



## Education Guide #3

# Credit-By-Examination

Credit-By-Examination is a great way to earn college credits at a low cost while also having flexibility and freedom over your schedule. Adults who have been in the workforce for some time and have prior knowledge or experience in particular subject areas may find that credit-by-examination works best for them.

Many colleges award students credit towards their associate's or bachelor's degrees on the basis of scores received through credit-by-examination programs. Some of these institutions do not have non-traditional degree programs, but still accept results on exams for credit. By using one of the well-established credit-by-examination programs, specifically College Level Examination Program (CLEP), DSST (formerly DAN TES Subject Standardized Tests), Excelsior College Examinations (UEXCEL), or Thomas Edison State College Examination Program (TECEP), you can receive the same amount of credit towards your degree that you would by completing traditional college courses.

### Why Use Credit-By-Examination Programs?

There are a number of reasons why people take exams for credit, but the three major reasons are as follows:

- 1. Time** – Most adult students have responsibilities outside of school that preclude taking more than one or two courses per term. This can affect the pace or rate at which they pursue their degree. Using exams to gain as many as 30 to 40 credits towards a degree (which some New York State employees have done) can considerably shorten the time required to finish a degree program.
- 2. Money** – Credit-by-examination programs are very economical, with some exams costing as little as \$80. Most community colleges charge between \$400 and \$700 for a three-credit course. Four-year schools usually charge more, so credit-by-examination is a cost-friendly option.
- 3. Confidence** – Many adults who think about returning to school may lack the confidence in their ability to do college-level work. Taking examinations for credit can help students determine whether or not they are ready to start a degree program.



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### Is Credit-By-Examination For You?

Although using credit-by-examination programs is a great boost in pursuing an associate's or bachelor's degree, it may not be for everyone. **Here are two factors you should consider as you look into taking examinations for credit:**

- 1. How well do you learn independently?** – There are some people who learn extremely well on their own, as long as they have the right resources (for example, books, websites, hand-outs, etc.). If this describes you, then credit-by-examination may be to your benefit. However, if you need interaction with teachers and other students, consider whether credit-by-exam is appropriate for you.
- 2. What type of test taker are you?** – Some people are effective at taking standardized tests, while others have difficulty on exams no matter how well they know the subject matter. If you have difficulty taking tests, you may want to get some assistance in developing your test taking skills before taking any of these exams.

### Planning and Preparation for Using Credit-by-Examination Programs

You will need to contact CLEP, the DSST Program, Excelsior College, or TECEP to get information on their examination programs. Before signing up to take any exams, there are a few steps to take to ensure that using a credit-by-examination program will help you in the long run. If you are already in a college program, start with Step 5.

**Step 1:** Obtain the catalog from the college or colleges you are considering along with a copy of the college's policy on accepting CLEP, DSST, Excelsior College, or TECEP exams.

**Step 2:** Meet with advisors from the college(s) to ask if they accept credits by examination.

**Step 3:** Based on your needs, inquire about the programs and services offered at the college(s), their policies on using examinations for credit and then evaluate your options and decide on which college is right for you.

**Step 4:** Apply for admission to the college of your choice. Credit-by-examination results can only be used if you are in a degree program.

**Step 5:** After acceptance, meet with an academic advisor to discuss courses to take and which exams you could take for possible credit.



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**Step 6:** Arrange to take exams and to have your scores sent to your college. Each examination program can supply a list of test centers for their respective programs.

**Step 7:** Study! Regardless of your background in a particular subject, most people cannot take an exam without preparation. CLEP, DSST, Excelsior College, and TECEP offer study guides for their exams and online practice questions. These guides and practice questions show a sampling of what is covered on each of the exams.

### Specific Examination Programs

**College Level Examination Program (CLEP)** is a national program of credit-by-examination that allows you to gain recognition for college-level achievement. General examinations measure familiarity with material covered during the first two years of college to meet general education requirements.

Subject examinations measure knowledge acquired in more specific college course areas. Choose from 33 exams in five subject areas covering material taught in courses during your first two years of college.

For more information, contact CLEP at P.O. Box 6600, Princeton, NJ, 08541; (800) 257-9558; [www.clep.collegeboard.org](http://www.clep.collegeboard.org). CLEP also has special benefits for military personnel. For more information, visit [www.clep.collegeboard.org/military](http://www.clep.collegeboard.org/military). You can also view a list of CLEP examinations here: <https://clep.collegeboard.org/exams>

**DSST (formerly DANTES Subject Standardized Tests)** is a credit-by-examination program offering students the opportunity to earn college credit through a suite of 33 exams. For more information, contact DSST at 1501 South Clinton Street, Baltimore, MD 21224; (877) 471-9860; [www.getcollegecredit.com](http://www.getcollegecredit.com). You can find a list of DSST examinations at [https://www.getcollegecredit.com/exam\\_fact\\_sheets/](https://www.getcollegecredit.com/exam_fact_sheets/)

**Excelsior College Examinations (UExcel Exams)** provide flexible opportunities to demonstrate college-level learning in the arts and sciences, business, education, and nursing. UExcel exams cover subjects at both the upper and lower college level and have been developed in alliance with Pearson VUE. For more information, contact Excelsior College at 7 Columbia Circle, Albany, NY 12203; (888) 647-2388; [www.excelsior.edu/exams](http://www.excelsior.edu/exams). You can find a list of Excelsior College UExcel Exams here: <https://www.excelsior.edu/exams/choose-your-exam/>

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**Thomas Edison State College Exam Program (TECEP)** offers a wide range of examinations for earning college credit. Originally designed to help enrolled Thomas Edison State College students meet degree requirements, the examinations are now administered nationally and may be used at many other institutions. You can find a list of Thomas Edison State College Exams here:

<https://www2.tesu.edu/listalltecep.php>

**The NYS & CSEA Partnership** offers reimbursement to CSEA-represented NYS employees for up to \$350 per exam for an unlimited number of exams. For more information on credit-by-examination programs, as well as advisement on applying to college, making academic decisions, career planning, financial aid, and using your tuition benefits for lifelong learning, contact a Partnership Advisor at (800) 253-4332 or (518) 486-7814; press option 1.