

July 25, 2007

MEMORANDUM

To: Members, Advisory Committee on Academic Programs

From: Dr. Gail M. Morrison, Director of Academic Affairs and Licensing

Consideration of Proposed International Baccalaureate Credit Award Policy

Background

The passage of the Education and Economic Development Act of 2005 (EEDA) created statutory responsibility for the *alignment of curricula and the creation of seamless pathways from secondary to postsecondary education*. For this purpose, the EEDA Coordinating Council formed the Articulation and Dual Enrollment, High School Graduation and Postsecondary Education Alignment Committee (hereinafter referred to as the Committee). This committee agreed to complete by Summer 2007 a statewide policy for statewide acceptance of the International Baccalaureate (IB) coursework by public institutions of higher education. IB courses comprise one of the avenues for high school students in South Carolina to gain college credit through courses taken in high school. Unlike the two major avenues—Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment courses—there is no existing state policy concerning the acceptance of IB courses by the state’s institutions of higher education.

Historical Information on the International Baccalaureate

The International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO), established in Geneva, Switzerland in 1968 (see www.ibo.org) promotes quality in international education to “help develop the intellectual, personal, emotional and social skills to live, learn and work in a rapidly globalizing world.” In its high school programs, the IBO does this through a rigorous standardized academic program leading to either the IB Certificate or the IB Diploma.

International Baccalaureate students are required to choose one offering from each of six academic subject areas:

- *Language A1* (student's native language and literature)
- *Second Language* (language other than native tongue and literature)
- *Individuals and Societies*
- *Experimental Sciences*
- *Mathematics and Computer Science*
- *Arts*

In addition to the content subject fields listed above, students complete three meta-theoretical components as follows:

- **Theory of Knowledge.** 100 hours of teaching in a course focused on bases of knowledge and analysis of evidence.
- **Creativity, Action, and Service Program.** Preparation for citizenship and development of the entire person through involvement in community service and creative and physical activity.
- **Extended Essay of 4000 Words.** Preparation for college-level writing assignments, examination of a particular topic of student's choice, which is independent, self-directed, and at a minimum, 4000 words.

To obtain the IB Diploma, a student must score at least 24 points of a maximum 45 points on six exams. Each subject exam is graded on a scale of one point (the lowest) to seven points (the highest). In addition to the examination portion of the Diploma Program, a maximum of three points is available for combined performance in the essay and the Theory of Knowledge.

The IB Certificate is given to students who choose to take fewer than the required six courses for the diploma, or who take six courses but fail to meet the requirements for the diploma.

Two types of courses exist in the IB program: higher-level and standard-level.

- **“Higher-level”** courses are taught over two years, involve 240 hours of teaching, and require greater depth of study across a broader range of content.
- **“Standard-level”** courses are taught in one year and include 150 teaching hours providing a broad perspective of the entire Diploma Program.

Students entering some institutions may be awarded credit at the university level for the completion of the International Baccalaureate Diploma as well as for satisfactory scores on course examinations given at the end of the International Baccalaureate program. Students completing higher-level courses take higher-level examinations and standard-level courses require standard-level exams. Most students complete three courses at the higher-level and three at the standard-level; however, some students will complete four courses (the maximum) at the higher level.

Other States' Policies on IB

According to a database released by the Education Commission for the States (ECS) in early 2007, few states in the nation have a unified policy on IB course credit. According to the state-by-state overview on IB policy, which can be found at <http://mb2.ecs.org/reports/Report.aspx?id=1311>, only nine states have a comprehensive IB policy. Of these nine states, five prescriptively define credit awarded and minimum test scores. The other four states have permissive policies in which individual institutions have substantial leeway over what academic credit they might award for high school IB coursework.

In all nine states with statewide IB policies, only higher-level courses are granted college credit as a matter of state policy. However, in some of these states with permissive policies, outside the statewide policies requirements, some institutions offer credit for standard-level courses. In these cases, test scores for acceptance of credit range from “4+” to “6+.” Likewise, some institutions also give course credit for the IB Diploma.

South Carolina's Current IB Participation and Course Credit Policy Status

According to the South Carolina Department of Education website, there are 24 high schools in the state offering the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program. In 2005, the most recent year for which data is posted, 879 students took at least one IB subject-area exam. In the same year, between 154 and 167 students received the IB Diploma, approximately 51% of the 233 students who attempted to earn one. According to SDE staff, there are 496 IB Diploma candidates in 2006-07, more than double the number from 2004-05. IB is, therefore, a rising phenomenon in South Carolina's K-12 repertoire from program options.

No statewide policy for accepting International Baccalaureate courses for college credit has ever existed in South Carolina. While many of the state's higher education institutions do have IB acceptance policies, the range of acceptable exam scores has varied. Most of the state's institutions continue to accept a score

of four, while some will not accept scores lower than five on certain exams. All accept only higher-level course scores.

Study Committee Process and Results

In keeping with the EEDA's mandate to make the transition between K-12 to higher education as seamless as possible, the Committee in February 2007 convened a study group to review the IB curriculum in South Carolina for the purpose of developing a statewide policy on the acceptance of IB examination scores in public higher education institutions. Composed of representatives from various sectors of higher education in the state, the State Department of Education, school districts, and classroom IB teachers, the study group created a research sub-committee of its higher education members to review freshman year performance of students who had received college course credit for IB higher-level test scores. The sub-committee was composed of representatives from Clemson University, the University of South Carolina-Columbia, the College of Charleston, Winthrop University, and Commission staff. The sub-committee collected and evaluated data on the relative success of IB students given course credit for IB test scores of 4+ (USC and Winthrop) and those given course credit for IB test scores of 5+ (Clemson and the College of Charleston). Based upon the available, albeit small, data sets, the study group determined that the data showed no appreciable difference in higher education performance between the two groups. *After reviewing the data, the study group has recommended that a test score of "4" on higher-level examinations be accepted as the statewide minimum score for awarding college course credit for IB higher-level courses.*

The amount of college course credit awarded will be equivalent to the credit hour value of the college course for which the IB credit is being accepted. For instance, a student earning a test score of "4" or higher on the IB Biology exam would be awarded four credit hours for Biology 101 at institution "A" if Biology 101 were normally a four credit hour course at that institution. If Biology 101 were a three credit hour course at institution "A," the student would be awarded three credit hours.

The IB credit policy will be made available to the public through the CHE's website and distributed to the SC Department of Education for dissemination to the state's high schools and reads as follows:

International Baccalaureate Credit Award Policy

Each public institution of higher education within the state shall adopt and implement a policy by Fall 2008 for the acceptance of International Baccalaureate credit for first-time freshmen students who have scored "4" or above on any

higher-level IB course examination. The amount of college course credit awarded for an IB course will be equivalent to the credit hour value of the college course for which the IB credit is being accepted. This policy shall be referenced in the institution's academic catalogue and made available to the public in an electronic format on the institution's website.

Recommendation

The staff recommends that the Advisory Committee for Academic Programs commend this policy favorably to the Commission for implementation in Fall 2008.