
Student Focus Group Protocol

PPSS ECE Articulation Project Student Focus Group Protocol

Key points to convey to the respondent:

- This is a study conducted by American Institutes for Research on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education. The purpose of the study is to examine the policies and practices that support effective credit transfer for early care and education (ECE) workers, so that they may progress from a Child Development Associate credential (CDA) to an associate's of arts degree (AA) to a bachelor's of arts degree (BA) without losing relevant coursework and credits.
- The goal of this study is to highlight effective credit transfer practices, and to inform the work of state and higher education leaders. This study is *not* meant to evaluate any individual, program, or institution.
- Have you received the consent form for this study? We want to assure you that we will protect your privacy and the information you share will be protected to the extent provided by law. We will not use your name in any reports, although states, higher education institutions, and/or roles may be used in some sections of the report.
- We would like to record this conversation so that we can be sure we have an accurate record of our conversation. We will not share this recording with anyone outside the research team, and we will delete the recording after the final report is complete. Is that okay with you?
- Please note that your participation is completely voluntary. You may discontinue your participation in this focus group at any time. Throughout the course of the focus group, if we touch on topics that you believe to be sensitive for any reason, please bring that to our attention, and we will not include these comments either in public reporting or in discussions with the U.S. Department of Education.
- There are no right or wrong answers. Some of you won't agree with each other and that's okay. Please feel free to talk about what you think, even if it's different from what someone else thinks. Keep in mind that we're just as interested in critical comments as we are positive comments, and sometimes the critical comments can be the most constructive. Even if you disagree with each other, please be respectful of other peoples' views.
- Do you have any questions about the purpose of this focus group, your privacy, or anything else?

Introductions

Let's start with some introductions.

Question

- 1. First, please tell us your name, which college you go to, and what you're studying. Please also let us know which institution you transferred from, or which institution you intend to transfer to.**
- 2. To start our discussion, we'd like each of you to take a few minutes to share the story of how you chose your first college, and what your goals were when you started school.**
Probe for:
 - *What led to you study for a degree related to early childhood education?***Listen for:**
 - *Type of degree*
 - *Career goals*
- 3. By a show of hands, how many of you are enrolled in a two-year college? How many of you have already transferred to a four-year college?**
- 4. How many of you took time off of school before transferring, and if so, how much?**

Decisions About Transfer

Thank you. Next, we'd like to ask some more questions about your decisions about school.

Question

- 5. If you haven't already transferred, what are the factors that are motivating you to consider transferring?**
Probe for:
 - *To what extent has articulation factored into your decision making? In other words, did you consider the number of transfer credits that would be granted?***Listen for:**
 - *Considerations related to credit transfer and the articulation process*
 - *Type of degree*
 - *Career goals*
 - *Desire for a teaching license*

Question

6. If you have transferred, what were the most important things you considered when selecting your new degree program and school?

Probe for:

- *To what degree did articulation factor into your decisions? In other words, did you consider the number of transfer credits that would be granted?*

Listen for:

- *Considerations related to credit transfer and the articulation process*
 - *Type of degree*
 - *Guaranteed admission*
 - *Desire for a teaching license*
-

Transfer Services and Supports

The next set of questions ask about the advice you have received about school.

Question

7. How much did you know about how credit transfer works prior transferring? If you haven't already transferred, what is your understanding of the credit transfer process?

Probe for:

- *What was your understanding of how the two colleges would coordinate?*

8. By a show of hands, how many of you have received advice about credit transfer from someone who worked at your first college or the college where you transferred? Please tell me about the advice or guidance that you received.

Probe for:

- *To what extent did the advising services address the cost of your degree?*
- *If you didn't receive guidance, why not?*

Listen for:

- *Who provided the advice (department or title)*
 - *Accuracy of advice*
 - *Ease/difficulty of accessing advising services*
 - *Other supports that would have helped*
-

Question

9. What other resources did you use to prepare for the credit transfer process?

Probe for:

- *How did these resources help you prepare for the credit transfer process?*
- *What additional resources should be available to ensure that students are well informed about credit transfer policies and procedures?*

Listen for:

- *Information source and mode of access (e.g., Internet search, college website, paper handouts, meeting with advisor)*
- *Examples might include transfer guides, or degree pathways guides*

10. What tools and information were available to help you determine your career path?

Listen for:

- *Information on degree and licensure options*
 - *Student understanding of options*
-

Credit Portability

The following question is for those of you who have already transferred.

Question

11. Next, we'd like to hear about your experience earning transfer credits for your previous coursework or credentials. What happened to your credits when you transferred?

Probe for:

- *Did you inform your new college that you had credits from another institution that you would like to transfer?*

Listen for:

- *Number of credits earned prior to transfer*
- *Amount of transfer credit granted*
- *Student understanding of the transfer process*
- *Barriers to credit transfer*
- *Time off before transfer*

12. By a show of hands, how many of you did not receive full transfer credit for your previous coursework? What were your options for appealing that decision?

13. What do you wish you had known prior to transferring?

Conclusion

Question

- **We have reached the end of the focus group. Thank you for participating and for the information you shared.**
-