Higher Education Evaluation Policy

MNCPD POLICY

Last Updated: November 2026

The Minnesota Career Lattice recognizes higher education degrees with Approved Semester Credit coursework related to the professional field of Early Childhood Care and Education. This policy outlines the higher education information that Achieve verifies for Develop Members and defines Approved Semester Credits that are recognized on the Career Lattice.

Achieve uses the criteria in this policy to carefully evaluate every official transcript we receive. We use information available on the transcript and/or the school's website and reserve the right to reach out to the school for more information. Due to the wide variation in programs offered by accredited colleges year to year, there is no "list" of approved Majors and/or Courses.

Higher Education Documentation is evaluated and verified as part of the Develop Individual Membership application process. After the application is finalized, the Member can review their verified information on their Education tab, Training tab, and Learning Record reports. A copy of the official transcript is available for download on the Education tab, and an evaluated version of the transcript is available on the Training tab.

ACCEPTABLE DOCUMENTATION

To verify higher education information, including Approved Semester Credits, Achieve will accept:

Official Transcripts

- Official transcripts must be sent directly to Achieve by the school's transcript ordering service.
  - See the How to Submit Official Transcripts resource for guidance.
- The college or university must be accredited by an organization recognized by the US. Department of Education.
  - Search the U.S. Department of Education's accreditation database to find out if a college or university is accredited.

A Foreign Credential Evaluation that shows equivalency to U.S. Higher Education

- The Foreign Evaluation Service must be accredited by one of the following organizations:
  - National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES)
  - Association of International Credential Evaluators, Inc. (AICE)
- A Course-by-Course evaluation is required to verify Approved Semester Credits
- See the Foreign Education Documentation Policy for more detailed information.

A copy of a Diploma (verifies Degree only)

- The college or university must be accredited by an organization recognized by the US. Department of Education.
  - Search the U.S. Department of Education's accreditation database to find out if a college or university is accredited.
- Achieve cannot verify Total Credits or Approved Semester Credits with a diploma.
  - Total Credits will be verified as zero (0).
  - A verified Degree does not automatically result in a higher Career Lattice Step without Approved Semester Credits or an Early Childhood Specific Major.
- Achieve can only verify a Major if it is displayed on the Diploma.

DEGREE

Achieve will verify the following degrees and the date awarded:

- Associate's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctorate
- Certificate/Credential for Credit
- Some College
    - o No degree name or award date is listed on the transcript.
    - o The award date will be verified as the estimated last date of attendance.

Achieve will also verify the Total Credits earned for each degree and list them on the Education tab. This is separate from Approved Semester Credits. See the Approved Semester Credits section below to learn more.

MAJOR AND MINOR

Sometimes referred to as Area of Study, Concentration, Specialization, Degree Program, etc., Achieve will verify the declared major and minor listed on an official transcript and categorize it in Develop based on its relation to the professional field of Early Childhood Care and Education. The categories are:

Early Childhood Specific

The major is clearly specifically focused on early childhood education or child development. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Early Childhood Education
- Child Development
- Child, Youth, and Family Studies
- Child Psychology
- Infant/Toddler Mental Health

An awarded degree with an Early Childhood Specific major automatically results in Career Lattice Step 9D, 10D, 11D, or 12D, depending on the degree.

Related

The major is related to early childhood education or child development, but early childhood is not the primary focus. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Elementary Education
- Family Consumer Science
- Special Education
- Educational Leadership

A major may be categorized as "Related" depending on how many Approved Semester Credits were completed during the program. For example, "Secondary Education" is only considered Related if the transcript shows at least 30 Approved Semester Credits or more than half of the Total Credits.

Not Related

The major is not related to early childhood education or child development. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Business
- Social Work
- Psychology
- Nursing

APPROVED SEMESTER CREDITS

Achieve will evaluate each course for which the college awarded credit to determine if it qualifies as Approved Semester Credits in Develop.

To qualify as Approved Semester Credits, at least 50% of the course content must have been designed to focus on one or more of the following areas, aligned with Minnesota's Knowledge and Competency Framework (KCF) for Early Childhood Professionals:

- Working with Infants and Toddlers
- Working with Family Childcare
- Working with Preschool-Aged Children in Center and School Programs

Please note: This policy is separate from MN DCYF Child Care Licensing's Accepted College Courses to Qualify Classroom Staff. Many general education courses accepted by Licensing do not qualify as Approved Semester Credits under this policy. While Achieve understands that many types of education can support educators' work, Approved Semester Credits are limited to coursework focused on the scope described above.

How Approved Semester Credits are verified in Develop

Approved Semester Credits are verified in Develop under Training.

Hours

- In Develop, For Credit training hours are equivalent to Approved Training Hours.
- Credits are converted to hours following the general rule provided by the U.S. Department of Education:
    - 1 semester credit = 15 hours of classroom instruction.
- Quarter Credits are converted to Semester Credits using the standard conversion rate of:
    - 1 quarter credit = 0.67 semester credits.

Category

Each Approved Semester Credit Course is categorized in Develop under one of the options below.

- Infant
- Early Childhood
- School-Age
- Youth Development
- Business – a maximum of 12 semester credits may qualify as Approved Semester Credits in this category

A breakdown summary of how many Approved Semester Credits were verified in each category can be found under Education on the DCYF Licensing Learning Record.

Only Approved Semester credits categorized as Infant, Early Childhood, and School-Age count towards Career Lattice Steps 9D, 10D, 11D, and 12D.

Knowledge and Competency Framework (KCF) Area(s)

A MN KCF area is assigned to each Approved Semester Credit Course based on the course details available on the official transcript and/or information available on the school's website. If the course content covers more than one KCF area, Achieve may divide the course hours among multiple applicable KCF areas.

See Minnesota's Knowledge and Competency Framework webpage for more information.

APPROVED SEMESTER CREDIT REVIEW POLICY

A Develop Member can ask Achieve to reconsider their coursework evaluation if they believe:

- An unaccepted college course may qualify as Approved Semester Credit based on the criteria in this policy.
- The KCF area(s) assigned to an Approved Semester Credit Course do not accurately reflect the course content, or additional KCF areas are applicable.

Members will need to provide supporting documentation that offers more details about the course content, such as a course syllabus or letter from the professor. Documentation summarizing individual employment, professional experience, job responsibilities, or how the coursework has been applied in the workplace will not be considered. See Achieve's Approved Semester Credit Review Form for more information and instructions.