

# EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

Mesalands Community College holds to the philosophy that students who attend class regularly are better prepared to learn. If a student stops attending class, it is his/her responsibility to officially withdraw from the course.

## DIRECTED STUDIES

Directed Study is permitted under the following conditions:

1. A required class cannot be taken due to a scheduling conflict which is no fault of the student; or
2. A student wishes to pursue a project for elective credit which is related to his/her program of study, but which is not part of the content of an existing class.

Students wishing to take a class as a Directed Study must have completed at least 30 credits, with a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0. Directed Study must be approved by the instructor as well as the Vice President of Academic Affairs. No more than one class per semester may be taken as Directed Study, nor more than a total of 7 credits for the duration of the student's educational experience at Mesalands Community College. The student will be responsible for the same fees and tuition paid for a traditional class.

## ADVANCED PLACEMENT CREDIT

Credit is awarded for those students who have attained qualifying scores on Advanced Placement (AP) examinations. Credit will be awarded only upon receipt of an official AP score report from the College Board. For more information on complete Advanced Placement policies see the Office of Enrollment Management.

## CHANGES IN ENROLLMENT

### ADD/DROP

Students who wish to add or drop a course may do so only during the time specified in the College calendar. Students cannot add courses after the late enrollment deadline without the consent of the instructor and the Director of Enrollment Management.

## WITHDRAWAL

Students are allowed to withdraw from a course without academic penalty up until the published withdrawal date, which is established in the College calendar. In addition, students may completely withdraw from Mesalands Community College at any time prior to the date established in the College calendar as the last day to withdraw from courses without academic penalty.

Students who are forced by emergencies or circumstances beyond their control to leave the College without officially withdrawing should notify the Office of Enrollment Management and request an administrative withdrawal.

## FULFILLMENT OF PREREQUISITES

A number of courses at Mesalands Community College are dependent upon knowledge gained in preceding classes. It is required that students receive at least a grade of "C" in all prerequisite courses prior to proceeding in the course sequence. Prerequisite courses are not normally waived.

## ACADEMIC LOAD

Full-time students must be enrolled in 15 or more credit hours during a regular semester and 6 or more hours during the summer semester. Part-time students may take fewer than 15 credit hours during a regular semester and fewer than 6 credit hours during the summer semester.

Normally a student may not enroll in more than 18 credits for a regular semester or 9 for a summer semester unless he/she had a GPA of 3.0 or higher the previous semester and has completed at least 12 credits. First time freshmen and high school concurrently enrolled students cannot enroll in more than 18 credits. Students who meet the above criteria wishing to enroll in 22 credits or more in a fall or spring semester (or 10 or more credits in the summer), must have the approval of the Vice President of Academic Affairs or the Vice President of Student Affairs.

## GRADING SYSTEM

### FINAL GRADES

Final grades are based on the quality of work done in courses offered for credit. They appear on a student's transcript and are used to calculate the grade point average (GPA). Letter grades are defined as follows:

Letter Grade	Descriptions	Grade Points per Unit of Credit
A	<i>Excellent work</i>	4
B	<i>Better-than-Average work</i>	3
C	<i>Average work</i>	2
D	<i>Below-average work</i>	1
F	<i>Failing work</i>	0
I	<i>Incomplete</i>	0
W	<i>Withdrawal</i>	0
AU	<i>Audit</i>	0
P	<i>Passing</i>	0

An “I” is issued when unforeseeable circumstances beyond the student’s control prevent the student from completing course requirements by the end of the semester. Incomplete grades will not be authorized when the student has failed to complete course requirements or has failing grades due to personal negligence. To apply for a grade of “I,” the student must complete an Incomplete Grade Form with their instructor. A student may only apply for an incomplete grade after the deadline for withdrawing and before the last week of class. If an emergency arises prior to the withdrawal deadline that prevents a student from completing a course, he/she should withdraw from the class. An incomplete will not be awarded.

A student who applies for an incomplete grade must attend class up until the time of applying for the incomplete, or up until the time a legitimate, documented emergency occurs. Those in distance education courses must make progress in their class and maintain contact with their instructor.

A student must have maintained a passing grade in the course up until the time of applying for an incomplete grade. A grade of incomplete cannot be replaced by repeating the course. If a student takes an incomplete and repeats a course the following semester, he/she will still be expected to complete the requirements of the incomplete course. Upon completion, an appropriate grade will be issued. A student who receives an Incomplete or grade of “I” will be given five weeks from the date the Incomplete was issued to complete their course work.

## WITHDRAWAL

Students are allowed to withdraw from a course without academic penalty up until the established withdrawal date. This date is established in the institutional calendar and published in the class schedule, the student handbook, and the College catalog. A drop/add/withdrawal fee will be assessed.

The withdrawal deadline for short courses and courses which do not meet according to the regular semester schedule is pro-rated accordingly. See the Office of Enrollment Management for withdrawal deadlines for these courses.

## AUDIT

Auditing a course gives a student an opportunity to attend a class as a non-graded, non-credit participant. Students typically audit a course in order to review a subject area, as a course refresher, or for their own general interest. Students must register for audited courses in the same manner as they do for regular courses. Standard tuition and fees apply to all audited courses, and are due and payable at the time of enrollment.

Audited courses are recorded on the College transcript as an “AU” and cannot be changed to a credit course or grade at a later date. Students may repeat the course for credit at a later date.

## PASS/FAIL GRADING

At the direction of the Vice President of Academic Affairs, courses which are not prescribed in a specified plan of study may be offered on a Pass/Fail grading basis. Also, students may opt to take courses on an individual Pass/Fail basis. However, only a maximum total of 7 credits of Pass/Fail may be used towards a student’s educational plan of study at Mesalands Community College. Students must maintain a 75% average to receive a grade of “P” Any lower average will be recorded as an “F”

## CHANGE OF GRADING STATUS

Students may elect to change from conventional grading to “Audit” or “Pass/Fail,” or vice versa at any time during the drop/add period by notifying the Office of Enrollment Management. A drop/add fee will be assessed.



## GRADE APPEAL

Any student who feels his or her grade is incorrect may appeal for a grade change by observing the following steps:

Discuss the grade with the instructor involved,

And

if unable to reach an agreement, make an appointment with the Vice President of Academic Affairs and present all evidence relating to the grade. The final appeal will be made to the Vice President of Academic Affairs, whose decision is final.

## REPEATING COURSES

Courses may be repeated only once to improve a grade. Students who wish to take advantage of this policy should notify the Office of Enrollment Management and complete an "Application to Repeat" form. Grades in both classes will appear on the transcript, but only the last grade earned will be used to calculate the cumulative grade point average (CGPA).

## TRANSFERRING CREDIT

Institutions of higher education across the United States have the option of transferring (accepting) course credits from other institutions of higher education. Students are encouraged to work with Student Affairs personnel to develop and/or review their plan of study to assure ease of transfer from one institution to another by submitting a transcript evaluation request to the Director of Enrollment Management. Currently, all public institutions of higher education in the State of New Mexico recognize the General Education Common Core of Courses (35 credits), as coordinated by the New Mexico Higher Education Department. These courses will transfer to all public colleges and universities in the State of New Mexico.

Only credit which is applicable toward a student's signed Educational Plan of Study shall be considered for transfer credit. Students who wish to obtain credit for past college work must have an official transcript from each previous college mailed directly to Mesalands Community College. They must also complete a Request for Transcript Evaluation Form. Only courses for which a grade of "C" or better (or "P" or "S") will be considered for transfer.

Any course accepted on transfer must be equivalent to the Mesalands Community College course for which it is substituted on the plan of study. If the course transferred to Mesalands is for fewer credits than the Mesalands course, the student must acquire additional credit(s) relevant to his/her plan of study to make

## Computing Grade Point Average

The grade point average (GPA) is calculated as follows, where A = 4, B = 3, C = 2, D = 1, F = 0: multiply the number of credits for a course by the points assigned to the letter grade for each class (e.g., "A" = 4 grade points x 3 credits = 12; "B" = 3 grade points x 3 credits = 9), add the total points (e.g., 12 + 9 = 21), and divide by the total number of credits (e.g., 21/6 = 3.5 = "B" average).

### Grade Point Average

The following is an example of how to determine the GPA after a student takes the courses below and receives the grades as shown:

Course	Final Grade	Grade Points		Credits	Quality Points
ENG 102	A	4	x	3 =	12
MATH 101	B	3	x	3 =	9
BIO 113	C	2	x	4 =	8
SOC 101	D	1	x	3 =	3
ART 101	F	0	x	3 =	0

Total Credits = 16

Total Quality Points = 32

Quality Points divided by Credits = Grade Point Average  
(32 divided by 16=2.00)

up the difference. Courses accepted in transfer will not be included in the Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA).

Transfer credit for military training will be allowed in accordance with the above, provided the student provides official documentation of course completion, including the course's American Council on Education ID number. The Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services shall be used in evaluating the course's equivalency to Mesalands courses. Problems regarding the transfer of credit to Mesalands Community College from other colleges or universities should first be directed to the Office of Enrollment Management. Complaints not resolved at this level should be submitted in writing to the Academic Standards and Issues Committee. Students who are attempting to transfer credit from Mesalands to other institutions and experience difficulty are encouraged to contact the Office of Enrollment Management for advice and/or assistance.

Issues regarding transfer credit between New Mexico institutions which cannot be resolved by the above processes may be directed to the New Mexico Higher Education Department, 2048 Cerrillos Road, Santa Fe, NM 87505.

## **CREDIT FOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**

It is recognized that not all learning takes place within the confines of a college classroom. Learning which is equivalent to that acquired in a classroom may occur in a variety of settings. This learning is referred to as “experiential learning.” Experiential learning may occur in non-collegiate settings such as the following:

- Employment, particularly where increasing levels of responsibility have occurred
- Military experience
- Specialized training or continuing education
- Technical or vocational training
- Trade school
- Correspondence studies
- Apprenticeships or internships
- On-the-job training
- Reading of professional publications and journals

Other accomplishments or activities, while not specifically learning activities in themselves, may be evidence of experience and/or advanced knowledge in a particular discipline. These accomplishments may include the following:

- Professional licenses/certificates
- Experience as a lecturer, instructor, mentor, or supervisor
- Personal writings or publications
- Authoring of strategic or business plans
- Development of a company or organizational budget
- Authoring of operational manuals, personnel handbooks, etc.
- Competency test results
- Awards or citations
- Participation in career-related organizations or trade associations
- Leadership role in civic, fraternal, political or religious organizations

It is important to note that simply sitting in a classroom does not guarantee a learning outcome. Likewise, neither does experience or involvement in any of the above activities automatically result in a learning environment equivalent to that which occurs in a collegiate classroom. To this end, involvement in a job or other activity for extended periods of time does not necessarily guarantee a collegiate-equivalent learning outcome.

Recognizing that adult learners may have experiences outside the college classroom that have led to the acquisition of knowledge and skills equivalent to those obtained in a traditional course, Mesalands Community College provides a mechanism for awarding college credit based upon the documentation of collegiate-equivalent learning.

Students with appropriate life experiences may petition for college credit by developing and submitting an Experiential Learning Portfolio. Up to 18 college credits may be awarded toward the Associate of Applied Science Degree

in General Studies (see Plans of Study). Credit will be awarded only if appropriate experiential learning has occurred and is documented as specified in this document and the Experiential Learning Portfolio Handbook. Students who are awarded credit for experiential learning must pay the current tuition rate in order to have these credits posted to their transcript and applied toward degree requirements. Contact the Office of Enrollment Management for more information.

## **VICE PRESIDENT’S LIST**

At the end of the fall and spring semesters, the Vice President’s List is announced as the official recognition of outstanding academic accomplishments. Qualifications are as follows:

Students must maintain a grade point average of 3.5 or higher for courses taken at Mesalands Community College (excluding pre-collegiate courses). Students must successfully complete 15 or more credit hours and not receive a grade below a “C” in the given semester. Students must not have an outstanding grade of “I” during the given year.

## **PRESIDENT’S CITATION**

At the end of the spring semester, the President’s Citation is announced as official recognition of exceptional academic achievement. Qualifications are as follows: maintenance of a cumulative grade point average of 3.75 or higher (excluding pre-collegiate courses), successful completion of 30 or more credits in the fall/spring semesters, with no grade below a “C” or no outstanding grade of “I” during the given year.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

The integrity of an academic program rests on the principle that the grades awarded to students reflect only their own individual efforts and achievement. Students are required to perform the work specified by the instructor and are responsible for the content of the work submitted. This includes papers, reports, and examinations.

## **ACADEMIC STANDARDS**

Honesty in academic work is a central element of the learning environment. The presentation of another individual’s work as one’s own, or the act of seeking unfair academic advantage through cheating, are violations. The general descriptions below emphasize those boundaries of academic conduct which are essential to the learning environment.

The following acts of academic dishonesty are among those which may lead to College disciplinary action or possible dismissal:

## CHEATING

Cheating is defined as submitting assignments, examinations, or other work which is based upon sources or activities forbidden by the instructor. Cheating includes the furnishing of materials to another person for the purpose of aiding that person to cheat. When an unfair academic advantage is gained by a person through deception or other means, that action is defined as cheating.

## PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is defined as submitting assignments, examinations, or other academic work which is not entirely the work of the student. This may include, but is not limited to, such practices as 1) quoting without giving proper credit to a source, 2) expanding someone else's work without giving proper credit, 3) adopting as one's own an actual document (including the copying of computer or other electronic media), and 4) directly using someone else's ideas without giving proper credit.

## VIOLATION OF COPYRIGHT

The unauthorized copying of copyrighted material, whether print or computer media, is illegal and is considered an act of academic dishonesty; moreover, such practice makes the violator subject to legal penalty.

## PENALTIES FOR ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

The following penalties may be applied in instances of academic dishonesty:

A student caught in the act of academic dishonesty on an assignment or exam shall, at the discretion of the



instructor, be assigned a grade of "F" for that assignment or exam, or for the entire class.

A student found to have committed an act of academic dishonesty may be dismissed from Mesalands Community College. The length of the dismissal will depend upon the nature of the offense and may include a permanent dismissal of the student.

## PROBATION AND ACADEMIC SUSPENSION

### ACADEMIC STANDING

In order to be in good academic standing, students must maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.0 ("C" average). Students who do not meet these standards will be placed on academic probation.

### ACADEMIC PROBATION

Any student whose Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) drops below 2.0 will be placed on academic probation. The student must bring the CGPA up to at least 2.0 during the following semester in order to avoid being placed on academic suspension.

### ACADEMIC SUSPENSION

Students on the first semester of academic suspension are not allowed to enroll in classes except for pre-collegiate courses or to repeat one or more courses with unsatisfactory grades in order to improve the cumulative grade point average.

If a student completes such limited enrollment under academic suspension with a GPA of less than 2.0 for that semester, the student will not be allowed to enroll in any courses the following semester. If the GPA for that semester is 2.0 or higher (but the cumulative GPA is still below 2.0), the student may continue on limited enrollment while under academic suspension. If the cumulative GPA reaches 2.0 or higher, the student will be released from probation and suspension.

Students who are placed on complete academic suspension for a second time are not automatically readmitted after one semester. Instead, after one semester of suspension, the student must submit a written petition to the Academic Standards and Issues Committee requesting readmission. The committee can grant readmission at this time, or may choose to require a suspension of a full year or longer. They may also deny future readmission altogether. Students readmitted after suspension may also be required to follow additional stipulations, including periodic meetings with an adviser or counselor, tutoring, attendance, or GPA requirements. Students readmitted after suspension who do not follow such stipulations are subject to immediate dismissal from the College.

## STUDENT APPEALS

Students who wish to appeal academic probation or suspension must do so in writing to the Vice President of Academic Affairs prior to the first day of regular registration for the following semester.

## STUDENT COLLEGE SUCCESS COURSE

All students pursuing a degree are required to take ACS 100 Student College Success within the first 12 credit hours of enrollment. This three-hour course is designed to assist students in obtaining the skills necessary to reach their educational, career, and personal goals.

Course topics include decision-making, time management, test taking, career planning, library skills, study techniques, communication skills, and personal topics facing college students.

## SUCCESS ASSESSMENT/PLACEMENT TESTING

The Success Assessment/Placement Test, which is administered through the Educational Services Center in Building A, is used to place students in appropriate math, English, and reading classes. These classes help to ensure students' success while enrolled at Mesalands Community College.

All students pursuing a degree and any student enrolling in core math or English classes must complete the assessment prior to enrollment. Students must enroll in the level of math and English prescribed by the assessment and, if indicated, in pre-collegiate reading. Students who score below prescribed levels on the Success Assessment/Placement Test will be placed in Adult Basic Education courses prior to enrolling in collegiate level courses.

Students who wish to retake the assessment within the same semester must first complete 12 contact hours of subject review in the Educational Services Center before they may pay to retest.

## ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

Assessment can be defined as the process of determining the quality and quantity of student learning in order to make improvements (Bordon and Zak, 2001). It is critical that faculty members at Mesalands Community College meaningfully capture and document what they are teaching, what students are learning, and how this information is improving the teaching-learning relationship. The College is committed to providing its students with a productive learning environment.

To that end, Mesalands Community College encourages faculty to take "ownership" of their respective programs and courses in terms of whether students are learning what faculty say they are learning as identified in the general education competencies, program objectives, and course objectives. Clearly defined general education competencies, program objectives, and course objectives are Mesalands' contract with all stakeholders and reflect those competencies that students will possess and demonstrate upon graduation. These objectives and competencies reflect the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions valued by workplace employers and other interested parties and represent the most deeply held values of the College. They drive all that occurs at Mesalands.

Mesalands assesses student learning at all levels of the college experience, both inside and outside the classroom using both graded and ungraded measures. Assessment exists to ensure that the College fulfills its function of facilitating and documenting student learning.

Effective assessment of student learning is a matter of commitment, not a matter of compliance. To that end, Mesalands Community College is dedicated to establishing a culture of assessment embedded in every aspect of the educational process.

