# CLEP®:

## Promoting Academic Success in Higher Education



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## CLEP®: Promoting Academic Success in Higher Education

Promoting academic success in higher education is the philosophical foundation and mission of the College-Level Examination Program® (CLEP) and the College Board.

CLEP allows students to demonstrate that they have acquired college-level mastery of course content in 34 different subject areas. Students who successfully complete a CLEP exam can enrich their degree programs with higher-level courses in the same discipline, expand their horizons by taking a wider array of electives, and avoid the need to repeat material that they already know.

For students who are able to pursue their degrees only part-time, or who are struggling to meet the rising cost of higher education, CLEP offers an educationally sound, responsible way to shorten the path to a college degree. This benefit makes earning a degree more feasible and therefore makes it more likely that part-time or financially strapped students will persist.

College faculty design and set the standards so that any college can rely on upon their validity, and any student who has mastered the course material can demonstrate that mastery.

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# Introduction to CLEP

**34**

The number of exams in introductory, college-level subjects

The College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), sponsored by the College Board, allows students to earn college credit by demonstrating their mastery of college-level material. Students who achieve a passing score on a CLEP examination may earn introductory-level college credit, allowing them to move on to more advanced, higher-level courses.

## Quick Facts about CLEP

- Exams are available in 34 introductory, college-level subjects.
- More than 2,900 colleges and universities have credit-granting and/or placement policies for CLEP.
- Institutions may grant from 3 to 12 college credits for each exam passed.
- Exams are administered at 1,400 colleges in the United States and abroad.
- CLEP is administered on computer; exams are available year-round.
- Exams are timed and approximately 90 minutes long.
- Exams are composed primarily of multiple-choice questions; other types of questions require candidates to fill in a numeric answer, to shade areas of an object, or to put items in the correct order. English Composition with Essay includes a required essay section. Several other exams have optional essay sections.
- All exams are scored on a scale of 20 to 80 and the credit-granting score recommended by the American Council on Education (ACE) for all exams is 50, a score which represents a grade of C[1].
- Score reports are available to students and the administering institution immediately upon completion of the exam[2].

[1] Four-semester recommended credit-granting scores for foreign languages are higher.
[2] Scores for English Composition with Essay are available 2–3 weeks after the exam date.

# The CLEP Exams

**Composition and Literature**
American Literature
Analyzing and Interpreting Literature
English Composition
English Composition with Essay
English Literature
Freshman College Composition
Humanities

**Foreign Languages**
French Language (Levels 1 and 2)
German Language (Levels 1 and 2)
Spanish Language (Levels 1 and 2)

**History and Social Sciences**
American Government
Human Growth and Development
Introduction to Educational Psychology
Introductory Psychology
Introductory Sociology
Principles of Macroeconomics
Principles of Microeconomics
Social Sciences and History
History of the United States I: Early Colonization to 1877
History of the United States II: 1865 to the Present
Western Civilization I: Ancient Near East to 1648
Western Civilization II: 1648 to the Present

**Science and Mathematics**
Biology
Calculus
Chemistry
College Algebra
College Mathematics
Natural Sciences
Precalculus

**Business**
Financial Accounting
Introductory Business Law
Information Systems and Computer Applications
Principles of Management
Principles of Marketing

"I am extremely grateful for the opportunity I have to get a college education. Without CLEP, a higher education would have been impossible to achieve. By saving time and money, I am able to work, raise my family, and still get the sense of refinement that comes from earning a college degree."

**Barbara Henderickson**
Class of 2008
Excelsior College



# CLEP and Your Institution

**1,400**

The number of colleges in the United States and abroad that administer CLEP exams

The College-Level Examination Program does not grant credit for, nor administer, CLEP exams. In order to gain access to these exams, students must rely upon colleges and universities. Institutions participate in the CLEP program by developing exams, setting exam standards, creating institution-wide policies to grant credit for CLEP examinations, and administering the exams to students at on-campus test centers.

## A Closer Look at What It Means to Be a CLEP Credit-granting Institution

Colleges and universities develop their own policies for awarding credit and/or placement to their students for CLEP exams. The CLEP program and the American Council on Education (ACE) make recommendations for establishing credit-granting scores, and academic institutions may use these recommendations as a guide in determining and administering their policies. *(See page 18 for information on setting and expanding institutional CLEP credit-granting policies.)*

Credit-granting institutions are encouraged to provide CLEP policy information to students on their Web sites, in college catalogs and brochures, and through the advising and admissions offices. Prior to taking a CLEP exam, a student needs to know whether his or her institution grants credit for that exam, the required score in order to receive credit and/or advanced placement, and the course equivalency. *(See page 20 for a sample CLEP policy.)*

Students' exam scores are immediately available to institutions that serve as test centers, allowing them to expedite credit-granting decisions. To send scores to institutions that are not CLEP test centers, students may designate a score recipient at the time of testing or request a transcript from CLEP at a later date.

# CLEP Test Centers: What's Involved and How They Work

In order to administer CLEP exams on their campuses, colleges must submit an application to CLEP and meet certain technical, security, and staffing requirements.

**Test centers are responsible for:**

- Providing computers and printers for CLEP testing (this equipment may be used for other purposes when not in use for CLEP testing)
- Determining, based upon space and availability of equipment, whether all testing will be done on a single computer or in a networked environment
- Managing and staffing the testing site
- Setting the center's testing schedule

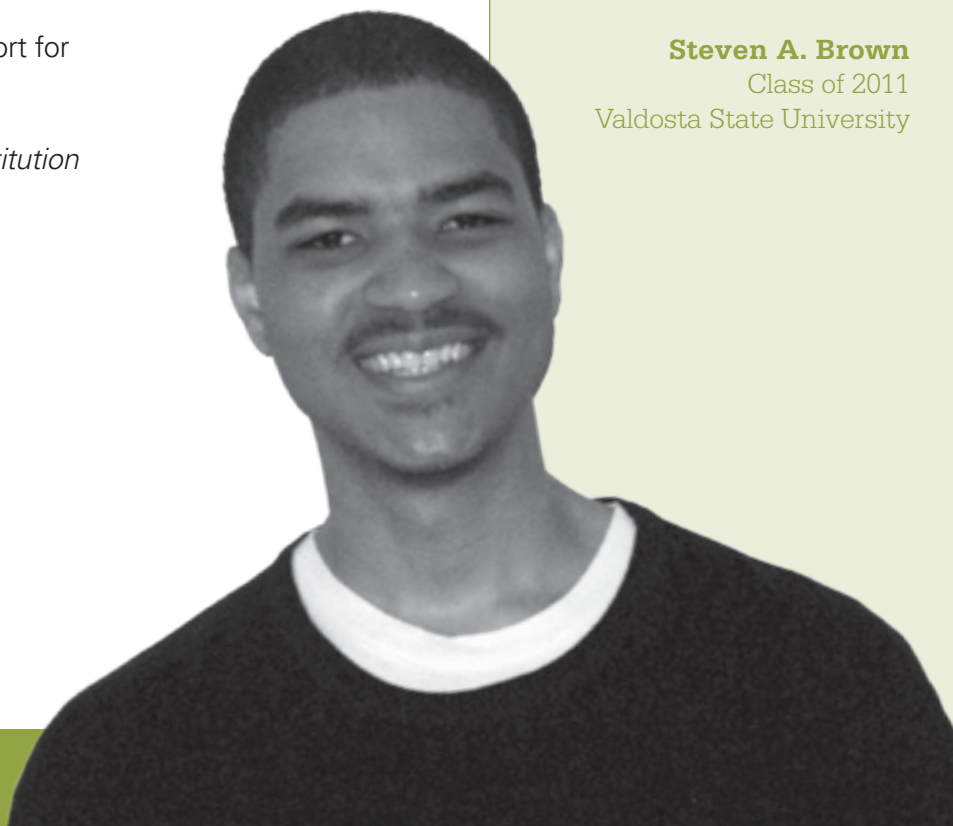
**For each test center, CLEP provides:**

- Testing software, updates, and technical support
- Full support through the application and start-up process, including assistance in educating faculty and staff about CLEP and CLEP testing on the campus
- An interactive, Web-based training course for CLEP test administrators and test center staff
- Promotional materials, resources, and support for on-campus campaigns

*(See page 23 for information on how your institution can become a CLEP test center.)*

"I wanted to make the most of my time the summer before I entered college, so I decided to take the CLEP Spanish exam. I scored high enough to earn six college credits and to feel confident that I could perform at a college level. I took two more CLEP exams that summer and entered Valdosta State University with 12 credits. Now I can concentrate on higher-level classes."

**Steven A. Brown**
Class of 2011
Valdosta State University



**91**

The percentage of students passing a CLEP exam who reported that CLEP made a difference in their ability to complete their degrees

## Benefits to CLEP Institutions

By recognizing and rewarding prior learning, credit by examination conveys benefits to colleges and universities and to students. These benefits have been validated through student surveys and current research.

A study conducted at a major research institution[3] indicated:

- Students who earned college credit through CLEP also earned **higher overall GPAs** than students of similar ability who did not earn credit through CLEP.
- CLEP students also **performed as well as or better than their peers** in subsequent course work related to the subject area in which they earned CLEP credit.
- CLEP students were also likely to be enrolled for about the same number of semesters as their similar-ability classmates and took a similar number of credit hours per semester. This finding indicated that CLEP students used the credit they earned through CLEP to **take more advanced courses** in the subject area for which they had received CLEP credit or to **broaden their educational experience** by taking courses in other subject areas.
- CLEP students also were found to be as **likely or more likely to graduate** (depending on exam subject) as students of the same ability who completed an introductory course.

A second study conducted at 12 universities and community colleges[4] confirmed that CLEP students have highly successful academic outcomes and corroborated the retention, time-to-degree, and completion benefits for institutions with CLEP policies. CLEP students in the study who earned credit for satisfactory scores on the College Algebra and Freshman College Composition exams:

- **Outperformed their classmates** in subsequent intermediate and advanced course work in the subject area of their CLEP exam
- **Earned a higher overall GPA** than other students, by approximately one-half of a grade point on average
- **Were more likely to earn course grades of A and B** than to earn any other letter grade in subsequent courses

[3] Scammacca, N., and Dodd, B. (2005). *An Investigation of Educational Outcomes for Students Who Earn College Credit through the College-Level Examination Program.* College Board Research Report No. 2005-5 (New York: The College Board).

[4] Moulder B., Abdulla, A., and Moore, D. (2005). *Validity and Fairness of CLEP Exams.* College Board Research Notes RN-22 (New York: The College Board).

These findings point to real benefits for higher education institutions.

### Retention and Graduation

Data show that students earning credit through CLEP are more likely to be retained semester-to-semester; satisfying introductory-level requirements allows them to focus on the courses they need. CLEP helps to improve time-to-degree performance, a measure of institutional accountability.

### Completion

Students earning credit through CLEP outperform their peers in subsequent courses and complete their degrees at a higher rate than students not earning credit-by-exam.

### Access

Capable students can move ahead by taking CLEP exams, opening seats in classes for students who truly need introductory course work. Resources can be reallocated, giving faculty the opportunity to focus more on individual students and curriculum development.

### Reduction of Financial Aid Expenditures

CLEP enables those students who study beyond four years to graduate sooner, freeing up more aid for on-time graduates.

### Recruitment

Institutions can offer high-performing potential students the opportunity to move ahead quickly when they demonstrate introductory-level knowledge.

"Students who take advantage of CLEP opportunities can advance expeditiously and move into a career or graduate/professional school as soon as possible. CLEP goes hand-in-hand with Texas Tech University's Graduate-On-Time program, which helps students save money by developing an educational plan to assist in on-time graduation. Both of these opportunities help students attain their goals much sooner."

**Becky Wilson**
Director, Student Financial Aid
Texas Tech University

# CLEP and Students

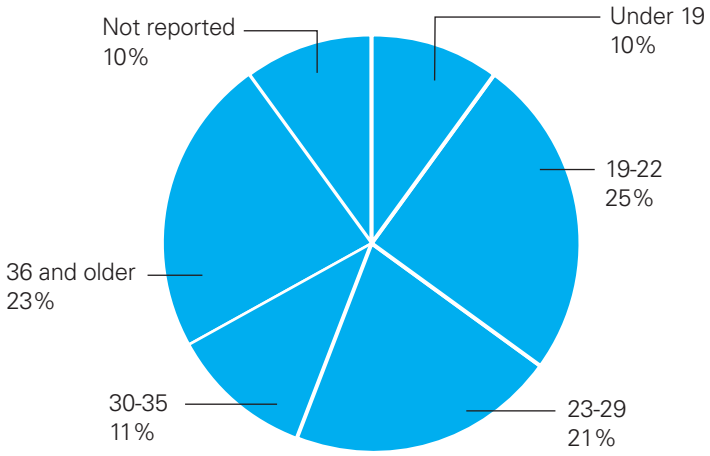
**99**

The percentage of students passing a CLEP exam who reported that they would recommend CLEP to their peers

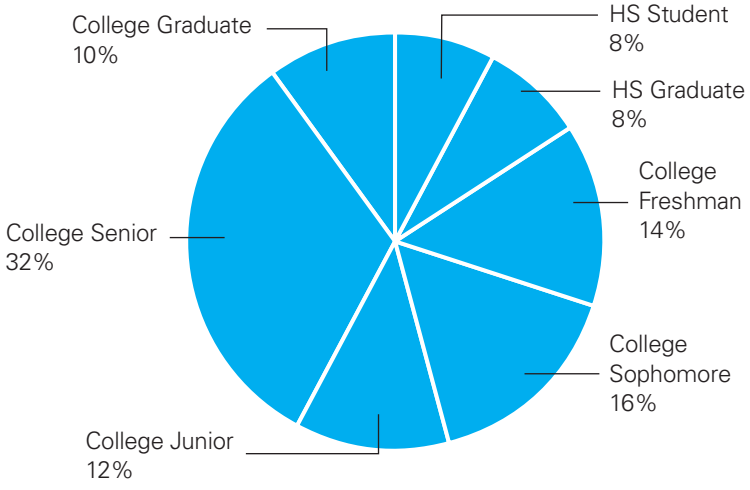
One of the strengths of the CLEP program is the diversity of the test-taking population. Students of any age may demonstrate college-level achievement through CLEP. Adults just entering or returning to school, international students, home-schooled students, military service members, and traditional 18-to-22-year-old students are among the students that take CLEP exams.

**National (Non-military) Test Takers, 2005–06**

**Age Distribution**




**Education Level Distribution**

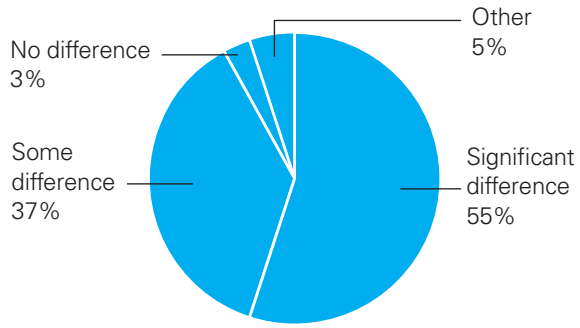


# Benefits to Students

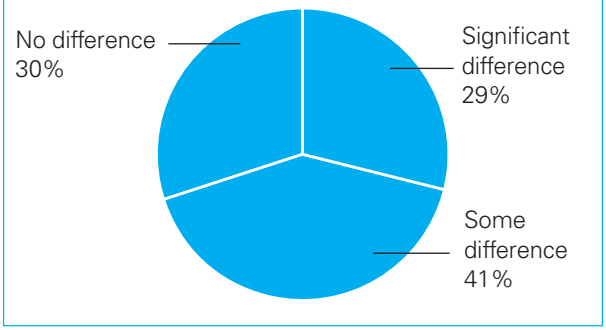
Students who take CLEP examinations are generally highly motivated, capable, and focused on completing their degrees. They benefit from the opportunity CLEP provides to move directly into advanced courses. The CLEP programs at these students' institutions can help them reach their academic goals.

In a 2004 survey of more than 4,000 students who earned scores of 50 or higher on one or more CLEP examinations, 91% of students reported that CLEP made some difference or a significant difference in their ability to complete their degrees. When asked if earning CLEP credit helped them to finance their education, 70% said that CLEP made some difference or a significant difference. The overall opinion of these students about CLEP was high; 99% reported that they would recommend CLEP to their peers.

**In helping me to complete my degree, CLEP made:**




**In helping me to finance my education, CLEP made:**




As illustrated by this survey, CLEP provides students with the opportunity for:

- Efficiency and increased likelihood of timely graduation
- Reduced tuition costs and shortened time to graduation

"I would not be a college graduate today without CLEP. I was able to skip introductory courses in the subjects that I wanted to study more rigorously, and earn credit for electives in other areas of interest. I walked away from the testing room confident that the exams were valid and thorough assessments of my independent learning."

**Adam Gutcheon**
2005 graduate
Charter Oak College



# CLEP Test Development Process

**600**

The number of faculty members from institutions across the country who are involved in the CLEP test development and standard-setting processes

All aspects of the CLEP program's test development process are informed by the belief that the exams must be rigorous and relevant to their respective disciplines. The development of each exam is overseen by a standing test development committee consisting of three or four faculty members, each of whom teaches the content covered in the exam. This committee reviews and shapes exam questions and specifications on a regular basis. Additionally, panels of 15–20 college and university faculty convene every few years to review the exam standards and to make recommendations to the test development committees. More than 600 faculty members from institutions across the country are involved in the test development and standard-setting processes. (Faculty members interested in serving on a CLEP test development committee are encouraged to notify CLEP of their interest by filling out a referral form at www.collegeboard.com/highered/clep.)

## Test Development Committees

Test development committees are comprised of three or four faculty members, from two- and four-year institutions, currently teaching relevant college undergraduate courses. These committees:

- Establish test specifications that determine the content of exams based on feedback from a national curriculum survey of teaching faculty and other data (e.g. third-party surveys and catalog searches).
- Establish a set of skills and knowledge requirements that successful test takers should be able to demonstrate.
- Develop and select test questions, reviewing statistical data from previous exams to maintain continuity and validity.
- Promote appropriate use of the exams among faculty, administrators, and test takers.
- Review analyses of candidate responses to proposed new questions (included in the exams as "pretest" questions).
- Help guide and shape policies governing the use and direction of the exam.
- Participate in conferences, workshops, and presentations for faculty and administrators.

As part of their participation on the test development committees, members receive training in writing and reviewing psychometrically sound examination questions. Their work is guided by ETS assessment specialists and psychometricians who generate and analyze statistics and data on the exams, maintain databases of items and previous exams, and assist the committee in preparing new test forms (versions of the exam).

## Item Development

Test development committees oversee the development of all items, or questions, on the tests. The process that guides a new test question from its "raw" form to its ultimate inclusion in a CLEP exam is rigorous and thorough. A new item may originate either with members of the test development committee or with other faculty members in the discipline who have been commissioned to write items. It is reviewed by the committee and by assessment specialists to ensure:

- That the question's topic is appropriate for the specifications of the exam
- That the question is unambiguous and that there is a single correct response to the question
- The validity of the new item in the context of the exam, so that its inclusion in the exam will help colleges and universities determine the achievement level of test takers
- That there is no knowledge outside the scope of the exam that would be required for a test taker to answer it correctly
- That the question measures a test taker's understanding of, and ability to think analytically about, the subject matter, and not merely factual recall or a trivial aspect of the subject

Each item also undergoes an editorial review and a fairness review, to make sure that it does not include inappropriate, offensive, or stereotypical language, and that its content and/or wording does not favor any single group of test takers over others.

After these reviews, items are pretested in exams. (A small portion of all items seen by a test taker are actually pretest items, which do not count toward his or her score.) When a pretest item has been exposed to enough test takers, its statistical performance on such factors as degree of difficulty and differential functioning among various groups of test takers is analyzed by psychometricians and the test development committee. Based on this analysis, the committee decides whether the item should be included as an operational item, rewritten to address any shortcomings, or discarded entirely.

"The CLEP U.S. History test is the product of collaboration among leading scholars in their field. Students who pass this test have demonstrated a wide-ranging and in-depth knowledge of the American past. The test is rigorous and reflects recent trends in historiography as well as established topics on any college level U.S. history syllabus."

**Carol Berkin, Ph.D.**
Former Chair
Test Development Committee,
CLEP U.S. History examinations
Professor of History,
Baruch College and
the Graduate Center



70

The percentage of students passing a CLEP exam who reported that CLEP helped them to finance their educations

## Exam Development and Assembly

The exam development process is also presided over by the test development committee. Exams are assembled to conform to the test specifications determined by the committee as a result of their review of the curriculum survey. These specifications dictate the percentages of items representing various aspects of the subject. For example, for the **Introductory Sociology exam**, the test specifications require the questions to reflect the following topics in the percentages indicated:

**20% Institutions**
- Economic
- Educational
- Family
- Medical
- Political
- Religious

**15% Social patterns**
- Community
- Demography
- Human ecology
- Rural/urban patterns

**20% Social processes**
- Collective behavior and social movements
- Culture
- Deviance and social control
- Groups and organizations
- Social change
- Social interaction
- Socialization

**30% Social stratification (process and structure)**
- Aging
- Power and social inequality
- Professions and occupations
- Race and ethnic relations
- Sex and gender roles
- Social class
- Social mobility

**15% The sociological perspective**
- History of sociology
- Methods
- Sociological theory

Each exam must also include items that represent a range of difficulty levels. This range allows psychometricians and other testing specialists to ensure that the test discriminates well among the different levels of content mastery among test takers.

## The Testlet Structure of CLEP Exams

When the CLEP program moved to computer-based administration of exams (CBT) in 2001, one objective was to increase test security by varying the content of the exams to a greater extent. Paper-and-pencil linear forms always contain the same questions, but the more sophisticated test delivery model afforded by CBT allows more variability.

CLEP exams are assembled using the testlet method. A testlet is a collection of questions that is organized around a content area or methodology within the larger scope of the exam. For example, the Biology exam is composed of five testlet sections: A, B, C, D and E, each of which covers a portion of the content specifications (Molecular and Cellular Biology, Evolution/Diversity, Organisms, Genetics/Molecular Genetics, and Ecology/Social Biology) for the test as a whole. For each content area, the Test Development Committee creates several testlets which are parallel in terms of content and statistical properties. For testlet section A, which focuses on Molecular and Cellular Biology, the Committee creates several testlets—A1, A2, A3, etc.—each containing different questions, but all related to this area of biology. The same is done for testlet B, which focuses on Evolution/Diversity, and for the other content areas covered by C, D, and E. During an exam administration, the computer software selects at random any A-B-C-D-E sequence of testlets, without impacting the content, level of difficulty, or statistical validity. Each test taker sees one A testlet, one B testlet, etc., but whether they see A1 or A2, B1 or B2 is determined only when the test is administered.

To clarify: suppose there were three testlets for each of three content areas (i.e., A1, A2, A3, B1, B2, B3, C1, C2, and C3). Although in this scenario there are only nine testlets, there can be 27 distinct variants of the exam, where any pair of the 27 exams has *at least* one testlet not in common, as shown below:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| A1 | B1 | C1 |
| A1 | B1 | C2 |
| A1 | B1 | C3 |
| A1 | B2 | C1 |
| A1 | B2 | C2 |
| A1 | B2 | C3 |
| A1 | B3 | C1 |
| A1 | B3 | C2 |
| A1 | B3 | C3 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| A2 | B1 | C1 |
| A2 | B1 | C2 |
| A2 | B1 | C3 |
| A2 | B2 | C1 |
| A2 | B2 | C2 |
| A2 | B2 | C3 |
| A2 | B3 | C1 |
| A2 | B3 | C2 |
| A2 | B3 | C3 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| A3 | B1 | C1 |
| A3 | B1 | C2 |
| A3 | B1 | C3 |
| A3 | B2 | C1 |
| A3 | B2 | C2 |
| A3 | B2 | C3 |
| A3 | B3 | C1 |
| A3 | B3 | C2 |
| A3 | B3 | C3 |

"As a member of the Calculus Test Development Committee, I can assure faculty and administrators that the Calculus exam was carefully constructed and validated. It is an exam that stresses the fundamental ideas of calculus and asks the kind of questions that you hope your students can answer the first day of the second semester of calculus."

**Jane Coffee**
Former Member
Test Development Committee,
CLEP Calculus examination
Professor of Mathematics,
College of Staten Island

**50**

The credit-granting score recommended by the American Council on Education (ACE) for all CLEP examinations

Because the individual exams are assembled from parallel testlets, the resulting exams are equivalent. In addition, test security is enhanced. For example, if 27 candidates test simultaneously at the same testing center, each of them will likely see a different form of the same exam. As more items are added to the question pool, the number of individual testlets and possible unique forms increase. If a test has three versions of each of four testlets, 81 unique forms can be generated; if a test has three versions each of five testlets, 243 unique forms are possible.

Advantages of the testlets approach include the following:

1. Multiple exams can be assembled and administered while providing a reasonable degree of control over content and statistical specifications.

2. The test administration software rotates testlets so that each variation of the exam is seen by equal numbers of test takers across all test centers. This ensures a consistent statistical analysis.

3. Because the assembly of testlets follows strict statistical and test content requirements, comparability of testlets with one another is predictable, controlled, and reliable.

## How Are Standards Established for CLEP Exams?

The standard-setting process ensures that the scores students earn on each examination consistently portray student mastery of a subject. Scoring standards are determined through the process of Web-based standard setting, which is accomplished by a standard-setting panel, comprised of 15–20 college faculty members teaching the equivalent college-level course.

The standard-setting study is conducted mainly online; panelists receive training materials, conduct discussions, and render judgments via the Internet. The studies are managed by a trained facilitator from ETS who answers questions, monitors the progress of the study, and leads the discussions. The panels follow the modified Angoff method in order to arrive at their judgments and recommendations.

## The Angoff Method

The Angoff methodology used in CLEP standard-setting studies is a modification of an approach first introduced by William H. Angoff in 1971[5]. The modified Angoff method asks panelists, or judges, to determine the percentage of typical students at grade levels B and C who would be able to answer a question correctly. This method reflects the fact that at any particular grade level, it is rare for 100 percent of students to answer a question either correctly or incorrectly. For exams that include essays, standards are established using the Benchmark Method[6] in addition to the Angoff method.

## The Web-Based Standard-Setting Process

Before meeting, panel members begin the process by familiarizing themselves with the CLEP examinations in general and the examination under review in particular. They are each asked to define the performance characteristics of a typical college student at various grade levels (A, B, C, D). The final description of a typical test taker to be used for the purposes of the standard setting is determined during an online discussion among all the judges on the panel.

In the next stage of the process, judges are trained to recognize factors, such as format or phrasing, that tend to either increase or decrease the difficulty of a given test question. This training is intended to help panel members critically assess factors other than content difficulty when predicting how students would perform on the questions.

After this training is complete, panel members are asked to estimate, or rate, the performance of typical students at various grade levels on each of the exam questions.

After the first round of ratings, standard-setting facilitators provide each judge with historical information about the items, the mean and variance of the ratings assigned to each item by the panel of judges, and the difference between the highest and lowest ratings for the item. Items with a particularly large or small variance are highlighted in the document. The judges participate in an online discussion in which they compare their individual ratings to those of other judges, with special attention to the highlighted items.

During the second round of ratings, judges are permitted to view and make adjustments to their ratings from the first round. However, they have the option of leaving their original ratings unchanged. The scores assigned by each judge to the individual items in this second round are then added together to give a total score for the judge in question. These scores are then averaged across all judges to determine the study's proposed passing score.

"Since CLEP Precalculus was developed by mathematics professors from a diverse range of schools and backgrounds, the exam represents a balance between traditional and reform curricula. We felt it was important to include questions that measure students' knowledge of mathematical concepts, as well as questions that measure students' ability to perform calculations."

**James Choike**
Chair
Test Development Committee,
CLEP Precalculus examination
Professor of Mathematics,
Oklahoma State University



[5] Angoff, W.H. (1971). Scales, norms, and equivalent scores. In R.L. Thorndike (Ed.), *Educational Measurement*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

[6] Faggen, J. (1994, November). *Setting standards for constructed response tests: An overview.* Educational Testing Service Research Memorandum RM-94-19. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.

## How the Final CLEP Credit-Granting Score is Determined

The test development committee reviews the results from the standard-setting which includes the standard-setting panel's definitions of the A, B, C, and D student, and the ratings of the judges at the B and C levels. The committee may make adjustments based on any of the following factors: the standard error of judgment, the standard error of measurement, and the historical performance of candidates. The final credit-granting score (or "cut-score," the number of correct questions needed to earn an equivalent of C) is determined following any adjustments. This cut score is equated to a scaled score of 50. The committee approves the final credit-granting score and that score is implemented in the operational exam.

| | Web-Based Standard Setting Report for CLEP: | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Typical A-Level Student** | **Typical B-Level Student** |
| **Knowledge and comprehension of basic facts, concepts, and principles** | Has an advanced understanding of the material and grasps concepts at a deep level. Answers factual questions, deduces answers to questions based on information learned in another context, draws inferences, and applies concepts. Firmly comprehends theory. Analyzes, synthesizes, and applies. | Has more than a surface level understanding of the material. Understands, in a moderately advanced manner, the applications and implications of factual information. |
| **Association of ideas with theories** | Chooses appropriate theories to aid in understanding a situation. Uses theory as a guide to selecting strategies for solving unique and complex problems. | Compares and contrasts theories. Applies theories to familiar situations, but may have difficulty applying theories to new or unfamiliar situations. Understands theories in isolation and may not notice differences between similar theories. Often does not understand how theories may simultaneously coexist, interrelate, and complement each other. |
| **Ability to apply concepts** | Transfers, generalizes, and applies knowledge in unique environments. Challenges and critiques theories and identifies their limitations. Acknowledges that boundaries between theories are not rigid. Understands how various theories support and extend each other. | Able to operate at the application level and can transfer knowledge into a classroom setting to create an effective learning environment most of the time, but may occasionally require minimal prompting or additional instruction. May have trouble applying concepts to a specific teaching area and sometimes needs supervision in applying general knowledge to complex problems. Is not yet able to recognize the complexity of the classroom context and may not be prepared to solve unique classroom problems independently. |
| **Behavioral characteristics** | Demonstrates self-confidence and the ability to draw upon life experiences. Reads outside sources for more information and asks questions that push the issue and go far beyond the expectation level of the class. Uses reflection, regulation, and metacognition, which allow them to be aware of their own understanding of concepts. | Asks some questions and reads the required material, but does not read any outside material. Draws on life experiences. Is confident and academically successful. Makes more recall and analysis errors than an A-level student and doesn't grasp classroom complexity as well. Is less able to grasp and apply knowledge. Has difficulty integrating theory with practice. |

## Introduction to Educational Psychology

| Typical C-Level Student | Typical D-Level Student |
|---|---|
| Understands basic concepts and factual information but is generally limited in terms of ability to generalize that learning to new situations, questions, and classroom contexts, and to make informed deductions. Tends to memorize information. | Demonstrates a below-average understanding of basic information and facts and may have little or no understanding of foundational principles. |
| Does not use theories to solve problems, and performs only surface-level analyses. Often relies on memorization when learning theories. Understands facts about theories rather than applications. | Recalls basic facts, but does not demonstrate the ability to relate facts to specific theories or contexts. |
| Knows and understands the material. Can sometimes apply concepts and less frequently, analyze situations to develop an effective learning environment. | Has difficulty applying information from the class to teaching situations. Relies on the memorization of theories and guesswork. Focuses on the details of theories rather than on the meaning and how the theory applies to real-world contexts. |
| Treats exam preparation and projects as unconnected tasks. Needs instructor's help in making explicit connections to future teaching. Manages to succeed, but is not as astute or insightful as a B-level student. | Demonstrates a lack of effort. Uses little reflection, regulation, and metacognition in class. Does not seek assistance in order to gain a better understanding of concepts. |

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

Founded in 1918, the American Council on Education (ACE) is the nation's unifying voice for higher education. ACE serves as a consensus leader on key higher education issues and seeks to influence public policy through advocacy, research, and program initiatives.

ACE has reviewed the College-Level Examination Program, as well as the processes and procedures utilized in computer-based testing. Effective July 1, 2001, the American Council on Education recommended a uniform credit-granting score of 50 across all subjects (with the exception of Level 2 French, German, and Spanish), representing the performance of students who earn a grade of C in the corresponding college course.

The recommended cut scores for Level 2 language exams have been established by faculty from 2- and 4-year colleges and universities serving on the CLEP test development and standard-setting panels. Faculty serving in this capacity are carefully selected and represent a broad cross-section of educators from across the county. They must be currently teaching the equivalent course at their institutions, and undergo rigorous training to qualify for their appointments.

In the August 2002 ACE review, ACE found that CLEP's procedures, managerial controls, policies, and content validity and technical adequacy of the examinations met or exceeded ACE standards.

# Establishing a CLEP Policy on Your Campus

**2,900**

The number of colleges and universities that have credit-granting and/or placement policies for CLEP

Each college and university determines its own credit-granting and placement policy for CLEP examinations. That policy should emphasize the institution's broad interest in awarding credit-by-examination, while also ensuring departmental control over academic decisions and educational standards.

Making the most of a CLEP policy requires the collaboration of different departments and individuals on campus including:

- **Admissions and recruiting officers** who make credit-by-examination policies known to prospective students
- **Academic advisers** who inform entering and enrolled students about their academic options
- **Continuing education professionals** who advise adult returning students about options like CLEP that allow them to take advantage of their prior knowledge and experience
- **Test center professionals** who administer CLEP exams
- **Faculty** who set and review CLEP policy based on the academic standards and goals of the institution
- **Financial aid professionals** who inform students about CLEP as a way to reduce the financial burden of earning a degree
- **Registrars** who post credit on a student's transcript.

# Questions to Consider When Setting Up or Evaluating a CLEP Policy

## Evaluating Your CLEP Policy

1. Which exams does your institution recognize for credit?
2. For each exam, what is the credit-granting score?
3. How much credit is granted for each exam? (In some cases, students may earn more credit for a higher score on the same exam.)
4. What are the equivalent courses for each exam?
5. What type of credit is granted for each exam? (For example: Does the credit granted for CLEP satisfy major requirements, core requirements, or general education requirements? Is course exemption granted for a successful score?)
6. Are there any time restrictions for accepting this credit?
7. How many credit hours can be earned through credit-by-examination (for all exams taken and for each exam)?
8. Is your CLEP policy comparable to your policy for accepting credit transferred from another institution?
9. What documentation do you require in order to accept CLEP credit transferred from another institution?
10. How often is your policy evaluated or revised?
11. What office or department is the key contact for questions about this policy?
12. Has your CLEP policy been communicated to students through your institution's Web site and catalog?

## Maintaining Your CLEP Policy

1. Is your advising team informed of your institution's policy?
2. How are changes to your policy publicized?
3. Where is your policy posted? Is it accessible to students and staff within the institution, as well as to prospective students?
4. Do you have clearly outlined transfer articulation agreements with partner institutions?

"Taking a CLEP exam allowed me to leave LaGuardia Community College a semester earlier and transfer to a four-year college, where I will be able to complete a double major on time."

**Daniel Pichardo**
Class of 2007
Manhattanville College



# Sample CLEP Policy - XYZ University

Our university welcomes students from a wide variety of backgrounds and learning experiences. Many students come to our institution with a firm grounding in a particular discipline. We recognize their prior learning by accepting a full range of College-Level Examination Program® (CLEP)® exams, which measure mastery of college-level, introductory course content. Students who achieve required credit-granting scores on these exams can earn the credits and course exemptions listed below. Our institution will grant a total of 60 credits for successful performance on CLEP examinations.

Visit the Testing Office or call to register for an examination.

| CLEP® Examination | Credit-Granting Score* | Credit Granted* | Equivalent Course |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Composition and Literature** | | | |
| American Literature | 50 | 6 hours | English 105, 106 |
| Analyzing and Interpreting Literature | 50 | 6 hours | English 115, 116 |
| English Composition (with or without essay) | 50 | 6 hours | Writing 101, 102 |
| English Literature | 50 | 6 hours | English 121, 122 |
| Freshman Composition | 50 | 6 hours | English 101, 102 |
| Humanities | 50 | 6 hours | Humanities elective |
| **Foreign Languages** | | | |
| French Language, Level 1 | 50 | 6 hours | French 101, 102 |
| French Language, Level 2 | 62 | 12 hours | French 101, 102, 201, 202 |
| German Language, Level 1 | 50 | 6 hours | German 101, 102 |
| German Language, Level 2 | 63 | 12 hours | German 101, 102, 201, 202 |
| Spanish Language, Level 1 | 50 | 6 hours | Spanish 101, 102 |
| Spanish Language, Level 2 | 63 | 12 hours | Spanish 101, 102, 201, 202 |
| **History and Social Sciences** | | | |
| American Government | 50 | 3 hours | History 201 |
| History of the United States I: Early Colonization to 1877 | 50 | 3 hours | History 110 |
| History of the United States II: 1865 to the Present | 50 | 3 hours | History 111 |
| Human Growth and Development | 50 | 3 hours | Psychology 103 |
| Introduction to Educational Psychology | 50 | 3 hours | Psychology 104 |
| Introductory Psychology | 50 | 3 hours | Psychology 101 |
| Introductory Sociology | 50 | 3 hours | Sociology 101 |
| Principles of Macroeconomics | 50 | 3 hours | Economics 101 |
| Principles of Microeconomics | 50 | 3 hours | Economics 102 |
| Social Sciences and History | 50 | 6 hours | Social science elective |
| Western Civilization I: Ancient Near East to 1648 | 50 | 3 hours | History 101 |
| Western Civilization II: 1648 to the Present | 50 | 3 hours | History 102 |

| CLEP® Examination | Credit-Granting Score* | Credit Granted* | Equivalent Course |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Science and Mathematics** | | | |
| Biology | 50 | 6 hours | Biology 101, 102 |
| Calculus | 50 | 3 hours | Math 111,112 |
| Chemistry | 50 | 6 hours | Chemistry 101, 102 |
| College Algebra | 50 | 3 hours | Math 103 |
| College Mathematics | 50 | 6 hours | Math 101, 102 |
| Natural Sciences | 50 | 6 hours | Nonlab, science elective |
| Precalculus | 50 | 3 hours | Math 109 |
| **Business** | | | |
| Financial Accounting | 50 | 3 hours | Accounting 201 |
| Information Systems and Computer Applications | 50 | 3 hours | Computer Science 101 |
| Introductory Business Law | 50 | 3 hours | Business 203 |
| Principles of Management | 50 | 3 hours | Business 101 |
| Principles of Marketing | 50 | 3 hours | Business 201 |

* The scores that appear in this sample are the credit-granting scores recommended by the American Council on Education (ACE).

"I will graduate on time thanks to CLEP. I left college several years ago without graduating. When I re-enrolled, I needed to take prerequisites and electives in order to earn my degree. If I hadn't taken CLEP exams to satisfy those requirements, I would still be working on completing my degree. I recommend CLEP to other students searching for ways to earn college credit and save money in the process."

**Michael Conti**
Class of 2007
Mountain State University




The number of CLEP exams administered since 1967

## After Your Policy Has Been Evaluated

1 Notify the CLEP program that you have developed a CLEP policy so that your institution can receive a CLEP Recipient Code Number for students to use when sending their exams scores. Fill out an update form at www.collegeboard.com/highered/clep or e-mail clep@collegeboard.org. Your institution will also be listed on the CLEP Web site among the colleges and universities that grant credit for CLEP.

2 Add information about CLEP to your institution's Web site, college catalog, academic advising and admissions protocols, new student orientation information, and any other programs or activities that notify students of academic options.

## Policy Resources

### Test Information Guides

Academic departments should review CLEP exam content to determine equivalency with course curricula, as well as comparability of difficulty levels and passing standards. Department heads and faculty may wish to review the CLEP Test Information Guides (TIGs) for exams in their disciplines.

Each TIG includes:

- Overview of CLEP and the exam development process
- Description of the examination
- Description of the knowledge and skills required to pass the exam
- Sample test questions
- Test format and scoring information
- Exam reliability and validity information

The TIGs are available for download on the CLEP Web site; however, access to that information is password-protected. You may request a password by emailing CLEP at clep@info.collegeboard.org, or by calling 800 257-9558.

### ACE Recommendations

ACE recommends a uniform credit-granting score of 50 across all subjects (with the exception of Level 2 French, German, and Spanish), representing the performance of students who earn a grade of C in the corresponding course. ACE recommends the following scores for Level 2 (four-semester) foreign-language examinations: 63 for German language, 62 for French language, and 63 for Spanish language.

### Recent Research on the Academic Performance of CLEP Students

Copies of the following studies may be downloaded from the CLEP Web site at www.collegeboard.com/highered/clep:

- *An Investigation of Educational Outcomes for Students Who Earn College Credit through the College-Level Examination Program.* Authors: Nancy Scammacca and Barbara Dodd.

- *Validity and Fairness of CLEP Exams.* Authors: Brad Moulder, Abdulbaset Abdulla, and Deanna Morgan.

### The College Board's Admitted Class Evaluation Service (ACES)

ACES provides a cost-free means of correlating a student's performance on a CLEP exam with their final course grade at the time the student is about to complete the corresponding college course. ACES reports can be shared with policymakers and provide the type of documentation required to support placement decisions and policies at your institution. More information on conducting an ACES study is available at www.collegeboard.com/aces.

## Becoming a CLEP Test Center

Institutions are encouraged to offer CLEP exams to students on their own campuses. To request information that will help you decide if becoming a CLEP test center is an option for your campus; and for more details on the process, contact CLEP at CLEP@collegeboard.org or visit www.collegeboard.com/highered/clep.

"CLEP is a great recruitment tool and a good way for students to . . . move forward in their degree progression, saving seats in 'front door' courses that other students need."

**Cheryl Robinson**
Dean of Students and
Adjunct Professor
Winter Park Campus, Valencia
Community College



# History of CLEP

**1967**

The year in which the first CLEP exams were administered

At the conclusion of World War II, thousands of military veterans, many of whom did not have a high-school diploma, sought higher education as a stepping-stone to a new career. These men and women had received training and education in the military that could be applied towards a college degree. CLEP and other credit-by-examination programs were born in response to the needs of these military veterans and other adults who sought higher education after acquiring college-level learning in non-academic settings.

## CLEP Milestones

**In the early 1950s,** Columbia University became the first institution to offer programs designed to enable adults to receive credit for prior learning. Other institutions—including Brooklyn College, the University of Oklahoma, Syracuse University, Brigham Young University, and the University of South Florida—followed Columbia's lead and developed their own programs.

**In the late 1950s,** the Carnegie Corporation of New York founded the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC), a group of academic leaders charged with implementing a national, standardized credit-by-examination testing program.

**In 1965** the College Board assumed responsibility and oversight for what would become known as the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP). The program received the evaluation and endorsement of the American Council on Education (ACE).

**1967** marked the establishment of 50 test centers throughout the United States and the first national administration of CLEP exams. Although this first administration was an important milestone for CLEP and an innovation in education, the response was minimal; only four people tested on the first day of administrations. Despite the slow start, the number of examinees grew quickly and steadily over the next years.

**During the last six months of 1970** more than 2,000 candidates took CLEP examinations at national test centers; during the same period a year later, the number of candidates exceeded 9,000.

**As of 1972,** more than 500 test centers on college campuses administered CLEP exams.

**In 1974,** the College Board formalized an agreement with the Department of Defense to provide funded CLEP examinations to active-duty military personnel.

**By 1979** more than 1,800 colleges and universities had developed policies to grant credit for CLEP exams.

**Throughout the 1980s and 1990s** the number of CLEP exam takers continued to grow and diversify. A significant number of high school seniors and traditional-aged college students joined returning adults in taking CLEP exams. The number of CLEP test centers and colleges adopting credit-granting policies increased concurrently.

**July 1, 2001**, marked the most dramatic change in the format of CLEP exams since their inception, as CLEP shifted from paper-and-pencil to a computer-based model.

**During the 2004–05 academic year,** more than 140,000 computer-based CLEP examinations were administered to non-military students nationwide and over 61,000 exams were administered to military personnel.

**In January 2006** CLEP released the first new exam in 15 years—Precalculus—which replaced College Algebra-Trigonometry and Trigonometry.

**June 2006** marked the implementation of new legislation that allowed qualified veterans to seek reimbursement from the Department of Veterans Affairs for CLEP exams and administration fees.

**In January 2007** CLEP released a new Financial Accounting exam, which replaced Principles of Accounting.

**Today** more than six million CLEP exams have been administered; more than 2,900 accredited institutions grant credit for CLEP, and almost half of those institutions, about 1,400, also function as CLEP test centers.

"CLEP has helped me greatly in working toward my career goals. Taking the College Mathematics exam will allow me to take fewer credits next semester so that I can prepare to student teach and graduate on time."

**Shannon Kranz**
Class of 2007
Earned 6 credits
Goal: To become a teacher



# Contacting CLEP

Many of the resources and publications listed below can be ordered at no charge from the CLEP Web site at www.collegeboard.com/CLEPresources. Visit the College Board store, store.collegeboard.com, to order exam preparation.

Item Number: 070062226

