



Middle States Commission on Higher Education

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Policy

Transfer Credit, Prior Learning, and Articulation

The Commission's requirements with respect to transfer and articulation are governed by Standards 8 (Student Admissions) and 11 (Educational Offerings) of Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education. Assessing experiential learning for credit is addressed in Standard 13 (Related Educational Activities). Although admission standards are the responsibility and prerogative of the institution, the Commission is required to confirm for the U.S. Department of Education certain aspects of an institution's transfer of credit policies.

The Commission standards and policies apply to transfer of credit between institutions within or outside a university system; transfer of credits earned at foreign institutions or earned in U.S. sponsored programs abroad; transfer of credits earned in non-traditional formats or through co-op or other extra-institutional learning; transfer of credits from non-regionally accredited institutions; transfer of advanced placement credit, tech-prep credits, and credit based on exams; credit for experiential and other forms of learning.

Requirements

In accordance with 34 CFR 602.24, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, in its role as a federally recognized accreditor 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.

General Principles

Although the extent to which transfer, articulation, and experiential learning issues apply to each institution will vary, the following usually characterize effective policies for transfer and experiential learning and their implementation.

- Transfer and experiential learning decisions are student-centered, striving for appropriate balance among fairness, consistency, flexibility, good educational practice, and academic program integrity. They address the needs of a student who has changed institutions or objectives, or has learned in non-traditional formats.
- Institutional mission and goals guide the formulation of policies and procedures for transfer and experiential learning. The basic principles of the institution regarding credit for prior learning are clear.
- Courses, programs, and other learning experiences are judged on their learning outcomes, using valid evaluation measures, including third-party review by appropriately qualified reviewers and recommendations from organizations experienced with such evaluations (e.g., ACE, CAEL).
- The acceptance or denial of transfer credit is not determined exclusively on the basis of the accreditation of the sending institution or the mode of delivery, but, rather, will consider course equivalencies, including expected learning outcomes, with those of the receiving institution's curricula and standards. (Characteristics of Excellence, Standard 11)
- Communication of the policies and procedures—written and oral, formal and informal—is clear and effective. It is clear how credit for prior learning and transfer will be recorded on transcripts.
- It is clear how college level learning is defined for the granting of credit for transfer of prior learning or advanced placement secondary learning, and it is clear that credit is awarded for learning, not experience.
- It is clear what degree requirements may or may not be met by prior or experiential learning. Specific general education core course requirements are addressed
- Outcomes assessment measures are directed towards evaluating institutional effectiveness and strengthening the public policy and educational environment for transfer students. Good outcomes data on the success of transfer students or students receiving credit for experiential learning is used, and multiple measures are used to assess the overall student experiences at the receiving institution.

- Faculty participate in the creation, review and implementation of transfer and experiential learning policies/procedures, and they advise both incoming and outgoing transfer students and experiential learning students.
- Evaluations of transcripts and experiential learning are conducted in a timely manner in order to be informative in academic advising and decision-making. Appropriate counseling (including any impact on financial aid eligibility) by well-informed faculty and others, and other support services are available.
- Students are advised when the transferability of learning credits to other institutions may present difficulties.
- The institution has provisions for periodic re-evaluation of transfer of credit, prior learning, and articulation policies and procedures.