

MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGIATE REGISTRARS AND ADMISSIONS OFFICERS

# The MACRAO Articulation Agreement Handbook

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Best Practices for Implementing the MACRAO  
Agreement at Your Institution

2009 Edition

MACRAO Articulation Committee

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## Foreword

The Michigan Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (MACRAO), and especially its College Articulation Committee, has a long history of supporting and promoting the educational experiences which prepare students for a successful transition from the community college to a four-year college or university. As noted in this handbook, MACRAO developed and established the MACRAO Articulation Agreement over thirty years ago, and continues to communicate and clarify the intentions of the original framers.

The work of this association is especially important as the State of Michigan is one of the few states in the nation that does not have a higher education system which sets parameters governing the acceptance of transfer courses or credits, or the admission of transfer students.

The 2009 edition of *The MACRAO Articulation Agreement Handbook* not only identifies and explains the Articulation Agreement Requirements; it features two valuable sections, “Responsibilities and Best Practices for Community Colleges” and “Responsibilities and Best Practices for Four-year Colleges.” Both sections strongly encourage transparency and communication.

It is with a great deal of pride that I encourage you to read, digest, discuss, and implement all aspects of this guide for today and the future.

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## Introduction

The first official signing of the MACRAO (Michigan Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers) Articulation Agreement took place on November 13, 1972, at the Association’s 43rd Annual Meeting in Lansing, Michigan. This agreement became effective in the 1973/1974 academic year. The intention of the framers of this agreement was to improve transfer student articulation between Michigan two-year and four-year colleges by creating a common understanding and agreement about general education requirements among signatory institutions.

In 1975, the MACRAO College Articulation Committee created an Articulation Agreement Handbook that consolidated materials and information about the MACRAO agreement in order to clarify the intent of the agreement and assist participating institutions in using the agreement effectively. In 2008, the Articulation Committee decided, with transfer activity increasing every year, it was time to issue an updated handbook. With the input of the general MACRAO membership during the 2008 and 2009 summer summits, a new MACRAO Articulation Agreement handbook has been compiled. The new handbook builds on information from the original and addresses transfer issues that have surfaced over the years. It offers recommendations to help participating institutions use the agreement consistently and can be used as a resource tool by institutions that are new to the agreement.

At the time the first handbook was created, there were 24 two-year and 27 four-year colleges participating in the agreement. Below is a list of 28 two-year and 28 four-year colleges that currently participate in the MACRAO agreement.

### Participating Four-year and Community Colleges

Four-year Colleges/Universities	Community Colleges
Adrian College	Alpena Community College
Albion College	Bay de Noc Community College
Baker College	Bay Mills Community College
Calvin College	Delta College
Central Michigan University	Glen Oaks Community College
Cleary University	Gogebic Community College
Concordia University	Grand Rapids Community College
Davenport University	Henry Ford Community College
Eastern Michigan University	Jackson Community College
Ferris State University	Kellogg Community College
Finlandia University	Kirtland Community College
Grand Valley State University	Lake Michigan College
Lake Superior State University	Lansing Community College
Lawrence Technological University	Macomb Community College
Madonna University	Mid Michigan Community College
Marygrove College	Monroe County Community College
Michigan State University	Montcalm Community College
Michigan Technological University	Mott Community College
Northern Michigan University	Muskegon Community College
Northwood University	North Central Michigan College
Oakland University	Northwestern Michigan College
Olivet College	Oakland Community College
Rochester College	St. Clair County Community College
Saginaw Valley State University	Schoolcraft College
Siena Heights University	Southwestern Michigan College
Spring Arbor University	Washtenaw Community College
Saint Mary’s College	Wayne County Community College Dist
Western Michigan University	West Shore Community College

# MACRAO Articulation Agreement Requirements

## Purpose

The MACRAO agreement was designed to facilitate the transfer of general education requirements from participating community colleges to participating four-year colleges and universities.

Community college students who complete the minimum requirements in each of the areas below will have satisfied many (and in some cases all) of the basic general education requirements of participating Michigan four-year colleges and universities. Students may complete the MACRAO Transfer Agreement as part of an associate degree or as a stand-alone package.

The simplicity and flexibility of this agreement allows a transfer student to meet the general education requirements of the community college and of the four-year college at the same time. If done carefully, a student can also complete some major and minor requirements and provisos (general education requirements specified by the receiving college) as part of MACRAO. This will reduce the likelihood of taking courses at the community college that don't apply toward the bachelor's degree. A transfer student must be admissible to a participating four-year college in order to benefit from this agreement.

## Minimum Requirements

Students must complete a minimum of 30 semester hours. Courses must be selected from each of the four categories below. In each category, except English, courses must be taken in at least two academic disciplines. At least one laboratory science course is required.

- English Composition ..... 6 credit hours
- Science and Math (one lab science required) ..... 8 credit hours
- Humanities ..... 8 credit hours
- Social Science ..... 8 credit hours

## **Responsibilities and Best Practices for Community Colleges in Implementing the MACRAO Agreement**

### **Determining Courses for the MACRAO Categories**

Individual community colleges determine specific courses to be included in the MACRAO categories at their institution. For example, a western civilization course might be designated as either social science or humanities, depending on the course content. Courses that are not transferable, such as those of a developmental or vocational nature, should not be included.

As new courses are developed at the community college, they should be evaluated for inclusion in the MACRAO categories. This will help to keep the institution's MACRAO course list from becoming obsolete. The following criteria should be considered when determining if a course should be included:

- Is the course transferable to your partner four-year colleges? If not, can it be revised so that it will transfer?
- Is the course approved for a general education category at your institution? If it is included in the general education requirements for your transfer degrees, it should also be included in the MACRAO course lists.
- Be flexible. Your students will be transferring to many different colleges and the more choices they have in completing MACRAO the better. Many courses used for MACRAO may also satisfy a major, minor, or program requirement at the four-year college.
- Work with your partner four-year colleges to identify what they would like you to include on the MACRAO list.

### **Certifying Students as “MACRAO Satisfied”**

It is the community college's responsibility to develop a process to certify that students have satisfied the MACRAO Agreement. Most community colleges print “MACRAO Agreement Satisfied” on a student transcript after an evaluation or audit by the Records or Registrar's office determines that all the requirements are met. The more automatic the evaluation is, the easier it is for everyone. Some recommendations are listed below:

- Place the words “MACRAO Satisfied” in a prominent location on the transcript so that it easily will be seen and identified by the admissions, records, and advising staff at receiving four-year colleges. On the top of the first page is recommended.
- Increase the likelihood that students will complete an associate degree by including the MACRAO requirements in your institution's associate degrees - at least the transfer degrees. If a student completes the degree, have “MACRAO Satisfied” printed on the transcript automatically.
- If your college's associate degrees do not automatically include the MACRAO requirements, then provide a check box for requesting a MACRAO evaluation on the form for requesting a degree audit.
- Include a check box for requesting a MACRAO evaluation on the form for requesting an official transcript.

## **Provisos, Limitations, and Exceptions by Community Colleges**

Some participating community colleges have put limitations and/or provisions (provisos) in place for administering the MACRAO Transfer Agreement. In doing so, schools should keep in mind that the agreement is a state-wide program for facilitating transfer of general education requirements between two-year and four-year institutions. The agreement is not an individual institution's program in the same way as degree and certificate programs or majors. The norm today is for students to transfer several times in their progress toward earning a degree. Some students may complete general education course work at two, three, or more institutions. Requiring a student to repeat general education courses to satisfy the MACRAO agreement is not in the student's best interests. In keeping with this reality, the Articulation Committee encourages community colleges to be flexible in allowing students to accumulate the credits to satisfy the MACRAO agreement. Recommendations to keep in mind when determining policies for implementing the MACRAO agreement are listed below:

- Two-year colleges may use credits earned at other institutions toward completion of the MACRAO requirements, including credits transferred back (reverse transferred) from the receiving four-year college or university.
- An institution is not obligated to provide a transcript with a "MACRAO stamp" for a student who hasn't completed courses there. Colleges are encouraged to determine a reasonable number of credits that must be completed at their institution for a student to request a MACRAO evaluation using transferred credits. Requiring a minimum number of a college's own credits applied to MACRAO (a MACRAO residency requirement) is not recommended.
- Although the Articulation Committee feels the attainment of an associate degree is desirable for most transfer students, individual objectives and circumstances are best considered by allowing each transfer student the maximum flexibility to determine the time of transfer. Students are not required to complete an associate degree in order to satisfy the MACRAO agreement and likewise, students who have completed an associate degree should be allowed to return later to complete MACRAO.
- Students should not have to be enrolled at a community college during the semester they request a MACRAO evaluation or "MACRAO Stamp".
- Any provisos, limitations, or exceptions instituted by a community college should be written clearly, advertised openly, and should be widely understood at the institution.

## **Communicating About MACRAO within the Community College**

Community colleges should advise students about the MACRAO agreement as early as possible. In many cases, provisos and support courses from the four-year institution may be integrated into the MACRAO requirements, if planned early. The MACRAO certification does not exempt students from the requirements in their major, minor or other bachelor degree graduation requirements. Having information about curriculum and graduation requirements will help students make wise decisions in selecting courses for completing MACRAO. Some things your institution can do to improve advising for students using MACRAO are listed below:

- Provide a MACRAO agreement page on your transfer website with an explanation of the policies and processes for completing MACRAO at your institution. Include the steps for requesting the MACRAO stamp on a transcript. Provide a link to the official MACRAO web page.

- Students should be encouraged to contact representatives from the institution(s) where they are considering attendance in order to determine the institution's level of participation in MACRAO.
- Provide links to four-year institutions' transfer guides and program listings on your transfer website so students can look up the MACRAO provisos and the bachelor's degree requirements they are pursuing.
- Provide MACRAO workshops for students to teach them how to maximize the use of credits by choosing courses for MACRAO that also satisfy a program requirement. If a student hasn't chosen a program major, he/she should at least pick MACRAO courses that are compatible with the field being considered. Make sure students know when they have to request a MACRAO evaluation.
- Most importantly, provide annual training sessions for advisors and faculty on the MACRAO agreement and any changes in your institution's approved MACRAO courses and policies.
- MACRAO training should be included in regularly scheduled student-service (admissions, advising, registration...) meetings.
- Making MACRAO courses a regular part of the course approval process will make your faculty and administrators more aware of the MACRAO agreement.

### **Communicating About MACRAO with Your Four-year Partners**

As community colleges develop new courses and change their programs and degrees, MACRAO course lists and policies should be updated accordingly. These changes should be communicated with the four-year college partners that participate in the MACRAO Transfer Agreement.

- Invite your four-year partner schools to orientations, information sessions, transfer fairs and other collaborative events to update them.
- Publish a list of courses used to satisfy the MACRAO agreement categories and other information about completing the MACRAO Transfer Agreement in your catalog and on your website.
- Work with your partner institutions to include MACRAO in their transfer guides and articulation agreements.
- Let your partners know when students are having a problem with transferring the MACRAO agreement to them as well as with other of their transfer policies.
- Keep your MACRAO provisos updated on the MACRAO Association's [Official MACRAO proviso web page](#).

# **Responsibilities and Best Practices for Four-year Colleges and Universities in Implementing the MACRAO Transfer Agreement**

## **Determining Bachelor's Degree Requirements that are Satisfied by MACRAO**

Participating four-year institutions must identify a specific set of course requirements that are satisfied by the MACRAO certification. This may consist of all or a subset of the institution's general education program. In other words, these are the course requirements that do not have to be completed if the student's transcript has the MACRAO satisfied "stamp". This "general education" program may go by a variety of names, but it usually includes courses such as writing and mathematics, and a set of distribution-style requirements in the areas of science, arts and humanities, and social sciences. Whatever the name or structure, it must be clear which course requirements don't have to be completed if the student transfers with the MACRAO stamp.

The MACRAO agreement was meant to be generic and cover the general education basics. This makes the program applicable to most colleges and allows it to remain relevant over time. After more than 30 years, the MACRAO agreement requirements are still in line with the basic general education programs of most colleges in Michigan. A survey of twelve public four-year colleges in Michigan, completed by the Articulation Committee in 2007, showed that they all required between 30 and 47 credits of general education requirements in the four categories used by the MACRAO agreement.

If a senior institution does not have a general education program of at least 30 credit hours, or the general education requirements are mostly math and science courses, the institution is probably not a candidate for participation in the MACRAO agreement. In this case, it is best to advise students about what will transfer and apply to program and graduation requirements at that institution.

## **Determining Provisos, Limitations, Exceptions at the Four-year Level**

Some participating four-year institutions have course requirements in addition to MACRAO. Such requirements are referred to as "provisos". The original MACRAO agreement included a place for signing institutions to explain any "limitations, provisos, or exceptions". These special requirements are allowed if they apply to all students in the institution. Provisos are sometimes used to cover unique requirements that go beyond the generic program and may change over time. For instance, computer literacy requirements became common place with the introduction of computers and have gradually been removed as more students begin college with computer literacy already under their belts.

Many four-year colleges and universities want to ensure that their graduates attain specific skill levels or knowledge in important areas such as mathematics and speech. A proviso may be used to stipulate those requirements. Some colleges have very large general education programs that go beyond the first two years. Provisos may be used to specify the requirements that go beyond the basic general education program. To uphold the integrity and spirit of the agreement, it is best if provisos are kept to a minimum; and students should be allowed to complete them at the community college and apply them toward MACRAO when applicable.

Provisos were not meant to force students to take basic general education requirements at the four-year college or to add requirements that are not required of other students at the institution. Provisos should be written clearly, advertised openly, and should be widely understood at the four-year institution. Unwritten or complicated provisos have added to the controversy about the

MACRAO agreement over the years. Even when it is not intentional, they are often viewed as traps to prevent students from using the MACRAO agreement or to force them to complete extra courses at an institution.

### **Requirements That Do Not Require Provisos**

Below are examples of requirements at four-year institutions that don't need to be listed as provisos:

- Foreign language requirements for a specific degree
- Courses required for a major such as writing-in-the-major courses. Major and minor requirements are never exempted by MACRAO and don't need to be listed as provisos.

### **Requirements That Should Be Listed as Provisos**

Below are some examples of requirements that should be listed as provisos:

- A specific level of math that needs to be satisfied, i.e. College Algebra or higher must be completed
- A diversity or cultural awareness requirement
- Religious institutions may require a course in religion
- A computer literacy requirement
- A speech requirement
- An upper-level general education requirement

### **Unreasonable Provisos and limitations**

Below are examples of requirements that are detrimental to students and are not recommended:

- A requirement that MACRAO cannot be completed once a student has enrolled at the receiving four-year college
- Any policy that is unwritten and known only by word of mouth
- A complicated requirement that is likely to be misunderstood

### **Implementing a Mechanism for Accepting the MACRAO Satisfied Stamp**

The four-year college will determine the equivalence and applicability of individual courses in meeting major, minor and other graduation requirements. Courses should not be individually evaluated for the "MACRAO Agreement" as that has already been done by the community college. Courses should not be evaluated for basic or lower level general education requirements except for specified requirements listed as provisos by the four-year college.

Four-year colleges should have a mechanism to communicate the "MACRAO Agreement Satisfied" certification to everyone who advises students or determines if their requirements are satisfied. This mechanism should be included in the internal student records system, if possible, so that all staff and faculty who meet with students will be able to easily access the information. Accepting the MACRAO certification should be a part of the transcript evaluation process. The more automatic it is, the easier it is for everyone involved. Some methods used by four-year colleges are listed below:

- Indicate that MACRAO has been satisfied on the transferred courses section of the student transcript.
- Indicate that MACRAO is satisfied on a note screen in the student records system, where it can be viewed by all staff.
- Indicate that MACRAO has been satisfied on the student audit in the student records system. This should be available to advisers early in the process.

- Indicate that MACRAO has been satisfied by inserting a code in the Transfer Degree Field in the student records system.
- For schools without a mechanized system, indicate that MACRAO has been satisfied on a student transfer credit worksheet kept in the student's file.
- It is also helpful to have a way to indicate that the student is planning to complete the MACRAO agreement.

### **Communicating about MACRAO within the Four-year College**

Transfer students need specific advising that is different from incoming freshman students. They are bringing in coursework from other institutions and trying to apply as much as possible to their program, major, minor, and other graduation requirements. Transfer advisors should be trained to ask and answer questions about the MACRAO agreement.

- When a transfer student goes in for initial advising, if their records do not indicate "MACRAO Satisfied", the student should be asked if the MACRAO agreement was being pursued. Many students transfer before completing MACRAO, or don't realize that they may need to ask for a MACRAO evaluation at the community college. If a student is unsure, advisors should be able to explain the MACRAO agreement and tell the student if he/she may be close to satisfying it.
- Include information about the MACRAO agreement in transfer student orientation sessions.
- MACRAO training should be included in regularly scheduled student services meetings (admissions, advising, records...) to keep everyone up-to-date.
- Provide MACRAO agreement training opportunities for faculty and administrators.
- Provide a MACRAO agreement page on your transfer website with an explanation of your institution's policies and processes for accepting the MACRAO certification. Provide a link to the official MACRAO web page.

### **Communicating About MACRAO with Your Community College Partners**

As four-year schools revise their general education requirements, they should update MACRAO provisos and policies accordingly. These changes should be communicated within the institution and with community college partners.

- Include updates on the MACRAO agreement in annual meetings with community college counselors.
- Invite faculty and deans from partner community college to information sessions and other events to update them. Or offer to go to their campus to hold a session.
- Publish a list of MACRAO provisos and policies in your catalog and on your website.
- Keep your MACRAO provisos updated on the MACRAO Association's [Official MACRAO proviso web page](#).
- Work with your partner institutions to include MACRAO in their transfer guides and articulation agreements.
- Let your partners know when students from their institution are having problems using the MACRAO agreement as well as other of their transfer policies.

## Definitions

These are some brief, basic definitions of terms used in this handbook. For fuller explanations, please refer to the appropriate sections of the handbook.

### **Articulation**

The process that facilitates the transition from one educational institution to another or from one level of education to the next, with minimum duplication of coursework

### **Articulation Agreement**

Formal, written documents agreed upon by two or more institutions that provide a value-added component to a traditional transfer program by allowing additional transfer credits, enhancing the number and quality of learning options or by providing unique student-centered options (preferred admission, student support, financial assistance, etc.)

### **Credit Hour**

Academic unit of measure used for completion of courses and programs of study

### **Distribution Requirements**

A set of categories of academic disciplines, where students select from a list of courses to satisfy the requirements

### **Equivalency**

The determination that courses from different institutions are equal to each other; either course may be used to meet a requirement at one institution

### **General Education**

Program of requirements that is included in all degree programs at an institution; may have differentiation based on a degree or major, but generally includes core skills and introduction to a variety of disciplines, such as social science, humanities, and natural science

### **Reverse Transfer**

The transfer of credits back to a sending institution after a student has transferred in order to complete a degree, certificate, or the MACRAO agreement at the first institution

### **Transcript**

A document issued by an institution that contains all essential data such as: dates of attendance, courses taken, grades and credits awarded, degrees received. It may also contain the student's current status at the institution. An official transcript is one that has been received directly from the issuing institution. It must bear an institutional validation (such as seal, logo, letterhead), date, and appropriate signature. Transcripts received that do not meet these requirements should not be considered official

### **Transcript Evaluation**

Review of a student's transcript from another college to determine coursework equivalencies and credit to be accepted at the receiving institution

**Transfer Guide**

A guide that lists courses which, if completed at one college, will meet specific requirements (such as program or major requirements) at another college

**MACRAO**

The Michigan Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers is the Michigan regional member of AACRAO, the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers

**MACRAO Agreement**

A Michigan statewide agreement, developed by the MACRAO Association, that is designed to facilitate the transfer of general education requirements from participating community colleges to participating four-year colleges and universities

**Provisos, Limitations, and Exceptions**

Additional requirements, rules, and policies that are specified by an institution as part of their participation in the MACRAO articulation agreement