Transfer of Credit Policy

OVERVIEW

Institutional Responsibilities
The Commission recognizes that each institution is responsible for determining its own policies and practices with regard to the transfer and award of credit. In accordance with 34 CFR 602.24, in its role as a federally recognized accreditor, WSCUC must confirm that an institution has transfer of credit policies that:

- Are publicly disclosed in accordance with section 668.43(a)(11) included below; and
- Include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education.

Section 668.43 Institutional Information
(a) Institutional information that the institution must make readily available to enrolled and prospective students under this subpart includes, but is not limited to ---
   (11) A description of the transfer of credit policies established by the institution which must include a statement of the institution’s current transfer of credit policies that includes, at a minimum--
      (i) Any established criteria the institution uses regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution; and
      (ii) A list of institutions with which the institution has established an articulation agreement.

As part of its review for Candidacy, Initial Accreditation, or Reaffirmation of Accreditation, WSCUC will confirm that the institution has publicly disclosed its transfer of credit policies, including a statement of the criteria it has established regarding the acceptance of credit earned at another institution of higher education. The following principles and criteria should be considered by an institution as it formulates its policies on acceptance of transfer credit.

All institutions have a responsibility to furnish transcripts and other documents necessary for a receiving institution to judge the quality and quantity of a student’s work. Institutions also have a responsibility to advise students that the work reflected on the transcript may or may not be accepted by a receiving institution. 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.

Applicability of Credit for Degree Purposes
Institutions are encouraged to review their policies and practices periodically to ensure that they accomplish the institution’s objectives and that they function in a manner that is fair and equitable to students. An inherent tension exists between institutional decision responsibility for degree coherence and quality, and the mix of factors involved in the award of transfer credit, including a student’s desire to transfer credits, an institution’s desire to maintain financial and quality oversight of credits awarded, and respect for other accredited institutions. At some institutions, there may be differences between
the acceptance of credit for admission purposes and the applicability of credit for degrees. A receiving institution may accept previous work, place 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 at the receiving institution. Institutions have a responsibility to fully disclose this distinction, and its implications, to students before they decide to enroll. Institutions also should make every reasonable effort to reduce the gap between credits accepted and credits applied toward an educational credential.

CRITERIA FOR TRANSFER DECISIONS

Policy and practice for the evaluation and award of transfer credit emanate from an institution’s decision that a student applicant is qualified to successfully engage the receiving institution’s curriculum and benefit from its educational purposes and programs. The credit proposed to be transferred is considered suitable for inclusion in the program for which the receiving institution will grant a degree.

Decision Makers in Granting Transfer of Credit
Institutions are expected to pay attention to the qualifications and roles of the persons making judgments about the appropriateness of transfers of credit. Generally, this responsibility falls on faculty and registrars. Institutions should avoid including staff who have responsibility for marketing and recruitment in transfer decisions.

Accreditation Status of Institutions and Transfer Credit
Recognition of the accrediting organization by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) or Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) affords some basis 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 goals respecting the educational accomplishments of students.

Balance in the Use of Accreditation Status in Transfer Decisions
Institutions of postsecondary education that are not accredited by USDE or CHEA-recognized accrediting bodies may lack that status for reasons unrelated to questions of academic quality. Such unaccredited institutions, however, may not provide a reliable, third-party assurance that they meet or exceed minimum standards. It is therefore incumbent on the receiving institution to take special steps to validate credits that have been previously earned at unaccredited programs or institutions. After review of the student transcript and any related documentation, if feasible, the receiving institution, upon request, may provide reasonable explanation to student applicants about why work is or is not accepted for credit.

Decisions regarding the acceptance of transfer credit should not be made solely on the accreditation status of an institution. This is just one of multiple factors to be considered in evaluating transfer credit.

Comparability and Applicability
Comparability of the nature, content, quality, and level of transfer credit, and the appropriateness and applicability of the credit earned, to programs offered by the receiving institution are at least 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, course syllabi, and other materials, and from direct contact between knowledgeable, experienced faculty and staff at the receiving and sending institutions.
**Consistency**
Policies and practices that inform transfer decisions are to be applied consistently to all students. This principle becomes even more important in the context of two national trends: changing student attendance patterns reflecting higher incidence of transfer rates, and new providers of higher education, with attendant new sources of credits and experience to be evaluated for transfer purposes.

**Accountability for Effective Public Communication**
Full and accurate disclosure of transfer policies and practices is important in ensuring that the transfer process is built on a strong commitment to fairness, effectiveness and transparency

**Commitment to Address Innovation**
Institutions are encouraged to be flexible and open in considering alternative approaches to managing transfer when these approaches will benefit students. For example, distance and competency-based learning generate alternative approaches to many functions of colleges and universities, and may require special attention to transfer policy and practice.

**Evaluation of Credit from International Institutions**
In most cases, international institutions are chartered and authorized by their national governments, usually through a ministry of education. Or international institutions are approved by the legitimate accreditation or quality assurance agencies that operate in that country. International institutions should also provide assurance that transcripts and other credentials provided for purposes of transfer of credit are legitimate and validated.

**RESOURCES**
This policy draws upon an advisory statement issued jointly by the American Council on Education (ACE), the Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) and the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) available at https://www.chea.org/sites/default/files/other-content/Joint-Statement-Transfer-Award-Credit-2017.pdf Institutions are encouraged to consult this statement as a basis for discussions in developing or reviewing institutional policies with regard to transfer.

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