

PLAN FOR THE ANNUAL ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION OF PENNSYLVANIA'S STATEWIDE TRANSFER SYSTEM

Overview

Pennsylvania's Statewide Transfer and Articulation System was established in accordance with a 2006 state law aimed at benefiting students transferring credits between public colleges and universities in the Commonwealth.

Article XX-C of the Public School Code of 1949 requires Pennsylvania to have a seamless statewide transfer and articulation system that includes:

1. A Transfer and Articulation Oversight Committee (TAOC), comprised of representatives from the participating institutions, PASSHE's Office of the Chancellor, the Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges and PDE, that coordinates, maintains and assesses the transfer system. (24 P.S. § 20-2004-C)
2. Participation by Pennsylvania's 14 community colleges and the 14 universities in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE). (24 P.S. § 20-2002-C) Independent institutions of higher education (IHEs) and state-related institutions may elect to participate, or "opt-in". (24 P.S. § 20-2006-C)
3. Equivalency standards developed by TAOC for foundation-level coursework and the identification of at least 30 hours of foundation courses that each participating institution will accept for transfer and apply toward graduation. (24 P.S. § 20-2002-C)
4. Statewide Program-to-Program Articulation that allows students to transfer full Associate of Arts (AA) and Associate of Science (AS) degrees (minimum 60 credits) into parallel bachelor degree programs at the participating institutions with junior standing. (24 P.S. § 20-2002-C)
5. An electronic database and web portal for sharing information about the transfer system with the public. (24 P.S. § 20-2005-C)

24 P.S. § 20-2004-C specifically charges TAOC with the following tasks:

- **developing an assessment and evaluation plan, including identifying and collecting appropriate data, to ensure the effectiveness of section 2002-C and with making necessary revisions to the system over time.**
- **submitting an annual report to the General Assembly detailing progress made by the participating public IHEs and IHEs that elect to participate under section 2006-C in further enabling the transfer of credits between them and recommending further action to be taken.**

The over-arching goal of the transfer system is to save students time and money by allowing coursework and associate degrees to transfer seamlessly among the participating institutions. Therefore, "effectiveness" must include an evaluation of students' effective use of the transfer system in relation to the programmatic components of the system (e.g. 30-Credit Framework, Statewide Program-to-Program Articulation.)

The following sections outline the goals, guiding principles and recommended process for beginning and sustaining the transfer system assessment process on an annual basis. Included in this process are recommendations for evaluating each component of the transfer system with particular attention paid to assessing performance outcomes for students transferring among the participating institutions.

Assessment Plan Goals

The assessment plan and process will provide data that indicates the extent to which Pennsylvania's Statewide Transfer and Articulation System meets the following goals:

1. Students are able to transfer at least 30 credits of individual foundation courses with no loss of credit among participating Pennsylvania institutions.¹

¹ Per legislation *Foundation Courses* are "courses required to be completed by students that provide an academic foundation for the degree, general education or advanced study in a major" and do not include developmental or remedial courses or career, technical or applied courses. Except in instances where degree requirements are prescribed by external agencies, students may

2. Students are able to successfully transfer a completed AA or AS into a parallel baccalaureate degree program at a participating institution, with at least 60 credits being applied toward the student's graduation requirements.
3. Clear and easily available information regarding transfer among participating institutions is provided to all stakeholders (students, parents, faculty, and staff) through the Pennsylvania Transfer and Articulation Center (PA TRAC) website.

Analysis of the data will produce 1) indicators describing the success of the system in assisting students that transfer among the participating institutions, and 2) indicators providing TAOC with guidance on changes that can be made to improve the transfer process over time, as well as guidance on amending the assessment plan and processes where necessary.

Guiding Principles & Important Concepts

The recommended assessment plan is based on several guiding principles and foundational concepts.

- The annual transfer assessment will be developed and implemented by TAOC, PDE and the participating institutions in consultation with faculty and personnel.
- All participating public IHEs and IHEs that elect to participate under section 2006-C will abide by the assessment plan adopted by TAOC. For the purpose of this document, these institutions will be referred to as "the participating institutions".
- The annual transfer assessment will include opportunities for various stakeholders to comment, share information, and provide feedback.
- The annual transfer assessment will include all requirements prescribed in the transfer legislation.
- TAOC will use data from the transfer assessment to ensure the effectiveness of the transfer system and to modify the transfer system over time.
- TAOC will use data from the transfer assessment to meet its legislative obligation of submitting an annual report for the General Assembly that includes progress made by the institutions to enable the transfer of credits between them and recommendations for further action.
- TAOC will use the Pennsylvania Information Management System (PIMS), the commonwealth's longitudinal data system for educational data, as the tool for collecting and reporting unit-level transfer data from the participating institutions.
- Institutions will submit unit-level data identified by TAOC directly to PIMS.
- Data collected is for the purpose of evaluating the transfer system and is not intended as a mechanism to evaluate transfer policies at individual participating institutions.
- PDE will provide technical assistance to TAOC and the participating institutions.

Workflow, Timeline & Milestones

Assessing the statewide transfer system requires a great amount of planning and coordination by TAOC, the participating institutions and PDE. For this reason, it is recommended that TAOC rollout the assessment plan over a two-year period as described below.

Project Plan – Year 1 (Initial Baseline Collection)

During Academic Year (AY) 2013-2014, TAOC will conduct activities necessary to build a statewide transfer reporting system based on transfer system performance indicators. Those activities include:

1. Collecting and reporting initial baseline unit-level data from the participating institutions using transfer data elements collected in previous years.²
 - Develop protocols for submitting data in PIMS, including distributing the AY2013-14 transfer data user manual.
 - Provide training and technical assistance to participating institutions, particularly those that have not submitted unit-level transfer data to TAOC in the past.

transfer and apply 30 credits of foundation courses (as identified in the *30-Credit Transfer Framework*) toward graduation at any of the participating institutions.

² Transfer data elements include student enrollment, course, award and transfer credit data.

- Collect End-of-Term (EOT) transfer data for AY2013-14, in accordance with the timeline approved by TAOC.
2. Developing a technical plan that includes identifying desired performance indicators and means for obtaining related data in Year 2.
 - Identify desired performance indicators, data elements and formats for submitting the data.
 - Obtain information regarding Framework courses and statewide program-to-program articulation from PA TRAC for participating institutions.
 - Design reports that allow data to be extracted and analyzed.
 - Run preliminary data reports after each data submission.
 - Identify data needs and data gaps.
 3. Using feedback from the Year 1 assessment to revise the assessment plan/process for AY2014-15 data (Year 2).
 - Vet requested data to identify any issues and problems.
 - Determine whether the requested data provide sufficient evidence of the performance indicators. Revise, if needed.
 - Determine if selected performance indicators allow for the effective analysis of the transfer system. Revise, if needed.
 - Determine timeline for participating institutions to submit AY2014-15 transfer data. Revise, if needed.
 - Develop protocols for submitting data in PIMS, including distributing the AY2014-15 transfer data user manual and submission timeline.
 4. Developing an Annual Report for the General Assembly using AY2013-14 transfer data.

In addition, TAOC will use subcommittees and other evaluation tools to assess components of the transfer system.

- The PA TRAC portal will be assessed using website analytics provided to TAOC by PDE, as well as feedback from portal users.
- A rubric listing legislative requirements and TAOC policies will be reviewed annually to ensure compliance by TAOC, participating institutions and PDE.
- Additional concerns related to the transfer system identified by participating institutions will be included within the narrative of the report, with any recommendations to be addressed by TAOC.

Milestones – YEAR 1	Tentative Timeline
TAOC approves the subcommittee’s recommended plan for the annual assessment/evaluation of the statewide transfer system.	August 2013
TAOC informs participating institutions of AY2013-14 transfer data collection (baseline elements and collection timeline).	October 2013
TAOC approves performance indicators and related data elements to be collected in AY2014-15 and informs participating institutions.	November 2013
TAOC works with PDE to prepare PIMS for the AY2014-15 transfer data collection (e.g., add approved elements to the templates, develop the user manual, develop/test data reports, etc.).	November 2013- July 2014
Participating institutions submit Fall 2013 EOT transfer data.	February 2014
PDE provides TAOC with preliminary data reports from Fall 2013 EOT transfer data. TAOC analyzes Fall 2013 transfer data and identify gaps. PDE provides participating institutions and TAOC with technical assistance as needed.	March 2014
TAOC modifies, if necessary, the AY2014-15 collection schedule and data elements based upon feedback from the Fall 2013 assessment.	April 2014
TAOC finalizes the AY2014-15 transfer data collection elements and timeline.	May 2014
Participating institutions submit Spring 2014 EOT transfer data.	June 2014

Milestones – YEAR 1	Tentative Timeline
PDE provides TAOC with preliminary data reports from Spring 2014 EOT transfer data. TAOC analyzes Spring 2014 transfer data and identify gaps.	July 2014
TAOC distributes AY2014-15 transfer data user manual for PIMS to the participating institutions.	August 2014
Participating institutions submit Summer 2014 transfer data.	October 2014
TAOC, with technical assistance from PDE, produces an Annual Report for the General Assembly using AY13-14 data.	January 2015

Project Plan – Year 2 and beyond

In AY2014-15 (Year 2) TAOC will implement an expanded transfer data collection that includes data elements aligned with transfer system performance indicators identified and approved by TAOC in Year 1. This will serve as the model for all future collections.

Year 2 activities include:

1. Collecting and analyzing the expanded list of transfer data elements for AY2014-15 from the participating institutions.
 - o Collect EOT transfer data AY2014-15 in accordance with the timeline approved by TAOC.
 - o Provide training and technical assistance to participating institutions.
 - o Run data reports after each submission and analyze to identify data gaps.
 - o Revise (and develop) data reports to meet TAOC need.

2. Revising the assessment plan/process for AY2015-16 based on feedback from the previous annual collection and to ensure TAOC continues to meet legislative requirements.
 - o Vet requested data to identify any issues and problems.
 - o Determine whether the requested data provide sufficient evidence of the performance indicators. Revise, if needed.
 - o Determine if selected performance indicators allow for the effective analysis of the transfer system. Revise, if needed.
 - o Determine timeline for participating institutions to submit AY2015-16 transfer data. Revise, if needed.
 - o Plan for producing cross-year comparisons and other means of displaying performance data from extended collection, in consultation with the participating institutions and PDE.

3. Developing an Annual Report for the General Assembly using AY2014-15 data.

Milestones – YEAR 2	Tentative Timeline
PDE provides technical assistance to participating institutions concerning the provision of transfer data.	September 2014- July 2015
TAOC approves performance indicators and related data elements to be collected in AY2015-16 and informs participating institutions.	October 2014
PDE prepares PIMS for the AY2015-16 transfer data collection (e.g., add approved elements to the templates, develop the user manual, develop/test data reports, etc.).	November 2014- July 2015
Participating institutions submit Fall 2014 EOT transfer data	February 2015
PDE provides TAOC with data reports from Fall 2014 EOT transfer data. TAOC analyzes data and identifies gaps. PDE provides participating institutions and TAOC with technical assistance as needed.	March 2015
TAOC finalizes the AY2015-16 transfer data collection elements and timeline.	May 2015
Participating institutions submit Spring 2015 EOT transfer data.	June 2015
PDE provides TAOC with preliminary data reports from Spring 2014 EOT transfer data. TAOC analyzes Spring 2014 transfer data and identify gaps.	August 2015
TAOC distributes AY2015-16 transfer data user manual for PIMS to the participating institutions.	August 2015

Milestones – YEAR 2	Tentative Timeline
Participating institutions submit Summer 2015 EOT transfer data.	October 2015
TAOC, with technical assistance from PDE, produces an Annual Report for the General Assembly.	January 2016

Role of Stakeholders

TAOC’s assessment plan relies on the continued cooperation of key stakeholders involved in the statewide transfer system.

TAOC

Legislation charges TAOC with the following tasks:

- Developing an assessment and evaluation plan, including identifying and collecting appropriate data, to ensure the effectiveness of the transfer system and with making necessary revisions to the system over time
- Submitting an annual report to the General Assembly detailing progress made by the participating institutions to enable the transfer of credits between them and including recommendations for further action

TAOC charged an Assessment Subcommittee with recommending an annual transfer assessment plan, including a process and timeline, to the full committee and with helping to implement the approved plan. A two-thirds vote by voting members of TAOC is required to approve the plan.

TAOC Representatives

Voting members of TAOC have the following responsibilities in the annual assessment process:

- To work with their sector to appoint representatives to serve on the subcommittee(s) appointed by TAOC to implement the annual assessment.
- To communicate TAOC policies, procedures and processes to the appropriate individuals at their institutions and organizations.
- To review and approve the annual assessment plan, in consultation with faculty and personnel.
- To coordinate and oversee implementation of the annual assessment plan by the deadlines determined by TAOC.
- To guarantee that their institutions meet all legislative requirements and TAOC policy.

Participating Institutions

Legislation requires participation by the 14 community colleges and the 14 PASSHE universities. Independent IHEs and state-related institutions may elect to participate, or “opt-in”.

Representatives from these participating institutions will be responsible for the following activities associated with the annual transfer assessment:

- Reviewing and providing feedback annually on the proposed list of transfer system performance indicators and associated data elements.
- Submitting appropriate data elements in the format approved by TAOC.
- Requesting technical assistance as needed to submit the desired data.

Assessment Subcommittee

TAOC has charged an Assessment Subcommittee with recommending an assessment plan, including a process and timeline, to the full committee and with helping to implement the approved plan.

This subcommittee will be comprised of no fewer than seven individuals from the voting TAOC membership:

- 3 individuals representing the community college sector
- 3 individuals representing the PASSHE sector
- At least 1 representative from the independent and state-related institutions that have formally joined TAOC

Each sector of TAOC will determine the appropriate representation for its sector to serve on the subcommittee. The PA Commission for Community Colleges will serve as the coordinating entity for the community college sector. PASSHE's Office of the Chancellor will serve as the coordinating entity for the PASSHE universities. PDE will serve as the coordinating entity for the Opt-in institutions. PDE, on behalf of TAOC, will appoint the recommended members to the subcommittee. In accordance with TAOC policy, only representatives from voting institutions may participate on subcommittees.

PDE will appoint one specific TAOC member to serve on the subcommittee and serve as a liaison between the group and TAOC. This person will be responsible for providing status reports to the full TAOC and PDE.