

## A Message to Students

Since our founding in 1971, SUNY Empire State College has worked closely with our students to design a custom degree program that matches their goals and fits their lifestyle. Whether you're raising a family, serving in the military, or holding down a job, you deserve a college experience that is uniquely yours. In the coming weeks, and throughout your time at SUNY Empire, you will work closely with an academic mentor to determine what and how you study and ensure you engage in a meaningful and relevant academic experience.

While at SUNY Empire, you'll work closely with an academic mentor to design a degree program that accounts for your previously earned college credits as well as prior professional and life experiences. In addition, the planning process will involve research, consultations with professionals in your field, and analytic and reflective writing. By merging past experiences with future ambitions, you and your mentor will develop a meaningful degree program that aligns with your dreams and goals. In addition to discussions with your mentor, the planning process will involve consultations with professionals in your field, research, and analytic and reflective writing. The college has numerous resources that will help you plan your degree, and we are here to support you throughout the process.

Along the way, SUNY Empire will support you with numerous resources that will help you plan your degree and advance you toward your aspirations. Our goal is to provide you with an academic experience that is deeply rewarding and relevant.

SUNY Empire's unique formula for higher education has worked for more than 92,000 alumni, who have gone on to thrive in virtually every industry. I'm confident your experience at SUNY Empire will be richly gratifying and prepare you for the next chapter of your life, whether it's a promotion, a new career, or the satisfaction of advancing your knowledge.

I encourage you to make the most of your experience and time with SUNY Empire. I look forward to seeing where your studies lead you.

Sincerely,

Nathan Gonyea  
Officer in Charge

## Important Information Regarding the Use of the Student Degree Planning Guide

Welcome to the Student Degree Planning Guide. The following guide will assist you through the degree-planning process.

1. There is a version of the Student Degree Planning Guide available at [www.esc.edu/studentdpguide](http://www.esc.edu/studentdpguide). The Web version will always contain the most up-to-date information and should be consulted regularly to make sure you have the current information. In addition, the Web version will have more and more resources available over time.
2. The Empire State College policies and area of study (AOS) guidelines appear only on the Web. This way, there is only one version available to reduce the chance of students and mentors using outdated versions. Policies can be found at <https://www.esc.edu/policies/>.
3. The AOS guidelines can be found at <https://www.esc.edu/degrees-programs/undergraduate-aos/> or through MyESC, click on Degree Planning (Undergraduate), and the AOS guidelines are on the right-hand side, Areas of Study (AOS) Guidelines under Degree Planning Resources. Links to both policies and guidelines also are included in the web version of the guide.
4. The format of the Student Degree Planning Guide parallels the degree-planning process and is organized into three sections: Important Degree Planning Concepts, Advanced Standing Credits and Degree Program Portfolio and Approval Process.
5. There is a Web-based-only guide called [Individualized Prior Learning Assessment \(iPLA\): A Guide for Students](#). Students, mentors and evaluators will find a wealth of information, from the logistics of developing and submitting an iPLA request to how to articulate college-level learning.

### Web Addresses

Student Degree Planning Guide  
[www.esc.edu/studentdpguide](http://www.esc.edu/studentdpguide)

Area of Study Guidelines  
[www.esc.edu/AOS](http://www.esc.edu/AOS)

Individualized Prior Learning Assessment  
(iPLA): A Guide for Students  
[www.esc.edu/iPLAguide](http://www.esc.edu/iPLAguide)

Empire State College Policies  
[www.esc.edu/Policies](http://www.esc.edu/Policies)

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# PART I – Important Degree Planning Concepts

## INTRODUCTION

At Empire State College, you plan your own undergraduate degree. You will use guidelines developed by Empire State College and requirements established by the State University of New York to plan your degree to fit your goals. You need to complete the degree-planning process within your first 32 credits of enrollment, or prior to your final 16 credits for your degree, whichever comes first.

Empire State College is part of the State University of New York (SUNY) system. That means that your degree from Empire State College meets the same degree standards as all other SUNY institutions and is competitive with other degrees granted by a regionally accredited institution.

## Chapter 1: Planning Your Degree

You work with a mentor to design your degree. You also will take a credit bearing educational planning study in which you learn how a degree is structured, determine how your prior learning will fit into your degree and plan the studies you need to complete the degree.

As you plan your degree, you and your mentor explore relevant questions. For example:

- What are my learning goals?
- What have I already learned?
- What do I still need to learn to advance toward my goals?

The degree planning process results in your degree program portfolio, which has three main components:

1. A degree program plan showing all of the studies you have taken and plan to take to complete your degree.
2. A rationale essay explaining the reasoning and research behind your choices and how you have organized your degree.
3. Supporting documentation (e.g., transcripts, prior learning assessment recommendations) to verify credits you have acquired outside of the college.

## Why Plan Your Degree?

Empire State College has a student-centered philosophy that is grounded in principles and practices of adult education; students learn best when they are personally invested in the learning process.

The college believes that your degree should develop from your educational goals and chosen field of study and that you should have the opportunity to build upon your previous knowledge. By planning your own degree, you:

- Have a voice in what you study and flexibility to match your degree to your goals.
- Have an opportunity to pursue college credit through prior learning assessment and use previously earned credit from other college transcripts, advancing you more quickly toward your degree.
- Create a degree that is current in your chosen field.

You work with a faculty mentor to clarify your educational goals, decide on your learning path and create your own plan of study that matches your goals within the context of larger academic and professional expectations for your type of degree.

The degree you design might look like degrees that students pursue at other colleges, or it could be quite different. The most important concept is that your degree really becomes “yours.” You may decide to pursue one of Empire’s structured degree programs, in which case you will have to follow a more defined curriculum. However, there is still the opportunity to include prior learning into your degree program.

## The Larger Degree Planning Process – Working with Your Mentor

Most students ask, “Do I need to plan my degree first in order to know what to study?” The answer is “not necessarily.” You and your mentor will identify initial studies that make sense given your educational goals and needs, studies that will be appropriate for your degree. The process of developing your degree is as important as the final degree itself. Degree planning is a process that develops, evolves, or unfolds as you work with your mentor. Your mentor’s role is to facilitate the reflection and exploration involved in planning your degree by listening, asking questions and helping you gain perspective on your academic experience.

Through the degree program planning process, you and your mentor will discuss:

- The nature and academic expectations of college degrees.
- The professional expectations for your degree.
- How to design a degree that considers your goals and degree expectations.

## Planning for Transfer Within SUNY

If you plan to begin at Empire State College and later transfer to another SUNY campus, SUNY Transfer Paths will help you identify core course work that will prepare you for multiple SUNY campuses. Transfer Paths summarize the common lower division requirements shared by all SUNY campuses for similar majors within most disciplines. Just select the Transfer Path discipline that is closest to your area of study and work with your mentor to plan and follow the core course sequence designed to ensure a seamless transfer. This is especially important for students pursuing an associate degree who wish to transfer to another SUNY campus to complete a bachelor’s degree in one of the Transfer Paths. For full details on the Transfer Paths and guaranteed transfer courses, please go to: <http://www.suny.edu/attend/get-started/transfer-students/suny-transfer-paths/>.

## The Degree Planning Study

The degree-planning study is Empire State College’s one requirement for all undergraduate students. The course is normally called Educational Planning, although it may also be titled Planning and Finalizing the Degree, or Academic Planning.

You discuss with your mentor the best time for you to enroll in the credit-bearing degree planning study, based on 1) the number of credits you already have toward your degree, 2) the timeline you choose to follow and 3) your own need to plan.

When pursuing an undergraduate degree, whether it’s in one of our structured degree programs or a degree in one of our 12 areas of study, you will work with your mentor in an educational planning study or course, through which you will create a plan for your degree.

The degree planning course involves:

- Identifying your educational goals
- Researching the Empire State College area of study guidelines, SUNY and Empire State College degree requirements and SUNY General Education Requirements, all of which describe academic expectations for degrees.
- Researching the skills and knowledge expectations of your profession.
- Choosing which transfer credits to use in your degree.
- Deciding whether to request credit for prior learning gained through experiences such as work, training or self-study.
- Deciding upon and finalizing the specific components of your degree.
- Writing your rationale essay to explain the thinking and research behind the decisions you made for your degree. Your rationale essay is used during the degree review process by members of a faculty degree review committee to understand why you designed your degree as you did. You and your mentor will work (and rework) your rationale essay, which is an important part of the degree planning course work.

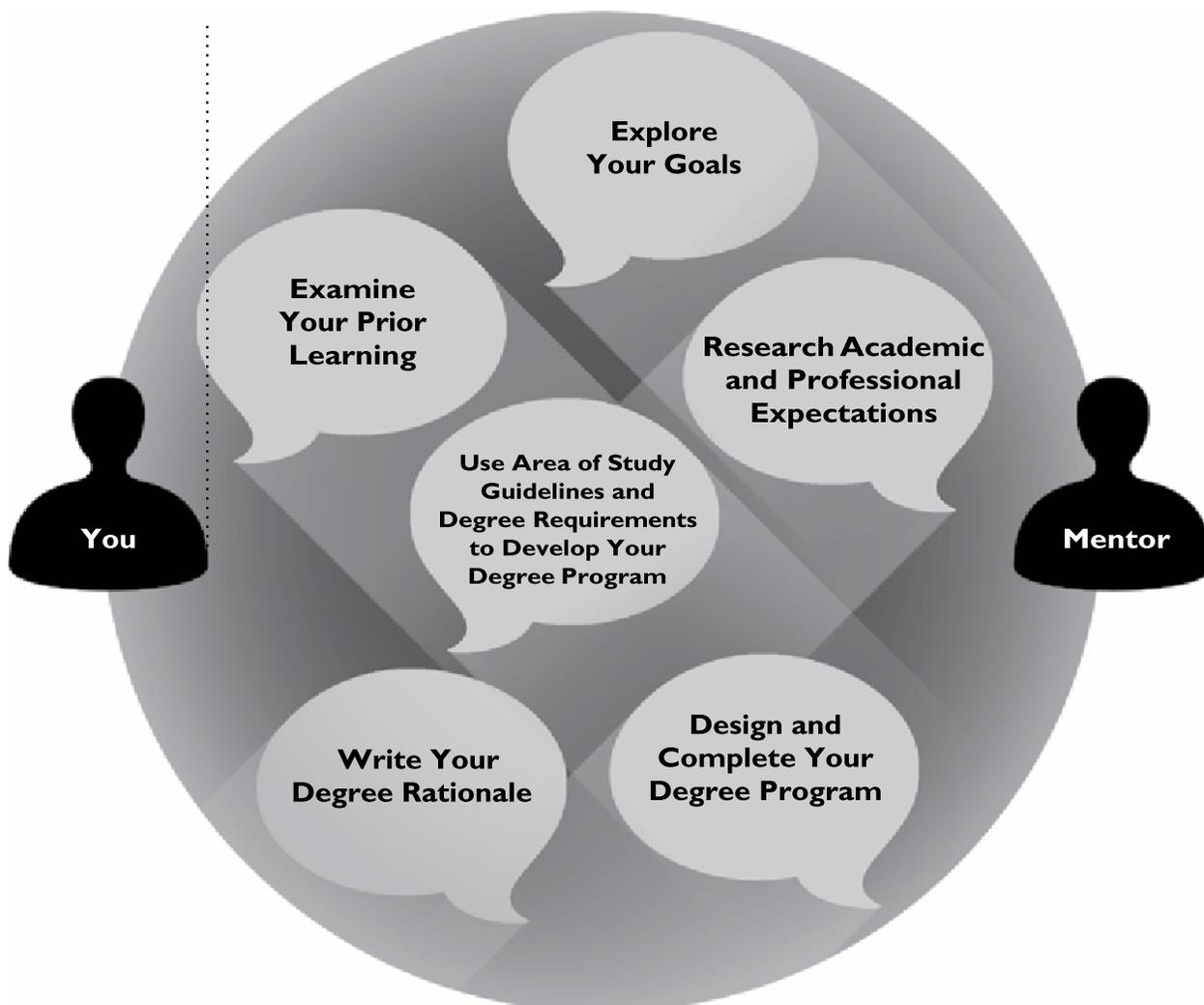
Empire State College policy states that your degree program must be ready for review and approval within the first 32 credits of enrollment or prior to the final 16 credits for the degree, whichever comes sooner.

Doing so ensures adequate time to make revisions and incorporate suggestions of the faculty committee that reviews your degree program.

## The Degree Approval Process

Once you develop your degree program plan and rationale essay as described in Chapter 8, these documents proceed through review and approval processes, both by a faculty committee and then, at a college level. Both reviews examine the academic soundness of your degree program plan. Once the degree is concurred (approved), it is your map for completing your studies at the college.

## You and Your Mentor Work Together to Design and Complete Your Degree Program



### EXPLORE MY GOALS

What are my learning goals?

What are my professional goals?

What have I already learned?

What do I still need to learn to advance towards my goals?

Chapters 1 and 2

### WHAT IS MY PRIOR LEARNING?

Transcripts

Professional licenses and certifications

Military course work

Volunteer and other personal experiences

Professional Learning

Chapters 7 and 10-15

### RESEARCH ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL EXPECTATIONS

What will my future employer expect from me?

How do my goals fit within academic and professional expectations?

How will I be prepared for possible graduate study?

Chapter 2

### USE AREA OF STUDY GUIDELINES AND DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

How does my degree fit into my chosen area of study?

How do my goals fit within my chosen area of study?

How does my proposed concentration fit into my chosen area of study?

Chapters 4, 5 and 6

### WRITE YOUR DEGREE RATIONALE

Why are you seeking this degree?

How will your degree program help you meet your academic, personal and professional goals?

How does your degree program fulfill the SUNY and Empire State College degree requirements?

How does your degree satisfy the area of study and concentration guidelines?

Are there unique aspects of your degree program that you should explain in the rationale?

Chapter 8

## Chapter 2: The Nature of College Degrees

College degrees are awarded in specific areas within a field. At Empire State College, these areas are called your “area of study.” You further define your degree by indicating a focus to your studies; this is called your “concentration.” You will design your degree program within a concentration that best reflects your goals and learning.

Your degree belongs to an area of study, often related to an academic discipline and/or a professional area, which is situated within a larger field of knowledge. These have specific expectations and applications that represent a historical perspective and development within that field. In addition, fields of knowledge are constantly growing and changing. The advantage of designing your own degree is that you decide what to include in your degree and how your degree is related to a particular field of knowledge.

### Your Academic and Professional Goals

The degree-planning process provides you with the opportunity to design your degree to:

- Learn about academic and professional expectations in your field.
- Match your goals to these expectations.
- Be current in your field.

### Academic Expectations at Empire State College

Every degree from Empire State College represents how a student has demonstrated knowledge and competency in broad general areas and in more field-specific areas. The different types of expectations and requirements will overlap, and you will find that many of your studies will address more than one of these areas. Part of the degree design process is to decide how your learning addresses these academic and professional expectations along with SUNY’s, and the college’s, degree requirements. Empire State College’s specific expectations for certain types of degrees are published in the college’s area of study guidelines, which you can read more about in Chapter 4 and at <https://www.esc.edu/degrees-programs/undergraduate-aos/>.

SUNY and Empire State College have developed academic expectations and requirements to guide your degree program development. These are:

- Empire State College learning goals (see next page).
- Degree types (see Chapter 3).
- Area of study and concentration guidelines (see Chapter 4).
- SUNY General Education Requirements (see Chapter 5).
- Liberal arts and sciences credit amounts by degree type (see Chapter 6).
- Introductory and advanced-level learning (see Chapter 6).
- Advanced standing (credits you transfer in) and Empire State College credits (see Chapter 7).

You will balance the academic expectations and requirements to design your degree.

## Empire State College Learning Goals

Empire State College's learning goals serve as a vital link between the college's historic mission, the current context of rapid educational change and the future of our students living and working in a global society, where knowledge and learning are urgently important. These learning goals represent the college's academic expectations for all students, regardless of your area of study. Keep these learning goals in mind as you plan your studies for your degree. The learning goals explain the skills our graduates will gain during their studies with ESC.

<b>Empire State College Learning Goal</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Active Learning	Assess and build upon previous learning and experiences to pursue new learning, <u>independently and in collaboration with others.</u>
Breadth and depth of knowledge	Cultivate a broad, interdisciplinary understanding in the liberal arts and sciences, as well as expertise in a particular field.
Social responsibility	Engage in ethical reasoning, and reflect on issues such as democratic citizenship, <u>diversity, social justice and environmental sustainability, both locally and globally.</u>
Communication	Express and receive ideas effectively, in multiple contexts and through multiple strategies.
Critical thinking and problem solving	Evaluate, analyze, synthesize and critique key concepts and experiences and apply diverse perspectives to find creative solutions to problems concerning human <u>behavior, society and the natural world.</u>
Quantitative literacy	Read, interpret, use and present quantitative information effectively.
Information and digital media literacy	Critically access, evaluate, understand, create and share information using a range of collaborative technologies to advance learning, as well as personal and professional development.

## Chapter 3:

# Degree Levels and Types

One of your first decisions in designing your degree is to decide which type of degree you will pursue. The college offers associate, bachelor's, master's degrees, and a doctoral degree as well as certificate programs (this guide focuses on associate and bachelor's degrees).

### Associate Degrees

An associate degree is the equivalent to two years of full-time study and totals a minimum of 64 credits. Students can design an associate degree within one of the areas of study, and with one exception, at least 24 credits of an associate degree must be earned at Empire State College. The exception is the Associate in Arts and Associate in Science in General Studies. For each of these associate degrees, only 12 credits are required at Empire State College. The associate degrees offered at Empire State College are:

- Associate in Arts (A.A.)
- Associate in Science (A.S.)

Associate degree programs are generally expected to include a variety of foundational and general education studies that help develop and strengthen basic academic skills, such as college-level reading and writing, quantitative reasoning, analysis, critical thinking and independent study.

You may choose between two associate degree formats:

- With a concentration (a two-column degree program).
- Without a concentration (an AA or AS in General Studies)

Associate degrees without a concentration are expected to be broad and include a sampling of studies from the arts and sciences, although some technical and professional studies also are appropriate.

Associate degree concentrations should balance studies between the depth of the concentration and breadth of general learning.

### Bachelor's Degrees

A bachelor's degree is equivalent to four years of full-time study and totals a minimum of 124 credits, with at least 31 credits earned at Empire State College. The bachelor's degrees offered at Empire State College are:

- Bachelor of Arts (B.A.)
- Bachelor of Science (B.S.)
- Bachelor of Science in Nursing (B.S.N.)
- Bachelor of Professional Studies (B.P.S.) \*

\* The B.P.S. is available only in these registered areas of study: The Arts; Business, Management and Economics; Community and Human Services; Interdisciplinary Studies; Labor Studies; Public Affairs; and Technology.

Bachelor's degree programs are expected to include:

- Introductory and foundational studies.
- A broad sampling of different academic topics and general education studies.
- Advanced-level studies, whose topics are examined with greater complexity, sophistication and depth. At least 45 credits of the bachelor's degree program must be at the advanced level with a minimum of 24 of those 45 credits in the concentration.

### Undergraduate Certificates

Undergraduate certificates provide focused study to support a specific career interest and are applicable to at least one undergraduate area of study. Associate and bachelor's degree program plans may include a certificate. Currently, Empire State College offers undergraduate certificates in Business and Environmental Sustainability, Manufacturing Management, Healthcare Management, Global Indigenous Knowledge, Entrepreneurship, and Crisis Prevention and Intervention. Go to [www.esc.edu/degrees-programs/undergraduate-certificates/](http://www.esc.edu/degrees-programs/undergraduate-certificates/) for more information.

### Combined Bachelor's/Master's Degrees

Empire State College offers combined bachelor's/master's degree programs for highly qualified, current SUNY Empire State College undergraduate students who wish to continue to a master's degree. Students accepted into the combined bachelor's/master's degree program will be able to take specified master's-level courses during their bachelor's degree at the undergraduate rate and have them count towards their degree. These programs may accelerate a student's time to degree completion and reduce the cost of completing the master's degree. Details about these programs are available on the web at <https://www.esc.edu/graduate-studies/combined-programs/>.

## Graduate Degrees and Advanced Certificates

Empire State College also offers master's degrees and advanced certificate programs. For more information about these programs, go to <https://www.esc.edu/graduate-studies/advanced-certificates/>.

Some professions expect a degree or certificate beyond the bachelor's degree. The college recommends that you research the educational requirements of your chosen profession and keep them in mind as you design your undergraduate degree.

## Degree Types

As you build your degree, the proportion of liberal arts and sciences or applied studies will determine your degree type. The Associate in Arts (A.A.) and Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degrees have more liberal arts and sciences studies. Liberal arts and sciences studies refers to courses that deal more with theory than with hands-on, professional practices, courses that provide a more general perspective of the field of study (e.g., a course in psychology deals with theory, whereas a course in management deals more with professional practice. See the chapter on Liberal Arts and Sciences Credit for a fuller explanation).

The Associate in Science (A.S.) and Bachelor of Science (B.S.) degrees have more applied studies, providing a focused perspective of the field. You also can choose a Bachelor of Professional Studies (B.P.S.), which consists of more applied studies focused toward a profession. Your educational and professional goals will help you determine which degree type you will want to design.

Credits listed on your degree program may fulfill more than one degree requirement. For example, one study could be a liberal arts and sciences study at an advanced level that also meets a SUNY General Education Requirement.

## SUNY EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE ASSOCIATE DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Degree	Total credits	Minimum credit earned at Empire State College	Minimum liberal arts and sciences credits (see Chapter 6)	Minimum SUNY general education credits (see Chapter 5)	Educational planning credits (see Chapter 1)
A.A.	64	24*	48	30	4-8
A.S.	64	24*	32	30	4-8

\*Students enrolled in the General Studies program will only need to complete 12 credits at Empire State College

## SUNY EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE BACHELOR'S DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Degree	Total credits	Minimum credit earned at Empire State College	Minimum liberal arts and sciences credits (see Chapter 6)	Minimum SUNY general education credits (see Chapter 5)	Minimum advanced-level credits in your concentration (see Chapter 6)	Minimum advanced-level credits in your program (see Chapter 6)	Educational planning credits (see Chapter 1)
B.A.	124	31	94	30	24	45	4-8
B.S.	124	31	62	30	24	45	4-8
B.S.N.	124	31	62	30	41	45	4-8
B.P.S.	124	31	32	30	24	45	4-8

## Registered Areas of Study and Structured Degree Programs

Empire State College has broad registered areas of study and several structured degree programs within which to grant degrees. You shape your degree program based on the guidelines within the area of study or the requirements of the structured program. Each AOS has guidelines that describe the college's general expectations for the academic content of concentrations within each area of study. For more information on the areas of study and concentrations see Chapter 4 or go to [www.esc.edu/AOS](http://www.esc.edu/AOS).

## Restricted Concentration Titles

New York state education law regulates certain kinds of professional education, and Empire State College **cannot** offer concentration titles in certain professional areas. More information on restricted concentration titles can be found in the supporting materials section at [www.esc.edu/studentdpguide](http://www.esc.edu/studentdpguide).

New York state has additional regulations for a concentration in education or a degree in accounting. Please go to the Web at [www.esc.edu/AOS](http://www.esc.edu/AOS) for more information on restrictions and requirements. Certification/licensure in education and accounting require additional education beyond the bachelor's degree. All students within the Educational Studies area of study or pursuing an Accounting degree, or who plan to acquire one of these certifications, must complete a certification disclaimer form indicating that you understand you will need more education to reach your goal. These forms are located on the college's website at [www.esc.edu/studentdpguide](http://www.esc.edu/studentdpguide).

## Changing Your Degree Program or Area of Study

During the degree planning process, you may find that the degree type and/or area of study that you originally planned no longer fits your educational goals. Or, you may find that you would like to pursue more than one degree. For example, many students who enroll for a bachelor's degree find that it makes sense to complete an associate degree along the way. If you are considering these types of decisions, you need to consult with your mentor to understand the procedures and implications.

## Chapter 4:

### Area of Study and Concentration Guidelines

The area of study guidelines:

- Help you structure your degree with your goals in mind.
- Offer general points to consider in designing a degree in your field.
- Identify the competencies and the knowledge expectations of your academic and/or professional fields so that your degree is current.
- Identify multiple courses and multiple ways to meet knowledge expectations.
- Allow maximum flexibility so that you can meet your educational objectives.

The AOS guidelines are not standard curriculum, however, students enrolled in a structured degree program will need to follow degree program requirements closely.

As you begin planning your degree, your mentor will help you interpret the guidelines. When your program is submitted for approval it goes through faculty and college-level review processes and the guidelines will be used as the basis for the review of your degree design and, where relevant, your concentration. When you write your degree program rationale, you explain how your studies address the area of study guidelines, as well as the college's learning goals and degree requirements.

A.A., A.S., B.A. and B.S. degrees are granted in one of the following registered areas of study:

- The Arts
- Business, Management and Economics
- Community and Human Services
- Cultural Studies
- Educational Studies
- Historical Studies
- Human Development
- Interdisciplinary/Multidisciplinary Studies
- Labor Studies\*
- Public Affairs
- Science, Mathematics and Technology
- Social Science

#### Area of Study and Concentration

Guidelines can be found at:

[www.esc.edu/AOS](http://www.esc.edu/AOS).

Select an area of study and

click Detailed Guidelines.

\* Offered only at The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies and through distance education.

The B.P.S. is awarded only for appropriate degree programs with concentrations that fall within the following areas:

The Arts

Business, Management and Economics

Community and Human Services

Interdisciplinary Studies

Labor Studies (offered only at The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies and through distance education)

Public Affairs

Technology\*\* (not in Science or Mathematics)

\*\*B.P.S. degrees are not permitted in Science, Mathematics and Technology, but rather the registered area would be Technology.

Together you and your mentor design a degree after you determine which type of degree and registered area of study is the most appropriate for your individual needs and goals.

### Structured Undergraduate Degree Program Options

Students enrolled in a structured program will need to follow degree program requirements carefully. For a fuller description of structured programs, go to the Empire State College catalog at <https://catalog.esc.edu/undergraduate/areas-study-degrees-certificates/>.

B.S. in Accounting

B.S. in Addiction Studies  
B.S. in Allied Health  
B.S. in Business Administration  
B.S. in Human Resource Management  
B.S. in Management  
RN to BSN  
B.A. in Psychology  
B.S. in Security Studies  
B.A. in Liberal Arts

## The Area of Study Guidelines Frameworks

Each area of study guideline is written broadly to represent a body of knowledge expected within that field. You will use the guidelines to develop your degree so that it includes both expected knowledge and currency in the field. The guidelines identify knowledge expectations that are included in multiple courses and in multiple ways and contain course maps to assist students in the selection of studies. Degrees fall into one of five general structures or frameworks:

1. **Disciplinary:** a program of study guided by the existing framework of a discipline. Degrees designed around this framework are similar in design to programs of study at other colleges, such as economics, physics or psychology.
2. **Interdisciplinary:** a program of study that simultaneously integrates two or more disciplines. Degrees designed around this framework draw upon the methods and bodies of knowledge from multiple disciplines to think across boundaries, such as women and health.
3. **Problem-oriented:** a program of study designed around a problem. Degrees designed around this framework examine a significant issue in depth from multiple perspectives, such as poverty.
4. **Professional/vocational:** a program of study that focuses on acquiring knowledge and skills needed for specific career performance and applications. Degrees designed around this framework explore the conceptual foundations of the profession, the role of the professional in that career and the relations between the profession and society at large, such as managing in a technical environment.
5. **Thematic:** a program of study focusing on a particular theme or set of ideas. Degrees designed around this framework trace the development of theme or idea or explore various aspects of a theme to examine its cultural and intellectual influence, such as issues in American health care.

A bachelor's degree concentration requires in-depth learning and a degree of competency in an academic area thus it includes evidence of progression from introductory to advanced-level learning with a minimum of 24 advanced-level credits in the concentration.

## Concentration Guidelines

In addition to the broader, general area of study guidelines, several areas of study have developed concentration guidelines that have specific meaning in the academic and professional worlds. There are a variety of concentrations that you can design that will fit into an area of study. Some concentrations may be pre-structured, some may have clear guidelines, while others may be individualized to your own needs and interests. You will need to research what a degree with this concentration might include, and this is where you may benefit from consulting with your mentor and from the flexibility and versatility of Empire State College degrees.

Many degrees that are designed around a disciplinary or professional/vocational framework use established concentration titles. For example, in the Business, Management and Economics area of study guidelines, there are structured programs for business administration, management, and Human Resource Management. In the Science, Mathematics and Technology area of study guidelines, there are specific concentration titles for biology, mathematics, information systems, computer science and more.

In addition to the concentration titles provided in the AOS guidelines, you can create your own concentration title using a disciplinary or professional/vocational framework, as long as the title is clear about the learning represented in the degree. If you are designing your degree around an interdisciplinary, problem-oriented or thematic framework, you also will be designing your own concentration title. Many students decide to develop their own concentration titles for flexibility, especially when they have significant advanced standing credits. For example, if you choose to design a degree in business without including several of the topics listed in one of the concentration guidelines, you might select another framework and develop a title that better describes your degree program. Just remember, your title is “truth in packaging;” be sure to choose a title that describes your learning well.

## Credits in the Concentration

The number of credits in a concentration varies with student needs and interests. Because the concentration requires serious, focused learning

and implies a degree of competency in an area, the amount of learning in a concentration should not be less than 24-36 credits of study for a bachelor's degree. Concentrations that are larger than 50 percent of the degree should be examined carefully, to be sure the learning is appropriately integrated. Large concentrations are acceptable, if the degree program satisfies the college's educational objectives for undergraduate degrees and meets SUNY expectations regarding liberal arts content.

## Double Concentrations

Double concentrations are possible in bachelor's degrees, when appropriate, but are not possible in an associate degree. When a degree program has a double concentration, each area must be represented by a set of integrated learning components that demonstrate progression to advanced levels of learning. Talk to your mentor if you are interested in a double concentration.

## Working With the Area of Study and Concentration Guidelines

As you plan your degree program, you have many options to consider. This may feel daunting at first, but as you move through the process, your plan will evolve. Here are some tips to get you started:

1. Write down your goals. What are your educational and professional goals?
2. Review the academic expectations in the area of study guidelines. Which ones fit your goals?
3. Research professional expectations if your goal is to plan a professionally oriented degree. What are these expectations?
4. Compare academic and professional expectations and the degree frameworks to your educational and professional goals. Should you use an established concentration guideline or develop your own concentration?

Once you have decided which guidelines to use, you need to decide how you will meet the degree requirements. Keep talking with your mentor as you make these decisions; your mentor will help you as you move through the degree-planning process. Some concentrations and degree programs also have restrictions. In addition to information in this chapter, go to the Web at [www.esc.edu/AOS](http://www.esc.edu/AOS) for more details about any restrictions on your concentration and degree titles and specifics related to degrees in accounting and education.

### **Area of Study and Concentration**

**Guidelines can be found at:**

**[www.esc.edu/AOS](http://www.esc.edu/AOS).**

**Select an area of study and**

**click Detailed Guidelines.**

## Chapter 5: General Learning and SUNY General Education Requirements

### General Learning

An Empire State College degree program must have breadth in the degree. Most degree plans have studies in the concentration and general learning. For example, a business degree will have course work in supportive areas such as sociology, history or literature, in addition to courses in business. We call these supportive courses that are not in your concentration “general learning.” Studies defined as general learning may or may not relate to your concentration, but they do add breadth to your degree program.

General learning studies provide you with the opportunity to develop general analytical and critical abilities, to take ideas from one field and apply them to another and to develop a sense of how specific studies relate to the learning involved in an entire field or academic discipline. This expectation is different from the SUNY General Education Requirement, although a study can cover both.

College degrees are intended to both broaden and deepen students’ knowledge and ability to understand and interact with others through skills and perspectives that broader learning fosters. Empire State College’s learning goals represent the college’s general learning expectations for all students, regardless of your area of study. Keep these learning goals in mind as you plan your studies for your degree.

Although each Empire State College degree program is designed to meet individual needs and goals, a strong degree program contains a reasonable balance between the concentration and general learning.

General learning creates breadth in your degree. Empire State College expects you to acquire the qualities of a broadly educated person. The purpose of a college education is both to enable you to gather information and build skills and to understand what you have learned in a broad context. You should learn to:

- Relate your learning to what you already know
- Consider and judge what you are told
- Apply what you learn in a practical and thoughtful way.

In other words, breadth means that you can:

- Demonstrate an understanding of several diverse perspectives, such as historical, literary, scientific, technological, aesthetic, ethical, international, multicultural and gender-based
- Develop an ability to apply diverse perspectives to issues concerning human behavior, society and the natural world
- Acquire the habit of critical examination, careful analysis and broad acceptance of the complexities of today’s world
- Understand other points of view and consider alternatives.

### SUNY General Education Requirements

As an Empire State College student, you have to fulfill SUNY General Education Requirements, which are designed to help you develop breadth in your degree. The SUNY General Education Requirements you need to meet are based on your matriculation date (see below for details). Currently, there are 10 general education knowledge and skills areas and two competency areas that need to be demonstrated through the studies in your degree. According to SUNY policy, 3 credits are needed to meet a general education area fully.

### SUNY GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENTS MATRICULATING SEPT. 8, 2014, OR AFTER

Degree type	Number of general education areas required	Minimum number of credits required	Specific general education areas required
Associate or Bachelor’s degree	7 out of 10	30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mathematics</li> <li>• basic communication</li> <li>• Plus 5 others</li> </ul>

## SUNY GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENTS MATRICULATING BEFORE SEPT. 8, 2014

Go to <https://www.esc.edu/degree-planning-academic-review/degree-program/student-degree-planning-guide/gen-ed-phase-in-period/> for more information.

For sample general education grids, please go to the Web at [www.esc.edu/studentdpguide](http://www.esc.edu/studentdpguide).

### SUNY General Education Knowledge and Skill Areas

#### 1. Mathematics (required)

**Students will demonstrate the ability to:**

- Interpret and draw inferences from mathematical models, such as formulas, graphs, tables and schematics.
- Represent mathematical information symbolically, visually, numerically and verbally.
- Employ quantitative methods such as arithmetic, algebra, geometry or statistics to solve problems.
- Estimate and check mathematical results for reasonableness.
- Recognize the limits of mathematical and statistical methods.

#### 2. Natural Sciences

**Students will demonstrate:**

- Understanding of the methods scientists use to explore natural phenomena, including observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence and employment of mathematical analysis.
- Application of scientific data, concepts and models in one of the natural sciences.

#### 3. Social Sciences

**Students will demonstrate:**

- Understanding of the methods social scientists use to explore social phenomena, including observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence and employment of mathematical and interpretive analysis.
- Knowledge of major concepts, models and issues of at least one discipline in the social sciences.

#### 4. American History

**Students will demonstrate:**

- Knowledge of a basic narrative of American history – political, economic, social and cultural, including knowledge of unity and diversity in American society.
- Knowledge of common institutions in American society and how they have affected different groups.
- Understanding of America's evolving relationship with the rest of the world.

#### 5. Western Civilization

**Students will:**

- Demonstrate knowledge of the development of the distinctive features of the history, institutions, economy, society, culture, etc., of Western civilization.
- Relate the development of Western civilization to that of other regions of the world.

## 6. Other World Civilizations

### Students will demonstrate:

- Knowledge of either a broad outline of world history or
- Knowledge of the distinctive features of the history, institutions, economy, society, culture, etc., of one non-Western civilization.

## 7. Humanities

### Students will demonstrate:

- Knowledge of the conventions and methods of at least one of the humanities in addition to those encompassed by other knowledge areas required by the SUNY General Education Requirements.

## 8. The Arts

### Students will demonstrate:

- Understanding of at least one principal form of artistic expression and the creative process inherent therein.

## 9. Foreign Language

### Students will demonstrate:

- Basic proficiency in the understanding and use of a foreign language.
- Knowledge of the distinctive features of culture(s) associated with the language they are studying.

## 10. Basic Communication (required)

### Students will:

- Produce coherent texts within common college-level written forms.
- Demonstrate the ability to revise and improve such texts.
- Research a topic, develop an argument and organize supporting details.
- Develop proficiency in oral discourse.
- Evaluate an oral presentation according to established criteria.

## Competencies

The following two competencies should be infused throughout the SUNY General Education Requirements:

### 1. Critical Thinking (reasoning)

#### Students will:

- Identify, analyze and evaluate arguments as they occur in their own or others' work.
- Develop well-reasoned arguments.

### 2. Information Management

#### Students will:

- Perform the basic operations of personal computer use.
- Understand and use basic research techniques.
- Locate, evaluate and synthesize information from a variety of sources.

## Who Must Meet the SUNY General Education Requirements?

All students who matriculated on or after Sept. 1, 2004, are subject to the SUNY General Education Requirements.

## How to Meet SUNY General Education Requirements

Students can meet the SUNY General Education Requirements in many ways. You should discuss your options and how to incorporate the SUNY General Education Requirements into your degree program with your mentor at an early stage to become familiar with and understand how you can meet these requirements.

You may meet the requirements through:

- Empire State College studies.
- Transcript credit from other colleges (note that transcript credit from other SUNY colleges that meet the SUNY General Education Requirements are recorded on the General Education Transfer Addendum [GETA]).
- Credit received via prior learning assessment.
- Credit evaluated by Academic Evaluation Services, Inc. (AES), Educational Credential Evaluators, Inc. (ECE), Educational Perspectives (EP) or World Education Services (WES).
- Some standardized examinations (such as CLEP, DSST, TECEP, UExcel, Advanced Placement).
- Some New York State Regents exams, with official high-school transcript documentation and a score of 85 or above on the Regents exam (mathematics – course III or mathematics B Regents, American history – partially met through United States history and government Regents, foreign language Regents).
- For foreign language, you can use New York University or other approved language-proficiency examinations or original high-school diplomas, school-leaving certificates or college transcripts from countries where the language(s) of instruction is/are other than English (maximum of 16 credits in the language(s) of instruction).

One study may be used to meet more than one general education area, except in the case of humanities. No study used to either partially or fully meet the humanities criteria can be used to meet a second requirement. Credits count only once when applying a study to more than one general education area.

## Chapter 6: Liberal Arts and Sciences and Advanced-Level Learning

For each study in your degree, you need to identify the type of learning that took place. Each study in your degree is designated as:

- Liberal arts and sciences **or** applied learning.

**And**

- Introductory **or** advanced-level learning.

Your degree must have a certain number of credits in each designation, as shown in the charts on page 10-11.

### Liberal Arts and Sciences Credits

The number of liberal arts and sciences studies that you will include in your degree is dependent on the type of degree you choose. (See the charts in Chapter 3 on pages 10-11.)

The State University of New York defines liberal arts and sciences courses as those “of a general or theoretical nature that are designed to develop judgment and understanding about human beings’ relationship to the social, cultural and natural facets of their total environment.” SUNY provides the following working definitions to determine if a study meets the liberal arts and sciences designation:

- Independent of specific application.
- Theoretical understandings as opposed to practical application.
- Breadth and scope in principle covered.
- Not specifically directed toward particular career or professional objectives.
- Not chiefly “how to” in manipulative skills or techniques.
- Not “applied” aspects of a field.

Empire State College defines liberal arts and sciences similarly:

“Liberal arts and sciences enhance the abilities of men and women to understand, to judge, to communicate and to take action with each other about the nature, quality and conditions of their lives. Learning that meets this definition generally tends to have strong theoretical and conceptual content. Fields of study traditionally included within the liberal arts and sciences – humanities, mathematics, natural and physical sciences, social sciences and the creative arts – fall within the present definition. Other subjects when studied with appropriate theoretical and conceptual content meet this definition” (SUNY Empire State College Policies, Procedures and Guidelines, <https://www.esc.edu/policies/>).

Another way to think about liberal arts and sciences is that they emphasize “why” rather than “how to.” They are theoretical, rather than applied or professional. Learning that grows out of a job or community experience most often results in applied, rather than theoretical knowledge.

### Examples of Liberal Arts and Sciences versus Applied Studies

Study	Designation	Why
Theories of Personality Development	Liberal Arts and Sciences	Answers questions about why personalities develop as they do.
World Literature	Liberal Arts and Sciences	Explores different perspectives across cultures.
Internship in Counseling	Applied	Emphasizes how to practice counseling techniques.
Computer Applications	Applied	Skills-based and focused on how to use computer applications.

Your learning may have been acquired through a specific application, career or professional objective, but it still could be designated as liberal arts and sciences. Think about the following points to help you decide about the designation:

- In what ways have you broadened your learning beyond the original application?
- What are the theories and principles behind the concepts that you have learned?
- How does your learning extend beyond the basic concepts and connect to other situations, context or theories and principles?
- What is the breadth and depth of your learning?
- What are the interrelationships among the concepts that you have learned?

- Does your knowledge of the topic extend to other careers or to other aspects of a profession?
- Is your knowledge transferable to multiple applications?

The American Association of Colleges and Universities provides resources to help institutions define liberal arts and sciences. You may find its information helpful – [www.aacu.org/leap/what-is-a-liberal-education](http://www.aacu.org/leap/what-is-a-liberal-education).

**On the degree program, liberal arts and science studies are designated with a star (\*).**

## Introductory and Advanced-Level Learning

Introductory and advanced level refer to the depth and breadth of the learning that takes place in a study.

Advanced-level study involves higher and more complex levels of knowledge and understanding than introductory or foundational learning. Advanced level means that you have a level of knowledge and understanding of a particular area or topic that goes beyond basic terminology and definitions, and includes analysis, synthesis and evaluation of information related to a specific topic or area of learning.

For example, Microeconomics and Macroeconomics would be considered introductory-level studies as they are the first studies in this area and provide a foundation for more complex learning. Human Biology is an introductory-level study but provides a basis for Genetics, which is typically considered advanced-level learning.

The following chart should help you think about the differences between introductory and advanced-level studies.

Characteristics	Introductory Level	Advanced Level
The level of theoretical and application skills required:	This learning usually covers the basic concepts, theories and principles of a topic.	Requires analysis, synthesis and evaluation that involve higher levels of abstraction, increasing extensive knowledge, complex content and greater methodological sophistication.
The presumption of prior study:	Usually prerequisite learning is not required beyond reading, writing and mathematical skills expected of a high school graduate.	Usually builds upon prerequisite knowledge, expanding upon fundamental concepts, theories and principles.
The nature of the studies themselves:	Introductory studies, surveys, or technical foundations studies.	More focused or specialized topics.
When the studies usually are taken:	Typically found in associate degree curricula or during the first (freshman) and second (sophomore) years of a bachelor's degree. Sometimes this is classified as lower division or lower level.	Typically found in the last two years of the bachelor's degree, during the third (junior) and fourth (senior) years of a bachelor's degree. Sometimes this also is classified as upper division or upper level.

Courses taken at community or junior colleges are considered introductory level. If a college uses a traditional numbering system, you can usually tell the course level from its number:

- 100 or 1000 range – freshman – introductory level
- 200 or 2000 range – sophomore – introductory level
- 300 or 3000 range – junior – advanced level
- 400 or 4000 range – senior – advanced level

**Note: when course numbers fall below 100 (e.g., 098) the course is usually pre-college.**

You should consult with your mentor or the Office of Academic Review if you have questions about the level of learning that a course represents.

All bachelor's degree programs at Empire State College (B.A., B.S., B.S.N., B.P.S.) require at least 45 credits of advanced-level study, with at least 24 of those in the concentration. (See the chart in Chapter 3 on page 10.)

**On the degree program, advanced-level studies are designated with a plus sign (+).**

Be careful not to confuse the term “**advanced standing**” with “**advanced-level**” studies.

“**Advanced standing**” refers to all of the learning in your degree program that was acquired outside of Empire State College.

“**Advanced level**” refers to studies that delve into a topic in depth, such as those one may expect to take in the third and fourth years of a bachelor's degree.

## Chapter 7:

# Bringing College Credit Into Your Degree and Planning Your Empire State College Studies

When students arrive at Empire State College, they often assume that they must complete the work of the degree planning process alone. Because this process involves many steps, the college assigns you a mentor who will guide and support you throughout the process of planning your Empire State College degree. Your mentor will work with you to identify transcript credits and other prior learning that will make up the advanced standing credits in your degree, which will then shape and influence your selection of Empire State College studies.

### Bringing College Credit into Your Degree = Advanced Standing

Empire State College recognizes that its students acquire college-level learning from many sources. The college calls these credits “advanced-standing” credits. Part II of the Student Degree Planning Guide provides details about the different types of advanced standing credits that can be used toward your degree.

You may have acquired advanced standing credits through formal study at other accredited colleges or other types of college-level learning that you acquired in a variety of settings. These credits can be identified and assessed in a number of ways to determine what college credit should be awarded.

### Sources of Advanced Standing Credits (for more details, see Part II)

You will work with your mentor to develop an understanding of the college-level learning you have already acquired. The usual sources of advanced standing credit are:

- Transcript credit earned at other regionally accredited colleges or institutions recognized by ESC and validated by an official transcript.
- Credit from pre-evaluated professional learning or military training, assessed by an approved organization or Empire State College and validated by appropriate documentation.
- Credit gained through individualized Prior Learning Assessment at ESC.
- Standardized examinations.

Be careful not to confuse the term “advanced standing” with “advanced-level” studies.

“Advanced standing” refers to all of the learning in your degree program that was acquired outside of Empire State College.

“Advanced level” refers to studies that delve into a topic in depth, such as those one may expect to take in the third and fourth years of a bachelor’s degree.

### Relationship of Available Advanced Standing to the Degree Program

Your degree program needs to include a minimum of 24 credits of Empire State College studies for an associate degree\* and a minimum of 31 credits for a bachelor’s degree. The balance of your credits can be brought in through advanced standing. However, to bring advanced standing credits into your degree, the credits need to make sense in terms of how you are structuring your degree. Not all your advanced standing credits may fit into your degree. For example, you may have gained 20 credits of learning related to different aspects of studio art, but you may not have room to use it all if you’re planning a degree in marketing and need to fulfill additional SUNY General Education Requirements. On the other hand, if you were planning a degree in art, all your advanced standing credits might apply toward your degree.

\*If you are planning on developing an AA or AS in General Studies, you will only need to complete 12 credits at Empire State College.

### Planning Your Empire State College Studies

While you are identifying the advanced standing credits appropriate to bring into your degree, you and your mentor also plan your Empire State College studies.

Consider studies that:

- Satisfy the knowledge expectations for your area of study and concentration.
- Fulfill the requirements of Empire State College, such as liberal arts and sciences, advanced-level credits and the SUNY General Education Requirements.
- Meet your personal, academic and professional goals and interests.

- Add breadth to your learning.
- Are unique from learning you have acquired from other sources.

Please refer to Chapters 3-7 for a full explanation of degree requirements. You and your mentor determine the appropriate sequence for completing the design of your degree program, within the framework of college policy as stated in the box on this page.

## Types of Empire State College Studies

You may learn at Empire State College in multiple ways. In determining the studies you wish to take at Empire State College, you consider not only what you want to learn, but how you want to learn. Your mentor can help you decide which formats are best for you and help you meet your goals. There are numerous ways to study, including:

- Guided independent study: work one to one with a mentor; you have input into designing your learning contract.
- Study groups: seminars that meet (in person or virtually) on a regular schedule.
- Online courses: all course work and discussions occur online.
- Residency-based studies: site-based, one-to-three-day meetings with intensive group interaction at the residency and continuation of work individually through the rest of the term.
- Cross registration with regionally accredited institutions: you can cross register for no more than half of the credits for which you enroll at Empire State College. The policy on cross registration can be found at <https://www.esc.edu/policies/>.
- Internships, field experiences and practicums.

## Using DP Planner to Build Your Degree Program

DP Planner is a Web-based tool used by students and mentors for the planning and submission of undergraduate degree programs at SUNY Empire State College. This tool and instructions for its use can be found at [my.esc.edu](http://my.esc.edu) and click on the Degree Planning button/link or [www.esc.edu/dpplanner](http://www.esc.edu/dpplanner).

Empire State College policy states that your degree program must be ready for review and approval within the first 32 credits of enrollment or prior to the final 16 credits for the degree, whichever comes sooner.

This means that if you expect to use many advanced standing credits in your degree, you need to enroll in Educational Planning and complete your plan very early in your work with the college.

Even if you are not planning to transfer in many credits, completing degree planning very early on is wise. Having a completed plan enables you to know what you need to study going forward.

## Chapter 8:

# Writing Your Degree Program Rationale

### What is a Rationale Essay?

**Rationale** refers to **reasons why**. And that's the purpose of the rationale essay, to explain your degree program and the reasons behind it. You have different reasons why you have designed and structured your degree program plan in the way that you have – personal, academic and professional. As you have planned your degree program, you will have:

- Considered how your degree will help you meet your personal, academic and/or professional goals
- Researched the academic and professional expectations in your field and have reasons why you have chosen particular studies for your degree
- Explored and made decisions as to how to address the area of study and concentration guidelines
- Explored and made decisions as to how to meet the SUNY and college degree requirements.

A degree has academic integrity and must be designed according to acceptable guidelines and specifications in each field. Since designing your degree is a process, your rationale should capture that process and the decisions that you made along the way. In the rationale essay, you explain the approaches that you took and the reasons why you have designed your degree in the way that you have. Think of the rationale essay as a logical argument for the design of your degree.

The degree program rationale essay should:

- Provide information about you and why you're seeking this college degree.
- Explain how you think your degree program will help you to meet your goals.
- Describe the process you have followed to develop your degree program, including how you conducted your research; the types of questions that you asked in order to learn more about a degree in your academic area; what you learned from this research; and how this information guided your individual choices in your degree design.
- Explain the approaches that you took and decisions that you made to design your degree.
- Explain how the individual studies in your degree program work together to meet your personal, professional and academic goals and how your degree program meets Empire State College's academic expectations.

### Who will read it?

Your degree program and rationale essay are reviewed by:

- Your mentor.
- A faculty review committee (consisting of Empire State College faculty and professional staff).
- The Office of the Registrar (the office responsible for the final approval and concurrence of your degree).

Those listed use your rationale essay to understand your degree design as they review and approve it. Their responsibility is to ensure that your degree is academically valid and follows policy.

During the degree-planning process, you have made many decisions that resulted in your degree program. The faculty and staff who review your degree program plan do not know the steps that you took and the decisions that you made. The rationale helps them understand how your degree is designed and how it meets all the requirements.

ESC policy states the following:

"The rationale essay is the student's explanation of the purposes, design and significance of her/his individual degree plan. Most students will develop their rationale early in their degree studies. Therefore, the rationale should be perceived as a planning (or prospective) document.

In the rationale, each student:

- outlines her/his own educational and professional experience, goals and learning needs
- discusses how the proposed degree program reflects her/his own background and purposes
- discusses how the degree program reflects the educational expectations of the college (i.e., SUNY General Education Requirements, level and breadth of learning, and integration and progression of learning)
- discusses how the student's learning reflects, or may depart from, the Empire State College area of study and concentration guidelines for the degree
- reflects the student's awareness of external professional expectations, where applicable.

The rationale essay accompanies and explains the student's individual degree program and is a key result of the required study in educational planning"

In order to approve your degree, the reviewers need to understand:

- The context in which you're pursuing your degree (your background, goals and plans).
- How your degree program satisfies the area of study, applicable concentration guidelines or other degree program requirements.
- How you address the SUNY and Empire State College degree requirements (e.g., general education, liberal arts and sciences, advanced level).
- The relevant research you have explored on external academic and professional expectations for your degree.
- How the studies in your degree all fit together.

Your mentor can help you with the organization of your essay. Additional information on writing your rationale, including a rationale essay worksheet, a rationale essay checklist and some annotated samples can be found in the supporting materials at [www.esc.edu/studentdpguide](http://www.esc.edu/studentdpguide). These resources provide many points for you to consider as you think about how to write and organize your essay. Additional information is available at [my.esc.edu](http://my.esc.edu) – Degree Planning (Undergraduate) Button/Link.

## When do I need to write it?

The degree program is reviewed and approved at both school and college levels. At Empire State College, we have policy to guide your degree planning process. Stated within policy, a degree program plan and its accompanying rationale essay are two required products of the degree-planning process. Students are expected to accomplish both through the required educational planning study.

You should consider writing your first drafts at the very beginning of designing your degree and revise as you continue through the process. This way you can capture your thinking as you go along. In addition, you will have less to do at the end, and you can get feedback on your essay throughout the planning process.

## Writing the Rationale Essay

The essay is an important piece of writing. Although it is not included in official transcripts from the college, the rationale is a part of your permanent academic record. This means that your final essay that accompanies your degree program should meet college-level writing expectations in terms of substance, presentation and academic integrity. You should take pride in the writing of your essay.

Devote most of the rationale to explaining your goals, your research and the design of your degree program. It shouldn't read primarily as a narrative of your personal life or as a listing of jobs and other professional experiences. Some personal and professional information is important, especially if it explains your goals and describes how your experiential knowledge fits within your degree but shouldn't dominate the rationale.

Here are some points to keep in mind:

1. Think of the essay as your logical argument for the validity of your degree choices. Provide enough specific evidence so that your readers will be convinced that you've: a) done and understood your research, b) understood your degree and concentration, and c) addressed Empire State College and academic and professional expectations thoughtfully and thoroughly.
2. The rationale is not an autobiography, nor is it a listing of degree components or courses. It should reflect the work you did to meet the learning objectives in the educational planning study and in designing your degree.
3. Your rationale should be consistent with your degree program plan and should explain your process and decisions, not just list the studies you have in the plan.
4. The discussion of how you are satisfying area of study guidelines, degree program requirements, SUNY General Education Requirements and other educational expectations is one of the most important parts of the rationale essay. It presents your evidence, backed up by research, to show that your individually designed degree is academically valid.
5. Be sure to explain how your degree plan meets both the area of study and concentration expectations and, if there are specific areas identified in the guidelines, how your degree program fulfills these specific expectations.
6. The areas of study guidelines explain the types of learning expected for broad areas of study and specific concentrations within those areas. They help you decide what to include in your degree. For individualized programs, guidelines are intentionally broad and do not specify specific courses. The guidelines provide flexibility to meet degree requirements in different ways. The rationale essay explains how your knowledge addresses the guidelines. Explain how you have gained, or intend to gain, the knowledge through the multiple sources of learning indicated in your plan.

7. Your discussion of professional expectations for your field is important. If one of your goals is to use your degree to enter into or advance in a profession, make sure to include the following information in your discussion of professional expectations:
- The external sources you consulted for information on professional expectations.
  - The most important skills, perspectives and knowledge areas for your profession, according to the sources you consulted.
  - The proposed future direction for your profession, based on the sources you consulted (e.g., the trends and practices for which professionals in this area need to think about and prepare).
  - The particular college courses that you've chosen to address current and future professional expectations.

To find the guidelines:

Go to [my.esc.edu](http://my.esc.edu) – Academics tab. In the box labeled “Your Degree Plan,” you will find a link titled “**Area of Study: Guidelines and websites**” ([www.esc.edu/AOS](http://www.esc.edu/AOS)).

Click the link and choose the area of study that you want to review from the left-hand column. You will find the area of study guidelines under “**Detailed Guidelines.**”

A few technical notes about the rationale essay:

- There is no set length or set format for the rationale essay. Your discussion of your degree depends on the work you did to plan your degree and complexity of your degree program.
- You may submit one rationale for an associate and a bachelor's degree program designed at the same time, as long as the essay discusses both degrees.
- If you are submitting two associate degrees or two bachelor's degrees simultaneously, each will need a separate rationale.
- If at any point you make significant revisions to your degree program, you may be asked to submit a revised rationale to explain your changes.
- Don't forget to include your name, area of study and, if applicable, concentration title. Numbering the pages also is helpful.

### **Special Considerations: Accounting, K-12 teaching and other considerations**

If there are any special considerations regarding your degree, you should include them in your rationale essay. For example, if you plan to teach or go into accounting, you need to state that this is your goal and sign a disclaimer form indicating that you know you will not fulfill all the state requirements through your degree. Or, if you deviated from any guidelines, you need to explain why. Use this as an opportunity to explain anything about which you think a reader might have a question.

# Additional Materials: Annotated Degree Program Plan

## ANNOTATED BACHELOR OF SCIENCE DEGREE PROGRAM

Last updated: 06/19/2019 12:17 PM

Mentor name: Joe Smith

1C → Status: 5a - Sent For concurrence

Banner Degree/AOS: BS BMEC

1A → Version name: Mentor - Dr. Smith - Business

1B → Banner Matriculation Term: 201980

1 → NAME:

2 → ID NO:

3 → DEGREE: Bachelor of Science

4 → SCHOOL/PROGRAM:

School for Undergraduate Studies

5 → REGISTERED AREA: Business, Management and Economics

6 → CONCENTRATION: Business Management

7 → Source

Concentration ← 8

Credits

9 → General Learning

10 → Credits

### 11 → TRANSCRIPT CREDIT

#### SUNY/Niagara County Community College

Principles of Management

3

\* Introduction to Sociology

3

\* Economics

3

\* College Algebra

3

Marketing

3

\* English Composition

3

\* Organizational Behavior

3

\* English Literature

3

\* Environmental Science

3

Computer Science

3

**TOTAL TRANSCRIPT CREDIT**

**30**

### 12 → CREDIT BY EVALUATION

NYS Real Estate License (ESC PLE)

Principles of Real Estate Sales

3

College Level Examination Program (ACE)

\* American History

3

\* Western Civilization

3

#### Independent Study

+ Employee Assistance Programs

4

\* Public Speaking

3

+ Recruitment and Selection

4

\* Spanish

4

Technical Writing

3

**TOTAL CREDIT BY EVALUATION**

**27**

**TOTAL ADVANCED STANDING**

**13 → 57**

### 14 → EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE STUDIES

+ Human Resource Management

4

\* Educational Planning

4

+ Organizational Communication

4

\* Introduction to Indian Culture

4

+ Collective Bargaining

4

\* Art Appreciation

4

15 → ⊕+ Organizational Culture

4

Introduction to Drug/Alcohol Addictions

3

+ Employment and Labor Law

4

\*+ Social Psychology

4

16 → ⊕ Compensation and Benefits Administration

4

\* Philosophy

4

+ Training and Development

4

Business Mathematics

4

\*+ Cultural Diversity in the Workplace

4

+ Total Quality Management

4

\*+ Business Ethics

4

**TOTAL EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE**

**67**

**DEGREE PROGRAM TOTAL**

**124**

17 →

	Degree Program	Conc.	Requirements
<b>Total Credits</b>	124	67	OK
<b>Empire State College Studies</b>	67		OK
<b>Advanced Level (+)</b>	52	48	OK
<b>Liberal Studies (*)</b>	66		OK
<b>Advanced Standing</b>	57		OK
<b>Educational Planning</b>	4		OK

## LEGEND

All of the degree program elements are more thoroughly explained in the degree planning guide.

### Header Information

- 1A. Mentor Name** – The name of your primary mentor
- 1B. Banner Matriculation Term** – Date of first term of enrollment after admission to the college.
- 80 – Fall term
  - 10 – Spring term
  - 50 – Summer term
- 1C. Status** – This indicates where your degree program is in the review and approval process.
- 1. Name** – your name
  - 2. ESC-ID** – The number the college assigns to you.
  - 3. Degree** – One of the Empire State College degree types: Associate in Arts, Associate in Science, Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, or Bachelor of Professional Studies.
  - 4. School/Program** – The Empire State College school with which you are affiliated.
  - 5. Registered Area** – One of the Empire State College areas of study that are registered with the New York State Education Department.
  - 6. Concentration** – The title should accurately reflect the emphasis of the studies that are included in the concentration.

### Degree Program

The main portion of the degree program lists the components selected for the degree program. In this main portion, there are:

- two columns – concentration and general learning
- three main sections – transcript credit, credit by evaluation and Empire State College studies.

### Two Columns: Concentration and General Learning

- 7. Source** – The source indicates where the learning took place. If the student acquired learning on his/her own, it is labeled as independent study.
- 8. The Concentration** – This column lists the studies in the student’s primary field of study. The concentration column can include studies in all three sections – transcript credit, credit by evaluation and Empire State College studies.
- 9. General Learning** – This column lists studies that provide breadth to a student’s academic work. The general learning column can include studies in all three sections – transcript credit, credit by evaluation and Empire State College studies.
- 10. Credits** – Credit amounts for each study on the degree

program are listed next to the study title.

### Three Sections: Transcript Credit, Credit by Evaluation and Empire State College Studies

- 11. Transcript Credit** – Credits that are transferred from regionally accredited institutions that were attended prior to Empire State College. The name of each institution, course titles and credit amounts are listed.
- 12. Credit by Evaluation** – College-level credits that are brought in from sources of prior learning other than regionally accredited colleges. Sources of learning (standardized examinations, the military, training that has been pre-evaluated for credit), titles of learning and credit amounts are listed. The phrase “independent study” means that you acquired the learning on your own.
- 13. Total Advanced Standing** – The total of all transcript credit and credit by evaluation is the total number of advanced-standing credits on a degree program. Advanced standing represents all learning on a degree program that was acquired outside of Empire State College.
- 14. Empire State College Studies** – Credits that are earned at Empire State College. Titles of studies and credit amounts are listed. You must complete a minimum of 24 Empire State College credits for an associate degree and a minimum of 31 Empire State College credits for a bachelor’s degree.

### Credit Designations

- 15. Liberal Arts and Sciences** – Asterisks (\*) indicate studies that are considered liberal arts and sciences.
- 16. Advanced Level** – Plus signs (+) indicate studies that are considered advanced (junior/senior) level.
- 17. Summary** – The summary lists the total number of credits for various categories in the degree program.

Once concurred, your degree program is included with your official college transcript.

## Part II – Advanced Standing Credits

### INTRODUCTION

**Advanced Standing** refers to those credits that you earned from learning acquired outside of Empire State College and will transfer into your degree. The sources of these credits may be from other regionally accredited institutions that you attended or through other evaluated sources of prior learning. Part II of this guide details all the ways you can acquire advanced standing credits and apply them to your degree. You will work with your mentor to decide which of your advanced standing credits are best to use in your degree program.

At Empire State College, you can use advanced standing credits in your degree if:

- The learning makes sense within the context of your approved degree program.
- The learning does not duplicate other credits in your degree program.
- You completed the learning at the same location and during the specific time covered by the evaluation and credit recommendation, if applicable.
- Official documentation is received by Empire State College Admissions directly from the issuing agency or organization.

Be careful not to confuse the term “**advanced standing**” with “**advanced-level**” studies.

“**Advanced standing**” refers to all of the learning in your degree program that was acquired outside of Empire State College.

“**Advanced level**” refers to studies that delve into a topic in depth, such as those one may expect to take in the third and fourth years of a bachelor’s degree.

### TYPES OF ADVANCED STANDING

Part II Chapters	Type of Advanced Standing Credits	Name of Type of Institution/Organization or Type of Assessment
9	Overview	
10	Transcript credits	Regionally accredited institutions
10	Transcript credits	New York State Education Department approved, or other acceptable accrediting body
10	Transcript credits	International: evaluated by an approved foreign credential evaluation services or a regional accrediting body
11	Prior learning assessment	<b>Standardized Exams:</b> Advanced Placement examinations (AP) Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) British A-level examinations College Level Examination Program (CLEP) DANTES Subject Standardized Test (DSST) Excelsior College examinations (UExcel) Graduate Record Examination (GRE) advanced subject tests New York University foreign language proficiency examinations Thomas Edison Credit Examination Program (TECEP)
12	Prior learning assessment	American Council on Education (ACE) Military Training and Occupations
13	Prior learning assessment	<b>Professional Learning Evaluation:</b> American Council on Education (ACE) National College Credit Recommendation Service (National CCRS)
14	Prior learning assessment	Empire State College’s professional learning evaluation (ESC PLE)
14	Prior learning assessment	Other regionally accredited institution’s professional learning evaluations
15	Prior learning assessment	Individualized Prior Learning Assessment

## Chapter 9: Advanced Standing Credits Overview

Empire State College recognizes that students acquire college-level learning from many sources. Your mentor will help you identify different types of college-level learning that you have acquired and how some of this learning can be used within your degree program.

Advanced standing credits allow you to advance toward completing the credits for your degree. Your degree program needs to include a minimum of 24 credits of Empire State College studies for an associate degree\* and a minimum of 31 credits for a bachelor's degree. The remainder of required credits may be brought in through advanced standing. This means that if you already have college-level learning that fits within your degree, you can complete your degree more quickly.

\*If you are planning on developing an AA or AS in general studies, you will only need to complete a minimum of 12 credits at Empire State College.

**Advanced standing** is a term used to describe incoming credits previously earned through acceptable sources, e.g., college transcripts, standardized exams, professional learning evaluations, and military transcripts.

### Considerations for Incorporating Advanced Standing Credits into Your Degree Program

You will work with your mentor to determine how your prior college-level learning applies to your Empire State College degree program, and the best way to demonstrate that knowledge.

In considering whether advanced standing credits are appropriate to your degree program, ask yourself whether the credits are relevant to your goals, address the area of study guidelines and/or will help you meet degree requirements. Your first priority is to develop a strong and coherent concentration and array of studies in general learning. Advanced standing credit that is not related to your concentration may still play a valuable role by adding breadth or diversity to your degree program.

Advanced- standing credits can be used toward addressing your area of study and concentrations guidelines and meeting all other degree requirements.

Empire State College accepts the credit recommendations and awards advanced standing credit in the context of your degree program when:

- This learning makes sense within the context of your degree program.
- The learning does not duplicate other credits in your degree program plan.
- You completed the learning at the same location and during the specific period covered by the evaluation and credit recommendation, when applicable.
- Official documentation is received by Empire State College directly from the issuing agency or organization.

You will need to explain how your prior learning fits into your degree program within the degree rationale. Advanced standing credits are not officially transferred into your degree until your degree program plan is approved (concurred) (see Part III, Chapter 16).

### Credit Hours: Semester-Based or Quarter-Based Credit

College credit represents the number of hours you have spent studying a particular topic. These hours are converted into credits based on the length of the course (semester, term), the number of hours the course met during the designated time and the number of hours expected for work outside of the course meetings. Typically, credits are measured in semester or quarter credits. One Empire State College credit is equal to one semester hour at most colleges and universities.

- If you attended an institution that awards credits based on semester hours, you would list the same number of credits awarded by that institution on your Empire State College degree program.
- If you attended an institution that awards credit based on quarter hours, the total transcript credit for that institution should be multiplied by .67. DP Planner does these calculations for you automatically when you indicate in your DP Planner Profile that the credits are quarter credits. Effective June 2020, DP Planner does not round credits, so if DP Planner indicates 123.5 credits, you will be short .5 credits toward degree completion.
- Students will need 124 credits in order to be concurred. The college will honor previously concurred programs. If a student was previously concurred during the period of rounding credits and has successfully completed their ESC coursework on their concurred DP, they will be able to graduate.
- For institutions that do not use either the semester or quarter-semester system, you need to ask your mentor or the Office of Academic Review for assistance. Many times, these institutions list contact hours; Empire State College uses a conversion based on the Carnegie Unit to calculate credits.

## Age of Credits

Empire State College accepts credits no matter how long ago you earned them, except when the learning is in an area that has changed significantly over time, such as computer technology. In such cases, credits should be reviewed for currency. Talk to your mentor about the appropriateness of your credits. Credits for learning that lack currency should not be in your degree program.

## Redundancy

Empire State College awards credit for specific learning only once. Learning from all sources is scrutinized carefully to be certain that your degree program contains no duplicate learning. Similar courses in the same subject at the same level taken at different institutions are considered potentially redundant unless the college has determined that there is no significant overlap. For example, management principles learned in a training program or on the job may involve the same learning as that in a Principles of Management course taken in college.

Consult your mentor if you think there is potential redundancy in studies you are considering for your degree program. If you have courses with similar titles, but have different learning, you may need to provide documentation to show that the learning is not redundant. You also should address this in your rationale essay to explain why the courses are not redundant. When you have transcript credit in an area in which credit also is granted by individualized Prior Learning Assessment, the evaluator's recommendation report must address any possible overlap of topics listed on your degree program plan. Be sure to address this in your interview with the evaluator. **Credits for learning that are determined to be redundant should not be in your degree program.**

## Introductory-Level Writing and Mathematics

Your degree program cannot include more than 8 credits in expository writing at the introductory level and/or 8 credits in algebra and trigonometry. More credits in these areas would be considered redundant with each other, as many of the topics would overlap.

## D Grades

Grades of D generally indicate less than satisfactory performance. Students who were awarded an Associate in the Arts (AA), Associate in Science (AS), or Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degree can bring in all or part of the credit earned, including courses with D grades. Students without a completed associate degree can bring in credits for which the student received a C- or above. In the case of an Associate in Occupational Studies (AOS) degree, division assessment committees evaluate a submitted degree on a course-by-course basis. D grades earned as part of an AOS degree are not transferable, even if the student completed the AOS. Courses with D grades listed on a SUNY general education transfer addendum may be used to meet SUNY General Education Requirements.

## Large Blocks of Advanced Standing Credits

Empire State College discourages listing large, undifferentiated advanced standing credits on your degree program. Advanced standing credits should be listed by recommended topics and associated credits. For example, if you had training through the New York City Police Department in Civilian Training for Police Administrative Aide (evaluated by National CCRS) you would not list that as the title of your learning, because the title doesn't describe your learning. Rather, you list the titles and credit recommendations as Criminal Justice for 3 credits and Office Technology for 4 credits. Your mentor will be able to help you determine the best way to list your learning.

Also, including large blocks of advanced standing credits that are unrelated to your concentration might prevent you from including other learning that might contribute to the quality of your degree program significantly. For example, if you earned an A.A.S. degree in electronic technology and your educational goal now is to complete a degree in historical studies, the need for substantial academic work in history and supporting studies may mean that some of the courses on AC/DC circuits may not fit into your Empire State College degree program.

Advanced standing credits that you choose not to use for your degree program are still available to you on the transcript from the institution that issued it. Your decision not to include that credit in a degree program means only that it does not appropriately fit in the context of your degree program at Empire State College.

## Transferring PLA Credit From Another Institution

Prior learning assessment credit or credit for individually evaluated learning that comes to the college on a transcript from a regionally accredited institution or from an institution on the NYSED approved list when you attended may be accepted when it is part of a completed A.A., A.S. or A.A.S. degree.

If this is not the case, then the credits may be used if the originating institution's process for awarding the PLA credits has been reviewed by the Office of the Registrar and has been determined to be consistent with Empire State College's conventions for evaluating such credits. PLA programs from SUNY institutions have already been evaluated, and are acceptable for direct transfer. For standardized examination credit, the transcript must indicate the exam title, the year taken, and the score received. Otherwise, you'll need to submit an official score report as documentation.

## Official Documentation

To be considered official, a transcript or other academic documents must be sent at the student's request directly from the originating institution or organization to Admissions at Empire State College:

Admissions  
SUNY Empire State College  
111 West Ave.  
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866-6069

After Admissions has received your official transcript or document, you will receive email confirmation. The transcript or document then is authenticated by the college with an official stamp and made available to your mentor and included in your file. Please see the following chapters for more detailed information on obtaining international, military and other types of transcripts and documentation.

The Office of the Registrar evaluates all official advanced standing academic documents. Each document is annotated to let you and your mentor know if the advanced standing credits can be directly used in the degree program, or if they need further evaluation. See Part II Additional Materials: Transcript Annotations and Meanings for details.

Unofficial documentation such as a photocopy of a certificate should not be sent to Admissions. Admissions accepts only official academic documents. Any unofficial documents that you are using as supporting documentation for individualized Prior Learning Assessment can be attached to PLA Planner [www.esc.edu/pla](http://www.esc.edu/pla).

## Chapter 10: Transcript Credits

You can transfer in credits earned at colleges and universities that are:

- Regionally accredited.
- Approved by New York State Education Department as a degree-granting institution.
- Evaluated by accrediting bodies approved by the college.

Each of these categories of transcript credits is described below. For any questions about your specific situation, talk with your mentor or the Office of Academic Review.

### Transcript Credit From Regionally Accredited Colleges and Universities

Empire State College accepts transfer credit earned through other regionally accredited colleges and universities. In order for the credit to be directly transferable, the college or university must be regionally accredited or a candidate for accreditation at the time of your attendance. Credits that you choose to include in your degree program are listed under transcript credit on the degree program you are designing in DP Planner, [www.esc.edu/dpplanner](http://www.esc.edu/dpplanner). Use the DP Planner Profile to create your list. A list of the regional accreditation agencies can be found in the supporting materials section at [www.esc.edu/studentdpguide](http://www.esc.edu/studentdpguide).

### New York State Education Department Recognized Institutions

Empire State College accepts credit from degree-granting institutions within New York state that had been approved by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) to award college-level degrees at the time of attendance. This includes independent and proprietary-sector institutions, such as some New York state business schools. Credits that you choose to include in your degree program are listed under “credit by evaluation” on the degree program you are designing.

### International Transcripts Requiring Evaluation

Empire State College accepts college credit earned at other accredited institutions internationally. Transcripts from most international institutions must be evaluated by one of the approved foreign credential evaluation services listed below:

- Academic Evaluation Services, Inc. (AES)
- Educational Credential Evaluators, Inc. (ECE)
- Educational Perspectives (EP)
- World Education Services (WES)

Credits that you choose to include in your degree program are listed under “credit by evaluation” on the degree program you are designing.

### FOREIGN CREDENTIAL EVALUATION SERVICES CONTACT INFORMATION

Service Name	World Education Services	Academic Evaluation Services, Inc.	Educational Credential Evaluators, Inc.	Educational Perspectives
Address		5620 E. Fowler Ave., Suite E Tampa, FL 33617	P.O. Box 514070 Milwaukee, WI 53203-3470	
Phone	212-966-6311 Toll Free: 800-937-3895	813-374-2020	414-289-3400	312-421-9300
Fax	212-739-6100	813-374-2023	414-289-3411	312-421-9353
Email	See website for email form	<a href="mailto:info@aes-edu.org">info@aes-edu.org</a>	<a href="mailto:eval@ece.org">eval@ece.org</a>	<a href="mailto:info@edperspective.org">info@edperspective.org</a>
Website	<a href="http://www.wes.org/esc.asp">www.wes.org/esc.asp</a>	<a href="http://www.aes-edu.org">www.aes-edu.org</a>	<a href="http://www.ece.org">www.ece.org</a>	<a href="http://www.edperspective.org">www.edperspective.org</a>

Empire State College accepts foreign-credential evaluations only from the four agencies listed previously. You need to contact the chosen agency to determine which documents the service accepts for evaluation and the manner in which they must be sent. You are responsible for the full cost of the foreign credential evaluation services.

Official evaluations conducted by the service must be sent directly to Admissions. The foreign credential evaluation services only use documents that they have verified as being authentic to develop their recommendation report. The college accepts the official recommendation report from the services as the official source documenting your learning.

The official report from the evaluation service is considered a credit recommendation only. Empire State College has the final discretion to accept the credit(s) for transfer. To be considered for transfer into your degree program, the college requires a “course-by-course report” from the foreign credential evaluation service. To be considered for transfer into your degree program, the course-by-course report must specify:

- The source of credits (institution) is equivalent to a U.S. regionally accredited institution
- For each course listed:
  1. Course title (in English).
  2. Number of credits.
  3. A designation that the course is either introductory (lower) or advanced (upper) level.
  4. A grade equivalency to determine if the student has successfully completed the course requirements.

If the international institution at which you studied is not considered the equivalent of a U.S. regionally accredited institution, you can pursue individualized Prior Learning Assessment to have your learning assessed for college credit.

## Transcripts Not Requiring International Evaluation

Empire State College does accept transcripts (in English only) from some international institutions that have undergone an official review determined to be equivalent to a regionally accredited institution. If you have a transcript from one of the following institutions, you do not need to have your transcript reviewed by a foreign credential evaluation service.

- Israeli institutions accredited by the Israeli Council on Higher Education and the Israeli Ministry on Education. The Council for Higher Education website has the most current list of institutions at [www.che.org.il/en/institutions/](http://www.che.org.il/en/institutions/).
- Canadian institutions listed as members of Universities Canada (formerly AUCC: the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada). The most current list can be found on their website at <http://www.univcan.ca/universities/member-universities/>.
- Canadian institutions listed as members of the Canadian Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAAT). The most current list can be found on its website at [www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-colleges](http://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-colleges).

Note: Puerto Rican institutions are considered part of the United States and accepted institutions have been accredited by the Middle State Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). Check the Middle States Commission’s website for a current list at <https://www.msche.org/institution/>.

## International Partner Institutions

Empire State College has developed official partnerships with the following international institutions. Official transcripts from these institutions are sufficient documentation for awarding credit for students enrolled in the partnership program. These credits are listed under the “credit by evaluation” section on the degree program:

- University of New York/Prague, Czech Republic
- University of New York/Tirana, Albania
- American University of Technology, Lebanon
- American University of Science and Technology, Lebanon
- New York College/Athens, Greece
- New York College/Thessaloniki, Greece
- La Universidad APEC (UNAPEC), Dominican Republic
- Anadolu University (AU), Turkey

Empire State College students who provide their original school leaving certificates (such as high school diplomas or college transcripts) from international institutions where the language of instruction is other than English are eligible to receive a maximum of 16 credits in the language of instruction. Verification of the language from the originating institution is needed.

## Other Types of Institutions

Empire State College accepts credits from institutions that have undergone review by the following types of programmatic accreditation:

- Nursing schools accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing, Inc. (ACEN), formerly National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission (NLNAC).
- Art schools with National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD) approval.
- Canadian 13th-Year credits.

Check with your mentor or the Office of Academic Review if you have questions.

## Chapter 11: Prior Learning Assessment: Standardized Examinations

Empire State College accepts many types of standardized examinations that have been evaluated for college-level credits.

If your results meet the guidelines established by the college for earning credit, you can use those credits toward your degree program plan when:

- You completed the examination during the specific time period covered by the evaluation and credit recommendation.
- An official score report is received by Empire State College directly from the testing service.

As with all advanced standing, standardized examination topics should fit into your degree program by strengthening your concentration or adding breadth and depth to your general learning.

Empire State College accepts the following standardized examinations:

- Advanced Placement Examinations (AP)
- Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE)
- British A-level Examinations
- College Level Examination Program (CLEP)
- DANTES Subject Standardized Test (DSST)
- UExcel Excelsior College Examination Program
- Graduate Record Examination (GRE) advanced subject tests
- New York University Foreign Language Proficiency Examinations
- Thomas Edison Credit Examination Program (TECEP)

Before you decide to take an exam, you should talk with your mentor to determine if it is appropriate for your degree.

For more information on standardized examination opportunities, check the organization's websites or [www.esc.edu/studentdpguide](http://www.esc.edu/studentdpguide). Many of these sites offer study guides and are sometimes available at bookstores. Some exams are proctored by the college. Check with your Empire State College Office of Academic Review for information on which exams are proctored by the college, their costs, examination dates and study materials.

## Chapter 12: Prior Learning Assessment: Military Training and Occupations

### Office of Veteran and Military Education (OVME)

If you are an active-duty, guard, reserve or veteran service member, you may find it helpful to contact the Office of Veteran and Military Education at Empire State College, which can assist you with requesting and reviewing military documentation, as well as provide other information and resources for veteran and military students. You can reach OVME via email, phone, fax or online at:

Military.Programs@esc.edu

518-587-2100, ext. 2779 or 800-847-3000, ext. 2779

fax 518-587-5483

[www.esc.edu/Military](http://www.esc.edu/Military)

### American Council on Education (ACE) Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services

Many types of military training and occupations have been evaluated for college-level credit through the American Council of Education. Empire State College accepts credit recommendations for any military training or occupation that has been evaluated by ACE.

ACE recommends credit for:

- Formal military courses.
- Army enlisted and warrant officer occupational specialties.
- Navy general rates and ratings.
- Navy limited duty and warrant officer specialties.
- Selected Navy enlisted classifications (NEC).
- Coast Guard ratings and warrant officer specialties.
- Selected Marine Corps occupational specialties.
- Department of Defense.
- Basic training (since 1957) – 4 credits for military science/physical education (nonliberal, lower level).

The “American Council on Education Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services” provides a listing of all the training and occupations that have been evaluated for recommended credits. The guide with credit recommendations for military service is available online at [www.acenet.edu/militaryguide](http://www.acenet.edu/militaryguide).

The ACE guide also provides credit recommendations for many military service school courses and military occupational specialties (MOS). The college accepts credit recommendations for credit from primary MOS and duty MOS. Additional documentation may be required in order to accept secondary MOS.

Students requesting credit for their military training or occupation must provide proper documentation that matches the following criteria described in the ACE guide course description, including:

- Title
- Contents
- Dates
- Location
- Length of study.

For students matriculated after July 1, 2005, the college accepts ACE credit recommended in the following categories:

- Lower-division associate/bachelor’s degree.
- Upper-division bachelor’s degree.
- Graduate degree.

In addition, for students who matriculated before July 1, 2005, the college accepts ACE credits in the “vocational/lower division” certificate category.

## Obtaining Official Military Documentation

In order to grant credit for learning you gained in the military, the college needs to have official copies of your military documents. See the table below for details on obtaining the appropriate documentation for your particular branch of service. To be official, all documents must be sent from the originating agency directly to:

Admissions  
 SUNY Empire State College  
 111 West Ave.  
 Saratoga Springs, NY 12866-6069

There are three ways that you can obtain your military documents:

1. If you have attended one of the following institutions, you need to request an official transcript be sent from that institution directly to Empire State College Admissions. These institutions are:
  - Air University
  - Army Command and General Staff College
  - Air Force Institute of Technology
  - Community College of the Air Force
  - Defense Intelligence College
  - Naval Postgraduate School
  - Naval War College
  - Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, School of Medicine.
2. If you have served in one of the following services, you can obtain your transcript through the following websites. For the Army, Navy, Marines and Coast Guard you can obtain your transcript from the official website for the Joint Services Transcript (JST) System.

Military Service	Official Transcript
<b>Army</b> Army, Army Reserves and Army National Guard, and Veterans	Request JST transcript at <a href="https://jst.doded.mil">https://jst.doded.mil</a>
<b>Navy/Marine</b> Navy, Navy Reserves and Veterans Marine, Marine Reserves and Veterans	Request JST transcript at <a href="https://jst.doded.mil">https://jst.doded.mil</a>
<b>Coast Guard</b> Coast Guard, Coast Guard Reserves and Veterans	Request JST transcript at <a href="https://jst.doded.mil">https://jst.doded.mil</a>
<b>Air Force</b> Air Force, Air Force Reserves, Air National Guard and Veterans	Request Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) transcripts through <a href="https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Barnes/CCAF/Display/Article/803247/community-college-of-the-air-force-transcripts/">https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Barnes/CCAF/Display/Article/803247/community-college-of-the-air-force-transcripts/</a>

The Army, Navy, Marines and Coast Guard have combined their transcripts into a Joint Services Transcript (JST). The previous AARTS and SMART transcripts no longer exist. The JST is an academically accepted document approved by the American Council on Education (ACE) to validate a service member’s military occupational experience and training along with the corresponding ACE college credit recommendations. The Air Force still issues transcripts in its own format at this time. Joint Services Transcripts are available for all service members, regardless of separation date for Army, Marine, Navy and Coast Guard members. Contact <https://jst.doded.mil> for more information.

3. If you are a veteran service member and unable to obtain your documents through one of the previously listed sources, you should contact the Office of Veteran and Military Education for assistance:
  - Active-duty personnel can use your DD295. This can be requested through a military education officer. The form must be certified by an authorized commissioned officer or his/her designee and then sent directly to Admissions, Empire State College.
  - Separated or retired personnel can obtain a copy of your DD214 Official Certificate of Discharge from the city or county clerk where you filed a copy of your original DD214 when discharged. You need to have a notarized or court-certified copy of the DD214 sent from that office directly to Admissions.
  - Veterans who are unable to secure a JST or CCAF transcript who served prior to 1974 should submit DD-214.

- All military personnel still have the option of writing to have an official copy of your DD214 sent to Admissions, SUNY Empire State College. This, however, can be a time-consuming process and is not the most efficient way to get military records.

National Personnel Records Center  
Military Personnel Records  
9700 Page Ave.  
St. Louis, MO 63132-5100

## Standardized Exams Appearing on an Official Military Document

Examinations, such as CLEP examinations, DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST) or Defense Language Proficiency Tests (DLPT), can be accepted on JST transcripts if they include exam title, date the exam was taken and the score.

## Information to be Included in Your Empire State College Degree Program Portfolio

The degree program portfolio should include a copy of the official document and a copy of the ACE recommendation with the date of the edition noted on the page or information printed from the online ACE military guide previously listed.

## Armed Services Training Not Yet Evaluated for College Credit

Not all armed services training has been evaluated for college credit. If a course does not appear in the ACE guide, the learning claimed from that course would need to be individually evaluated to determine if college-level credit is appropriate (see Chapter 15).

## If You Have Questions

Your first option for help with obtaining your military documents or using the ACE military guide is through the Empire State College Office of Veteran and Military Education at [Military.Programs@esc.edu](mailto:Military.Programs@esc.edu).

You can send your questions directly to ACE regarding the military guide recommendations:

Military Evaluations Program  
American Council on Education  
One Dupont Circle NW  
Washington, DC 20036-1193  
202-939-9300  
email: [mileval@ace.nche.edu](mailto:mileval@ace.nche.edu)  
[www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Military-Guide-Online.aspx](http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Military-Guide-Online.aspx)

Course titles may be listed under more than one ACE Identifier. Credits cannot be combined. Be sure to review carefully to ensure there is no duplication or redundancy. Credits for the same or similar learning may be used only once in a degree program. Students are eligible for the credits listed for their rank (as listed on page 1 of the JST) only. Care should be taken to verify all appropriate credits.

## Chapter 13:

### Prior Learning Assessment: Professional Learning Evaluation – The American Council on Education (ACE) and the National College Credit Recommendation Service (National CCRS)

#### Professional Learning

You may have acquired knowledge from structured learning experiences offered by organizations that are not colleges, such as companies or state agencies. Typically, you will have engaged in this type of learning through your employment.

Empire State College accepts credit recommendations from two organizations that evaluate professional learning:

- The American Council on Education (ACE).
- The National College Credit Recommendation Service (National CCRS).

In addition, Empire State College has evaluated a number of training programs to determine the knowledge that is gained by those who successfully complete certain programs (see Chapter 14). If you have learning that has not been pre-evaluated, you can still request an individualized Prior Learning Assessment (see Chapter 15).

Keep in mind that as with all advanced standing, learning topics should fit into your degree program by strengthening your concentration or adding breadth and depth to your general learning. Check with your mentor or the Office of Academic Review to determine if your professional learning has been evaluated by either ACE or National CCRS, or refer directly to the publications offered by the organizations, as detailed below:

#### The American Council on Education (ACE)

The ACE National Guide to College Credit for Workforce Training found at [www2.acenet.edu/credit](http://www2.acenet.edu/credit), contains ACE credit recommendations for formal courses or examinations offered by various organizations, from businesses and unions to the government and military that are current. Credit recommendations apply only to training received during the period of time, at the locations, and for the length of time listed in the guide.

#### National College Credit Recommendation Service (National CCRS)

National CCRS evaluates courses, training programs, licenses and/or certificates. Credit recommendations apply only to training received during the period, at the locations, and for the length of time listed in the directory found at [www.nationalccrs.org/](http://www.nationalccrs.org/). You can view its credit recommendations on its website for each organization through its course credit recommendation directory.

#### Official Documentation

For credit to be accepted by Empire State College from ACE or National CCRS sources, official documentation or verification of successful completion must be sent directly to:

Admissions  
SUNY Empire State College  
111 West Ave.  
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866-6069

The documentation should include an official seal or agency letterhead and signature. The ACE National Guide and the Directory of the National CCRS list the “source of official student records,” where you can request official documents. Transcripts also are accepted from the ACE transcript registry. The dates and location of your training must match what was evaluated. If you are unsure of the issuing source or sponsoring agency or its location, consult with your mentor or the Office of Academic Review.

## Chapter 14: Prior Learning Assessment: Professional Learning Evaluation – Empire State College

### SUNY Empire State College Professional Learning Evaluations

Empire State College evaluates some licenses, certificates and training programs and courses provided by industry, professional organizations, agencies and companies, and recommends college credit that can be used in an Empire State College degree.

A list of the current Empire State College professional learning evaluations can be found in the supporting materials at [www.esc.edu/studentdpguide](http://www.esc.edu/studentdpguide). Empire State College has some expired evaluations, but if you acquired the learning during the original dates indicated on the credit recommendation, you still may use the credits. Your mentor and the Office of Academic Review have more detailed information regarding program evaluations and available credits.

### Other Regionally Accredited Institutions' Professional Learning Evaluations

Empire State College also accepts recommended credit for professional learning evaluated by other regionally accredited institutions for which the college has reviewed and approved their review process. You do not need to have the originating institution transcribe your credits, but you will need the appropriate official documentation required by that institution. Ask your mentor or the Office of Academic Review for more information.

Currently, Empire State College has approved the professional learning evaluations conducted by the following institutions. A full list of the specific evaluations can be found on the website at [www.esc.edu/studentdpguide](http://www.esc.edu/studentdpguide). Other colleges' professional learning evaluations can be reviewed upon request.

- Charter Oak State College of Connecticut
- Excelsior College
- Granite State College of New Hampshire
- Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana
- Thomas Edison State University of New Jersey
- University of Maryland Global Campus
- Vermont State Colleges.

## Chapter 15:

# Prior Learning Assessment: Individualized Prior Learning Assessment (iPLA)

## INTRODUCTION

Empire State College is committed to the idea that students should be awarded credit for verifiable college-level learning regardless of where or how it was acquired. Many students have gained knowledge from sources that are not validated through traditional course work, standardized examinations or evaluated professional learning. This learning can be evaluated through the individualized Prior Learning Assessment process.

Individualized Prior Learning Assessment (iPLA) is the process by which students are able to explain and document their college-level learning which is then assessed by an expert evaluator. Each year, more than 4,000 Empire State College students complete the iPLA process. Most students who go through the process find it satisfying, affirming and worth the time and effort.

This chapter introduces the concepts of individualized Prior Learning Assessment. The booklet, Individualized Prior Learning Assessment: A Guide for Students found online at [www.esc.edu/iPLAguide](http://www.esc.edu/iPLAguide), provides you with in-depth information on how to request credits through an assessment of your prior learning.

iPLA is your opportunity to:

- earn credits for your college-level knowledge
- save money and time by being assessed in areas in which you otherwise might have been required to take courses

For current information on the fees associated with individualized Prior Learning Assessment, please visit [www.esc.edu/iPLA-fees](http://www.esc.edu/iPLA-fees).

Students seeking assessment of their prior learning should consult the Office of Prior Learning website, which is located on the main section of the student MyESC home page. This site includes links to other resources and information related to iPLA, including fees and PLA Planner.

## Overall Process

The evaluation of individualized prior college-level learning is conducted within the context of your degree program planning process. As you develop your degree program plan, you also will develop your iPLA requests. The college does not evaluate learning through iPLA if it does not apply in some manner to your degree program as part of your concentration, a SUNY general education component, or an applicable general elective.

Overall, the iPLA process includes the following steps:

- You work with your mentor to develop your iPLA request.
- Your request will identify, describe and document your knowledge.
- You submit your request through PLA Planner.
- Staff in the Office of Prior Learning review your iPLA request for assignment to a qualified evaluator with expertise relevant to the subject.
- The evaluator evaluates your learning, which includes an interview with you.
- The evaluator writes and submits a credit recommendation report.
- The evaluator's credit recommendation report is reviewed and approved during the degree program plan approval process.

## Sources of Prior College-Level Learning

Empire State College recognizes that adults have many opportunities for valuable learning in their personal and professional lives. Think about the following list. What are all the things you have done in your life that fit into one or more of these areas? You might want to prepare a short biography or resume of these experiences to discuss with your mentor. These include:

- Workplace training and experience.
- Licenses, certifications and other credentials not evaluated by ACE, NCCRS or Empire State College.
- Continuing professional education, including some training that yields continuing education units (CEUs).

- Noncredit courses.
- Learning acquired through open educational resources (e.g., MOOCs).
- Volunteer work in the community.
- Hobbies and recreational activities that have resulted in considerable learning.
- Independent reading and research.
- Study at postsecondary/proprietary schools that may be licensed but not accredited.

Credit may be granted for verifiable college-level learning acquired through life or work experiences, but not for just the experience itself. Credit is not awarded for what has been done, even if it has been done for a long time and done well. The experience may have provided an opportunity for learning, and the credits are awarded for your knowledge.

Your mentor or the Office of Academic Review or the Office of Prior Learning can help you determine whether your learning might be college level and whether it would contribute to your degree program goals.

## Working With Your Mentor

Your mentor is your resource as you review your learning and develop your request for credit. Your mentor will help guide you as to:

- The form, content and length of your learning description.
- The amount of credit you should request.
- The determination of how it fits into your degree program.
- The supporting documentation and evidence you should include in your request.

You and your mentor will engage in early and ongoing conversations regarding your background, potential areas for prior learning assessment and potential areas for new learning – in other words, regarding the overall scope of your degree program and plans for your new learning through enrollment in Empire State College studies. Through the Office of Prior Learning, the college provides online, print and in-person resources that support you in this process. You can contact the Office of Prior Learning through email at [plaooffice@esc.edu](mailto:plaooffice@esc.edu).

## Identifying Your College-Level Learning

Defining college-level learning involves many factors, and you and your mentor will discuss these. College-level learning represents your ability to take your knowledge and relate it within a particular context and to other contexts within and outside your field. College-level learning involves:

- Acquiring new information.
- Engaging critical inquiry.
- Analyzing, synthesizing and integrating the information.
- Situating the knowledge within a broader context.
- Demonstrating the ability to apply it.

This may sound complex, but there are different ways that college-level learning can be demonstrated. The guide, *Individualized Prior Learning Assessment: A Guide for Students*, provides details on identifying your college-level learning and how to describe and document your learning. Staff in the Office of Prior Learning also can provide guidance.

## Working With an Evaluator

The Office of Prior Learning will select a qualified evaluator with expertise in the subject area of the learning you have described in your iPLA request.

The evaluator reviews:

- Your learning description.
- Any supporting materials you have submitted.
- Your proposed degree program plan to determine if there are any overlaps between the learning being evaluated and other knowledge identified on the degree program.

## Evaluator Interview

The evaluator will interview you to gain a better understanding of your learning. The evaluator will ask you different questions to understand the depth and breadth of your learning. The evaluator also may ask you to provide additional documentation.

Once an evaluator is assigned, you will receive an automated email with your evaluator's contact information. You are responsible for contacting the evaluator to set up a mutually convenient time to conduct the interview. The interview needs to be in real time (e.g., in-person, over the phone, or through video conferencing or other technology-enhanced methods). Face-to-face interviews will take place at the college or an agreed upon public environment. Email interviews are not in real time and should only be used to make initial contact and for follow-up questions.

## Evaluator Recommendation Report

Once the evaluator has reviewed your request and has interviewed you regarding your learning, the evaluator will write and submit a written recommendation report. The evaluator is expected to make an academic credit recommendation that is in keeping with the standards of an accredited and respected collegiate institution. While you and your mentor have done your best to develop appropriate titles and credit amounts, the evaluator can adjust them to best reflect the learning you have demonstrated.

## Award of iPLA Credit

The award of credit for your prior learning is the responsibility of the faculty and is done within the context of your degree program plan review and approval process. When your degree program plan is submitted for approval, the Office of Academic Review will include evaluator recommendation reports as part of your degree program portfolio. These reports are reviewed during the degree program approval process, and once your degree program plan is approved by the faculty academic review committee and concurred by the Office of the Registrar, your prior learning assessment credits become official and are part of your degree program.

For more information on the degree program plan approval process, please see Part III, Chapter 16, Degree Program Approval Process below.

## PLA Planner

The iPLA request review and approval process is managed through the online tool PLA Planner. In PLA Planner:

- You will create and submit your iPLA request, which includes your learning description and any other documents, to your mentor.
- Your mentor will review your request and provide you with feedback. You will work closely with your mentor to make sure that the learning description clearly explains what you know, provides enough detail for Office of Prior Learning to locate an appropriate evaluator and for the evaluator to understand the nature of your learning and prepare for the interview.
- Your mentor will submit the final draft of your request to the Office of Prior Learning, which will also review your request and may give you feedback.
- The iPLA fee will be posted to your account when the Office of Prior Learning accepts your request.
- The Office of Prior Learning will identify an evaluator and assign your request.
- You will be notified through email of the assignment. The email will include a link to the contact information for the evaluator. You are expected to contact the evaluator to set up a time for the interview.
- You will submit any further supporting materials if the evaluator requests them.
- The evaluator will submit a recommendation report for review by the faculty academic review committee that will review and approve your entire degree program portfolio.
- The credits recommended by the evaluator and accepted by the faculty are incorporated into your degree program.
- Once your degree program is concurred (approved) by the Office of the Registrar, the iPLA credits become part of your official record.

Throughout the process, you can monitor the progress of your request through PLA Planner.

*The Individualized Prior Learning Assessment: A Guide for Students* provides more information regarding how to use PLA Planner and an introductory quick guide that explains how to use the tool. Within PLA Planner, there is a full guide on how to use all the features in the program.

To access PLA Planner go to:

MyESC/Academics/Your Degree Plan or  
[www.esc.edu/PLA](http://www.esc.edu/PLA).

## Part II Additional Materials

### Transcript Annotations and Meanings

When your official document is received by Empire State College, it is given one of the following annotations:

Transcript Code	Meaning
<p><b>AOK</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regionally accredited institutions (including the time period during candidacy)</li> <li>Institutions that are members of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada</li> <li>Institutions that are members of the Israeli Council for Higher Education</li> </ul>	<p>Courses from <b>AOK</b> documents are directly transferable, if appropriate.</p> <p>These institutions and courses are listed under transcript credit on the ESC Degree Program.</p>
<p><b>AOK/QTR CR</b> Transcripts from regionally accredited institutions or candidates for regional accreditation that use quarter credits</p>	<p>Courses from <b>AOK/Qtr.Cr.</b> documents are directly transferable, if appropriate.</p> <p>These institutions and courses are listed under transcript credit on the ESC Degree Program.</p>
<p><b>AOK/CBE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Degree-granting institutions that were on (or candidates for) the New York State Department of Education list when the student attended</li> <li>Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing, Inc. (ACEN) approved RN programs</li> <li>National Association of Schools of Art and Design approved art schools</li> <li>Empire State College foreign partner institutions</li> <li>Evaluations of foreign transcripts provided by an approved foreign credential evaluation service</li> <li>Test score reports that need no other interpretation or supporting documentation</li> <li>Military Transcripts (JST, AARTS, SMART)</li> <li>Canadian Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAATS)</li> <li>Canadian 13th Year</li> <li>British A-Level Exams</li> <li>Transcripts from ACE</li> </ul>	<p>Courses from <b>AOK/CBE</b> documents are directly transferable, if appropriate, on a course-by-course basis.</p> <p>These institutions and courses are listed under credit by evaluation on the ESC Degree Program.</p>
<p><b>AOK/CBE/QTR CR</b> AOK/CBE documents listed above that use quarter credits</p>	<p>Courses from <b>AOK/CBE/Qtr. Cr.</b> documents are directly transferable, if appropriate, on a course-by-course basis.</p> <p>These institutions and courses are listed under credit by evaluation on the ESC Degree Program.</p>
<p><b>PLE/ACE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indicates that the learning has been evaluated by the American Council on Education (ACE)</li> </ul>	<p>Credits awarded for learning evaluated by ACE are listed under credit by evaluation on the ESC Degree Program.</p> <p>A copy of the ACE evaluation needs to be included in the degree program portfolio.</p>
<p><b>PLE/NCCRS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indicates that the learning has been evaluated by National College Credit Recommendation Service (National CCRS)</li> </ul>	<p>Credits awarded for learning evaluated by NCCRS are listed under credit by evaluation on the ESC Degree Program.</p> <p>A copy of the NCCRS evaluation needs to be included in the degree program portfolio.</p>

<p><b>PLE/ESC</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indicates that the learning has been evaluated by Empire State College or an institution with a similar evaluation process. Information regarding the professional learning evaluation (PLE) is available in Resources and Criteria</li> </ul>	<p>Credits awarded for learning evaluated by any of these sources are listed under credit by evaluation on the ESC Degree Program.</p> <p>A copy of the ESC evaluation needs to be included in the degree program portfolio.</p>
<p><b>FOREIGN CREDENTIAL EVAL REQUIRED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indicates that the document must be evaluated by one of the foreign credential evaluation services approved by Empire State College in order to determine if acceptable credit exists</li> </ul>	<p>Documents with this annotation do not contain directly transferable credit and have not yet been evaluated for college-level credit by a source recognized by the college.</p>
<p><b>NEEDS IPLA FOR CREDIT AWARD</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nonregionally accredited institutions or institutions without accreditation</li> <li>Documents with Continuing Education Units (CEUs)</li> <li>Learning experiences for which a student would need to seek individualized Prior Learning Assessment</li> </ul>	<p>Documents with this annotation do not contain directly transferable credit and have not yet been evaluated for college-level credit by a source recognized by the college.</p>

If you have a question about an annotation or suspect a document was annotated incorrectly, please contact your mentor or your School Office of Academic Review.

## Part III – Degree Program Portfolio and Approval Process

### Degree Program Checklist

#### 1. DEGREE PROGRAM PLAN.

- Total credits
  - 64 credits minimum for an associate degree.
  - 124 credits minimum for a bachelor's degree.
- Liberal studies marked before the study with an asterisk (\*)
  - Minimum of 32 for A.S.
  - Minimum of 48 for A.A.
  - Minimum of 32 for B.P.S.
  - Minimum of 62 for B.S.
  - Minimum of 94 for B.A.
- Advanced-level studies marked by plus (+) (for bachelor's degree)
  - Minimum of 45.
  - Minimum of 24 in concentration.
- Studies separated into concentration and general learning (except for a one-column degree).
- Total of each subsection
  - Advanced Standing.
  - Empire State College Studies – minimum of 24 credits\* for an associate degree (12 for an AA or AS in General Studies) and 31 credits for a bachelor's degree.
    - \*If you are planning on developing an AA or AS in general studies, you will only need to complete 12 credits at Empire State College.
  - 4 to 8 credits in educational planning.

The Degree Program Style Guide provides information on how to enter all information on your degree program plan.

Please visit at  
[www.esc.edu/studentdpguide](http://www.esc.edu/studentdpguide).

#### 2. GENERAL EDUCATION GRID – appropriate general education infused with degree program.

- Associate and Bachelor's degrees – 30 credits over seven areas, mathematics and communication required.

#### 3. If applicable, attach either one of the following:

- a. NEW YORK STATE ACCOUNTANT (CPA) CERTIFICATION DISCLAIMER FORM
- b. NEW YORK STATE TEACHER CERTIFICATION DISCLAIMER FORM (TCD Form)

#### 4. DEGREE PROGRAM RATIONALE

#### 5. ADVANCED STANDING CREDIT, with supporting documentation, if applicable.

- Transcript Credit.
- Prior Learning Assessment (Credit by Evaluation).
  - Standardized examinations.
  - Credit for licenses/certifications.
  - Military experiences.
  - Professional learning evaluations.
  - Individualized Prior Learning Assessment.

Note: When you enter information on your degree program, keep these points in mind.

- When possible, use the "add course" and "add completed and in-progress ESC Studies" buttons to add ESC titles. Use "Add transcript studies" button to add transfer credit which has been applied in Banner.
- Include the same learning only once (no redundancy).
- List exact credits as they appear on the documentation (do not reduce credits).

## Chapter 16: Degree Program Approval and Amendment Processes

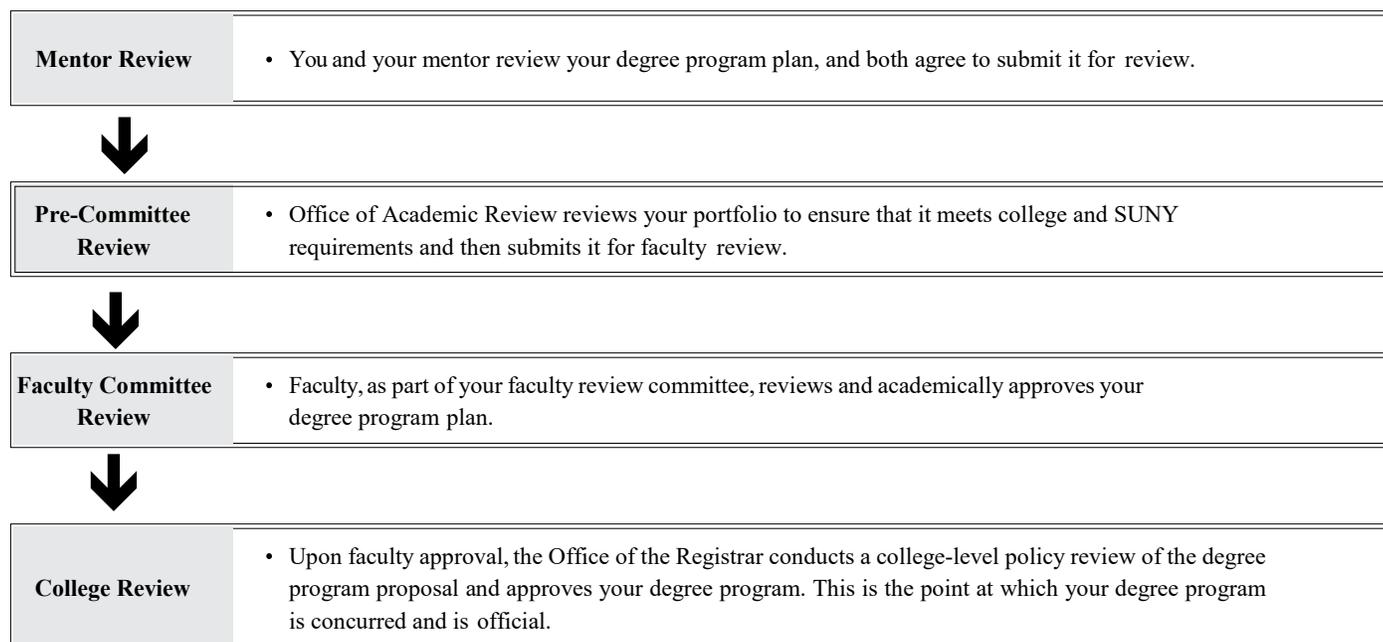
### Overview of the Process

Once you have completed your degree program proposal, the college must approve it for the degree program to become your official curriculum. Final approval is called “concurrence.” When your degree program has been concurred, it becomes the program you follow to complete your degree. Your concurred degree program also is what the college follows to determine if you have completed all your requirements to award your degree at graduation.

The review process has many steps. This is because the college wants to make sure there are sufficient checks and balances in its review process. This ensures that your degree is academically sound, meets all the SUNY and college requirements and has integrity. The college wants you to be proud of your degree.

The review and approval of your degree program portfolio involves:

College policy requires that you complete the degree planning process within your **first 32 credits of enrollment, or prior to your final 16 credits for your degree, whichever comes sooner.** Doing so ensures adequate time to make revisions and incorporate suggestions of the faculty committee that reviews your degree program.



### Mentor Review

You and your mentor develop your degree program proposal and once you both agree that it is ready for review, your mentor submits it, along with your completed general education grid and rationale essay, to the Office of Academic Review through DP Planner ([www.esc.edu/dpplanner](http://www.esc.edu/dpplanner)).

If you are planning a degree in accounting, you must read and sign (with your mentor) the Accounting Disclaimer Form immediately. Accounting degrees recognized by New York State may have restrictions on the kinds of credits you may use as part of your concentration. The form makes clear what current restrictions are in effect (PLA, for example cannot be used to satisfy accounting specific outcomes).

### Pre-Committee Review

Upon receipt of your degree program proposal by the Office of Academic Review, an acknowledgement is sent to you and your mentor. The Office of Academic Review assembles and reviews your portfolio to be certain that it meets college and SUNY requirements. This review includes:

- A check that all official transcripts and documents have been received by the college.
- An analysis of your transcript credit used in your degree program.

- A check for duplication, D grades, appropriate level of learning, etc.
- A check to be sure all necessary components and documentation are included.
- A review of individualized Prior Learning Assessment (iPLA) recommendations to be sure they are consistent with college standards and practices. See Chapter 15 and The Individualized Prior Learning Assessment: A Guide for Students for details on iPLA requests.

The academic division's Office of Academic Review may ask you to make revisions or submit additional information. Once the director of academic review determines your degree program proposal and portfolio are ready for review by the Faculty Assessment Committee, he/she schedules it for review. Ideally, the review takes place within 45 days.

## Faculty Committee Review

A faculty review committee is comprised of three or more Empire State College faculty members and facilitated by a director of academic review or designee. The committee reviews and approves your degree program proposal and portfolio on behalf of the college faculty as a whole. Approval by the committee is required before a degree program proposal and portfolio can be forwarded to the Office of the Registrar for official concurrence.

Here are some of the questions that faculty at Empire State College will consider while reviewing and assessing your degree program plan:

- Does the degree program include basic studies that provide a foundation for the concentration?
- Does the concentration include sufficient progression and depth?
- Does the degree program reflect reasonable breadth of learning?
- Does the degree program include sufficient liberal and advanced-level study for the degree type, e.g., B.A., B.S., B.S.N. or B.P.S.?
- Does the degree program address the area of study and concentration guidelines?
- Does the degree program meet the SUNY General Education Requirements?
- Does the rationale include a clear description of your goals and does the degree program help to meet those goals?
- Does the rationale explain how your degree program meets the area of study and concentration guidelines?

## Outcomes of the Faculty Committee Review

You and your mentor will be given a summary of the committee feedback and one of the following outcomes:

### Faculty approval:

Faculty approval means that the degree program proposal and portfolio are ready to submit to the Office of the Registrar for a final review and concurrence.

### Conditional approval:

In this case, the committee specifies the conditions that require response in order to move to faculty approval. Examples include:

- Changes in the program design (e.g., changes in specific degree program components, the concentration title or the area of study).
- Submission of an addendum that explains some aspect of the program design.
- Revision of the rationale essay.

### Deferral:

Deferral means that the program needs substantial changes made in consultation with you and your mentor. After changes are made, the degree program proposal and portfolio need to be resubmitted to the Office of Academic Review.

## Responding to Your Faculty Review

If the faculty asks you to revise your degree program proposal or supply additional information, you are responsible for discussing those issues with your mentor, working out a solution, making the necessary changes and ensuring the revised portfolio is resubmitted to the Office of Academic Review. You are encouraged to do this as quickly as possible. Do not become discouraged if you are asked to rethink your program or supply additional information. Remember, the faculty committee recommendations are to help you have the strongest academic program possible to meet your goals.

## Final College Review of Your Degree Program

Final approval of your degree program plan is called “concurrency.” **Once approved, your concurred degree program is your official curriculum that you follow to complete your degree.**

The Office of the Registrar is responsible for the college-level policy review and concurrence of the degree program proposal and portfolio. When the Office of the Registrar finds no issues with the degree program proposal and portfolio, it “concur” (approves) the portfolio, and your degree program becomes final. When your degree program is concurred, you and your mentor will be notified, and your degree program will become part of your official record housed in the Office of the Registrar.

If the Office of the Registrar finds that the degree program portfolio is incomplete or does not comply with college policy or criteria, the Office of the Registrar staff informs the

academic division’s Office of Academic Review within 30 days. The Office of Academic Review staff works with you, your mentor and others, as needed, to resolve the problem, or provide additional information.

## Using Your Concurred Degree Program to Complete Your Degree

After your degree program has been approved by the Office of the Registrar, you have a concurred degree program. You can view your concurred degree plan in DP Planner ([www.esc.edu/dpplanner](http://www.esc.edu/dpplanner)). The college expects you to follow this degree program once it is approved. Refer to your concurred degree program to keep track of what you have completed and what you still need to complete. **It is important if you are registering for studies that are different than what appears on your concurred program that you consult with your mentor and inform the Office of Academic Review.**

## Longevity of Degree Programs

Your concurred degree program remains valid for as long as you remain matriculated at the college. If you stop out of your studies for more than three years, you must reapply to the college. If you reapply to the college, your degree program is still valid for five years from the date of concurrence. Beyond five years, you need to consult with your mentor for guidance on your next steps.

## Changes in Your Concurred Degree Program

Although changes in a study or a shift in the focus of a study may appear inconsequential to you, it may have other unanticipated consequences, such as it could make the study inappropriate for the general education area for which it was originally designated. Therefore, all changes must be reviewed by your mentor to make sure that the degree program still follows guidelines and policies. Any proposed changes to a degree plan made after approval must be discussed with your mentor AND RATIFIED by the appropriate Director of Academic Review who will apply such modifications or formal amendments to your plan of study.

If a change is minor, substitutions within your Empire State College studies can be made at the local level, with mentor approval.

## Changes in Your Concurred Degree Program Requiring an Amendment

After your degree is concurred, if a change is major or shifts the focus of your degree, your original degree will need to be amended. The revised degree program is reviewed and approved at local and college levels. The types of changes that require amendments are:

- Major changes to studies in the Empire State College studies section.
- Changes to the advanced standing section of a concurred degree.
- Changes in degree designation.
- Changes in the registered area of study or concentration title.

To initiate an amendment, contact your mentor.

## Chapter 17:

# Fees Related to Degree Program Planning and Prior Learning Assessment

Empire State College has established the following fees to cover the costs associated with the review and approval of your degree program and individualized Prior Learning Assessment:

- Portfolio fee (assessment fee).
- Individualized Prior Learning Assessment (iPLA) fee – formerly the individual evaluation fee (IEF).

### Portfolio Fee (Assessment Fee)

The portfolio fee is charged to all undergraduate Empire State College students. This fee is charged at the beginning of your first matriculated enrollment and supports general college portfolio and assessment services:

- Review and approval of individualized degree program.
- Review of transcripts from previous institutions of higher education.
- Review of standardized examination scores.
- Review of professional learning evaluations.

For the most up-to-date information regarding fees, go to [www.esc.edu/Fees](http://www.esc.edu/Fees).

### Individualized Prior Learning Assessment (iPLA) Fee

The individualized Prior Learning Assessment (iPLA) fee, previously called the Individual Evaluation Fee (IEF), provides individual expert evaluation for your iPLA request. The \$700 fee is charged to all students who request individualized prior learning assessment. This one-time fee covers all prior learning assessment requests. Students previously charged any amount of the iPLA fee under the previous tiered structure or were billed for the previous IEF fee will not be charged this fee. The iPLA fee is charged at the time a student's individualized prior learning assessment request is accepted at his or her center Office of Academic Review and is nonrefundable once the first request is accepted. Go to [www.esc.edu/iPLA-Fees](http://www.esc.edu/iPLA-Fees) to see the latest iPLA fee schedule.

### Sources of Information

The college website has the most up-to-date information regarding fees at [www.esc.edu/Fees](http://www.esc.edu/Fees).

You also can talk with your mentor or the Office of Academic Review for additional information or with any questions about assessment-related fees. You can determine your matriculation date through MyESC or ask your mentor or the Office of Academic Review.

### Fee Waivers for Participants in Special Programs

If you are a student in one of our special programs, your fees may be included in your tuition. For more information, check with your Center Office of Academic Review. Such programs include:

- Military and veteran students (you also can check with the Office of Veteran and Military Education).
- E-Army University.
- International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local Union 3 (IBEW).

# Glossary

## Academic Divisions

Empire State College is divided into five academic divisions – Business; Arts and Humanities; Human Services; Science, Mathematics and Technology; and Social Science. The process of Academic Review takes place under the purview of the division in which the student is enrolled.

## Advanced Level

Study beyond the introductory level that involves higher levels of abstraction, increasingly extensive knowledge, complex content and greater methodological sophistication. It is commonly thought of as junior- or senior-level study at traditional institutions. Designated by (+) on the degree program.

## Advanced Standing

Academic credit for college-level learning gained outside of your attendance at Empire State College. This includes transfer credits and any learning evaluated through prior learning assessment, such as CLEP exams, military credits or individualized assessments.

## American Council on Education (ACE)

An organization that evaluates noncollegiate learning (such as standardized examinations, licenses and training) offered through various companies, organizations and military experiences. Empire State College students may receive credit for recommendations made by ACE. For more information, go to [www.acenet.edu](http://www.acenet.edu).

## Area of Study (AOS)

One of the broad academic areas in which Empire State College can award undergraduate degrees.

## Concentration

Those studies in the degree program that focus on the central elements of the student's specific educational goals, the parts of which, together, form a coherent whole.

## Concurrence

The final acceptance of the degree program plan based on a policy compliance review completed by the Office of the Registrar. This is the point at which your advanced standing credits are officially accepted, and your degree program becomes your official curriculum.

## Coordinating Center

The college's central administrative office in Saratoga Springs. Included in the Coordinating Center are Admissions, Office of the Registrar, Financial Aid, Student Accounts and Information Technology Services.

## Credit by Evaluation (CBE)

Credit for learning that has been evaluated and validated by an organization or a standardized examination, such as CLEP, ACE or Empire State College. Credit by evaluation is also known as prior learning assessment (PLA). Individualized Prior Learning Assessment can be completed for areas of college-level knowledge that is not evaluated and validated by other acceptable sources.

## Cross Registration

Cross registration allows you to take a course at another college or university from time to time to complete your degree requirements at Empire State College. You may enroll in a course for academic credit at a college or university that is accredited, or a candidate for accreditation, by a recognized regional accrediting agency. By doing so, you expand the variety of learning resources available.

## **Degree Program (DP)**

The comprehensive plan for a student's Empire State College degree. The degree program is prepared with faculty advice and utilizes a special transcript/degree program format. On the degree program, students list all the components that make up their degree, including previously obtained transcribed or evaluated learning and all studies to be completed at Empire State College. Once the degree plan is concurred, it becomes the official curriculum that the student follows to complete his or her degree.

## **Degree Program Planning**

The process by which a student plans an effective and coherent degree program in consultation with his or her mentor. The degree program plan is a primary outcome of educational planning, one of the first studies students undertake at the college.

## **Degree Program Portfolio**

The collection of materials and forms that is compiled and submitted to obtain degree program and advanced standing approval. The portfolio contains the degree program plan, the rationale for the degree program and supporting documents such as transcripts and other evaluations of a student's prior learning.

## **Degree Program Rationale**

The student's explanation of the purposes, design and significance of her or his individualized degree program. This essay is normally developed early in a student's studies as part of educational planning and is included in the degree program portfolio.

## **DP Planner**

A Web-based tool used by students and mentors for the planning and submission of undergraduate degree programs. This tool can be found at [my.esc.edu](http://my.esc.edu) by clicking the Degree Planning (Undergraduate) button or [www.esc.edu/dpplanner](http://www.esc.edu/dpplanner).

## **Educational Planning**

The Empire State College study in which students plan an effective and coherent degree program. This is usually one of the first studies students undertake at the college and also may be known as academic planning and degree program planning. This is the only required course for all undergraduate students at Empire State College.

## **Evaluator**

A qualified expert that evaluates individualized Prior Learning Assessment.

## **General Education**

A requirement of the State University of New York system that all degrees have an established number of general education credits spread out over seven areas of knowledge and skills.

## **General Learning**

Degree program components which provide breadth to the student's degree work beyond the concentration. These are not necessarily, but may be, liberal arts and sciences and SUNY General Education Requirements.

## **Individualized Prior Learning Assessment (iPLA)**

The process by which the college evaluates a student's college-level knowledge obtained through experiences outside of the traditional college classroom, such as workplace training, personal research and special interests.

## **Introductory Level**

Beginning or foundational learning. Introductory learning is also known as lower-level learning.

## Learning Contract

The individual study plan developed with a mentor that states what students will learn for a specific number of credits to be awarded during an enrollment period (generally 16 weeks). Contracts may include independent study, tutorials, courses, or other learning activities.

## Liberal Arts and Sciences/Liberal Studies

Studies that enhance the abilities of individuals to understand, to judge, communicate and take action with each other about the nature, quality and conditions of their lives. This learning generally has a strong theoretical and conceptual content. Designated by (\*) on the degree program.

## Location

Empire State College has more than 30 undergraduate teaching locations across New York, as well as the School of Nursing and Allied Health, and the School for Graduate Studies.

## Mentor

An Empire State College faculty member or professional. Mentors work closely and individually with students, serving as guides to help students define their educational tasks, design their degree program, identify resources and evaluate students' progress.

## National College Credit Recommendation Service (National CCRS)

National College Credit Recommendation Service is an organization that evaluates noncollegiate learning (such as training programs, licenses and/or) offered through various companies and organizations. Empire State College students may receive credit for recommendations made by National CCRS. [www.nationalccrs.org](http://www.nationalccrs.org).

## Office of Academic Review

Office attached to an academic division that works with students and mentors in the academic review of degree programs and prior learning assessment.

## Office of Prior Learning

Office responsible for managing the individualized prior learning assessment process.

## PLA Planner

A Web-based tool used by students, mentors, staff and evaluators for the planning, submission and management of individualized prior learning assessment requests and evaluations. This tool can be found at [my.esc.edu](http://my.esc.edu) then click Degree Planning (Undergraduate), and the link will be on the right-hand side on the bottom, PLA Planner or [www.esc.edu/PLA](http://www.esc.edu/PLA).

## Primary Mentor (also see mentor)

At Empire State College, each student is assigned a primary mentor to guide the student throughout his or her degree program planning process and studies.

## Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)

Learning that has been acquired outside of Empire State College and is assessed for college-level credits.

## Professional Learning Evaluations

The college has evaluated some professional licenses, certifications, training courses and other activities for college-level credit. Students who complete such pre-evaluated experiences are eligible for college credit toward their Empire State College degrees.

## Redundant Learning

Learning that overlaps other learning. Credit for the same learning can be awarded only once.

## Registrar's Office

Office responsible for managing the degree program approval (concurrency) process.

## Standardized Examinations

Tests created by a testing agency to measure a person's knowledge.

## Study

Empire State College's term for a unit of learning, i.e., course of study.

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