

# Process and Procedure for Organization, Development, and Maintenance of Community College to NMU Articulation Agreements

## Purpose:

Articulation agreements with community colleges serve students by providing clearly outlined and agreed-upon pathways to a bachelor's degree through Northern Michigan University. An articulation agreement states the nature of coursework to be completed at both institutions, for example, an associate of arts leading to a bachelor of arts, and it also mandates the responsibilities of both institutions when negotiating, developing, maintaining, and using the articulated pathway. Some degree programs are more flexible or accommodating than others when developing an agreement, and not all degree programs may desire or need an articulation agreement. Their development and use guarantee clear expectations and outcomes for students and helps promote NMU programs in a competitive transfer environment while fostering closer relationships with community colleges. NMU Admissions has helped develop this standardized process of articulation agreement creation, maintenance, and storage to assist NMU's faculty in association with the Provost's Office.

This process covers a particular type of articulation agreement: community college agreements with NMU. Other agreement types not addressed in this document include but are not limited to:

- High school to NMU/Career Technical Education agreements (aka Postsecondary College Agreements)
- NMU bachelor's degree to graduate-level education (aka 4+1, "early assurance", etc.)
- Non-community college-earned credits (aka Prior Learning Assessment) to NMU degrees

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## 1. Offices and personnel

Oversight of academic agreements ultimately rests with the Provost of Northern Michigan University. Because of the purpose and use of articulation agreements to attract and recruit academically prepared students who have prior college credit earned, the Admissions Office assists in the daily operations of articulation agreements. The Admissions Office has a Coordinator of Transfer Pathways and Partnerships that is your main point of contact at NMU regarding the process and procedures of negotiation, development, use, and maintenance of agreements.

The Admissions Office works closely with the Registrar's Office to ensure articulation agreements are meeting degree requirements, are in accordance with other academic policies, and ensure timely progression to a bachelor's degree as other NMU students may expect in the degree program.

As of publication, the Coordinator for Transfer Pathways and Partnerships is:

- Tanya Savage, Assistant Director
- [tsavage@nmu.edu](mailto:tsavage@nmu.edu)
- 906-227-2644

## 2. Negotiation and development

### Indication of intent/interest

Articulation agreement interest may come from faculty/department recruitment desires, community college partnership requests, or initiatives by state organizations or agencies. The first step will be to alert the Admissions Office of the intent to develop an articulation agreement.

1. Navigate to <https://nmu.edu/admissions/articulationagreementrequest>
2. Complete the form and submit all information as accurately as possible
3. Tanya Savage will reach out to the party submitting the request to go over the form details

### Negotiation

1. Gather any communication that has already taken place with the companion party, such as degree planning and provide it to Tanya Savage
2. Tanya will review relevant information and begin an initial draft of the agreement, using Northern Michigan University's approved community college articulation agreement template. If information is missing that is needed to meet agreement intent or degree requirements, Tanya will communicate to the department(s) about additional information that is needed. This may

include but is not limited to course evaluations or substitutions, degree requirement areas, or additional program application steps.

- a. An articulation agreement should be as detailed as possible when indicating curriculum to take. The foundation of an agreement is its guarantee to achieve the degree(s) stated in an affordable and timely manner, which means in practical terms providing specific requirements or even recommendations from electives. A goal for negotiating an agreement should be as few as possible undefined/open-elective courses.
3. Once the initial draft is completed, Tanya will provide this to the departments for review and any additional changes needed.
4. After a draft is agreed upon with the departments internally and externally, any additional review by the Associate Provost may be needed prior to Registrar's Office review.

## **Registrar review**

1. Once the departments have completed their review and approval of the agreement, including the external partner, a final draft copy will be provided to the Registrar's Office at Northern Michigan University to ensure that a student can complete a bachelor degree as expected and outlined.
2. The Registrar's Office will usually communicate directly back to Tanya Savage about needed changes, if any. There may be times that the Registrar's Office asks a department directly for clarification, for example on a course evaluation.
3. The Registrar's Office will return a final draft that has been reviewed for either correction and further processing or a draft that is ready for signatures.

## **3. Signing authority and publication**

### **Signing articulation agreements**

1. Prior to signing, the Associate Provost or Provost will provide any required changes needed at an administrative level.
2. For new agreements the Provost, or Associate Provost for Academic Affairs for renewed agreements, will sign a community college articulation agreement on behalf of Northern Michigan University. There may be times when the President also signs the agreement. The department head or chair will be recognized on the agreement, but does not sign.
3. The signing process will begin with the external partner. Tanya Savage will provide the external partner with a copy for either digital signing or physical.
4. When Tanya receives the externally signed copy of the agreement, she will provide it to the Provost's Office. The Provost's Office will handle forwarding of the agreement to any university leadership for final signatures.

5. The secretary of the Provost's Office will store a copy of the signed agreement, enter into Xtender a copy of the agreement, and forward a signed copy to the Admissions Office, the Registrar's Office, Student Success, and academic department.

## Posting articulation agreements

1. Per requirements by Northern Michigan University's accreditor, the Higher Learning Commission, NMU is required to make accessible and public a listing of articulation agreements. These are currently publicly available on the Admissions Office website at <https://nmu.edu/admissions/articulation-and-reverse-transfer-agreements>
2. An Admissions Office representative with website editing access will post a copy of the signed agreement as soon as possible after it is signed.
  - a. If the agreement was signed physically, and the copy returned for record keeping (original) is a scanned agreement, then the signature page with scanned signatures will be attached to a new, clean digital copy of the agreement, to improve legibility and accessibility. If the agreement was signed digitally (e.g. via DocuSign) then no further editing of the agreement will be undertaken.

## 4. Student use and tracking participation

### Conversion to student-friendly format

1. In 2022, Northern Michigan University's Admissions Office began translating formal articulation agreements into student-friendly pathways and advising guides, called Northern Transfer Tracks. These can be found online at <https://nmu.edu/admissions/articulation-and-reverse-transfer-agreements/>. They are created by the Admissions Office based only upon the curriculum detailed by the agreement.
2. Once the agreement is signed, creation of the Northern Transfer Track begins immediately. Once completed, the Northern Transfer Track will be posted online and distributed to the department(s), advising units at both NMU and the external partner, and the Admission Counselor responsible for the external partner.
3. Admission counselors, academic advisers, and departments should use this student-friendly version in lieu of the formal articulation agreement for recruitment and advising purposes. The Northern Transfer Track is backed by the articulation agreement and presents the curriculum information in a way that easy to follow and read.

### Participant tracking

1. In order for the Registrar's Office to quickly and accurately update a student's NMU record based upon their participation in an articulation agreement, for their academic advisor to communicate information, and for NMU Admissions to provide timely transfer information we must collect basic student information such as but not limited to name, contact information, program of study, college of attendance, and anticipated start term. This is information regularly collected for prospective students via NMU Admissions' work and processes to safeguard and ensure proper use of this information are in place.

2. Students should submit the interest form on NMU Admissions' website at <https://nmu.edu/admissions/nmutransferagreementsignup/> as soon as they are ready to declare an intent to follow the pathway to NMU from their community college. The form will direct the student to maintain regular and ongoing communication with their academic advisor and also allow NMU Admissions to send ongoing updates about the transfer process, resources, and other vital information.
3. Upon the student's application for admission to NMU, a member of the Admissions Office will send a notice to the Registrar's Office indicating the student's participation in an articulation agreement for their degree requirements to have any necessary adjustments made within the bounds of the agreement.
4. The Admissions Office will regularly report statistics on articulation agreement usage to stakeholders in the agreement process such as the Provost, Registrar, academic departments, and the external college partner.

## 5. Storage and maintenance

### Maintaining agreements

1. Article IV of the agreement stipulates that either party will communicate as soon as a change to or intent to modify the curriculum underpinning the articulation agreement happens. This should be communicated to Tanya Savage, for review of the articulation agreement and potential need to update the agreement.
2. Throughout the year through our relationship with the NMU Academic Senate, NMU Admissions will review updates regarding curriculum changes to proactively identify impacts to articulation agreements. Though the Admissions Office will attempt to check against known agreements, departments should also check whether a planned change will impact an agreement and reach out to Tanya Savage for assistance.

### Storage of agreements

1. There will be four areas where signed community college articulation agreements are stored by NMU. NMU includes a requirement in the articulation agreement that our partner also promote and make publicly available the articulation agreement.
  - a. A final original copy that receives the Provost and President's signatures will be kept by the Provost's Office.
  - b. A scanned copy of the original will be added to the Xtender document management system, only accessible by certain NMU employees with access. When this copy is added, an automated email will alert necessary users at NMU of its availability.
  - c. A copy of the signed agreement will be kept on NMU Admissions' internal network folder.

- d. A copy of the signed agreement will be posted to the NMU Admissions website for the public, per HLC guidelines.
2. Beyond the copies stored in these areas, additional NMU departments that receive a final signed agreement include:
  - a. Registrar's Office
  - b. Transfer Admissions Counselor who manages the recruitment territory of the external partner college
  - c. The Director of Student Success
  - d. The Department Head of the academic program

## 6. Renewal

### Process

1. Either an NMU academic department or external college may request proactively to renew an existing articulation agreement. An academic department wishing to begin the renewal process should reach out to Tanya Savage in the NMU Admissions Office.
2. Tanya will keep a listing of agreements and monitor expiration dates. In advance of expiration, Tanya will also reach out to the academic departments at NMU and the external college to discuss their interest in a renewal.
3. If the parties have interest in renewing, Tanya will compare the agreement to the NMU bulletin and request feedback from the academic departments for any curriculum changes.
4. Once changes are agreed upon by the departments, the agreement will go to the Registrar's Office for review, and then if ready for signatures will begin the signing process at the external college, followed by NMU's associate provost.
5. A signed copy will replace the previous agreement in effect in all places of storage, the website will be updated, and copies of the Northern Transfer Track will be updated accordingly.