INTERSTATE PASSPORT

HANDBOOK FOR REGISTRARS AND INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCHERS
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Handbook for Registrars and Institutional Researchers

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Section 1: Interstate Passport Organizational Framework

The Interstate Passport Handbook for Registrars and Institutional Researchers has been created to inform and assist registrars, institutional researchers, and others in successfully implementing the data reporting tasks of the Interstate Passport program. It describes the Interstate Passport program as well as the important role, guiding principles, and responsibilities and tasks of registrars and institutional researchers. This handbook is intended to be used for inter-institutional activities and is not intended to replace or supersede the existing policies of any institution or its governing board.

Section 1a: What is Interstate Passport?

Interstate Passport, based at the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), is a nationwide program that facilitates block transfer of lower-division general education based on learning outcomes rather than on specific courses and credits. (see Appendix A.1.) The basis of the program is 63 Passport Learning Outcomes (PLOs)—what a student knows and can do—across nine areas of learning. The PLOs were developed initially by teams of faculty members from two and four-year institutions in seven WICHE states. Each learning outcome is supported by faculty-identified Proficiency Criteria (PCs), which are helpful examples of some of the ways in which faculty teach and assess learning at the lower-division level. The program’s built-in quality assurance is based on students’ academic progress data.

Member institutions construct a Passport Block, which is a menu of courses or other learning opportunities by which a student can demonstrate proficiency in the PLOs. The Passport Block is usually similar to—and sometimes identical to—the institution’s own lower-division general education course options. Once a student demonstrates proficiency, by earning a minimum grade C or its equivalent in all selected Passport Block courses, a Passport is awarded. If transferring to another Network member institution, that learning will be recognized; no additional courses will be required to meet the receiving institution’s lower-division general education requirements, even if the courses and the number of credits differ from those of the sending institution. (see Appendices A.1 and A.2)

The Interstate Passport Network is a consortium of public and private, regionally accredited, two-year and four-year institutions dedicated to providing an efficient process for students transferring from one institution to another and avoiding the need to repeat academic work already successfully completed. Its goals are to improve graduation rates, shorten time to degree, and save students money.

As members of the Interstate Passport Network, institutions agree not to unpack or review other institutions’ Passport Blocks. Similarly, Passport transfer students are not required to repeat or take additional courses or learning experiences in order to satisfy the lower-division general education requirements at the receiving institution. However, receiving institutions may require students transferring in with a Passport to complete additional lower-division courses in the following circumstances. Some institutions may require certain prerequisites for entry into a specific program of study. Faith-based institutions may require the religion-related courses it requires of other students. A few state legislatures require a specific course in state history or civics for graduation.

The Interstate Passport program has been developed and rolled out in phases with funding from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Lumina Foundation, and a U.S. Department of Education First in the World grant.
The foundational documents which form and govern the Network are found in their entirety in the appendices. A summary of each document is described below.

**Section 1a.1 Guiding Principles**

The Guiding Principles are not a legally binding agreement but rather a statement of operating principles to guide and facilitate cooperation between and among the Network member institutions. The Guiding Principles establish the basic values underlying Interstate Passport and are essential to the conduct of the program. (see Appendix A.3.)

**Section 1a.2 Memorandum of Agreement**

The Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) forms the mutual agreement by which institutions join the Interstate Passport Network. The MOA identifies the rights and responsibilities of the member institutions, including, but not limited to, program governance, funding, administration and management. The MOA is signed by the campus officials deemed appropriate by each member of the Network. (see Appendix A.4.)

**Section 1a.3 Bylaws**

The Bylaws contain the basic rules relating to Interstate Passport Network, the Passport Review Board and how it is governed internally, including membership, executive committee, officers, elections, and other matters pertinent to the efficient operation of the Network. (see Appendix A.5.)
Section 2: The Important Role of Registrars and Institutional Researchers

An essential component of Interstate Passport is the data collection and tracking process designed to provide information on the academic performance of Passport earners for use in continuous improvement efforts by member institutions and for evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the program. Registrars and institutional researchers in the WICHE region have been key players in designing and implementing this process, as well as the process to utilize the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) as the central data repository for the program.

Network member institutions’ registrars and institutional researchers identify students who earn the Passport (those students who earn a minimum grade of C or its equivalent in Passport Block courses) and notify them of the award; track Passport earners who transfer to their institution; submit data to the NSC at the end of each term; and review and share with relevant stakeholders annual reports from NSC about the performance of Passport earners after transfer.

Additionally, registrars must establish a way to inform students when they have been awarded a Passport—such as email, degree audit system, document of completion, or other means of communication most relevant to their student population—within 60 days of the student's completion of the Passport.

NOTE: Receiving institutions may require students transferring in with a Passport to complete additional lower-division courses in the following circumstances. Some institutions may require certain prerequisites for entry into a specific program of study. Faith-based institutions may require the religion-related courses it requires of other students. A few state legislatures require a specific course in state history or civics for graduation.
Section 3: Registrar/IR Guiding Principles and Assumptions

The responsibilities of Interstate Passport registrars and institutional researchers are guided by the following parameters initially established by the Passport Review Board, the Passport State Facilitators and their faculty representatives in 2011. They are reviewed and updated by the Interstate Passport Registrar and Institutional Researcher Advisory Committee:

- Interstate Passport is a General Education block transfer framework based on the AAC&U LEAP learning outcomes, not courses and credits.

- The Interstate Passport framework consists of 63 Passport Learning Outcomes and proficiency criteria. Passport LDGE includes the lower-division general education core learning outcomes in all nine Passport areas: oral communication, written communication, quantitative literacy, natural sciences, human cultures, creative expression, human society and the individual, critical thinking, and teamwork/value systems.

- The number of courses and credits required to earn a Passport may vary from one institution to another. For example, a student may achieve the Passport at Institution A with 30 credits. Although 34 credits would be required of native students at Institution B, a student from Institution A could transfer with the Passport and meet all the general education core requirements. S/he may be required to take an additional three credits to graduate or meet some other requirement, but not in general education core.

- Students may achieve a Passport in different ways at different institutions. These may include course completion, test scores, e-portfolio and/or other ways deemed appropriate by the Network institution’s faculty. Students must earn a minimum grade of C or its equivalent in all Passport Block learning opportunities to earn a Passport.

- As a growing nationwide network of institutions, students who transfer with a Passport to another Network member institution will have their lower-division general education requirements met.

- The solutions must work across different student information systems and work for both paper and electronic student records. Minor customization may be required for different platforms.

- The solutions should be simple and easy to implement and should not require vendor modifications at this time.

- The notations on the student’s record should make sense to registrars at non-Network institutions.

- Network member institutions will report Passport Completions and Academic Progress Tracking to the National Student Clearinghouse annually.
Section 4: Roles and Expectations of Registrars and Institutional Researchers

The responsibilities of registrars and institutional researchers at Interstate Passport Network institutions are detailed below. Appendix B.1, the Registrar Checklist, can assist with the set up and implementation of tracking and reporting requirements.

Section 4a: Receive Passport Block and Sign the Amendment to the Core Services Agreement

The registrar at each Interstate Passport institution will receive from faculty the institution's Passport Block, which lists the courses, course sequences, and/or other learning experiences by which students achieve the Passport Learning Outcomes. The Passport Block contains courses for nine different knowledge and skill areas, and in most cases more than one course or a combination of courses is required to achieve the learning outcomes in a specific area. In most cases, the Passport Block will be very similar to the institution's lower-division general education requirements.

First steps for registrars and institutional researchers are as follows:

1. Watch/listen to the webinar prepared by the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), *Overview of the Interstate Passport Program*, available at [https://studentclearinghouse.info/interstate-passport/](https://studentclearinghouse.info/interstate-passport/). The presentation includes general information about the Interstate Passport program and specific information about the Passport Services offered by NSC and the file submission process.

2. From the same NSC web page, download and review the file formatting and submission instruction guides. Three guides are available, one each for the type of data file to be used by Passport institutions: (a) Passport Completion Data File (see Appendix B.2), (b) PassportVerify Request File (see Appendix B.3), and (c) Academic Progress Tracking Data File (see Appendix B.4).

3. Upon receipt of the *Amendment to the Core Services Agreement to Provide Passport Services from NSC*, review the Amendment and secure the appropriate signature for your institution. (Institutions must contact PassportSupport@studentclearinghouse.org to receive the Amendment. Institutions that do not already have a Core Services Agreement for Services from NSC should first contact the Clearinghouse about such an agreement.)

4. Return the signed amendment to NSC as directed by NSC.
Section 4b: Record the Passport, Extract Data, and Submit Files

**Institution Students (Native Students)**

1. Identify students who meet the requirements for the Passport. The scripts/processes developed by fellow registrars for the Banner, PeopleSoft, and Colleague Student Information Systems (SIS) could be helpful.

2. For each student who has earned the Passport, record the Passport in the institution's SIS for processing and reporting.

3. Make an entry on the official student transcript that a student has earned the Passport. The entry should be recorded as **Interstate Passport-LDGE** and include the date of the award. A comment is the recommended way to do this. (see Appendix B.5)

4. Submit a **Passport Completion Data File** (see Appendix B.2) to NSC containing information on the students awarded Passports. Fall 2016 is the first term that the Interstate Passport-LDGE was awarded. Registrars may go back in history to test for completion in previous terms. **Passport Completion Data Files are due from all Network member institutions no later than June 15 each year.**

5. Notify students when they have earned the Passport and what that means, i.e., achievement of the **Passport Learning Outcomes in nine knowledge and skill areas** and completion of lower-division general education at all other Network member institutions. Each institution may determine how students are notified, i.e., an email message or letter/document. (see Appendix B.6)

*Figure 1: Example of Comment on Transcript*

![Example Comment on Transcript]

**Incoming Transfer Students**

1. Submit a **PassportVerify Request File** (see Appendix B.3, Student Tracker-type request) to NSC to identify students who have transferred to your institution with the Passport. **This request can be made at the most appropriate or convenient time for each institution but should be made before the start of the term to ensure that students do not repeat learning already achieved.**

2. If NSC reports that a transfer student earned a Passport at a previous institution, record the Passport in the SIS (including the awarding institution and date awarded).
3. Ensure that incoming transfer students who have earned the Passport do not repeat or take additional courses to meet lower-division general education requirements. When possible, the degree audit system should be coded to recognize the Passport and mark the general education requirements as complete.

**Tracking Academic Progress**

1. Submit the Academic Progress Tracking Data File (see Appendix B.4) to NSC that contains de-identified student information on courses and grades on three different populations of students: (1) transfer students with Passports, (2) transfer students without Passports, and (3) native students with Passports. Students will be included in the report for at least the first and second terms after the student transfers or after the student earns the Passport. Data for more than two terms may be reported but the report should not include courses taken after a bachelor’s degree is awarded.

2. APT Data Files are due from all Network member institutions no later than August 15 each year.

3. NSC will compile and report the information to sending institutions and to the Passport Review Board.

*Figure 2: Screenshot National Student Clearinghouse Passport File Submission Page*
Section 4c: Review Reports and Provide Recommendations

The NSC will provide annual reports to the sending institutions about how their students performed after transfer. These reports will be sent in February of each year. Additionally, the NSC will also provide raw data files of the students’ academic progress post transfer. Institutions must submit a request for the raw data files. The raw data files will allow institutions to create custom reports across multiple dimensions. Institutional research staff and registrars should review and share the annual reports as well as any custom-made reports using the available raw data with relevant stakeholders for use in the institution’s continuous improvement efforts, as appropriate.

Figure 3: Example of Annual Institutional Report Provided by National Student Clearinghouse

![NSC Passport Academic Tracking Report: Gender for SEPTEMBER 1-DECEMBER 31 2017 Cohort](image)

Figure 4: Example of Custom Report built using Raw Data File

![CrossTab Graph: Low Income/First Gen by Gender](image)
Each year, the NSC will also produce composite reports of aggregate data compiled from all Network institutions for use by the Passport Review Board in evaluating the overall program and for inclusion in its Annual Report. The total number of Passports awarded, by term, and data on the academic performance of the Passport cohorts of students after transfer compared to non-Passport transfer students and to native students will be reported. The Annual Report will be posted on the Interstate Passport website.

Figure 5: GPA and Student Credit Hours of Passport and Non-Passport Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2018-19 Cohorts</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Grade Point Average (GPA)</th>
<th>Student Credit Hours (SCH)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transferred WITH a Passport</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June - Aug. 2018</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. - Dec. 2018</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferred WITHOUT a Passport</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June - Aug. 2018</td>
<td>1,364</td>
<td>2,077</td>
<td>3,441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. - Dec. 2018</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>843</td>
<td>1,553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. - May 2019</td>
<td>863</td>
<td>1,192</td>
<td>2,055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>2,937</td>
<td>4,112</td>
<td>7,049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earned a Passport and Remained at Institution</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June - Aug. 2018</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>3,346</td>
<td>4,109</td>
<td>7,455</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6: GPA of Passport and Non-Passport Students broken out by Gender, Pell Eligibility, First-Generation, and Veteran Status
Section 4d: Provide Information About Interstate Passport to Stakeholders
Registrars and institutional researchers should be prepared to share information about the Interstate Passport program with stakeholders at the institution such as the provost, General Education committee, and others. Additionally, they should be prepared to generate additional reports from raw data provided by the NSC.

Section 4e: Recommend Changes to Interstate Passport Operations
Institutional researchers and registrars are encouraged to provide feedback to Interstate Passport staff on policies and procedures related to their role in the program. This includes suggestions for additional topics on the Frequently Asked Questions section of the Interstate Passport website (https://interstatepassport.wiche.edu/faq) and recommendations on the reports generated by NSC, as well as the creation of custom or other reports that could provide useful information to the institution, to a group of institutions participating in the Network, or to the members of the Network as a whole.

Section 4f: Timeline for Implementation
Registrars and institutional researchers should use the timeline below as a guide to implement the systems and processes to identify, award, and track Passport students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targeted Timeline for Implementation</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immediately after institution has signed the Interstate Passport Memorandum of Agreement</td>
<td>● Sign amendment to NSC agreement to submit data for Interstate Passport. Contact the NSC at <a href="mailto:PassportSupport@Clearinghouse.org">PassportSupport@Clearinghouse.org</a> to receive this amendment; ● Establish account to submit data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The term immediately following receipt of the Passport Block</td>
<td>● Identify native students who meet Passport requirements; ● Record the Passport in the student information system (SIS) so it will show on students' transcripts; ● Notify students who have earned a Passport; ● Build and submit a Passport Completion file listing Passport earners to the NSC; ● Build and submit a PassportVerify file to the NSC to verify incoming transfer students with a Passport; ● Record when/where Passport earned on transfer students' records in SIS for tracking purposes; ● Recognize Passport earners as having completed lower-division general education in SIS/Degree Audit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For two terms after Passports are awarded</td>
<td>● Track academic progress data for least two terms after transfer for incoming students and for at least two terms for native Passport-earners by building and submitting the Academic Progress Tracking (APT) data file to the NSC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February following submission of Academic Progress Tracking file</td>
<td>● Review/share with appropriate campus stakeholders your institution's annual report and raw data files provided by NSC on academic progress of former students for use in continuous improvement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section 5: Passport Data Management Plan

The Passport Data Management Plan is integral to the success and scalability of the Interstate Passport Network. The plan provides details on data management, descriptions, sharing, privacy, security and rights and is considered a working document that may change over time.

The design of Interstate Passport includes three important standard services involving student data: the ability for (1) receiving institutions to verify that a transfer student has earned a Passport at his/her sending institution and when; (2) sending institutions to learn about the academic success of their former students to use in continuous improvement efforts; and (3) the Passport Review Board to make informed decisions about Passport operations and policies based on this aggregated information.

Among the Core Principles of the Data Management Plan are the following:

1. The Interstate Passport Network is committed to safeguarding individual privacy and ensuring the security of all data collected in the initiative, while providing for the necessary sharing of data that enables institutions and key stakeholders to evaluate outcomes of the initiative.

2. WICHE staff, participating institutions, sub-contractors and any other participating entities must, at a minimum, comply with all relevant federal and state laws and regulations with regard to privacy and data security, including but not limited to the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (“FERPA”).

3. The Network will clearly establish binding policies for data ownership and use, including relevant intellectual property, for all parties to the initiative.

4. All personally identifiable student information provided by institutions to the NSC for the Interstate Passport program will remain at all times the property of that individual institution and remains the legal responsibility of the institution disclosing the data.

5. Data submitted by Network members may be used by WICHE and its authorized sub-contractors only for the purposes set out in the Interstate Passport Memorandum of Agreement or in subsequent agreements between Network members and WICHE.

6. WICHE and its sub-contractors are prohibited from selling the data received under such agreements to external third parties or from using institution-specific data for marketing purposes without the specific institution’s written consent.

7. Institutions providing data to the initiative shall have a role in determining the limitations on access to and the use of data they provide through representation on the Passport Review Board.

8. The full Data Management Plan provides further information on the data collection and submission processes and the NSC Security Program Overview. A copy of the full plan is available on the Passport website at http://interstatepassport.wiche.edu/resources/information-for registrars/.
Section 6: Academic Quality Assurance

The Interstate Passport program was developed and piloted by faculty and staff in multiple states at a variety of institutions – large and small, two-year and four-year, urban and rural. It is reasonable to ask whether students at such diverse colleges and universities are, indeed, achieving the same learning outcomes and at a level to be prepared to succeed at any receiving institution to which they are admitted. Five avenues of quality assurance have been built into the design of the initiative, each of which approaches the question from a different direction.

1. Retention and GPA of students who transfer after earning a Passport is tracked for two terms post-transfer, and compared with non-Passport transfer students at the receiving institution and with freshman-entry students who earn a Passport at that institution. The results are reported back to the sending institution.

2. The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) conducted a grant-funded mapping exercise across two institutions in each of three Western states (CO, NM, MT) that were not involved in the original development of the PLOs and Proficiency Criteria. Faculty in these states were trained to exchange and evaluate both critical assignments and de-identified student work products on those assignments that purport to demonstrate achievement of PLOs in order to determine their consistency across institutions and the reliability of faculty assessments.

3. In order to be awarded a Passport, a student must earn at least a C or equivalent in every course included in the Passport Block on the transcript. A grade lower than C would not assure proficiency on all of the PLOs the institution had associated with that course.

4. The First in the World (U. S. Department of Education) grant, awarded to Interstate Passport in October 2015, supported the Education and Employment Research Center at Rutgers University to conduct a longitudinal study of the outcomes for Passport students, including persistence, GPA, graduation rate, and time to degree.

5. The Passport Review Board (PRB) consists of one member from each participating state, as well as transfer, learning outcomes and assessment experts, and Interstate Passport staff. The PRB meets in person at least once annually and electronically as needed to review the results of all of the data collection and analyses, as well as to discuss any issues brought forward by a state or institution. The PRB can require a Network member institution to make changes, if needed, or to give up its Interstate Passport status if its students are not being well served.

Taken together, these measures provide a robust system supporting the academic quality of Interstate Passport at every institution that offers it, and reassuring receiving institutions that Passport students are well-prepared to succeed after transfer.
Section 7: The Role of the Passport Review Board

The Passport Review Board (PRB) is the policy making body of the Interstate Passport Network. Its members include the Passport State Facilitators — one individual selected by Network member institutions in each state — who serve ongoing terms, and other higher education experts who serve two-year renewable terms. The PRB is responsible for defining all policies and procedures for the Network as outlined in the Passport Bylaws, i.e., elect officers; approve candidate member institutions for Passport status; set fees associated with participation in the Passport and approve the annual budget; determine the need for faculty review and/or updating of PLOs and PC; evaluate the overall performance of the Interstate Passport program as well as the performance of participating institutions on an annual basis and provide strategies for more successful participation in the Network as needed; and publish the Annual Report on the Interstate Passport program's status. At the annual PRB meeting, the PSFs relate any concerns from faculty in the respective states and the PRB determines appropriate action including reconvening interstate faculty teams to revise and/or expand PLOs and PC in one or more knowledge/skill areas. The list of those currently serving on the PRB is available at http://interstatepassport.wiche.edu/about/review/.

Section 8: More Information

The Interstate Passport website – interstatepassport.wiche.edu – is a comprehensive source of continuously updated information about Interstate Passport. Users can find background on the project, the Interstate Passport framework, participating institutions and PSFs, Passport Blocks, and staff contact information. A copy of this handbook can also be downloaded at http://interstatepassport.wiche.edu/resources/information-for/registrars/.
Section 9: Appendices

Appendix A

Appendix A.1: Interstate Passport Overview
Appendix A.2: The Benefits of Interstate Passport
Appendix A.3: Interstate Passport Guiding Principles
Appendix A.4: Memorandum of Agreement
Appendix A.5: Interstate Passport Bylaws

Appendix B:

Appendix B.1: Registrar Checklist
Appendix B.2 Passport Completion File Formatting and Submission Guide
Appendix B.3 PassportVerify Request File Formatting and Submission Guide
Appendix B.4 Passport Academic Progress Tracking Data File Formatting and Submission Guide
Appendix B.5: Sample Transcript Notation of Interstate Passport
Appendix B.6: Sample Notification Letter