NBCAEP Accelerated Education Framework

National Board of Certified Accelerated Education Professionals

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1. Accelerated Education Framework

1.1 Institutional Mission Statement

The National Board of Certified Accelerated Education Professionals (NBCAEP) exists to standardize, validate, and govern the competencies required to execute alternative credit mobility and time-to-degree compression frameworks within higher education. The Board's framework is intended to equip certified professionals with the auditable tools required to drop student stop-out rates, optimize institutional seat capacity, and drive public revenue streams safely, legally, and at scale.

1.2 Intended Users

- Academic advisers, registrars, evaluators, and student-success professionals
- Enrollment, workforce, military-student, and adult-learner leaders
- Faculty and administrators responsible for prior learning assessment and competency-based education
- Institutions seeking recognition through the CAPI Registry
- Accredited Training Partners delivering NBCAEP-aligned education

1.3 Framework Outcomes

The NBCAEP Accelerated Education Framework establishes a common professional standard for designing, evaluating, implementing, and continuously improving accelerated education pathways. It translates the Board's credentialing, institutional, registry, and operational architecture into a unified body of practice. Organizations and practitioners applying this framework should be able to reduce time to credential, preserve academic integrity, improve credit transparency, align learning with workforce outcomes, and demonstrate measurable institutional value.

1.4 Core Principles (ELASTIC)

1. **Equity of access:** Processes should support *all* learners, with priority determined by the most current statistical data. See Appendix B.
2. **Learning over seat time:** Credit decisions should recognize verified learning and competency.
3. **Academic integrity:** Acceleration must preserve defensible standards, assessment quality, and data reliability.
4. **Student mobility:** Policies should minimize avoidable credit loss and administrative friction.
5. **Transparency:** Requirements, equivalencies, costs, decisions, and appeal routes should be understandable and accessible.
6. **Institutional stewardship:** Programs should balance learner benefit, regulatory duties, capacity, and financial sustainability.
7. **Continuous improvement:** Decisions should be monitored through evidence, feedback, and periodic review.

2. Architecture

2.1 Accelerated Education Lifecycle

Stage	Purpose	Primary Outputs
Discover	Identify learner goals, prior learning, constraints, and eligible pathways.	Learner profile, preliminary pathway map, disclosure record
Evaluate	Authenticate evidence and determine applicable credit or competency.	Evidence inventory, equivalency decision, rationale
Design	Build a compliant, efficient academic pathway.	Degree map, duplication guard, cost and time analysis, alternative course offerings
Authorize	Secure required academic and administrative approvals.	Approved plan, exceptions, documented responsibilities
Implement	Execute exams, assessment, enrollment, transfer, and advising actions.	Posted credit, completed milestones, updated learner record
Verify	Confirm accuracy, compliance, learner understanding, and outcome quality.	Audit record, issue log, corrective actions

Improve	Use evidence to refine policies, matrices, instruction, and support.	Improvement plan, revised standards, performance report

2.2 Knowledge Domains

Domain	Professional Focus
1. Alternative Credit Mechanics	CLEP, DSST, dual credit, advanced placement, military learning, ACE-reviewed learning, and institutional equivalencies.
2. Prior Learning Assessment	Portfolio evidence, faculty evaluation, learning outcomes, authenticity, rubrics, and defensible credit decisions.
3. Competency-Based Education	Competency definition, assessment, pacing, substantive interaction, progress monitoring, and operational logistics.
4. Strategic Enrollment and Institutional Value	Adult-learner success, workforce alignment, partnerships, capacity, student acquisition, retention, and return on investment.

2.3 Cross-Cutting Practice Areas

- Ethics, privacy, accessibility, and regulatory awareness
- Data governance, records integrity, and transparent communication
- Risk, quality, stakeholder, and change management
- Technology enablement and secure assessment administration
- Professional judgment, documentation, and learner advocacy

2.4 F.R.A.M.E. Methodology

F.R.A.M.E. Definition: Finding and Researching Alternative Methods for Efficiency

"A systematic approach for evaluating alternative credit pathways to accelerate degree completion"

Practitioners apply F.R.A.M.E. during the Discover, Evaluate, and Design stages of the lifecycle (Section 2.1).

A Flowriculum is the finished product of the F.R.A.M.E. process: every prior source of earned credit is Found, Researched, Analyzed against institutional policy, Mapped to a degree's requirements, and Evaluated for efficiency. The result is a degree plan in which the student's learning, not seat time, sets the pace.

F.R.A.M.E. Methodology

- **Find** every prior source of earned credit the student could potentially use to satisfy course requirements for one or more degree and certificate curriculums
- **R**esearch alternative credit sources the student can use to satisfy degree requirements
- **A**nalyze equivalency, transferability, residency and graduation constraints
- **M**ap credits to curriculum requirements
- **E**valuate the plan for efficiency, and confirm it

3. Standards for Professional Practice

3.1 Learner Discovery and Informed Choice

Practitioners should establish the learner's objective, current academic standing, prior learning, residency constraints, financial-aid considerations, transfer risks, and decision deadlines before recommending an accelerated pathway. The learner should receive a plain-language explanation of benefits, limitations, costs, and alternatives.

3.2 Evidence Evaluation

All evidence should be authenticated, mapped to defined outcomes, checked for duplication, and evaluated using current institutional policy. Decisions should identify the evidence reviewed, evaluator, applicable standard, credit awarded or denied, rationale, date, and reconsideration route.

3.3 Pathway Design

A pathway should integrate accepted credit, remaining requirements, prerequisites, sequencing, residency rules, modality, affordability, and realistic completion timing. Practitioners should not promise acceptance or completion outcomes outside their authority. The resulting plan is the learner's Flowriculum: a personalized degree map that preserves every requirement of an institution's curriculum while charting the most efficient route to completion, by applying alternative methods of earning credit (credit-by-exam, transfer and dual credit, military and corporate training, prior learning assessment, and competency-based courses) wherever the institution's policies allow (Section 8).

3.4 Implementation Control

Implementation should assign owners, dates, dependencies, communication points, and escalation routes. Material changes should trigger revalidation of the learner's pathway and disclosure of any effect on cost, time, eligibility, or completion.

3.5 Verification and Quality Assurance

Verification should confirm that awarded credit matches the approved decision, the learner record is complete, duplicate credit was prevented, required approvals are retained, and the learner understands the next action. Exceptions and defects should be recorded and corrected.

3.6 Continuous Improvement

Programs should review outcomes at planned intervals using learner feedback, credit utilization, completion, appeals, defects, processing time, and institutional-impact measures. Findings should produce assigned and time-bound improvement actions.

3.7 Minimum Documentation Set

- Learner intake and consent record
- Evidence inventory and authenticity check
- Credit or competency evaluation record
- Academic pathway and duplication review
- Approval and exception record
- Communication and disclosure record
- Outcome verification and closure record
- Appeal, grievance, or corrective-action record when applicable

3.8 Recommendations

Concurrent Certificate Advising

Concurrent Certificate Advising is the practice of advising a degree-seeking learner to enroll in an aligned certificate program concurrently with a degree program, so that progress toward the degree also produces a stand-alone credential along the way. The NBCAEP uses the term ‘Micro-Confidence’ for the confidence a learner gains during degree completion from saving time, saving money, or earning a recognized certificate along the way. A concurrent certificate is one of the most direct sources of Micro-Confidence, and it also enhances employment if the degree is interrupted.

Rationale

- **Curricular alignment:** The certificate is composed of courses already required in the degree curriculum. Concurrent enrollment therefore adds no coursework, time, or cost, and should not disrupt institutional academic policy.

- **Protection against stop-out:** If a learner stops out for any of the common reasons, such as financial pressure, work or family obligations, health, or relocation, the learner leaves with a recognized credential rather than with credit alone. Albeit, the learner would still be counted within the Some College, No Degree (SCND) population, because no actual degree would have been completed,
- **Employment value:** The certificate can position the learner for employment or advancement in the field while away from study.
- **Return to completion:** A credential already earned toward the degree may increase the likelihood that the learner later returns to complete it.

Practice Standard

The NBCAEP recommends Concurrent Certificate Advising as standard practice in any and every area where it makes sense. During pathway design (Section 3.3), practitioners should:

- Identify certificate programs whose required courses are fully contained within the learner's degree requirements.
- Confirm that concurrent enrollment is permitted and does not adversely affect financial-aid eligibility, residency, or program status.
- Sequence the certificate's courses early in the learner's Flowriculum (degree map), as prerequisites allow, so the credential is earned as soon as practical.
- Explain to the learner, in plain language, what the certificate is, that it is not a degree, and how its courses count *toward* degree completion.
- Record the certificate in the learner's academic pathway and communication and disclosure records.

The NBCAEP recognizes the deliberate implementation of Concurrent Certificate Advising as a sign of a responsible, student-centric institution.

4. Professional Credential Architecture

4.1 NBCAEP Membership

Practitioners maintain active standing with the Board through NBCAEP membership, which carries the following fees:

- **Initial Membership Fee:** $150.
- **Annual Renewal Fee:** $100.

4.2 Certified Accelerated Education Specialist (CAES)

The CAES designation represents applied proficiency in front-line accelerated education practice. The credential emphasizes accurate pathway explanation, alternative-credit mechanics, evidence intake, transcript interpretation, learner advocacy, documentation, and appropriate escalation.

- **Target Personnel:** Academic Advisors, Admissions Counselors, Registrar Evaluation Clerks, High School Outreach Coordinators, and military educational liaisons (0–2 years' experience).
- **Education:** Bachelor's degree
- **Operational Mandate:** Mastery of execution—possessing the technical proficiency required to find, review, and interpret established national alternative credit policies and transcript evaluation workflows.
- **Delivery Layout:** 85-question randomized proctored exam.
- **Entry Point:** $397 members / $597 non-members

4.3 Certified Accelerated Education Professional (CAEP)

The CAEP designation represents advanced professional mastery in policy integration, prior learning assessment, competency-based education operations, strategic enrollment, institutional partnerships, governance, measurement, and system design.

- **Target Personnel:** Advising Directors, University Registrars, Vice Presidents of Enrollment Management, Institutional Research Analytics officers, and Corporate Instructional Designers (2+ years leadership experience or active CAES holders).
- **Education:** Bachelor's degree
- **Operational Mandate:** Mastery of architecture. The CAEP builds on the CAES: a CAEP holder is expected to perform every CAES function (finding, reviewing and interpreting established alternative credit policies and transcript evaluation workflows) and, beyond that, to possess the advanced compliance knowledge required to rewrite institutional residency policies, design CAEL-compliant experiential learning portfolio frameworks, model the financial return on investment (ROI) of acceleration for CFOs and other institutional leaders, and build employer partnerships that map a company's training programs to college credit.
- **Delivery Layout:** 100-question randomized remote-proctored mastery exam.

- **Entry Point:** $597members / $797 non-members

4.4 Role Boundary

Credential holders must act within institutional authority, applicable law, published policy, and demonstrated competence. Certification does not independently confer authority to award academic credit, override faculty judgment, guarantee transfer, or make legal or regulatory determinations.

5. Institutional Alignment and the CAPI Registry

5.1 Institutional Standard

Institutions seeking NBCAEP-aligned recognition should maintain clear ownership of acceleration policy, publish current pathway information, train responsible personnel, preserve reviewable decision records, and operate a fair correction and appeal mechanism.

5.2 CAPI Compliance Benchmarks

1. **Published governance:** Named owners, decision rights, policies, and review cycles.
2. **Current articulation data:** Maintained public CLEP, DSST, military JST, ACE, and other applicable equivalency information.
3. **Learner-facing transparency:** Accessible requirements, limitations, costs, timelines, and appeal routes.
4. **Evidence of quality:** Periodic audits, correction practices, staff preparation, and outcome monitoring.

5.3 Registry Data Stewardship

Registry participants should designate an accountable data owner, review published matrices on a defined schedule, timestamp material changes, retain approval evidence, and correct known inaccuracies promptly.

6. Governance, Ethics, and Assurance

6.1 Governance Responsibilities

NBCAEP governance should separate standards development, education delivery, assessment, certification decisions, appeals, registry review, and commercial relationships sufficiently to protect impartiality and public trust.

6.2 Executive Board Governance

The National Board of Certified Accelerated Education Professionals (NBCAEP) utilizes a 5-to-7 member governing executive board, engineered to comply with NCCA Standard 2 (National Commission for Certifying Agencies) mandates and ensure complete autonomy over certification standards.

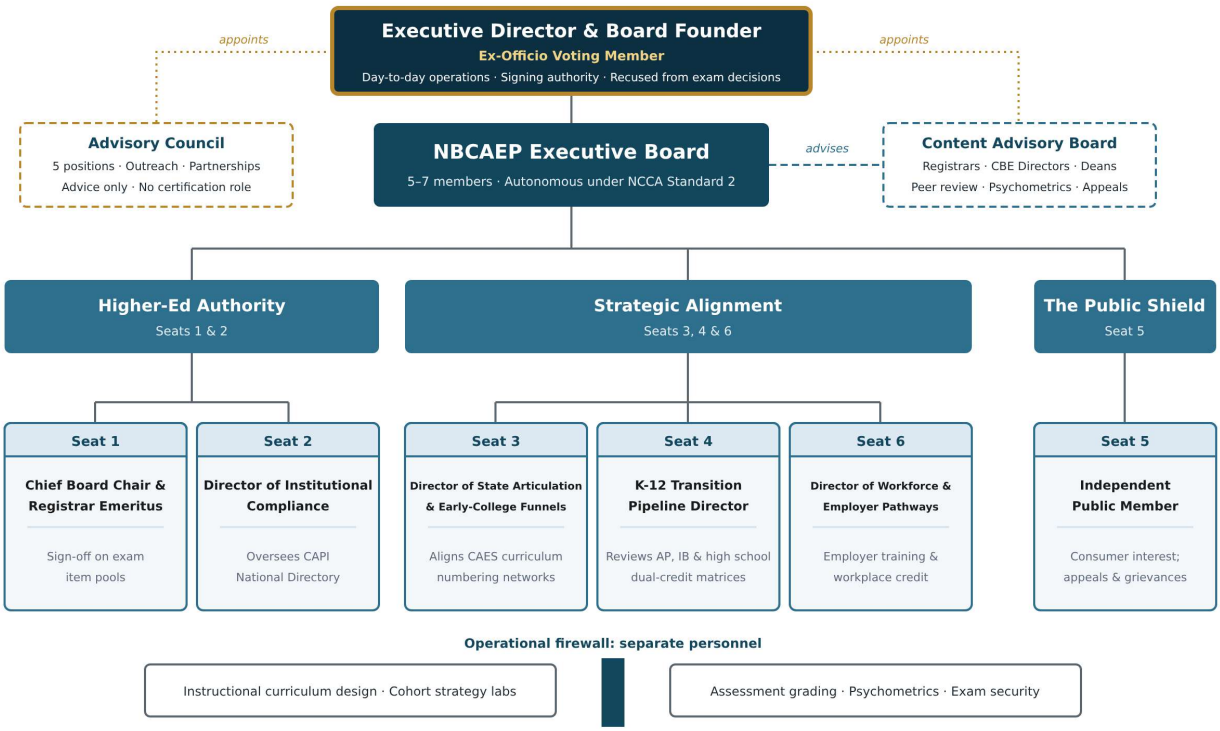


Figure 1. NBCAEP Executive Board structure

Executive Board Architecture & Essential Seats

The board structure is divided into three primary functional branches across six essential seats:

Executive Leadership (Ex-Officio Seat)

- **Executive Director & Board Founder: Ex-Officio Voting Member of the Board**
  - **Operational & Commercial Control:** Holds an ex-officio voting seat and manages day-to-day operations.
  - **Executive Authority:** Serves as the issuing and signing authority for institutional enterprise proposals, advisory board appointments, and corporate partnership agreements.
  - **Standing Recusal:** Recuses from all board discussions, votes, and decisions on examination content, item pools, cut scores, eligibility, and

score appeals or grievances, and holds no access to secure examination content (see Section 6.3).
    - **Candidate Preparation:** Live cohort strategy labs for candidates are led by designated instructional personnel who hold no board seat and have no access to examination content.

1. Higher-Ed Authority (Seats 1 & 2)

- **Seat 1: Chief Board Chair & Registrar Emeritus**
    - **Profile:** Active or recently retired University Registrar or Assistant Registrar.
    - **Qualifications:** Master's Degree or Ph.D., plus 5+ years managing institutional transfer credit databases, transcript auditing, or graduation degree-audit software systems.
    - **Jurisdiction:** Final sign-off on psychometric examination pools.
- **Seat 2: Director of Institutional Compliance**
    - **Profile:** Vice President of Enrollment Management, Academic Dean, or Director of Admissions.
    - **Qualifications:** Master's Degree, plus 5+ years managing campus enrollment operations or regional accreditation cycles.
    - **Jurisdiction:** Oversight of the CAPI National Directory database tracking.

2. Strategic Alignment (Seats 3, 4 & 6)

- **Seat 3: Director of State Articulation & Early-College Funnels**
    - **Profile:** Active Director or senior policy administrator within the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).
    - **Qualifications:** Bachelor's or Master's Degree.
    - **Compliance Constraint:** Must serve in a voluntary, non-compensated advisory profile, consistent with state ethics guidelines and secondary-income conflict-of-interest restrictions.
    - **Jurisdiction:** Audits and aligns the CAES curriculum numbering networks.
- **Seat 4: K-12 Transition Pipeline Director**
    - **Profile:** Active, veteran High School Guidance Counselor or Lead Concurrent-Enrollment Teacher.
    - **Qualifications:** Bachelor's or Master's Degree in Counseling/Education, holding an active state education license.
    - **Jurisdiction:** Restricts validation review scope strictly to AP, IB, and high school dual-credit matrices.
- **Seat 6: Director of Workforce & Employer Pathways**
    - **Profile:** Senior workforce development, career placement or employer-training leader from a workforce board, community-based training organization, employer, or government workforce program.

- **Qualifications:** Bachelor's Degree, plus 10+ years leading workforce development, career placement, adult education, or employer training programs. Experience with adult learners, grants, or employer partnerships preferred.
- **Jurisdiction:** Aligns the credentials with how adults earn college credit from work: ACE- and NCCRS-evaluated employer training, apprenticeships, corporate tuition assistance, and workforce-to-degree pathways. Reviews the CAEP competencies for employer partnerships and corporate credit crosswalks.
- **Conflict Safeguard:** Must disclose any current role with a training provider or employer partner, and recuses from decisions affecting those organizations or their employees as candidates. Holds no ownership in examination-preparation or credit-by-exam businesses.

3. The Public Shield (Seat 5)

- **Seat 5: The Independent Public Member**
  - **Profile:** A consumer advocate or community leader representing the interests of students and the public.
  - **Qualifications:** Bachelor's Degree; must hold zero active financial or professional ties to the higher education or K-12 employment markets (cannot be a former teacher, college worker, or current training partner).
  - **Jurisdiction:** Protects consumer interest and participates directly in score appeal and grievance reviews.

Core Governance Principles

- **Autonomous Decision-Making:** Under NCCA Standard 2, the board maintains complete, independent authority over all certification matters, including eligibility criteria, test development, administration, scoring cutoffs, and disciplinary appeals. Sponsoring entities or parent organizations cannot veto or alter these decisions.
- **Operational Separation of Personnel:** To prevent conflicts of interest, a strict operational firewall separates the individuals responsible for instructional curriculum design from those who manage assessment grading, psychometrics, and exam security.
- **Advisory & Appeals Integration:** The board works alongside a broader Content Advisory Board (composed of regional Registrars, CBE Directors, and Academic Deans) who participate in biannual curriculum peer reviews, quarterly psychometric evaluations, and three-member independent grievance appeal panels.

Advisory Council

NBCAEP also maintains a five-member Advisory Council that advises the Executive Director and the Executive Board on how NBCAEP reaches, serves and grows its community. The Council is advisory only: it has no vote on the Executive Board, no role in eligibility, examination development, passing scores, scoring, recertification, discipline or appeals, and no access to confidential examination material or candidate records. The Executive Director appoints its members, informs the Executive Board, and reports the Council's advice to the Board each year. The NBCAEP Advisory Council Charter governs its work.

- **Position 1: Outreach & Candidate Recruitment:** Founding Cohort and candidate outreach through associations, conferences and professional networks.
- **Position 2: Institutional & CAPI Partnerships:** Relationships with colleges and universities, and growth of the CAPI registry.
- **Position 3: Employer & Workforce Partnerships:** Employers, workforce boards and training programs that send adult learners toward degrees.
- **Position 4: Membership & Professional Events:** Member services, webinars, conferences and continuing education for certificants.
- **Position 5: Communications & Sustainability:** Public awareness, the website and media, plus fundraising, sponsorship and long-term financial health.
- **Agreements:** Every Council member signs the NBCAEP Conflict-of-Interest Agreement each year, and a confidentiality agreement when their work involves personal information.

6.3 Conflict of Interest, Recusal, and Separation

NBCAEP protects the impartiality of every certification decision through three controls: a signed conflict-of-interest agreement, a defined recusal procedure, and a firewall between certification and candidate preparation. These controls apply to Executive Board members, the Executive Director, Content Advisory Board members, appeal panelists, staff, and contractors involved in certification activities.

Conflict-of-Interest Agreement

Each covered individual signs the NBCAEP Conflict-of-Interest Agreement before beginning service and renews it annually. NBCAEP retains every signed agreement and enforces its terms. By signing, the individual agrees to:

- Disclose in writing any financial, professional, or personal interest that could influence, or reasonably appear to influence, a certification decision, before the matter is discussed or decided.

- Update that disclosure whenever circumstances change, and complete an annual disclosure statement.
- Recuse from any matter in which a conflict exists, following the procedure below.
- Not create, deliver, endorse, or approve examination review or preparation courses while holding access to examination content.
- Keep examination content, candidate records, and board deliberations confidential.
- Accept that a violation may result in removal from service and voiding of affected decisions.

Recusal Procedure

A covered individual must recuse when they have a personal or financial interest in the outcome; a family, employment, supervisory, academic, or client relationship with an affected candidate; involvement in preparing an affected candidate; or any other circumstance in which their impartiality could reasonably be questioned.

- **Declare:** The individual states the conflict before discussion begins.
- **Withdraw:** The individual leaves the discussion, does not vote, and receives no materials related to the matter.
- **Record:** The minutes record the recusal, the general nature of the conflict, and confirmation that the individual did not participate.
- **Resolve disputes:** The Chief Board Chair rules on whether a conflict exists. If the Chair is conflicted, the remaining voting members decide.
- **Quorum:** Recused members are excluded when determining quorum and the vote count for that matter.

Standing Recusal of the Executive Director

Because the Executive Director & Board Founder manages operations and commercial agreements, the Executive Director is permanently recused from the following matters and holds no access to secure examination content or item banks:

- Examination blueprints, item writing, item review, and item pools
- Cut-score setting, scoring rules, and score reporting decisions
- Eligibility criteria and individual eligibility determinations
- Score appeals, grievances, and disciplinary actions

The Executive Director retains a full vote on all other board business, including strategy, budget, partnerships, and operations.

Separation of Certification and Candidate Preparation

- Examination development, item banking, psychometrics, scoring, eligibility, and appeals are performed only by personnel with no role in candidate preparation.
- Candidate preparation, including live cohort strategy labs, is delivered by designated instructional personnel who hold no board seat, have no access to examination content, and take no part in certification decisions.
- NBCAEP does not state or imply that its preparation offerings are required or are the preferred route to certification. Participation confers no advantage in eligibility, scheduling, scoring, or appeals.
- Access to secure examination content is limited to named certification personnel and is logged.

6.4 Ethical Duties

- Represent qualifications and authority accurately.
- Protect learner information and use only necessary data.
- Disclose relevant conflicts of interest.
- Avoid guarantees unsupported by written institutional policy.
- Apply standards consistently and document justified exceptions.
- Escalate suspected fraud, security events, or material errors.

6.5 Assessment and Certification Assurance

Credential assessment should use documented blueprints, secure item handling, identity and integrity controls, consistent scoring rules, candidate communications, accommodation procedures, and a defined appeal process. Assessment performance and item quality should be reviewed periodically.

7. Framework Adoption

7.1 Tailoring

This framework should be tailored to institutional mission, authority, accreditation, jurisdiction, learner population, systems, and risk. Tailoring may change methods and documentation depth, but should not remove transparency, evidence integrity, learner protection, or quality assurance.

7.2 Adoption Sequence

1. Establish executive sponsorship and accountable ownership.
2. Assess current policies, data, roles, systems, and gaps.
3. Define the local lifecycle, decision rights, and minimum records.

4. Prepare personnel according to role and credential level.
5. Pilot the framework with a bounded learner population or pathway.
6. Audit decisions, records, learner experience, and outcomes.
7. Correct gaps, approve the operating standard, and scale.
8. Review performance and published information on a defined cycle.

7.3 Suggested Performance Measures

Measure	Management Question
Processing time	How long does a learner wait for a complete decision?
Credit utilization	How much awarded credit applies to the learner's program?
Defect and correction rate	How often are records or decisions corrected?
Learner understanding	Can learners explain the decision, limitations, and next step?
Appeals and resolution	What issues recur, and how promptly are they resolved?
Time and cost avoided	What verified burden was removed without reducing rigor?
Completion and persistence	Do accelerated pathways support continued progress and completion?
Data currency	Are published equivalencies accurate and timely?

8. Controlled Vocabulary

CAES: Certified Accelerated Education Specialist

CAEP: Certified Accelerated Education Professional

CAPI: Certified Accelerated Pathway Institution

F.R.A.M.E.: Finding and Researching Alternative Methods for Efficiency; the NBCAEP methodology for evaluating alternative credit pathways (Section 2.4).

NBCAEP: National Board of Certified Accelerated Education Professionals

Accelerated Education: The coordinated use of recognized learning, efficient pathway design, competency demonstration, and transparent institutional practice to reduce time and costs while preserving academic quality.

Alternative Credit: Academic credit earned or recognized outside a conventional institution-delivered course.

Articulation Matrix: A maintained record mapping examinations, prior learning, military or corporate learning, or external credentials to institutional credit.

Competency: A demonstrable integration of knowledge, skill, judgment, and application measured against defined criteria.

Duplication Guard: A control that prevents overlapping learning from being awarded more than once toward the same requirement.

Flowriculum: A personalized degree map that preserves every requirement of an institution's curriculum while charting the most efficient route to completion, by applying alternative methods of earning credit (credit-by-exam, transfer and dual credit, military and corporate training, prior learning assessment, and competency-based courses) wherever the institution's policies allow. It is the finished product of the F.R.A.M.E. process (Section 2.4) and the output of pathway design (Section 3.3).

Micro-Confidence: The confidence a learner gains during degree completion from saving time, saving money, or earning a recognized certificate along the way (Section 3.8).

Prior Learning Assessment: A structured process for evaluating college-level learning acquired outside traditional coursework.

Substantive Interaction: Meaningful instructional engagement consistent with applicable institutional and regulatory expectations.

Unlocked Seat Capacity: Institutional capacity made available when learners complete requirements more efficiently without compromising standards.

Appendix A. Practitioner Decision Record

Field	Required Entry
Decision subject	Learner, course, requirement, competency, or pathway reviewed
Evidence	Sources reviewed and authentication completed
Standard	Applicable policy, rubric, matrix, or approval authority
Decision and rationale	Outcome, limits, and concise justification
Approvals	Evaluator, approver, and date

Learner disclosure	Communication, acknowledgment, and next step
Review route	Correction, reconsideration, appeal, or escalation process

Appendix B. Student Priority

Students ranked by institutional impact, graduation proximity, and conversion return on investment (ROI)

1. Near-Completer

- **Strategic Priority: Rank 1 (Immediate Graduation Yield)**
- **Core Metric: 60+ Accumulated Semester Credits** (representing ~3.1 million or **7.2%** of the national non-completer population).
- **The Statistic:** National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) longitudinal data shows that near-completers have a re-enrollment and credential completion rate exceeding **60%**, making them **over 50% more likely** to finish a degree than any other sub-segment when targeted with degree-audit crosswalks.

2. Some College, No Degree (SCND)

- **Strategic Priority: Rank 2 (Macro Market Benchmark)**
- **Core Metric: 43.1 Million Working-Age American Adults**.
- **The Statistic:** The SCND population accounts for over **43.1 million American adults**—representing roughly **1 in 5 working-age Americans** (over 20%) who have earned postsecondary credit but hold no credential. This figure is the universal benchmark used in state Performance-Based Funding (PBF) and Lumina Foundation tracking.

3. Competency-Rich Learner

- **Strategic Priority: Rank 3 (Alternative Credit Acceleration Lift)**
- **Core Metric: 81.5% Relative Increase in Degree Completion via PLA/CBE**.
- **The Statistic:** According to the landmark CAEL / WICHE *PLA Boost* study across 72 institutions and 125,000+ adult students, learners who receive Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) credits for military and workforce knowledge complete their degrees at nearly double the rate of non-PLA peers (**49% vs. 27%**, a **+22 percentage point / 81.5% relative increase**).

4. Stop-Out

- **Strategic Priority: Rank 4 (Early Retention & Pipeline Leakage Control)**
- **Core Metric: 22.9% Freshman Attrition Window**.
- **The Statistic:** Across U.S. higher education, **22.9% of college freshmen drop out or fail to return for their sophomore year**. Tracking students at the "stop-out" milestone allows institutions to deploy automated credit-by-exam interventions before learners disengage permanently.

5. Re-Entry Candidate

- **Strategic Priority: Rank 5 (Active Funnel Matriculation & Persistence)**
- **Core Metric: 61.1% Persistence & Completion Rate Post-Return**.
- **The Statistic:** National Student Clearinghouse data tracking student re-engagement indicates that when a stopped-out student officially transitions into a "re-entry" pipeline, **61.1%** either complete their degree or remain continuously enrolled 12 months after re-matriculating.

6. Returning Adult Learner

- **Strategic Priority: Rank 6 (Enrollment Volume & Seat Capacity Balancing)**
- **Core Metric: 35% to 38% of Total Undergraduate Enrollment** (Over 6.5 Million Students).
- **The Statistic:** Adult learners aged 25 and older represent over **one-third (35%–38%)** of all enrolled college undergraduates in the United States, yet only **2.5% to 3.0%** of the broader adult non-completer population re-enrolls in any single academic calendar year without proactive outreach.

7. Credit-Bearing Adult

- **Strategic Priority: Rank 7 (Academic Currency & Stranded Capital Valuation)**
- **Core Metric: 60%+ (25+ Million Adults) Holding** ≥ 15 **Transferable Semester Credits**.
- **The Statistic:** Over **60%** of non-enrolled adults with past college experience hold at least one full semester (15+ credit hours) of academic credit, representing an estimated **$150+ billion** in accumulated, un-transcribed academic tuition equity currently stranded outside institutional degree audits.

8. Experienced Non-Completer

- **Strategic Priority: Rank 8 (Workforce Wage Penalty & Economic Mobility)**
- **Core Metric: $25,000 to $30,000 Annual Median Earnings Disparity**.

- **The Statistic:** According to Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and U.S. Census Bureau wage tables, experienced workers in the non-completer pool earn a median of **$48,000/year**, compared to **$74,000/year** for bachelor's degree holders—a lifelong earnings gap exceeding **$1,000,000** despite 5 to 15+ years of demonstrable workplace tenure.

- *The NBCAEP Framework is designed to support disciplined professional judgment—not replace institutional authority, faculty expertise, or applicable legal and regulatory requirements.*
