
Policy on Transfer of Credit

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Background

Students experience transfer of credit as an issue critical to the successful completion of their educational goals. The majority of students attending two-year and community colleges typically attend more than one institution before completing their degree or certificate program. In addition, a large proportion of students seeking degrees or certificates will desire to pursue higher education at some time in the future.

Many factors contribute to student attendance at multiple institutions of higher learning;

- Economic, geographic and employment mobility;
- Desire to transfer distance learning credits to site-based institutions;
- Desire to transfer credit for experiences gained from employer training programs;
- Desire to transfer credits from foreign institutions.

These situations necessitate clear institutional policies on how academic credit is awarded and on how students can transfer academic credit. Institutions need to be flexible and open in considering alternative approaches to facilitating transfer of credit to benefit students.

The ACCJC is committed to:

- Enhancing educational opportunity by facilitating student mobility;
- Helping institutions to develop effective transfer of credit practices;
- Assuring that institutional transfer of credit practices are consistent with accreditation standards and policies;
- Maintaining effective communication between the Commission and member institutions in order to facilitate institutional adherence to standards and policies and support improvement of transfer of credit between institutions.

Policy

Accredited institutions have a responsibility to provide for effective transfer of credit that minimizes student difficulties in moving between institutions while assuring the high quality of their education. Each institution is responsible for determining its own policies and practices with regard to the transfer and award of credit including transfer of credits from non-accredited institutions. Institutions shall establish policies on the transfer of credit that are clearly stated and that function in a manner that is fair and equitable to students. At the same time, institutions shall be responsible for careful evaluation of credits that students wish to transfer. Institutions must balance responsiveness to students' preferences about transfer of credit and institutional commitment to the value and quality of degrees, certificates, or other credentials that the receiving institution awards.

Policy Elements

Institutions considering transfer of credit from another institution must evaluate and ensure that:

- There is a balanced approach to decisions about whether to accept transfer of credit. Clearly stated policies and procedures for consideration of transfer of credit must be developed, followed, and maintained. Sound mechanisms for ongoing review and updating of policies and procedures must be established. The policy must include a statement of criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education¹;
- The educational quality of the sending institution is the primary consideration. Receiving institutions must ensure that decisions are based on a fair assessment of the institution's educational quality and may include the regional, specialized and national accredited status of an institution, along with other factors as appropriate. Institutions should be flexible and open in considering alternative or innovative forms of educational delivery that may characterize the institution where the student received the credits proposed for transfer;
- There is assurance that the institution from which a student desires to transfer credit is a legitimate institution accredited by a U.S. Department of Education recognized accrediting body or that the institution, if in another country, is approved by the legitimate accreditation or quality assurance agencies that operate in that country;
- There is assurance that transcripts and other credentials provided for purposes of transfer of credit are legitimate and, if validated by a third party foreign credential services, that the credential service agency is valid²;
- The nature, content, associated student learning outcomes, and level of credit(s) earned at the sending institution are comparable to those of the credit(s) offered at the receiving institution;
- The credit(s) earned for the programs offered by the sending institution, in light of the student's educational goals, are appropriate and applicable to the credits the student seeks to transfer to the receiving institution's program;
- The receiving institution acts consistently and fairly in its review of the courses that students propose to transfer for credit. Students must be treated equitably as they seek to transfer credit, and institutions must consider all requests to transfer credit carefully before making decisions; and,
- College publications used to inform or recruit students provide accurate and timely information about transfer of credit policies and procedures to students, the public, and sending institutions. The information should include clearly defined procedures, deadlines, and documents needed from sending institutions when attempting transfer of credit as well as essential academic factors that are involved in transfer of credit decisions (such as existing course equivalencies, content and/or student learning outcomes, grades, course level and applicability toward a degree, certificate, or program prerequisite). These policies must be publically disclosed.

Effective public communication is maintained through an ongoing exchange with students and the public about transfer of credit opportunities and limitations through catalogues, counseling and advising, and websites. Ongoing contact and information exchange among institutions that

¹ Required by the Higher Opportunities Education Act as amended.

² The ACCJC recommends that AACRAO services be used.

routinely send and receive transfer students must be sustained. Information to students and the public about special circumstances that may affect the ease or difficulty of transfer of credit shall be provided.

Where software or a website is used to offer customized transfer of credit information or information on articulation agreements to students, it is accurate and current. Where provision is made for electronic transfer of credit, application for transcript analysis, or other key functions, it is confidential, secure, accurate and current.

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