

MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGIATE REGISTRARS AND ADMISSIONS OFFICERS (MACRAO)



The Michigan Transfer Agreement Handbook

**Implementing the
Michigan Transfer Agreement at Your Institution**

2016 Edition

MACRAO Articulation Committee

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Introduction

In 2012 the Michigan legislature included language in the community college appropriations bill calling for improvement in the transferability of college courses between Michigan colleges and universities by revising the Michigan Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (MACRAO) Agreement. Since its 1972 signing, the MACRAO Agreement has been used successfully by many students to transfer their general education courses from a community college to a university. The Michigan Transfer Agreement has been created in an effort to increase the transferability of core college courses between community colleges and four-year colleges and universities.¹

The state committee created by the 2012 legislation addressed issues that were raised during a year of study and discussion of the MACRAO Agreement by recommending the following changes: increasing the rigor of the requirements; calling on all colleges to participate; changing the name of the agreement to the more descriptive “Michigan Transfer Agreement”; and by calling for a communications plan to inform students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders of this new agreement.

The committee also recommended that implementation of the revised Michigan Transfer Agreement be led by the MACRAO organization; and that MACRAO would work with all the appropriate constituents to determine a process for regularly reviewing the Michigan Transfer Agreement for needed changes.

The first step in implementation of the new agreement is the development of this handbook as a resource for colleges and universities. Similar to the 2009 MACRAO Articulation Handbook, it describes the new Michigan Transfer Agreement in detail and provides many examples of best practices for implementing the agreement effectively.

Institutions seeking assistance with the implementation of this agreement are encouraged to contact the MACRAO College Articulation Committee for support.

NOTE: This handbook is not meant to be exhaustive and it may be revised from time to time. MTA participating institutions would be given notice of any changes in advance by way of the registrar. The registrar is responsible for forwarding the revised handbook to institution’s MTA contact who will ensure the proper dissemination of information. Should you have any questions, please contact MTA Support at michigantransferagreement@gmail.com.

¹ In this handbook, the sending institution refers to community colleges and the receiving institution refers to four-year colleges and universities participating in the MTA.

Michigan Transfer Agreement Requirements

Purpose

The Michigan Transfer Agreement (MTA) was designed to facilitate the transfer of general education requirements from one institution to another. Students may complete the Michigan Transfer Agreement as part of an associate's degree or as a stand-alone package.

In describing how the core college courses fit into a student's bachelor degree, one can envision that the 30 credits of core college courses will most likely fulfill all or the majority of the student's lower level general education requirements dependent on their major e.g., engineering vs. fine arts. If the course does not fit into the major requirements then that course and credits will be counted towards the student's overall degree requirements. At some institutions, students are required to also take upper level general education courses for their bachelor's degree. This will reduce the likelihood of taking courses at one institution that do not apply toward the completion of a bachelor's degree. A transfer student must be admissible to a receiving institution in order to benefit from this agreement.

Guiding principles and recommendations for the Michigan Transfer Agreement

- Make the agreement simple and easy to understand
- Keep the agreement student-focused
- Treat transfer students the same as native students at the receiving institution
- Acknowledge the distinction between the MTA and degree requirements
- Promote transparency among institutions to ensure accurate transfer information for students
- Require students to complete at least one credit-bearing course at the institution awarding the MTA

Minimum Requirements

To fulfill the Michigan Transfer Agreement, students must successfully complete at least 30 credits*, with at least a grade of 2.0 in each course. These credits, which will be certified by a sending institution, should be met according to the following distributions:

- One course in English Composition
- A second course in English Composition or one course in Communications
- Two courses in Social Sciences (from two disciplines)
- Two courses in Humanities and Fine Arts (from two disciplines excluding studio and performance classes)
- Two courses in Natural Sciences including one with laboratory experience (from two disciplines)
- One course in Mathematics**

* Additional coursework may be necessary to satisfy the 30 credit hour requirement.²

**A mathematics course should be treated as an entry-level college course; see Math Requirement section that follows for a full description.

² Quarter hour based credits must be converted to equal 30 semester credit hours in order to fulfill the MTA.

Math Requirement

A select number of mathematics faculty from two-year and four-year institutions were appointed to a special task force to define the MTA math requirement. The Math Task Force devised three math pathways that satisfy the MTA math requirement:

College Algebra Pathway - For students proceeding to programs that specifically require background in algebra, particularly STEM programs.

Statement on Prerequisites:

- For success in the College Algebra Pathway a college level course has a prerequisite skill level of intermediate algebra or high school algebra II or equivalent content. Students will be expected to apply advanced algebra skills.
- This course must be beyond Intermediate Algebra.

Topics/content that should be a part of a course in this pathway:

- Functions, polynomials (including polynomials of degree greater than 2 and the fundamental theorem of algebra), rational functions, logarithms, exponential functions, inverse functions, and graphing by recognition and transformation rather than by plotting points. Pre-calculus topics such as sequences and series may also be included.

Descriptors to consider for this pathway:

- This course (possibly in conjunction with a separate course on trigonometry) would qualify a student to take a calculus course
- This course should be one that your mathematically capable student would start with after completing high school Algebra I and II
- This course should provide a strong foundation for critical mathematical thinking
- Many students in this pathway will have additional math courses required for their program; if a college-algebra-type course is a prerequisite for that course, students who are ready to begin with that course might be able to use it for meeting the math requirement.

Guidelines from the Mathematics Association of America:

- College Algebra provides students a college-level academic experience that emphasizes the use of algebra and functions in problem solving and modeling, provides a foundation in quantitative literacy, supplies the algebra and other mathematics needed in partner disciplines, and helps meet quantitative needs in, and outside of, academia. Students address problems presented as real world situations by creating and interpreting mathematical models. Solutions to the problems are formulated, validated, and analyzed using mental, paper and pencil, algebraic, and technology-based techniques as appropriate.
- Link: <http://www.maa.org/sites/default/files/pdf/CUPM/crafty/CRAFTY-Coll-Alg-Guidelines.pdf>

Statistics Pathway - For students proceeding to programs in business or social sciences.

Statement on Prerequisites:

- The Statistics Pathway will satisfy the MTA requirements for general education.
- For success in the Statistics Pathway a college level course has a prerequisite skill level of at least beginning algebra or high school algebra I or equivalent content. Students will be expected to apply basic algebra skills.

Topics/content that should be a part of a course in this pathway:

- Probability, descriptive statistics, and inferential statistics, including hypothesis testing, p-values, confidence intervals, and linear regression. The course should incorporate both formula-based and technology-based approaches to statistics.

Descriptors to consider for this pathway:

- This course must go beyond descriptive statistics
- The course can be algebra-based or calculus-based
- The course must be taught and organized by the Math (or Statistics) department or be cross-listed as a Math (or Statistics) course
- The course should be conceptually driven from a Math perspective

Guidelines from the American Statistical Association:

- The best thinking about introductory statistics courses is that students should focus on statistical thinking. The Guidelines list goals of the statistics course, which form the minimum expectations for an MTA statistics course.
- Link: http://www.amstat.org/education/gaise/GAISECollege_Goals.pdf

Quantitative Reasoning Pathway - For students proceeding to programs not requiring statistics or calculus.

Statement on Prerequisites:

- The Quantitative Reasoning Pathway will satisfy the MTA requirements for general education.
- For success in the Quantitative Reasoning Pathway a college level course has a prerequisite skill level of at least beginning algebra or high school algebra I or equivalent content. Students will be expected to apply basic algebra skills.

Topics/content that should be a part of a course in this pathway:

- Mathematical modeling and the use of reasoning to choose between competing models
- Numeric, symbolic, and graphical methods to handle a variety of applications
- Topics could include but are not limited to number sense and estimation, linear and non-linear models, financial models, symbolic logic, networks and graphs, probability and counting, statistical reasoning, voting theory, geometric models, similarity and scaling, and game theory

Descriptors to consider for this pathway:

- Building on the Kentucky guidelines articulated below, this course should help students communicate mathematical and/or statistical information symbolically, visually, and/or numerically.
- This course should also help students communicate a quantitative argument in writing.

Guidelines borrowed from the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education:

- The General Education Transfer Policy and Implementation Guidelines for Quantitative Reasoning (page 11):
 - ✓ Interpret information presented in mathematical and/or statistical forms.
 - ✓ Illustrate and communicate mathematical and/or statistical information symbolically, visually, and/or numerically.
 - ✓ Determine when computations are needed and to execute the appropriate computations.
 - ✓ Apply an appropriate model to the problem to be solved
 - ✓ Make inferences, evaluate assumptions, and assess limitations in estimation modeling and/or statistical analysis.
- Link: http://cpe.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/6D7A8159-16D8-4810-A0B6-3D8161157D73/0/Revised_GE_Transfer_PolicyImp_Guidelines.pdf

Residency Requirement

Many students earn credits at several institutions. Nevertheless, students will be required to complete at least one credit-bearing course in order for an institution to grant an “MTA Satisfied” endorsement. The credit-bearing course is not required to be from the areas represented in the MTA, but must be a college level class.

Participating Institutions

The intent of this agreement is that all Michigan public community colleges and universities should participate. Private colleges and universities including tribal institutions are encouraged to participate.

Implementation Timeframe for the MTA Agreement

The MTA will take effect for students who begin their studies in the fall 2014 semester. Students who started prior to fall 2014 will be able to complete the existing MACRAO Agreement until the end of the summer 2019. Irrespective of time, if a student already has a “MACRAO Satisfied” endorsement previously placed on their transcript, it is expected that receiving institution will still honor it in the best interest of this individual.

Students attending a community college prior to fall 2014 may be eligible to follow MACRAO or MTA. Students should check with their community college Advisor or Counselor for eligibility requirements.

Sending Institutions: Implementing the Michigan Transfer Agreement

Determining Courses for the MTA Categories

Individual sending institutions determine specific courses to be included in the MTA 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 that are below college level or occupational (vocational) in nature shall not be included.

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

- Is the course transferable to partner institutions? 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 degrees, it should also be included in the MTA approved course list.³
- Be flexible. Your students will be transferring to many different institutions, and the more choices they have in completing the MTA, the better. Many courses used for the MTA may also satisfy a major, minor, or program requirement at receiving institutions.
- Work with your partner institutions to ensure you are including courses that can double count for students (where applicable).

³ Please note that if your general education requirements consider a math course that is less than college level, as described in this Articulation Handbook, it should not be in the MTA approved course list.

- Work with your partner institutions to identify what they would like you to include on your MTA list.
- Make your institution's MTA approved course list public and easy to access for students and other institutions (online is preferred).

Certifying Students as "MTA Satisfied"

It is the sending institution's responsibility to develop a process to certify students who have satisfied the requirements of the MTA, which includes prominently displaying "MTA Satisfied" on an official transcript. Additional suggestions are listed below:

- Increase the likelihood that students will complete an associate's degree by including the MTA requirements in your institution's associate's degrees as appropriate.
- If possible, create an automatic process for evaluating and granting the MTA.
- If your college's associate's degrees do not automatically include the MTA requirements, provide a means for students to request an MTA evaluation.
- Include a check box for requesting an MTA evaluation on your transcript request form.

Recommendations for Implementing the MTA

Sending institutions may use credits earned at other institutions toward completion of the MTA requirements, including credit reverse transferred from the receiving institution.

- A student must earn at least one credit-bearing course at the sending institution in order to have "MTA Satisfied" posted on a transcript.
- Students must earn at least a grade of 2.0 in each MTA course in order for it to count towards the minimum MTA requirements.
- Students are not required to complete an associate's degree in order to satisfy the MTA and likewise, students who have completed an associate's degree should be allowed to return later to complete the MTA.
- Students should not be required to be enrolled at a sending institution during the semester they request an MTA evaluation.

Communicating the MTA within the Sending Institution

Sending institutions should advise students about the MTA as early as possible and include information about it in catalogs and other transfer publications. In many cases, if planned early, specific pre-program requirements or other required courses at the receiving institution may be integrated into the MTA requirements. The MTA does not exempt students from the requirements in their major, minor or other bachelor degree requirements. Having information about curriculum and graduation requirements will help students make wise decisions in selecting courses for completing the MTA. Some things your institution can do to improve advising for students using the MTA are listed below:

- Provide information about the MTA on your institution's website. Include an explanation of the policies and processes for completing the MTA at your institution and steps for requesting the MTA evaluation.
- Students should be encouraged to contact representatives from the institution(s) where they are considering attendance in order to determine which MTA courses would be the best fit for the receiving institution.

- Provide links to receiving institutions' transfer guides and program listings on your transfer website so students can investigate the MTA and the bachelor's degree requirements they are pursuing.
- Provide MTA workshops for students to teach them how to maximize the use of credits by choosing courses for the MTA that also satisfy a program requirement. If a student has not chosen a program major, he/she should be advised to pick MTA courses that are compatible with the field(s) being considered.
- Make sure students know when they should request an MTA evaluation.
- Provide annual training sessions for advisors and faculty on the MTA and any changes in your institution's approved MTA courses and policies.
- MTA training should be included in regularly scheduled student-service meetings.
- Require that the discussion of a new course's compatibility with the MTA is a regular part of the course approval process, which will ensure that your faculty and administrators are more aware of the MTA and its role in student success.

Communicating the MTA with Your Receiving Partner Institutions

As sending institutions develop new courses and change their programs and degrees, MTA course lists and policies should be updated accordingly. These changes should be communicated with partner institutions.

- Invite your receiving partner institutions to orientations, information sessions, transfer fairs and other collaborative events to keep them updated.
- Publish a list of courses used to satisfy the MTA categories and other information about completing the MTA in your catalog and on your website.
- Work with your partner institutions to include the MTA in their transfer guides and articulation agreements.
- Let your partners know when students are having a problem with transferring the MTA to them or experiencing any other difficulties with their transfer policies.
- Be sure to maintain your institution's list of approved courses for the MTA on the Michigan Transfer Network.

Receiving Institutions: Implementing the Michigan Transfer Agreement

Determining Degree Requirements that are Satisfied by the MTA

One of the guiding principles of the agreement is to promote transparency among institutions and ensure accurate transfer information for students. In this spirit, institutions must clearly identify the lower level general education course requirements that are satisfied by the completion of the MTA. This may consist of all of an institution's lower level general education requirements or a subset. Final recommendations submitted to the legislature state that the thirty credit hours of lower-level general education from the sending institution will be accepted as a block of 30 credit hours by the receiving institution.

Receiving institutions may have general education requirements that go beyond the coursework covered by the MTA. It is not the intent of the MTA to dictate the general education requirements of receiving institutions, nor does it expect that every institution waive all general education requirements

for students who have successfully completed the MTA at another institution. To uphold the integrity and spirit of the agreement, it is best if any additional course requirements outside of the scope of the MTA be clearly identified. In addition, students should be allowed to complete any additional lower level general education coursework at the sending institution. Any additional requirements should be applicable to all students (native/transfer).

Major, minor, and other degree requirements are not exempted by the MTA. However, students may satisfy multiple requirements with courses completed for the transfer agreement, sometimes called double-counting. Students will need advising and catalog information to determine what major and minor requirements may be completed at a sending institution.

Some academic programs may have general education requirements that are comprised of mostly math and science courses. In those cases, it is incumbent upon academic advisors to guide students for whom the MTA may not be the best fit.

Non-Student Focused Practices

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

- A practice that does not allow students to complete the MTA once a student has enrolled at the receiving institution
- Any transfer policy that is unwritten and known only by word of mouth
- A complicated general education requirement that is likely to be misunderstood
- Requiring additional requirements of non-native students that are not required of native students.

Implementing a Process for Accepting the MTA

While it is the sending institution's responsibility for certifying the completion of the MTA, the receiving institutions will determine the equivalence and applicability of individual courses within the MTA in meeting additional major, minor, degree and other graduation requirements. Courses should not be individually evaluated to ensure the MTA endorsement, as that has already been done by the sending institution.

Receiving institutions should have a process to communicate that the MTA has been satisfied to appropriate employees within the institution, especially those who advise students or determine if requirements are satisfied. This information should be included in the student records system and displayed on the institution's transcript, if possible. Accepting the MTA 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 receiving institutions are listed below:

- Indicate that the MTA has been satisfied on the transferred courses section of the student transcript.
- Indicate that the MTA is satisfied on a note screen in the student records system, where it can be viewed by all staff.
- Indicate that the MTA has been satisfied on the student audit in the student records system. This should be widely available to those at the institution, especially those who advise students or determine if their requirements are satisfied early in the process.

- Indicate that the MTA 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 the MTA 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 MTA.

Communicating the MTA within the Receiving Institution

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, degree, and other graduation requirements. Advisors should be trained to ask and answer questions about the MTA.

Students often receive their initial advising before their final transcripts are sent to the receiving institution, and many do not realize they need to ask for an MTA evaluation at the sending institution. Because of this, students need to be asked whether they are intending to complete the MTA at their previous institution(s). If a student is unsure, advisors should be able to explain the MTA and tell the student if he/she may be close to satisfying it.

- Include information about the MTA in transfer student orientation sessions.
- MTA training should be included in regularly scheduled student services meetings.
- Provide training opportunities regarding the MTA for faculty, advisors, and academic administrators.
- Provide an MTA page on your transfer website with an explanation of your institution's policies and processes for accepting the MTA. Provide a link to the official MACRAO website.
- Advisors should consider utilizing reverse transfer when applicable.

Communicating the MTA with Your Sending Partner Institutions

An important aspect to helping students transfer with the MTA is maintaining healthy relationships with partner institutions. Open communication can reduce the road blocks students encounter in using the MTA to transfer into a receiving institution.

As receiving institutions revise their general education requirements, they should update their information related to the general education courses satisfied by the successful completion of the MTA and any other policies accordingly. These changes should be communicated with sending partner institutions.

- Include updates on the MTA in annual meetings with partner institution advisors.
- Invite faculty and deans from partner institutions to information sessions and other events to keep them updated, or offer to go to their campus to hold a session.
- Work with your partner institutions to include MTA information in their transfer guides and articulation agreements and make a notation in publications that may be viewed by students.
- Let your partners know when students from their institution are having problems using the MTA or if students are experiencing any other difficulties with any of their transfer policies.
- Let your partner institutions know your institution's MTA resource person(s) if they need to contact them.
- Keep your institution's participation in the agreement up-to-date on the official MACRAO website.

Sending and Receiving Institutional Responsibilities

For the block transfer to work seamlessly for students, it is essential for institutions to keep course equivalencies that satisfy the MTA up-to-date and readily available on college, university, and Michigan Transfer Network websites.

2016 Updates

The MTA 2.0 Ad Hoc Committee was established in an effort to address topics that were unable to be discussed and/or resolved during the Agreement's initial development and implementation. Based on the Committee's work, the following updates have been added to this handbook.

1. A course geared towards a specific career, and uses it in the title (e.g., Mathematics for Teachers), is to be treated as an occupational course; thus, it cannot be applied towards the MTA.
2. Out of state credit is applicable towards the MTA when deemed appropriate by the sending institution.
3. Dual enrollment credit is applicable towards the MTA when deemed appropriate by the sending institution.
4. Advanced Placement (AP) credit is applicable towards the MTA when deemed appropriate by the sending institution; however, the receiving institution may determine transferability contingent upon its current AP acceptance policy. It is incumbent upon sending institutions to advise transferring students accordingly.

Additional areas of prior learning are not applicable to the MTA at this time (e.g., International Baccalaureate-IB, College-Level Examination Program-CLEP, DANTES Subject Standardized Test-DSST, etc.).

Furthermore, while not mandatory, the MTA 2.0 Ad Hoc Committee encourages colleges/universities to consider becoming both an MTA sending and receiving institution.

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 is 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.

An **Articulation Agreement** is a formal, written document 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.).

A **credit hour** is an academic unit of measure used for completion of courses and programs of study.

Distribution Requirements are a set of categories of academic disciplines from which students select from a list of courses to satisfy the requirements.

Double count refers to the use of a limited number of credit hours towards satisfying multiple graduation requirements.

Equivalency is 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 is the program of liberal arts requirements that is included in all degree programs at an institution. It may have differentiation based on a degree or major, but general education coursework typically includes core skills and introduction to a variety of disciplines, such as social science, humanities, and natural science.

MACRAO is the acronym for the Michigan Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, which is the Michigan regional member of AACRAO, the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers.

The **MACRAO Agreement** is a Michigan statewide agreement, developed by MACRAO, that is designed to facilitate the transfer of general education requirements from participating community colleges to participating four-year colleges and universities. Participating four-year institutions could opt not to fully participate in the MACRAO Agreement by stipulating limitations through provisos.

The **MACRAO stamp** is an indicator on a transcript identifying that a student has successfully completed the course requirements to satisfy the MACRAO Agreement.

The **Michigan Transfer Agreement (MTA)** is a Michigan statewide agreement modeled from the original MACRAO Agreement, and is designed to facilitate the transfer of general education requirements from participating community colleges to participating four-year colleges and universities. Four-year institutions cannot stipulate provisos under the MTA. This agreement was developed by the State of Michigan's Committee on the Transferability of Core College Courses and maintained and updated from time to time by MACRAO.

The **MTA stamp** is an indicator on a transcript identifying a student has successfully completed the course requirements to satisfy the MTA.

Occupational (vocational) courses are those classes devoted to educating based on occupation or employment in preparing students for specific trades, crafts, and careers. These courses typically teach job-specific skills and training that are not generally accepted as part of a liberal arts education. Examples of occupational courses include office administration, apprenticeships, etc. Occupational courses cannot be considered in fulfilling MTA distribution requirements.

Receiving institutions refers to MTA participating four-year colleges and universities.

Reverse transfer refers to the transfer of credits back to a sending institution after a student has already transferred in order to complete a degree, certificate, or the MTA.

Sending institution refers to MTA participating community colleges.

Studio and performing arts courses include classes that are more applied and pragmatic in nature, as opposed to courses devoted to a broad survey of the arts designed to sensitize students to the variety of art forms and their importance in contemporary civilization. Examples of studio and performing arts courses include drawing, sculpture, acting, etc. Studio and performing arts courses cannot be considered in fulfilling MTA distribution requirements.

Swirling refers to a student who has attended multiple institutions without successfully completing a credential.

A **transcript** is 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 refers to the review of a student's transcript from another college to determine coursework equivalencies and credit to be accepted at the receiving institution.

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