

## ECE Credential Entitled Application Introduction

The information provided in this document is designed to support faculty in becoming a Gateways to Opportunity Entitled Program and in maintaining program entitlement. Information provided includes an overview of the Gateways to Opportunity ECE Credential and processes required to gain and maintain entitlement.

Careful review of this document will support faculty knowledge of their role in attaining and maintaining entitlement within the Gateways ECE Competency-based system. Information provided in this document, in addition to an overview of the Gateways to Opportunity ECE Credential and the Gateways ECE Competencies, includes:

- Entitled application processes
- Annual reporting requirements
- Candidate credentialing processes
- Entitling assurance processes
- Course substitution procedures

### Overview: Gateways to Opportunity ECE Credential

The Gateways to Opportunity ECE Credential reflects professional attainment of knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to support high-quality practice within early childhood settings. The Credential reflects multiple professional standards considered essential for professional practice within the field, and influence all levels of training, education and role responsibilities in Illinois.

### Standards, Guidelines, and Program Outcomes Informing Gateways to Opportunity ECE Credentials

The Gateways to Opportunity ECE Credential is informed by the following standards:

- Illinois Early Childhood Education Content-Area Standards
- Illinois Professional Teaching Standards (IPTS)
- Professional Standards for Teacher Preparation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

Additional program quality guidelines, program outcomes, and professional standards informing the Gateways to Opportunity Credentials include, but are not limited to:

- Illinois Director Credential
- Illinois Birth to Three Standards
- Head Start Program Outcomes
- Illinois' Early Intervention Credential
- National Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential

## **The Role of Competencies within the Gateways to Opportunity ECE Credential**

The Gateways to Opportunity ECE Credential is comprised of 56 ECE Competencies. Competencies reflect knowledge, skills, and dispositions expected at different levels of employment within the early childhood field.

Level 2 Competencies represent foundational knowledge, skills, and dispositions within the field. Competencies included at Levels 3, 4, and 5 build on this foundation. These competencies are organized under the seven Gateways Content Areas, which include:

- Human Growth & Development (HGD)
- Health Safety & Well-Being (HSW)
- Observation & Assessment (OA)
- Curriculum or Program Design (CPD)
- Interactions, Relationships & Environments (IRE)
- Family & Community Relationships (FCR)
- Personal & Professional Development (PPD)

### **Levels of Entitlement**

The Gateways ECE Competencies align with different levels of entitlement within the Gateways to Opportunity ECE Credentials.

*The Gateways to Opportunity ECE Credential is available for alignment within community colleges at Levels 2, 3, and 4.*

Institutions aligned with Level 2 are required to demonstrate where Level 2 Gateways ECE Competencies are assessed within their curriculum; institutions aligned with Level 3 are required to demonstrate where Level 2 and Level 3 Gateways ECE Competencies are assessed within their curriculum; institutions aligned with Level 4 are required to demonstrate where Level 2, 3, and 4 Gateways ECE Competencies are assessed within their curriculum.

*The Gateways to Opportunity ECE Credential is available for alignment within universities at Levels 2, 3, 4, and 5.*

Universities are entitled at Level 5, and are required to demonstrate where Level 2, 3, 4 and 5 Gateways ECE Competencies are assessed within their curriculum.

### **Entitlement Processes**

Institutions seeking Gateways to Opportunity ECE Credential Entitlement are required to demonstrate how their early childhood program plan, content, and assessment practices align with the Gateways ECE Competencies. Demonstrating alignment with competencies includes (1) documenting how current course objectives align and (2) describing how competencies are assessed within the program.

## Competency Alignment within Early Childhood Coursework

Illinois ECE faculty are required to demonstrate how their current course content aligns with the Gateways ECE Competencies. To determine alignment, faculty will need to carefully consider course content and objectives. It is important to note that competencies represent a composite of knowledge, skills, and dispositions, while course objectives are often a more micro-level representation of knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Therefore, several course objectives might fit within one Gateways ECE Competency.

A master list of Gateways ECE Competencies is provided ([insert link to higher ed landing page for ECE](#)). Note that competencies are arranged by level, which is indicated in the horizontal column at the top of the (title) page, as well as by color.

- Level 2 competencies are indicated by the color yellow
- Level 3 competencies are indicated by the color green
- Level 4 competencies are indicated by the color orange
- Level 5 competencies are indicated by the color blue

Because competencies are arranged by level, it is essential to consider the sequencing of content when aligning early childhood programs and the ECE Credential.

## Leveled Competency Implications for Program Planning

Faculty designing courses within a competency-based framework must consider several factors. Leveled competencies imply a progression across courses. Each competency included in a Gateways Content Area may not be included within the same course, however, it is assumed that foundational competencies (Level 2, for example) are included in course/content sequencing prior to the introduction and assessment of higher level competencies (Level 4, for example). As faculty pursue Gateways to Opportunity ECE Credential entitlement, it is important to consider competency levels and appropriately sequencing of competencies within their curriculum.

As noted, institutions are required to submit the Gateways ECE Competency Alignment Table when applying for Gateways to Opportunity ECE Credential entitlement. The Entitlement Application provides an alignment table (Competency Alignment Table) for use in this process.

- Institutions entitled at Level 2 are required to complete this table for each competency in each content area at Level 2. Level 2 competencies are noted in yellow.
- Institutions entitled at Level 3 are required to complete this table for each competency in each content area at Level 2 and Level 3. Level 2 competencies are noted in yellow. Level 3 competencies are noted in green.
- Institutions entitled at Level 4 are required to complete this table for each competency in each content area at Level 2, Level 3 and Level 4. Level 2 competencies are noted in yellow. Level 3 competencies are noted in green. Level 4 competencies are noted in orange.
- Institutions entitled at Level 5 are required to complete this table for each competency in each content area at Level 2, Level 3, Level 4, and Level 5. Level 2 competencies are noted in yellow. Level 3 competencies are noted in green. Level 4 competencies are noted in orange. Level 5 competencies are noted in blue.

**Articulation Application:** When a community college is articulating competencies with a four-year institution, they are required to meet the Level 5 competencies within the articulating competency area. For example, if a community college is articulating Child Growth and Development, reporting requirements will include a description of how Level 2-5 Competencies are assessed.

In addition to program sequencing and assuring that competencies are aligned to credentials at appropriate levels, faculty need to align course and objectives to the Gateways ECE Competencies. As noted previously, competencies represent a composite of knowledge, skills and dispositions. Course objectives, comparatively, are often a more micro-level representation of knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Therefore, several course objectives might fit within one Gateways ECE Competency. An example of alignment between competencies and course objectives based on the Illinois Community College Core Courses is provided in the Entitled Application.

### Entitlement Process: New Institutions

Institutions initially seeking Gateways to Opportunity ECE Credential Entitlement are required to submit the following, which are each explained in more detail below:

- Entitlement Application Form
  - Competency Alignment Table
  - Current Plan of Study for Credential-Related Degrees and Certificates
  - Institutional Procedure for Credential Attainment
  - Program Articulation Agreements
  - Course Substitution Procedure
  - Non-Course Requirements
  - Course Delivery
  - Institutional Assurances & Signatures
  - Program Syllabi



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