



Articulation Agreements: The Path to Offering College Credit for Your Accredited Paramedic Program

By Bill Mergendahl

Offering college credit to students who complete nationally accredited paramedic programs is important not only to these students, but to our EMS profession as a whole.

Many paramedic programs are based in post-secondary academic institutions that grant college credit for successful completion of a paramedic educational program. These programs are based in colleges, universities, community colleges, and junior colleges that are accredited by a regional or national institutional accrediting body. Some programs are based in vocational, proprietary, and religious schools that are accredited by regional or specialized institutional accrediting bodies with the authority to approve college credit.

What if a program--which is the case with ours--is not based in an institution that grants college credit? How can the program make college credit available to its graduates? One way is through an articulation agreement.

I write this article as the President of a paramedic program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP). Our program is one of a relatively small, but growing, group of paramedic programs based in settings outside of post-secondary institutions. The program roots are based in an EMS agency with sponsorship established through an agreement with a large teaching hospital in our service area.

Being closely aligned with an EMS agency provides many advantages for our paramedic program. We have great relationships with our clinical settings, we can provide top-notch field-internship experiences to our students with our own staff, and we have cultivated an excellent instructional staff of active EMS field providers who can impart their experiences to our students.

Unfortunately, we did not have an established method to grant college credit to our program graduates. Developing an articulation agreement with a qualifying educational institution allowed us to provide college credit to our students.

An articulation agreement is an official arrangement between an educational institution and a training facility to provide college credit to individuals completing a particular training program. Those programs not offering Associate or Bachelor degrees are encouraged by the CAAHEP *Standards and Guidelines** to establish articulation agreements that provide for maximum transfer of clinical and clinically related coursework. Courses in general education, social sciences, and

health sciences should parallel offerings in colleges and universities. The agreement allows students to receive college credit if they enroll at the educational institution; it does not require students to receive college credit if they do not register.

Establishing articulation agreements can be accomplished by all programs that are not based in a traditional educational setting that grants college credit. A CAAHEP accredited paramedic program will have already completed much of the documentation that many colleges require as part of ensuring the quality of the educational program. Program goals, expectations, objectives, and learning domains are established. The curriculum has been created with written course syllabi that a college will evaluate. A system will be in place for student evaluation and assessment as well as documented policies and procedures for fair practices within the program.

Every college has a somewhat different culture, personality, requirements, and areas of focus that come into play when evaluating a program for developing an articulation agreement. The bulk of the “heavy lifting” has already been done by virtue of a program’s successful completion of the CAAHEP accreditation process.

The procedure for establishing articulation agreements can involve meetings and paperwork; however, the process itself can make a program better. Insight can be gained into the educational institutions, exposing a program to new methods and ideas that will allow the program to make improvements while meeting the standards and requirements of the college or institution. Most importantly, a program will be providing students with a valuable edge and the encouragement they need to continue their journey as lifelong learners.

In order to continuously advance the EMS profession we all must take training and education seriously. An articulation agreement can serve as the mechanism for obtaining college credit toward an Associate or Bachelor degree upon completion of an accredited paramedic program, thus allowing our profession to provide educational opportunities and experiences that are second to none.

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CAAHEP Standards and Guidelines, Section II C

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[Sample Articulation Agreement](#) to adapt to the needs of your program