



Excelsior Scholarship Program — How to Verify Credits

To be deemed an Excelsior Scholarship Recipient an applicant must generally be on track to completing an Associate's degree in two years or a Bachelor's degree in four years.

Credit Verification is performed to establish initial eligibility only. Once a recipient, the certification process is used to determine whether such recipient remains on track to timely completion of his or her degree.

The "How to Verify Credits" section applies to the establishment of initial eligibility only.

Terminology

1. Current college. When referring to transfer students, the current college is the college to which the student has newly transferred. This is the college responsible for verifying credits.
2. On track to timely completion of a degree. To be on track to timely completion of a degree, a student must meet both the credit requirement and be continuously enrolled, except in special circumstances as allowed by regulation.
3. Term. References to term means Fall or Spring terms only, unless otherwise specified.

1.1 CREDIT VERIFICATION REQUIREMENT

First-time, returning and transfer students are eligible to apply for the Excelsior Scholarship. Each college must verify credits for all students who have applied for an Excelsior Scholarship award to determine whether such applicants are on-track to timely complete their degree, as prescribed by the Excelsior Scholarship program.

1.1.1 First-time Students

A first-time student is one who has never matriculated (i.e., pursued a degree) prior to the term or academic year for which the Excelsior Scholarship award is first being sought.

Schools must verify credits to determine whether an Excelsior Scholarship applicant is a first-time student; however, a first-time student will always meet the credit requirement regardless of the number of college credits earned prior to their matriculation.

1.1.2 Returning and Transfer Students

A returning student is one who matriculated (i.e., pursuing a degree) prior to the term or year for which the Excelsior Scholarship award is being sought.

A transfer student is one who was matriculated (i.e., pursuing a degree) at one college or university and who now seeks to attend a different college or university.

Schools must verify credits for returning and transfer students applying for an Excelsior Scholarship to determine whether such applicants are on track to complete their associate's degree in two years and their bachelor's degree in four years by:

- Earning an average of 30 or more credits per year towards their program(s) of study since first matriculating in accordance with Section 1.2 below.

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For transfer students, credits earned at the previous college must be accepted by the current college in accordance with Section 1.2 below.

- Being continuously enrolled with no break in attendance since first matriculating, except in special circumstances as allowed by regulation (see Section 2).

1.2 DETERMINING ON-TIME COMPLETION (SCHEDULE)

To be deemed initially eligible for an Excelsior Scholarship, students must: (1) be on track for on-time graduation, (2) have no break in attendance since first matriculated at any college (except in special circumstances as described in Section 2) and (3) have earned credits in their current program(s) of study per the schedule below:

Term(s) Completed	2, 4-, and 5-Year Programs	Opportunity Programs
1	15 credits	12 credits
2	30 credits	24 credits
3	45 credits	36 credits
4	60 credits	48 credits
5	75 credits	60 credits
6	90 credits	72 credits
7	105 credits	84 credits
8	120 credits	96 credits
9	135 credits*	108 credits
10	150 credits*	120 credits

*5 Year programs of study

In accordance with the schedule, a matriculated student who has been enrolled for one term must have a total of 15 credits towards his/her program(s) of study to be an Excelsior Scholarship recipient.

1.2.1 5-Year Programs of Study, Opportunity Programs, ADA

Students enrolled in a program of study normally requiring five years or an opportunity program will be entitled to complete their degree within 5 years, pursuant to the above schedule. The requirements for students with disabilities under the Americans With Disabilities Act are described in Section 1.3.

1.2.2 Credits Earned While a Nonmatriculated Student

For purposes of determining on-time completion, Excelsior Scholarship applicants may have earned college credits towards their program(s) of study through a combination of classes taken in previous Fall, Winter, Spring and/or Summer term(s), and/or earned prior to matriculation in college. Any credits earned while a nonmatriculated student through AP or college classes, CLEP Exams, courses taken as part of job training and/or the military, and other non-matriculated classes may be used to fulfill the requirements above. Such credits must be accepted by the school and applicable to the student's program(s) of study. These credits may only be used once during a student's college career.

For purposes of verifying credits, schools may use college credits earned while a nonmatriculated student to meet the above schedule requirements for a first time, returning or transfer student.

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1.3 VERIFYING CREDITS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES UNDER THE ADA

For on-time degree completion, ADA students must meet the following requirements:

- successfully completed the number of credits for which they enrolled each semester in their program(s) of study, and
- maintained continuous enrollment,

unless failure to complete attempted (enrolled) credits or maintain continuous enrollment is documented to be due to their disability or other special circumstance as described in Section 2.

1.3.1 Registration

Students who self-identify as having a disability under the ADA on the Excelsior Scholarship application must register with their college office for students with disabilities.

Students not identified as ADA students by the school will be evaluated using the schedule for students without disabilities (i.e., an average of 30-credits per year).

1.3.2 Determining On-Time Completion for Students with Disabilities Under the ADA

To determine eligibility for new applicants, HESC provides each school with a file list of self-identified ADA students using web file transfer (HE9078) and requests the following information be returned using web file transfer (HE9079):

- College
- Student's name
- Student's SSN
- Designated as ADA student at the school – Y/N
- Terms enrolled
- # of credits enrolled per term
- # of credits completed per term
- Leave of Absence (LOA) date
- LOA due to disability – Y/N

Upon receipt of the HE9079, HESC will review and make a final determination of eligibility.

1.3.3 ADA Appeals

ADA students who are denied may appeal the decision by submitting a completed Excelsior Scholarship Appeal Form available on HESC's website.

1.4 APPLICANTS WHO HAVE EARNED A PRIOR CERTIFICATE, DEGREE OR CREDITS

Applicants who have earned a certificate can receive an Excelsior Scholarship award to pursue an associate's or bachelor's degree, provided:

- they immediately enroll in a two-year or four-year program upon completion of their certificate program; and
- credits earned at the previous college are accepted by the current college and are applicable to their program(s) of study.

Applicants who have earned an associate's degree can receive an award to pursue a bachelor's degree, provided:

- they immediately enroll in a four-year program upon completion of their associate's degree.
- at least 60 credits are accepted by the current college and are applicable to their program(s) of study.
- they are not pursuing a second associate's degree.

Applicants who have previously earned a bachelor's degree (foreign or domestic) are ineligible to receive an Excelsior award.

Applicants who have previously attended college as a matriculated student and are not on track for on-time completion of

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their degree are ineligible for the Excelsior Scholarship.

1.5 METHODS FOR VERIFYING CREDITS

There are several methods available for credit verification. The New York State Office of Information Technology Services (ITS) will generate and send files containing Excelsior Scholarship applicants to schools for verification of attendance and credits earned. For each student record in the files, schools must report the total number of credits earned by the student toward their program(s) of study. Files are sent and received using the file transfer system.

1. Outgoing file- HE8838 Excelsior Credit Certification Request file to School
2. Incoming file from schools
 - HE8839 – Excelsior Student Credit Verification Response
 - HE8869- Excelsior Student Credit Verification Response Spreadsheet

2. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

2.1 LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Approved leaves of absence (LOA) generally do not jeopardize students' eligibility for the Excelsior Scholarship award. Reasons for an approved LOA may include a death in the immediate family, illness or other crises.

Students who contact HESC to indicate that they have taken a leave of absence from their school or reduced their course load must complete and return an Excelsior Scholarship Appeal form (available at hesc.ny.gov) to HESC.

Schools will be asked to provide HESC with any documentation, dates, or other information regarding an approved LOA. If the school does not have any official record of the leave, HESC will work with the student and school to document the reason for the break in enrollment or credit reduction. A final determination regarding the student's eligibility will be made upon HESC's review of all documentation.

Neither students with disabilities nor students without disabilities can receive or retain an Excelsior Scholarship award if they take longer to complete due to a change of majors or transfer to another college unless such change is a direct result of functional limitations resulting from the impairment that impacts the student's ability to continue at the college or in the major. Specifically:

For individuals who have lost college credits due to a change in major or transfer of college, consideration for an award will only be given to students who provide medical documentation that clearly specifies that they (1) both (i) transferred to another college due to their disability or medical condition (e.g., the student must be cared for at home and, therefore, transferred to a college near their home) and (ii) changed majors, if applicable, because their previous major was not offered at the college to which they transferred; or (2) were first diagnosed with their disability or medical condition after entering college/selecting their major, and their capacity to continue at that college or in pursuit of that major is or was limited by their disability or medical condition, resulting in the loss of credits.

2.2 FINAL YEAR OF STUDY

Students in their final two terms prior to graduation need to enroll in 12 credits each term but do not need to meet the 30 credit per year requirement. For the final term, only one class needs to be in their program(s) of study.

Effective December 27, 2017, for the term prior to the final term, only six credits need to be in the student's program(s) of study.

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2.3 COURSE STRUCTURE FOR CERTAIN PROGRAMS

Students enrolled in programs leading to an associate's degree in two years or a bachelor's degree in four years that follow different sequencing which does not enable students to meet the requirements outlined for the Excelsior Scholarship are eligible provided they adhere to the programs' prescribed credit requirements.

In addition, a student who enrolls in a program structured to begin only in a Spring or Fall term and who had a break in attendance for the term prior to the start of such program, will be considered to have an allowable interruption of study.