

## *Transfer and Award of Academic Credit Policy*

This Policy is directed to institutions of higher education and others concerned with the transfer of academic credit among institutions and award of academic credit for courses taken at another institution. Underlying this Policy is the principle that each institution is responsible for determining its own policies and practices with regard to the transfer and award of credit. Institutions are urged to review their policies and practices periodically to ensure that they accomplish the institution's goals and that they function in a manner that is fair and equitable to students. This Policy should be used as a guide and does not constitute a substitute for institutional policies and practices.

Transfer of credit involves transfer of credit between institutions and recognition of learning beyond the institution accepting the credit. As their personal circumstances and educational objectives change, students seek to have their learning, wherever and however attained, recognized by institutions where they enroll for further study. It is important for reasons of social equity and educational effectiveness, as well as for the wise use of resources, for all institutions to develop reasonable and definitive policies and procedures for acceptance of transfer of credit. Such policies and procedures should provide maximum consideration for the individual student who has changed institutions or objectives. It is the receiving institution's responsibility to provide reasonable and definitive policies and procedures for determining a student's knowledge in required subject areas. All institutions have a responsibility to furnish transcripts and other documents necessary for a receiving institution to judge the quality and quantity of the work. Institutions also have the responsibility to advise the students that the work reflected on the transcript may or may not be accepted by a receiving institution.

Interinstitutional Transfer of Credit. Transfer of credit from one institution to another involves at least three considerations:

1. The educational quality of the institution from which the student transfers.
2. The comparability of the nature, content, and level of credit earned to that offered by the receiving institution.
3. The appropriateness and applicability of the credit earned to the programs offered by the receiving institution, in light of the student's educational goals.

Accredited Institutions. Accreditation speaks primarily to the first of these considerations, serving as the basic indicator that an institution meets certain minimum standards.

1. Regional accrediting commissions which accredit total institutions.
2. Certain national accrediting bodies that accredit various kinds of specialized institutions.
3. Certain specialized organizations that accredit free-standing professional schools, in addition to programs within multi-purpose institutions.

Accreditation affords reason for confidence in an institution's or a program's purposes, in the appropriateness of its resources and plans for carrying out these purposes, and in its effectiveness in accomplishing its goals, insofar as these things can be judged. Accreditation speaks to the probability but does not guarantee that students have met acceptable standards of educational accomplishment.

Comparability and Applicability. Comparability of the nature, content, and level of transfer credit and the appropriateness and applicability of the credit earned in programs offered by the receiving institution are as important in the evaluation process as the accreditation status of the institution at which the transfer credit was awarded. Since accreditation does not address these questions, this information must be obtained from catalogs and other materials and from direct contact between knowledgeable and experienced faculty and staff at both the receiving and sending institutions. When such considerations as comparability and appropriateness of credit are satisfied, however, the receiving institution should have reasonable confidence that students from accredited institutions are qualified to undertake the receiving institution's educational program.

Admissions and Degree Purposes. At some institutions there may be differences between the acceptance of credit for admission purposes and the applicability of credit for degree purposes. A receiving institution may accept previous work, place a credit value on it, and enter it on the transcript. However, that previous work, because of its nature and not its inherent quality, may be determined to have no applicability to a specific degree to be pursued by the student.

Institutions have a responsibility to make this distinction and its implications clear to students before they enroll. This should be a matter of full disclosure, with the best interests of the student in mind. Institutions also should make every reasonable effort to reduce the gap between credits accepted and credits applied toward an educational credential.

Unaccredited Institutions. Higher education institutions that are not accredited by a USDOE recognized regional or national accrediting agency may lack that status for reasons unrelated to questions of quality. Such institutions, however, cannot provide a reliable, third-party assurance that they meet or exceed minimum standards. That being the case, students transferring from such institutions may encounter special problems in gaining admission and in transferring credits to accredited institutions. Institutions admitting students from unaccredited institutions should take special steps to validate credits previously earned.

Non-U.S. Institutions. In most cases, non-U.S. institutions are chartered and authorized by their national governments, usually through a ministry of education or head of state. Although this provides for a standardization within a country, it does not produce useful information about comparability from one country to another.

Validation of Extra-Institutional and Experiential Learning for Transfer Purposes. Transfer-of-credit policies should encompass educational accomplishment attained in extra-institutional settings as well as at accredited higher education institutions. In deciding on the award of credit for extra-institutional learning, institutions will find the services of the American Council on Education's College Credit Recommendation Service (CREDIT) helpful. One of the Office's

functions is to operate and foster programs to determine credit equivalencies for various modes of extra-institutional learning. CREDIT maintains evaluation programs for formally structured courses offered by the military and civilian non-collegiate sponsors such as business, corporations, government agencies, and labor unions. Evaluation services are also available for examination programs for occupations with validated job proficiency evaluation systems, and for correspondence courses offered by schools accredited by the Distance Education and Training Council. The results are published in a Guide series. Another resource is the General Education Development (GED) Testing Program, which provides a means for assessing high school equivalency.

For learning that has not been validated through the ACE formal credit recommendation process or through credit-by-examination programs, institutions are urged to explore the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) procedures and processes.

Institutions are encouraged to use this statement as a basis for discussions in developing and implementing as well as reviewing institutional policies with regard to transfer of credit.

Disclosure. The institution's policy on transfer of credit is publicly disclosed through its website and other relevant publications. The publication includes a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education along with a list of institutions with which it has articulation agreements.

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