

## Commission Policy and Good Practices on Transfer of Credit

### TRANSFER OF CREDIT (policy I.C.6)

Each institution determines its own policies and procedures for accepting transfer credits, including credits from accredited and non-accredited institutions, from non-U.S. institutions, and from institutions that grant credit for experiential learning and for adult learner programs. An institution's periodic review of its transfer policies and procedures should include evaluation of their clarity to those who administer them, to the students who follow them, and to employers and other stakeholders. It should also include the consistency of their interpretation and application throughout the institution, and their responsiveness to new types of learning opportunities outside institutions of higher education.

*The following excerpt from the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) publication, "A Statement to the Community: Transfer and the Public Interest," November 2000, supplements the Commission's policy on transfer. The full text of the "Statement" is available from CHEA, [www.chea.org](http://www.chea.org).*

### Good Practice on Transfer

#### Making Transfer Decisions: Roles and Responsibilities to Assure Quality

Institutions, accreditors and national higher education associations play significant roles and sustain important responsibilities in the transfer process. Each has responsibilities with regard to quality assurance and fairness.

- The Role and Responsibilities of Institutions.*** Colleges and universities are ultimately responsible for decisions about the admission of transfer students and the acceptance or non-acceptance of credits earned elsewhere. Typically, academic faculty and student affairs professionals (working within the framework of faculty rules and standards) determine the transferability of courses and programs. Institutions must balance responsiveness to students' preferences about transfer with institutional commitment to the value and quality of degrees or other credentials.
- The Role and Responsibilities of Accreditors.*** Institutional (national and regional) accreditors have policies and standards that, in turn, call on institutions and programs to develop and maintain clear transfer policy and practices. Accreditors have expectations, for example, that degree requirements for native students be consistent with those that apply to transfer students. Specialized (programmatic) accreditors often have policies or standards to address transfer, with particular attention to admission practices and assuring equitable treatment for transfer students.

Accreditors are responsible for assuring that institutional transfer practices are consistent with accreditation standards and policies on transfer. They are responsible for maintaining effective communication among accrediting organizations as a means to meet students' needs in the transfer process while also sustaining quality.

- The Role and Responsibilities of National Higher Education Associations.*** For many years, institutions and accreditors have based their scrutiny of transfer primarily on three criteria contained in the 1978 Joint Statement on Transfer and Award of Academic Credit developed by three national higher education associations. These criteria are:
  - the educational quality of the sending institution;

- the comparability of credit to be transferred to the receiving institutions; and
- the appropriateness and the applicability of the credit in relation to the programs offered by the receiving institution.

National higher education associations lead the ongoing national conversation about transfer. They work with agencies of the federal government to address transfer issues that reach the level of national public policy, and they provide a national voice for assuring that students are well served by transfer practices that meet students' needs while also sustaining the quality of the system itself.

### Criteria for Transfer Decisions

CHEA believes that the three criteria of quality, comparability, and appropriateness and applicability offered in the 1978 Joint Statement remain central to assuring quality in transfer decision-making. The following additional criteria expand this list and are offered to assist institutions, accreditors and higher education associations in future transfer decisions. These criteria are intended to sustain academic quality in an environment of more varied transfer, assure consistency of transfer practice and encourage appropriate accountability about transfer policy and practice.

- Balance in the Use of Accreditation Status in Transfer Decisions.** Institutions and accreditors need to assure that transfer decisions are not made solely on the source of accreditation of a sending program or institution. While acknowledging that accreditation is an important factor, CHEA believes that receiving institutions ought to make clear their institutional reasons for accepting or not accepting credits that students seek to transfer. Students should have reasonable explanations about how work offered for credit is or is not of sufficient quality when compared with the receiving institution and how work is or is not comparable with curricula and standards to meet degree requirements of the receiving institution.
- Consistency.** Institutions and accreditors need to reaffirm that the considerations that inform transfer decisions are applied consistently in the context of changing student attendance patterns (students likely to engage in more transfer) and emerging new providers of higher education (new sources of credit and experience to be evaluated). New providers and new attendance patterns increase the number and type of transfer issues that institutions will address—making consistency even more important in the future.
- Accountability for Effective Public Communication.** Institutions and accreditors need to assure that students and the public are fully and accurately informed about their respective transfer policies and practices. The public has a significant interest in higher education's effective management of transfer, especially in an environment of expanding access and mobility. Public funding is routinely provided to colleges and universities. This funding is accompanied by public expectations that the transfer process is built on a strong commitment to fairness and efficiency.
- Commitment to Address Innovation.** Institutions and accreditors need to be flexible and open in considering alternative approaches to managing transfer when these approaches will benefit students. Distance learning and other applications of technology generate alternative approaches to many functions of colleges and universities. Transfer is inevitable among these.

Finally, CHEA is committed to working with other national higher education associations to convene a group of higher education leaders to address emerging issues for transfer and to develop additional tools and sound practices that can assist institutions as they manage transfer. This national conversation should include attention to how higher education's future will differ from its past and, above all, our responsibilities to students in an increasingly mobile, fast-paced and international environment.

*Approved by CHEA Board of Directors, September 25, 2000.*

*Endorsed by the Board of Trustees of The Higher Learning Commission, November 10, 2000.*