exam confers GE credit under the CSU policy.
6. If the CSU policy lists more than one GE area as an option for an exam and no articulated GE course exists, then the General Education Governance Board (GEGB) will review the exam and decide whether to allow credit in only one of the areas or to give credit in whichever area is most advantageous to the student.
7. If the CSU policy lists more than one GE area as an option for an exam and a department articulates course(s) covering one of those areas, the student will receive the articulated GE course credit. If the student has already fulfilled that GE area by other means, then the student will be given completion of the other GE area mandated by the CSU but no additional unit credit beyond the higher of the CSU minimum units or the articulated course units. (Using AY 2025-2026 as an example, according to CSU policy a passing score on the AP European History Exam awards 3 units of credit in either GE Area 3B or GE Area 4. Suppose that the History Department decides that this exam gives credit for HIST 2212, which is 3 units in GE Area 4B. However, the student already receives GE Area 4B credit through their major but has not fulfilled GE Area 3B. The student receives 3 units of credit in HIST 2212 and fulfills GE Area 3B but gets no additional units since CSU only mandates 3 units for completion of this exam.)
8. If a student receives the CSU passing score on an external exam with a mandated GE area and the exam articulates to a Cal Poly course with a different GE area, the student will receive credit in the articulated course and the CSU-mandated GE area but not in the GE area covered by the course. (This preserves the course articulation without awarding credit in an extra GE area for a single exam.)

9. If a student receives the CSU passing score on an external exam without a mandated GE area, and the exam does not articulate to any Cal Poly course, the student will receive free elective credit equal to the minimum semester credits earned for admission listed in the CSU policy.
10. If a student receives the CSU passing score on an external exam with a mandated GE area, and the exam does not articulate to any Cal Poly course, the student will receive GE credit equal to the semester credits towards GE certification listed in the CSU policy.
11. If a student receives the CSU passing score on an external exam with a mandated GE area, and the exam articulates to non-GE Cal Poly course(s), the student will receive the articulated course credit as GE credit up to the units of the articulated course or the semester credits towards GE certification listed in the CSU policy, whichever is higher.
12. No excess free elective credit will be given for any exam beyond the number of units listed in the minimum semester credits earned for admission or the semester credits toward GE certification listed in the CSU policy. If Cal Poly course(s) articulate to the exam, the course units will be used to meet the CSU mandate whenever applicable.
13. Due to technical limits on Cal Poly systems, it may be necessary to offer more credits than this policy allows until the systems are replaced or revised. These limitations do not alter the underlying policy. In these instances, the guiding principles will be that (a) Cal Poly course articulations will be honored, (b) CSU mandates will be met, and (c) the total units of credit granted will be the minimum to satisfy both (a) and (b) subject to the limitations of the systems.
14. The Senate empowers the Registrar's Office—in consultation with the General Education Governance Board (GEGB) and the Academic Senate Curriculum Committee (ASCC)—to determine the details of how this policy will be implemented in areas not clearly defined by the policy.
15. Any disputes arising from this policy concerning GE credit will be resolved by the GEGB. Any disputes concerning non-GE credit will be resolved by the ASCC.
16. The attached External Exam Credit Decision Grid will be used by the Registrar's Office to implement the Policy on External Exam Credit in consultation with the General Education Governance Board (GEGB) and the Academic Senate Curriculum Committee (ASCC).

ADDENDUM

External Exam Credit Decision Grid

The table below shows the combinations of CSU mandate and Cal Poly course articulations covered by this policy.

CSU Mandate	Cal Poly Articulation	Action	Policy Items
Non-GE	None	CSU mandated units	9
Non-GE	Non-GE	Higher of CSU mandated units (balance as free electives) or course articulation	4, 5
Non-GE	GE	Higher of CSU mandated units (balance as free electives) or course articulation; plus GE	4, 5
GE (1 option)	None	CSU mandated units; plus GE	10
GE (1 option)	Non-GE	Higher of CSU mandated units (balance as GE units) or course articulation; plus GE	4, 5, 11
GE (1 option)	GE (same as CSU)	Higher of CSU mandated units (balance as GE units) or course articulation; plus GE	4, 5
GE (1 option)	GE (different than CSU)	Higher of CSU mandated units (balance as GE units) or course articulation; plus CSU-mandated GE only	4, 5, 8
GE (2+ options)	None	GEGB decides CP option(s); CSU mandated units plus GE from GEGB choice	6, 10
GE (2+ options)	Non-GE	GEGB decides CP option(s); Higher of CSU mandated units (balance as GE units) or course articulation; plus GE from GEGB choice	4, 5, 6, 11
GE (2+ options)	GE (matches CSU option)	Higher of CSU mandated units (balance as GE units) or course articulation; plus GE in area most favorable to student	4, 5, 7
GE (2+ options)	GE (different than CSU)	Higher of CSU mandated units (balance as GE units) or course articulation; plus CSU-mandated GE only in area most favorable to student	4, 5, 8