

The Student's Guide to Transfer of

credit



Distance Education and Training Council

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by Sally R. Welch, Assistant Director
Distance Education and Training Council

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1601 18th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20009 U.S.A.
202-234-5100
202-332-1386
<http://www.detc.org>
E-mail: detc@detc.org

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(Editor's Note: Much of this Guide was taken from *DETC Occasional Paper Number 15: Strategies for Helping Students Transfer Credits*. This Guide, along with other publications, is also available in a PDF file from www.detc.org. Select "DETC Publications" and "Downloadable Files.")

The Student's Guide to Transfer of Credit

Introduction

Years ago, transferring academic credit from one educational institution to another was a pretty straightforward transaction. However, the education world has changed. Today, students may earn academic credits at four or five different institutions before completing their degree. Nontraditional schools now offer credits and degrees. And, with the convenience of earning legitimate credits via the Internet, the amount of credit transfer has exploded.

Unfortunately for students seeking to transfer their previous work, the culture of credit transfer at some traditional colleges and universities has not kept pace with the rapid changes with today's mobile students. Many universities still insist that they will accept academic credits or degrees only *from institutions that are regionally accredited*. The culture of "regionally accredited only" can lead to frustration for students who choose to earn their credits at *nationally accredited* institutions, such as those accredited by the Accrediting Commission of the DETC. Until the traditional higher education community comes into compliance with the national calls for a more open system, we have developed this *Student's Guide to Transfer of Credit* as a helpful road map through the transfer maze.

Please note that although this Guide addresses the subject of credit transfer, this information may also apply to getting your degree accepted by another institution for the purpose of admission to a higher degree level.

The Process of Transferring Credit

Today, the process of transferring credit from one institution to another is a complex one. Every institution develops its own policies and procedures concerning award and transfer of credit, so no institution, organization or agency can **guarantee** that another institution will accept its credit. Even if the sending institution is accredited by the same accrediting agency as the receiving school, there's no guarantee that its credits will transfer.

Several states have attempted to simplify and streamline the credit transfer process by implementing policies that allow for the general transfer (i.e., accep-

tance) of credits across state-supported institutions. Some of these include: Illinois, Florida, California, and Minnesota. The state efforts have realized varying degrees of success. The Illinois plan has been very successful and has resulted in an almost absolute guarantee of credit transferability of at least general education courses across state institutions. The Florida plan is a little more aggressive. It has legislatively mandated the acceptance of transfer credit among state institutions and is supported by a statewide course numbering system.

Who Makes the Decision: The person(s) who make the decision on whether or not to accept your academic credit could be the chairperson of the department that offers the degree program, a college faculty transcript review committee, the dean in the specific academic area (for example, engineering, business, or arts and sciences), an admissions officer, the registrar, or a faculty advisor.

Factors Affecting Credit Transfer: No matter who makes the decision, there are certain factors that may affect their ability to accept your academic credit. These requirements are usually stated in an institution's catalog under the section titled "transfer policies." If any of these factors apply to your situation and you **do not meet** the criteria stated, it is unlikely that you will have your credits accepted. You should check these before you proceed. The factors are:

- **College and/or state policies on transfer and types of credit:** Most colleges and some states have policies concerning the number and type of credits they will transfer from another institution, as well as the amount of credit for examinations, military training, business and industry credits, or lifelong learning (also referred to as prior or experiential learning) that they will accept and apply to a degree. These policies vary greatly; decisions about the type and amount of credit that an institution will accept under transfer are primarily determined at the institutional level. Accrediting bodies or state higher education agencies may influence these decisions.

- **College residency requirements:** Most colleges require that a student complete a specific number of credits (normally program major credits or credits earned during the final year of enrollment) at their institution in order to be awarded a degree from them.

- **Appropriateness of the course:** Does the course you completed fit into the college's degree program? Each degree program has specific credit require-

ments. If the credit you earned doesn't fulfill specific requirements, and you have already completed all of the elective courses, then you may have credits that may transfer but cannot be applied to your degree. In addition, some courses may not be relevant to the degree you are currently pursuing.

- **Appropriate level of the course:** A college's acceptance of your credit depends, in part, on your academic standing and how many credits you have already earned. Some institutions require that you complete the upper level courses needed at their school. Remedial and/or developmental courses probably will not be transferable.

- **Comparability of the course:** Does the content of the course compare favorably with the topics in the courses that are in the college's current degree curriculum? Because comparability of course content is important, you should be prepared to discuss how the course you have completed includes the topics required in the college course. The college could ask for copies of the work you did, or a copy of a syllabus or study guide for the course in order to address the comparability issue.

- **Grade received in a course:** Some colleges have a policy that requires a specific course grade, rather than a pass or completed designation on the transcript before accepting it for transfer credit. Institutional policies on the maximum grade accepted in transfer vary. Most colleges have policies that disallow the acceptance (transfer) of credits with a grade that is equivalent to a "D" or below. Some colleges will accept these credits as long as they are not in courses in the student's major. Grades of C or C- or higher are normally required.

- **Academically credible information and documentation:** You are required to have your official transcripts sent directly from the colleges you attended. The transcripts must be official copies (i.e., bear the appropriate institutional signatures, seal, date of issuance, etc.) and generally should be received directly from your school registrar's office.

- **Proper accreditation and educational quality of the institution or course:** There are two entities in the United States that "recognize" national, regional, and specialized accrediting agencies; (1) the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) that grants federal recognition as published in Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations, and (2) the Council for Higher Education Accreditation

(CHEA) that is a non-governmental agency. Most of the “traditional” colleges and/or universities are accredited by a regional accrediting agency, depending on the location of institution. The Accrediting Commission of the DETC and the six regional accrediting agencies are recognized by both USDE and CHEA. They are reviewed periodically to make certain that they meet the criteria for recognition. To check if the accrediting agency that accredited the institution you attended is recognized by USDE and CHEA, you should visit these Web sites: USDE www.ed.gov/offices/ope and CHEA www.chea.org. Proper accreditation helps to assure the educational quality of the institution or course.

Advice on Getting Your Credits Accepted

If none of the above factors apply as to the reason why an institution is not accepting your credit, or if the receiving institution will not accept your credits because its policy is to “only accept credits from regionally accredited institutions,” there’s still something you can do:

1. Follow the correct transfer procedures. Fill out the correct application for transfer of credit. Be specific about where the transcript needs to go when providing the receiving institution’s address.
2. Know the requirements. You should know: (1) what are the core or general requirements; (2) what are the major departmental requirements; and (3) what, if any, are the residency requirements?
3. Complete the transfer application on time. Neatness of an application does count. Double check deadlines, especially departmental deadlines.
4. Get a copy of the official transcript. Look over your transcript to make certain all grades are accurate and up-to-date. Are all the courses listed properly? If your name has changed, you should check to be certain it is accurate and consistent on the transcript. If you have taken any classes and earned a Pass/Fail, you should be sure that the transcript indicates what constitutes a passing grade. Other institutional codes, qualifiers or abbreviations used on the transcripts should be clearly defined.
5. Get in touch with the Registrar directly. Ask for a personal interview, if possible. You are the salesperson selling yourself and your transcript.

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6. Follow-up with the admissions office. You should not be shy about appealing a credit evaluation if credits are rejected. You might have to negotiate credit for each course you have taken. Consult the institution's appeal procedure.

In addition to the suggestions above, you should put together an "information packet" that includes the following:

1. A cover letter explaining what's in the packet of information (see Figure 1).
2. The "Course Syllabi" from the courses you have completed. Hopefully you have saved everything from the courses you took: syllabi, notebooks, papers, and exams (see Figure 2). If not, it may be possible for you to get a copy of the syllabus from the institution. Call and check with the registrar or academic dean.
3. A copy of the school's catalog with the classes you have taken clearly marked.
4. Create a "Course Equivalency Chart" (see Figure 3), comparing the courses you took to the courses that are offered by the receiving institution.
5. Compile a "Projected Academic Program." This demonstrates that you are familiar with the receiving college's educational system (see Figure 4).
6. A recommendation letter from your former professors and/or instructors (see Figure 5). You should select an instructor who has had enough interaction with you that he or she feels comfortable writing a letter of recommendation and can include details about your accomplishments.
7. A letter from DETC verifying that the institution is accredited (see Figure 6). You may request this letter directly from DETC by e-mailing detc@detc.org or calling 202-234-5100.

Appealing a Decision

If the receiving institution will not accept your credits because its policy is to "only accept credits from regionally accredited institutions," you may appeal or petition for review of an adverse decision. First, you should request a copy of the

institution's appeal procedure. Then, follow the procedure and supply the material and information requested.

If the receiving institution is a member of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (to check, visit CHEA's web site at www.chea.org), you should remind the institution that CHEA publishes a "Joint Statement on Transfer and Award of Academic Credit," where it recommends that quality, comparability, and appropriateness and applicability be applied when considering the transfer of academic credit. CHEA also states that institutions need to assure that the "transfer decisions are not made solely on the source of accreditation of a sending program or institution." (See "A Statement to the Community: Transfer and the Public Interest," at www.chea.org/Commentary/index.html.) This CHEA policy has been endorsed by many higher education groups and by the regional accrediting agencies.

Other Suggestions

The American Council on Education sponsors a program called, "College Credit Recommendation Service" (CREDIT) that is available to DETC-accredited institutions. Through this service, teams of faculty members evaluate courses offered by accredited institutions and assign college credit recommendations. The results are published in *The National Guide to Educational Credit for Training Programs* (published by Oryx Press—available by calling 1-800-279-6788 or visiting Oryx's web site at www.oryxpress.com/catace.htm). To find out which DETC institutions participate in ACE's CREDIT program, please consult the DETC web site at www.detc.org and select "Accredited Institutions" and "ACE Credit Recommendations."

If the courses you have completed have ACE credit recommendations, ACE's CREDIT can send a letter to the institution on your behalf. This letter may provide sufficient information for the institution to establish a policy for granting credit for off-campus learning. ACE's College Credit Recommendation Service also offers a permanent, continuously accessible, computerized record of all courses students through the Registry of Credit Recommendations Transcript Service. For more information, contact ACE's Registry of Credit Recommendation Service at 202-939-9475, or visit their web site at www.acenet.edu.

Other Helpful Resources

- *A Statement to the Community: Transfer and the Public Interest*, published by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, November 2000. Available in a PDF file from www.chea.org/commentary/index.html or writing to Publications, CHEA, One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 510, Washington, DC 20036-1135 (phone: 202-955-6126).
- *Accredited Institutions of Postsecondary Education*, published for the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, this directory lists CHEA's members and their accrediting agencies. (Visit www.oryxpress.com/scripts/book.)
- *DETC Occasional Paper Number 15: Strategies for Helping Students Transfer Credits*. Available from DETC, 1601 18th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009 and in a PDF file from www.detc.org and select "Publications"
- *Pocket Guide to College Credits and Degrees: Valuable Information for Adult Learners Seeking College Degrees* by Jacqueline E. Johnson, Jo Ann Robinson and Sally R. Welch; ISBN 0-8268-1465-1; \$9.95 U.S./\$12.95 Canada (includes shipping and handling); ACE Fulfillment Service, Dept. 191, Washington, D.C, 20055-0191; phone: 301-604-9073. (Visit [www.acenet.edu/calec/publications.cfm.](http://www.acenet.edu/calec/publications.cfm))
- *U.S. Department of Education's List of Recognized Accrediting Agencies*, a listing of those accrediting agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. (Visit www.ifap.ed.gov/csb_html/agency.htm)
- *Transfer Credit Practices of Designated Educational Institutions (2001-2002)*, published by AACRAO. Available for \$45. (Visit www.aacrao.org/publications/catalog/transfer.htm)
- American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 520, Washington, DC 20036 (Visit www.aacrao.com).
- American Council on Education (ACE), College Credit Recommendation Service, One Dupont Circle, NW, Washington, DC 20036 (Visit www.acenet.edu).

Figure 1. Cover Letter

January 1, 2003

Ms. Name
Transfer Counselor
University Name
123 Street Name
City Name, State Name 21445

Dear Ms. Counselor:

To help assist you in your review of my previously earned academic credits, I've enclosed the following information:

- Transcripts from previously attended universities and institutions (official transcripts will be sent directly from the granting institutions);
- Syllabi of courses taken at (list name of universities and institutions);
- "Course Equivalency Chart" table of courses taken at various colleges that are comparable to courses at your institution;
- Copies of "Course Catalog" from previously attended colleges;
- My "Projected Academic Program" while attending your institution; A "Letter of Recommendation"; and

- A letter from DETC certifying that the institution is accredited.

It is my understanding that all regional accrediting associations have endorsed a Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) policy statement that holds that institutions should not reject credit transfers "based solely on the source of accreditation of the sending institution."

Please contact me by phone or e-mail if you need any further information. Thank you in advance for your review.

Sincerely,

Michael Doe

Figure 2. A Portion of a Course Syllabus

XYZ Institution
Course Syllabus

1. Course Number and Title: EET 471 Control Systems I - Three Semester Hours
2. Course Description: This course is designed to explore industrial controls and emphasis on position, force, motion, fluid and temperature transducers, and signal transmission and conditioners.
3. Course Objectives: Upon completion of this course the student will:
 - 3.1 - Be knowledgeable of open-loop control and close-loop control.
 - 3.2 - Be skilled in the operation of servomechanism control system.
 - 3.3 - Be skilled in the operation of process control system.
 - 3.4 - Understand the transfer function of the performance of higher-order elements.
 - 3.5 - Be knowledgeable of different types of transducers.
 - 3.6 - Understand and be able to configure circuits for signal conditioning and transmission.
4. Course Topics:
 - A. Introduction to Industrial Controls - Chapter 1
 - 4.1 - Purpose of automatic control.
 - 4.2 - Open-loop control.
 - 4.3 - Closed-loop control.
 - B. Process Element Characteristics - Chapter 2
 - 4.4 - Transfer function.
 - 4.5 - Gain or span.
 - 4.6 - Integral process element.
 - 4.7 - First-order process element.
 - 4.8 - Dead time.
 - 4.9 - Second-order process element.
 - 4.10 - Higher-order process element.
 - C. Transducers - Chapter 3
 - 4.11 - Transducer specifications.
 - 4.12 - Position transducers.
 - 4.13 - Force transducers.
 - 4.14 - Motion transducers.

Figure 3. Course Equivalency Chart

Awarding Institution				Receiving Institution			
Course Number	Subject	Title	Credit Hours	Course Number	Subject	Title	Credit Hours
104	MA	Elementary Algebra	4	121	MTH	Algebra & Trigonometry I	3
108	MA	Trigonometry	2	Same	Same	Same	Same
110	MA	College Algebra	4	122	MTH	Algebra & Trigonometry II	3
106	EL	Technical Electricity	4	111	EET	Electric Circuits I	4
107	EL	Basic Electronics	4	112	EET	Electric Circuits II	4
115	PH	Applied Physics	4	241	PHY	Technical Physics	3
101	EN	English Composition #1	3	232	HUM	Technical Writing I	4
102	EN	English Composition #2	3	242	HUM	Technical Writing II	4

Figure 4. Projected Academic Program

ASSOCIATE OF ELECTRONICS ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY		
Course Number	Subject	Credit Hours
1st Semester		
MTH111	TOPICS IN TECHNICAL MATH	1
EET121	ELECTRONIC CIRCUITS II	4
CET121	DIGITAL ELECTRONICS I	4
EET122	ELECTRONIC CIRCUIT TROUBLESHOOTING	3
EET124	SYMPTOMS IN ELECTRONIC CIRCUITS	3
MTH231	TECHNICAL CALCULUS I	3
1st Semester Total Credit Hours		18
2nd Semester		
CET231	DIGITAL ELECTRONICS II	4
EET231	NETWORK ANALYSIS I	4
MTH232	TECHNICAL CALCULUS II	3
EET232	SOLID STATE CIRCUIT DESIGN	4
PHY241	TECHNICAL PHYSICS	3
2nd Semester Total Credit Hours		18

Figure 5. Recommendation Letter

January 1, 2003

RE: Michael Doe
123 Any Street
Any City, Any State 12345

Dear Sir/Madam:

It is with great pleasure that we recommend Mr. Michael Doe to your program. He completed his studies with XYZ Institution on September 1, 1995. His outstanding achievement indicates his ability and determination to advance in the electronics field. We believe Mr. Doe would be a valuable asset to your institution.

Mr. Doe enrolled in the Associate in Applied Science in Electronics Engineering Technology Degree Program on November 20, 1992. The Associate in Applied Science Degree is a comprehensive program offered to both beginners and advanced students of electronics. Special emphasis is placed on advanced mathematical techniques to allow the student to make engineering-level calculations in circuit design. Calculus, transient analysis, and differential equations are familiar tools to the graduate of this program.

I have worked with Mr. Doe for approximately 3 years while teaching him courses in electronics. He has shown a determination and excellence in pursuing his goals. His participation in advancing the material offered in the course was noted through his many suggestions and remarks. I feel confident and certainly proud to recommend Michael to advance his education with your institution.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Mr. John Instructor
Academic Director

Figure 6. Letter from Accrediting Agency (DETC)

January 1, 2003

Mr. John Doe, Registrar
ABC University
223 West South Street
Denver, CO 22222

Dear Mr. Doe:

This certifies that the XYZ Institution is accredited by the Accrediting Commission of the Distance Education and Training Council. The institution was first accredited in January 1993 and re-accredited in 2001. It has been found to meet or exceed the Commission's published academic and ethical standards.

Incorporated into DETC's accrediting process is the concept that educational programs, degrees and otherwise, should be comparable (in objectives, curriculum, scope, and outcomes) to those offered by accredited traditional residential universities. Programs offered by DETC-accredited institutions are reviewed by subject matter experts to verify that the learning acquired through their courses is comparable to that acquired through the courses offered at a traditional college. Although the method of delivery is different, you can be assured that a student who completes these programs has obtained similar knowledge and outcomes.

The Accrediting Commission of the DETC is listed (and has been since 1959) by the U.S. Secretary of Education as a "nationally recognized accrediting agency." Like the regional accrediting agencies, DETC's Accrediting Commission is reviewed periodically by the U.S. Department of Education to make certain that it meets the criteria for federal recognition as published in Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations. *Federal law does not discriminate against national accrediting bodies such as the DETC.*

DETC's Accrediting Commission is also a charter member of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). CHEA publishes a "Joint Statement on Transfer and Award of Academic Credit," where it recommends that quality, comparability, and appropriateness and applicability be applied when considering the transfer of academic credit. CHEA also states that institutions need to assure that the "transfer decisions are not made solely on the source of accreditation of a sending program or institution."

For more information about the DETC, please visit our web site at www.detc.org.

Sincerely yours,

Michael P. Lambert, Executive Secretary



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