

Using your NYS Peer Worker Certification to Access College Credits When you Matriculate at SUNY Empire State College (ESC)

The New York State Department of Health AIDS Institute has partnered with the State University of New York (SUNY) Empire State College (ESC) to enable Certified Peer Workers in HIV, HCV or Harm Reduction to access 26-32 undergraduate college credits as a result of training and practicum experience from the peer certification process. This FAQ provides information about how to access these free credits.

How can I apply my peer certification training and practicum toward earning a college degree at Empire State College?

In order to access these credits, you must apply to SUNY ESC and be admitted as a degree-seeking student (this is called matriculating.) Requirements for admission include:

1. Completion of the ESC online application
2. Payment of \$50 orientation fee
3. Submit proof of high school or GED completion
4. Complete admission essay
5. Submit official transcripts from all institutions previously attended to, if applicable:

<https://www.esc.edu/admissions/associate-bachelors/>

The Admissions Office will review your application and you will be invited to attend an orientation, which you can complete in person or online. You should also apply for financial aid:

<https://www.esc.edu/financial-aid/>.

Where are ESC locations near me?

SUNY Empire has over 30 onsite locations across New York State. You can search for a location near you here: <https://www.esc.edu/locations/>. Additionally, SUNY ESC offers online coursework, and allows you to study part-time or full-time, onsite or online. You can even combine onsite and online learning and experience the best of both worlds.

How about cost? Are these credits really free? Is financial aid available?

All students must pay a \$50 orientation fee and a \$315 one-time Portfolio Fee. However, once you establish a degree plan the credits received through completion of your NYS HIV, HCV, HR Peer Certification are free of cost. ESC students are eligible for a number of state and federal grants as well as college foundation scholarships. More than 50% of ESC students receive financial assistance.

Is it possible that I could apply for admission and not be accepted as a student?

As long as you have a high school diploma or GED, ESC's admissions and financial aid staff is ready to work with you to make earning your degree possible and affordable. For questions call **800-847-3000**

How many credits am I eligible for?

Students who have a degree plan at ESC are eligible for 23 credits for their core Peer Certification coursework, and 3 additional credits per certification track (HIV, HCV or Harm Reduction), for up to 32 credits total. If you are certified in one track, you can access 26 credits. If you are certified in 2 tracks,

you would be eligible for 29 credits and if you were certified in 3 tracks, the maximum total credits you could access would be 32 credits. An Associate's Degree is 64 credits, so it's possible to obtain up to half of a 2-year degree free via credits earned through Peer Certification.

What if I don't have a copy of my high school diploma or GED. How can I obtain one?

To obtain a copy of your High School diploma or transcript, contact the school district where you graduated. To obtain a copy of your New York State High School Equivalency Diploma or transcript, visit here: <http://www.acces.nysed.gov/hse/duplicate-diplomas-andor-transcripts>. If you attended high school or received your GED from someplace outside of New York, you should contact the location Education Department for instructions and assistance.

Can I see an example of a degree plan?

Yes, a sample Associate's degree plan in Community and Human Services can be found here (LINK), and a sample Bachelor's degree plan in Community and Human Services can be found here. (LINK)

How do ESC mentors support students? What is that relationship like?

After you have attended orientation, you will be assigned a primary mentor who will work with you to create your degree program. PhD level mentors are assigned to all students once you matriculate.

Can I enroll into Empire State College prior to completing my certification?

Yes, a student could enroll prior to completion of the peer certification process. However, a student would not be able to get his/her degree approved until the peer certification is completed. The student could apply the credits to the degree plan pending completion, but unless the college receives official notice that the program has been completed, the credits would not officially count. Degree program approval can take place at any point during a student's time at ESC, but it is important the student make it clear that the peer certification is pending.

Can I obtain a degree in something unrelated to peer work or social services, for example, a music degree?

Your peer certification credits can be applied to basic educational requirements for any undergraduate degree you choose. However, if your degree plan is not related to social services, you may or may not be able to apply ALL of the credits from peer certification. You would work with your mentor to customize a focus of study to best meet your educational goals and maximize access to the free credits. ESC has 5 undergraduate divisions you can choose to study under: Arts and Humanities, Business, Human Services, Science, Math and Technology, Social Science.

Can I matriculate with ESC and then transfer to another school? Will my credits count elsewhere?

Once your degree plan has been approved by the college, the credit becomes transferrable. Each college accepts transfer credit at its discretion – transfer credit, whether it is a course or evaluated learning, is made by the college to which the student transfers and depends upon many factors.

I already have a bachelor’s degree. Can I use my credits towards a graduate degree?

Unfortunately, not. The coursework from your NYS Peer Worker Certification in HIV, HCV and HR is considered undergraduate work and can only be applied towards an associate’s or bachelor’s degree.

How do semesters run at ESC? What are the deadlines for applications?

ESC has three semesters each year- fall (begins in September), spring (begins in January) and summer (begins in May). Please check the website for current application deadlines:

<https://www.esc.edu/admissions/associate-bachelors/terms-priority-dates/>

Can I work and go to ESC at the same time? Can I take classes online?

ESC offers a number of ways to study and obtain credit, with flexible options for working adults with busy lives.

- through guided independent study, working one-to-one with a faculty mentor at times convenient for the two of you
- through online learning
- through small seminars, study groups, residencies or cross registration at other colleges – whatever suits your interests and lifestyle
- through a combination of all these ways.

I am considering enrolling and have questions about the process. Who can I speak with?

Prospective students will be assigned to recruiters in the area that they live once they live. Until then, they may reach out to:

Nicholas Mendez

Recruitment and Outreach Coordinator

Office of Enrollment Management

Call: 718-907-5743 internal ext. 1748 | Fax:

718-858-0943 |

Email: nicholas.mendez@esc.edu | www.esc.edu