

# Ohio Guaranteed Transfer Pathways Implementation Policy

October 30, 2018

## I. Policy Statement

In response to the legislative requirement [Ohio Revised Code 3333.16(c)] to update and implement the policies and procedures to ensure that any associate degree offered at a public institution of higher education can transfer and apply to a bachelor's degree program at any other public institution of higher education in an equivalent field without unnecessary duplication or institutional barriers, the Ohio Guaranteed Transfer Pathways (OGTP) initiative was established.

The importance of creating seamless transfer pathways to facilitate the completion of higher education degrees is seen in the drastic differences in the percentage of Ohioans of age 25 or older living in poverty based on their level of educational attainment. The poverty rate is 29.8% among those with less than a high school diploma, 13.8% for those with a high school diploma, 11.6% for those with some college or an associate degree, and only 4% for those with a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>1</sup> "The impact of these disparities in economic outcomes is felt most severely by segments of the population that are disproportionately poor and historically underrepresented in our institutions of higher learning. While educational attainment rates overall are increasing, college completion rates differ considerably across demographic groups."<sup>1</sup>

Economic growth and social justice depend upon a system of higher education wherein a college degree is attainable by all who possess the aptitude and drive. Ohio has committed to sustained, strategic action to increase the number of Ohioans who achieve a postsecondary credential.<sup>2</sup> And yet, we know that individuals from low-income households make up only a small percentage of those holding baccalaureate degrees. Because of affordability and proximity, individuals from low-income households, or who are place bound, are most likely to enroll at their local associate degree-granting institution. And, indeed, associate degree-granting institutions can provide low-income and/or place-bound individuals with affordable pathways to baccalaureate degrees – but only if there is certainty in the pathways. Low-income students need this certainty at the outset, for they can least afford the additional time or money associated with backtrack or detour when they arrive at an Ohio baccalaureate degree-granting institution. Likewise, for the associate degree-granting institution to provide accurate and ethical advisement of bachelor's-bound students requires certainty in the pathways. The OGTP initiative directly addresses this problem of uncertainty by providing students at the onset with a defined associate-to-baccalaureate pathway to any Ohio baccalaureate degree-granting institution. By fully embracing and implementing the OGTP initiative, Ohio's public colleges and universities, together, make our state more economically robust and socially just.

The OGTP initiative is built upon the idea that pathways should promote academic rigor and quality, as well as student choice and success at both associate- and baccalaureate-degree levels. Further, the pathways should enable students to complete a bachelor's degree at less cost, without sacrificing time

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<sup>1</sup> Source: The Case for Ohio Attainment Goal 2025  
([https://www.ohiohighered.org/sites/ohiohighered.org/files/uploads/attainment/attainment-framing-paper\\_FINALb\\_050416.pdf](https://www.ohiohighered.org/sites/ohiohighered.org/files/uploads/attainment/attainment-framing-paper_FINALb_050416.pdf))

<sup>2</sup> This statement is referring to the Ohio's attainment goal, which seeks to ensure that "65 percent of Ohioans, age 25-64, will have a degree, certificate or other postsecondary workforce credential of value in the workplace by 2025."

to degree, by reducing unnecessary duplication and institutional barriers upon transfer. This initiative utilizes the existing course and program equivalency [Ohio Revised Code 3333.16(A) and 3333.16]. It should be fair to both native students and transfer students. Ultimately, the pathways should allow agreed-upon courses and program requirements completed within an associate degree at any Ohio public institution of higher education to be transferable and applicable in their entirety toward a baccalaureate degree in an aligned discipline at an Ohio baccalaureate degree-granting institution.

This initiative is implemented under the leadership of the Ohio Articulation and Transfer Network (OATN) Oversight Board and in partnership between the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE), Ohio Association of Community Colleges, Inter-University Council, and other key stakeholders. In line with other initiatives, OGTP builds upon existing OATN processes for faculty review and campus endorsement with faculty members taking a central role in the development and endorsement of pathways. Faculty panel members are to prioritize the best interest of students in the State of Ohio in the development of these pathways. Furthermore, academic advising will play a key role in the implementation of pathways by providing transparency that upholds student choice.

## **II. Procedures**

Implementation of the OGTP includes the following elements: a. Communication, b. Endorsement, c. Compliance, d. Information, e. Research and Monitoring, and f. Periodic Review.

### **a. Communication**

Official communications about the OGTP initiative, such as nominations to OGTP faculty panels, endorsement surveys, announcement of pathways, etc., are distributed to the chief academic officer or provost of each public institution. Ongoing communication between ODHE/OATN and campus leadership is critical to the success of this initiative as is the flow of information from chief academic officers and provosts to key stakeholders on their campuses, including but not limited to faculty senates and councils. There is an expectation that this information is used on campus to facilitate discussions about the OGTP work with appropriate stakeholders. All OGTPs are signed by an institution's chief academic officer or provost prior to submission, and the Chancellor of ODHE approves each institutional OGTP prior to posting it on the OGTP page on ODHE's website. Institutions may also post the OGTPs on their website, linking from ODHE's official OGTP web page.

As statewide articulation agreements, the OGTPs should be handled as other articulation agreements, and each institution should ensure that the appropriate personnel are informed about and involved in the development, endorsement, and implementation processes.

### **b. Endorsement**

Prior to implementation of each pathway, the pathway must go through endorsement. Endorsement is a consensus process of the group wherein all parties involved express their support and concerns before moving toward a final statewide decision. The endorsement process begins when a faculty panel indicates their readiness to seek statewide input on a proposed pathway via an endorsement survey. All public institutions of higher education are invited to respond by way of their chief academic officer or provost. Endorsement is not based upon voting, and institution(s) cannot block statewide consensus. If major concerns arise, they

will be brought back to the relevant pathways faculty panel in order to revise the proposed pathway, and the proposed pathway will be sent out for endorsement again. If no significant issues are identified through the endorsement survey, the pathway is considered endorsed. The Chancellor of the ODHE will give final approval of the proposed pathway, after which a formal announcement of the pathway will be made. All public institutions preferably will work to implement the agreed-upon pathways that were endorsed statewide no later than one academic year from the date of the announcement of the endorsed pathway.

c. Compliance

Institutions will act in good faith and work with the student by finding a way to ensure students can complete the necessary courses prior to transfer on the part of the sending institution and by honoring the OGTP on the part of the receiving institution. Each public institution is responsible for implementing an endorsed pathway if it offers an equivalent degree, program, major, concentration, or transfer degree.

i. Ohio Transfer 36, Career-Technical Assurance Guide (CTAG), and Transfer Assurance Guide (TAG) Approval Status

Institutions shall ensure that all relevant Ohio Transfer 36, TAG, and CTAG courses included in the pathways are approved in line with the expectations set forth in the Ohio Articulation and Transfer Policy, House Bill (HB) 95, and Ohio Revised Code 3333.162.

ii. Ohio Transfer 36, CTAG, and TAG Guarantees

Institutions shall ensure that they are following all of the related statewide articulation and transfer policies. If an institution has not yet obtained faculty panel approval of their Ohio Transfer 36/CTAG/TAG course(s), it is essential/imperative to begin the approval process immediately. If there is a gap between the pathway approval date and Ohio Transfer 36/CTAG/TAG approval date, institutions should work in good faith to transfer the coursework.

All statewide guaranteed courses, and particularly TAG courses, were deemed core courses during the formation of the TAGs and must be required of all students to guarantee the transfer and the applicability of equivalent courses. However, certain programs may offer students more flexibility. For instance, in the psychology TAG, students may have course options for a human development or lifespan development course based on their specialization or interest. In this scenario, not all programs require that set of statewide guaranteed courses as part of their core, but all must transfer the chosen statewide guaranteed course to fulfill and to count toward major requirements. Furthermore, chief academic officers and provosts will be notified when an Ohio Transfer 36, CTAG, or TAG change is made that will affect a specific OGTP.

iii. Math Pathways

Each OGTP identifies a preferred mathematics pathway for students, building upon the work of the Ohio Mathematics Initiative. Knowing that time will be needed for some

institutions to move toward the preferred mathematics pathway, institutions should explore opportunities to implement the preferred mathematics pathway. Preferred mathematics pathways and alignment with institutional mathematics requirements will be revisited during each pathway's first review cycle. If an institution cannot offer the preferred mathematics pathway, the institution will submit a letter of justification requesting an exception that will be reviewed by the OGTP Steering Committee and/or the OATN Oversight Board.<sup>3</sup>

- iv. **Areas of Specialization**  
Certain professional areas, such as Engineering and Education, may only have pathways that lead to specialized bachelor's degree programs. The high degree of specialization in these areas may complicate transfer due to limitations in the ability to offer the specific coursework that would enable students to progress most efficiently through their program of study. In these cases, the faculty panels may recommend different pathway configurations that best serve students.
  
- v. **Institutional Pathways**  
An institution may not necessarily have a named Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree in a specific discipline; however, if an institution offers all of the TAG courses, it should provide students the option of earning a general Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree with a pathway in the specified discipline. Once a pathway is endorsed, each institution will need to determine by its course offerings if the pathway will be offered at the institution. Each institution with a pathway will have up to 60-90 days from the official announcement of a pathway to identify the appropriate corresponding coursework and then submit a list of courses and degree map to ODHE. Timely submissions will help students and are thus encouraged. Baccalaureate degree-granting institutions will also document the second two years of coursework to completion of the baccalaureate degree. Each institutional submission must be approved by the institution's provost or chief academic officer. Submitted courses and degree maps will be reviewed by the OGTP Steering Committee and/or OATN Oversight Board if need be, and the Chancellor or his designee will have final authority to fully implement and advertise each pathway.
  
- vi. **OGTP and Program Approval Guidelines**  
All institutions should ensure their academic programs are consistent with the Guidelines and Procedures for Academic Program Review, which state that an associate degree "requires completion of 60 semester credit hours; associate degree programs should not exceed 65 semester credit hours unless it can be shown that the additional coursework is required to meet professional accreditation or licensing requirements." Furthermore, a bachelor's degree program "requires completion of 120 semester credit hours; bachelor's degree programs should not exceed 126 semester credit hours unless it can be shown that the additional coursework is required to meet professional

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<sup>3</sup> The OGTP Steering Committee and OATN Oversight Board serve in an advisory capacity to the Chancellor of the ODHE. The Chancellor has final decision-making authority.

accreditation or licensing requirements." Institutions shall adjust and reduce their credit hour requirements, change their program of study, and/or take other measures to ensure the total hours for degree completion meet program approval guidelines and align with each endorsed OGTP.

- vii. **Standing**  
Students must be able to enroll with true junior standing at the **baccalaureate degree-granting institution** in relation to their degree progress toward completion of their OGTP field, assuming they have met all relevant program admission requirements, such as a minimum grade point average, portfolio review, interview, etc.
- viii. **Course Offerings**  
If certain courses within a given pathway are not offered by an **associate degree-granting institution**, it is the institution's responsibility to provide alternative and/or innovative ways to allow students to complete the coursework.
- ix. **Necessary Individual Program Exemptions from Participating in an OGTP**  
Very few institutions may offer programs that necessarily require duplication of coursework or other barriers to transfer because of their unique nature. Such programs should submit a request for a necessary exemption from participating in an OGTP for review by the OGTP Steering Committee and/or the OATN Oversight Board.<sup>4</sup> However, TAG courses are commonly agreed-upon courses within a major that must be transferable to the related program regardless of the distinctive nature of a program.
- x. **Policy Modification**  
Institutions will modify existing policies as may be necessary to accept the transfer of an entire program via the OGTP.
- xi. **Timeline**  
The OATN Oversight Board prefers that institutions implement the endorsed pathway no later than one year from the date of announcement of a pathway.
- xii. **Expiration**  
The requirements within each OGTP may change over time. Students should follow the OGTP that is in effect upon their initial enrollment in their **associate degree-granting institution**. Institutions should act in good faith for students who do not complete their OGTP within this timeframe and offer an appeals process for those students. Students may opt to complete their degree under the most recent version of an OGTP but must comply with any and all new requirements set forth. If a program is eliminated at an institution, the student will go through the teach-out process as designated by that particular institution's policy.

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<sup>4</sup> The OGTP Steering Committee and OATN Oversight Board serve in an advisory capacity to the Chancellor of the ODHE. The Chancellor has final decision-making authority.

d. Information

Students will have access to clear and concise information concerning the program of study and program requirements required to earn their associate degree and to fulfill the pathway as well as to complete their bachelor's degree. Institutions will publicize and update, as necessary, the OGTPs that they offer. Once endorsed, the OGTPs for Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degree will serve as the pathway in a given area. However, local or regional articulation agreements may continue to exist as long as they further supplement the existing OGTPs and do not contradict them. Students should be guided to understand the different transfer options and the benefits and ramifications for each option. A student can opt into a pathway much like declaring a major/track/program at their associate degree-granting institution and upon transfer to their bachelor degree-granting institution. It will be up to each institution to track student time of entry. Successful completion of an OGTP will be noted on a student's transcript to remind the receiving bachelor degree-granting institution to honor the guarantee.

e. Research, Assessment, and Monitoring

ODHE will conduct ongoing research to assess the effectiveness of each endorsed pathway. Public institutions are expected to monitor the academic progress and retention of students who took advantage of a guaranteed transfer pathway. Further, they are strongly encouraged to work collaboratively within their regions to address issues and to share promising practices in problem solving with the OATN/ODHE and other regions.

f. Review and Updates

Each institution is expected to review its guaranteed transfer pathways annually to ensure that the course offerings continue to be current. Any changes in curriculum in relation to the OGTPs should be submitted to ODHE/OATN in order to ensure that changes will continue to honor the agreed-upon, endorsed pathway.

After its official announcement, each pathway will be reviewed for its currency every three years by the co-leads of the relevant cluster faculty panel. Any updates made to the existing guaranteed transfer programs may impact the implemented pathway, and as such, any changes or updates will be made working with the relevant OGTP faculty panels and will undergo the statewide endorsement process.