

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

A Narrative Review on Course Equivalency

¹Victor Devaasirvadham, ²Vijayalakshmi Gopalan Nair

Correspondence:

Victor Devaasirvadham

Email: vickydeva93@gmail.com

Introduction

Course equivalency is the term used in higher education describing how a course offered by one college or university relates to a course offered by another. If a course is viewed as equal as or more challenging in subject and course material than the course offered by the receiving college or university, the course can be noted as an equivalent course. A course equivalency can be unilateral, meaning it is deemed equivalent by the receiver. Or, it could be bilateral, meaning both sender and receiver acknowledge their acceptance of each other's course as equivalent. The methods and measures used to determine course equivalency vary by institution, state, region and country.

Background

College transfer often requires the determination and evaluation of prior course learning. Receiving institutions usually maintain course equivalency tables listing how courses equate by sender institution. Unless the receiving institution maintains an online public reference to the course equivalency tables, students have difficulty ascertaining transferability of their credit experiences. As a result, student transitions from sender to receiver can be very problematic. This has led a number of states to initiate legislate reforms, regulations and mandates to augment the tracking of course equivalencies. A variety of statistics, studies, and initiatives have been documented.

The most common course attributes evaluated to determine course equivalency are description, academic credits, accreditation, type of instructor, method of instruction, level of instruction, learning outcomes, grade scale and grade earned, pre-requisites, co-requisites and textbook. This is not an exclusive list of course attributes. Generally, faculty perform the determination of course equivalencies. Course equivalency decisions can often be appealed by presenting evidence to an academic department.

Transcript

In **education**, a **transcript** is an inventory of the courses taken and grades earned of a student throughout a course. There are official **transcripts** and **transcripts** which can be made by the student and verified and attested by an authorized person.

A **transcript** is a copy of a student's permanent academic record, which usually means all courses taken, all grades received, all honors received and degrees conferred to a student from the first day of school to the current school year. a transcript may also contain the number of people in a class, and the average grade of the class. An official transcript is prepared and sent by the issuing school usually by the student registrar with an original signature of a school official on the school letterhead and is sealed by the school. When students are thinking about changing schools, the cumulative transcripts get mailed from school to school. Transcripts usually consist of grades 9-12 when applying to colleges. Transcripts are most often issued and used at the high school (grades 9-12) and university levels.

A transcript is the most important academic record of what a student has accomplished throughout their high school career. It contains a complete record of their courses and grades, as well as personal information like the student's age and home address.

Using the transcript, those advising students can help them develop a four-year high school plan, beginning, if possible, in middle school. This plan can then be updated and revised as needed throughout high school. School staff and/or outreach staff from institutions of higher education can help with this. The evaluation of a student's transcript and the review of his or her four-year plan is something that should be done at least once every academic year.

While the transcript is important for helping students make informed choices about coursework, it is also a vital tool for those advising students about their goals, options and opportunities. It also can help students shape their future educational and career paths. As educators, we have a responsibility to encourage and support students by providing as many positive options as possible, while being realistic and pragmatic. The quality of the advice we give students can determine the trajectory of their future. For this reason, families and educators should pay close attention to students' transcripts – both what is currently on them and what they will look like in the future – so that students are prepared fully to develop their educational and career paths.

This section of the website gives access to multiple tools and resources to help support schools and educators in conducting transcript evaluations and providing information to ensure that *all* students are prepared for *all* post-secondary options following high school.

Nurses /midwives on conditional registration/enrolment must make a request to Singapore Nursing Board (SNB) to transfer their registration/enrolment if they wish to change employment or work in a different place of practice.

When requesting for the transfer, you must:

- a) have resigned from current employment;
- b) have an offer of employment from another healthcare institution;

For those who wish to practice nursing in home care settings or ambulatory setting, you must have at least 2 years of continuous nursing practice (in acute hospitals or nursing homes only) with one employer in Singapore. This 2 years continuous practice must be completed in the last one year to ensure regency of practice. A 6-months competency assessment on home-care competencies is required and your transfer will only be approved after you have passed this competency assessment with the new institution.

The employing healthcare institution will need to apply for transfer for the nurses/midwives. Please note that the HR must submit the application online with the required documents and fees.

You can only commence practice with the new employer or place of practice after your application for transfer of conditional registration/enrolment has been approved.

What does your transcript include?

To determine how you're being evaluated for college programs and degrees, ask your guidance counselor about your transcript with the following questions:

- How often are students evaluated: every quarter, trimester or semester?
- Does the transcript only include courses I've completed, or are dropped/incomplete courses also on the record?
- How does the school rank students? (High school academic rankings compare your cumulative GPA (your average GPA for each semester of high school) against your classmates' scores. Common ranking types include: X out of Y (For example, 208th out of 600, with 1 as the highest-ranked student), percentage (90th percentile), ratio (top fifth of graduating class))

- Is my GPA weighted, with AP/IB classes worth more? (This means GPAs higher than 4.0 are possible, which affects where your score falls in the rankings.)
- Does the transcript include a profile with records like my attendance, **community service**, a list of honors, and AP classes, etc.?
- Does my transcript include a school profile? This is a demographic record of the student population, AP/IB classes offered and other pertinent information that is usually required by college admissions officers.

Why College Transcripts are Important

A transcript is the record of everything you accomplished while in college, including the credit and non-credit classes you took, the degree or degrees you earned, your grades and more. You'll need this information in instances where you are required to provide proof of your academic accomplishments and proficiency. This can occur while you're still in school, such as when you apply for a scholarship, but it can also happen after you've left college. If you apply for admission to any other higher-learning institutions or pursue certain jobs, your college transcripts may be needed for verification purposes.

Important Facts about Transcripts

Academic Information	Grade Point Average, courses taken, standardized test scores
Course Completion	Transcripts list every course taken, whether or not a student completed it. This means that W's (withdrawn) and I's (incompletes) will also appear
Other Uses for Transcripts	Internships, scholarships, academic awards, transfer applications, research opportunities
Submission	Although there are many ways to send a transcript, it is highly recommended that they be sent electronically

Higher Education

When you're applying to graduate school, you will need to send along a transcript record so that your application is considered complete. Having a copy of your transcript allows the committee or person who reviews your application to get a picture of your academic achievements and to determine whether you meet the school's admission requirements. If you attended more than one school as an undergraduate student, you will probably need to send transcripts for each school you attended. Transcripts may also be necessary if you are applying for postgraduate loans or scholarships.

Employment

If you will be applying for a job in a college, university or government agency that requires a college education, it is highly likely that you will need to submit a college transcript with your application. This allows your potential employer to verify that you have the level of education required for the position you would like to hold. Private employers may or may not ask for transcripts. Because obtaining an official college transcript often requires processing time, you might keep a few copies on hand when you're applying for jobs.

Official vs. Unofficial Copies

An official transcript is usually a paper copy of a transcript that has been signed and sealed by a school's registrar. You can also obtain unofficial transcripts, which can be delivered digitally or in print and do not carry an official seal. Most schools will charge a fee for either type of transcript, although the cost of an unofficial transcript is frequently less. When you apply to graduate schools or for jobs, you will probably need to send an official transcript, although sometimes an unofficial copy will be sufficient.

Requesting a Copy

If students default on educational loans, they may encounter difficulties in obtaining copies of their transcripts. When students are in default, some schools will allow them to request official transcripts for employment or education purposes only under certain conditions, while others will allow access to an unofficial transcript but not the official version. To obtain a copy of your transcript, you will likely go through your school's registrar's office, either in person, by telephone or via the Internet.

Credit system**Definition**

A "CREDIT HOUR" is the unit of measuring educational CREDIT, usually based on the number of classroom hours per week throughout a term. Students are awarded credit for classes on the basis of the Carnegie unit. This defines a semester unit of credit as equal to a minimum of three hours of work per week for a semester. California's Title V code, section 55002, also defines student credit in this way.

How to Earn Nursing Continuing Education (CE) Credits

To earn nursing continuing education (CE) credits, you can attend a variety of conferences, seminars and/or workshops, or you can enroll in correspondence or online continuing education courses as well as online nursing programs.

Class Credits and CE Requirements

If you're wondering whether the college class you're taking will count toward your nursing continuing education's CE requirement, you can be reassured that, in many cases, it will. As long as the academic nursing course you're taking is relevant to nursing practice, the class will count toward your CE requirement. One quarter hour of academic credit equals 10 contact hours, and one semester hour of academic credit equals 15 contact hours of nursing continuing education.

Non-Nursing CE Activities Counting Toward Requirements

Most boards of nursing will allow nurses to complete CE courses designed for other health care professionals if you can provide a statement explaining how the course relates to your nursing practice. You should be sure to check with your state board of nursing before enrolling in a CE activity not specifically designed for nurses, however.

Activities That Won't Count

In general, nursing continuing education requirements may not be satisfied by activities that are part of your normal, ongoing job responsibilities. This means that you can't satisfy your CE requirement with on-the-job clinical practice, by participating in the development of policies and/or presentations specific to your job, or by attending business meetings and/or employee-orientation activities.

CE Programs Approved by State Boards of Nursing

Most boards of nursing will accept a wide variety of continuing education activities in fulfillment of the CE requirement. However, because each board has a slightly different way of determining approved programs, you will need to check with your state board of nursing in order to figure out whether or not a specific nursing continuing education program will satisfy its requirements.

Sending Records of Completion to State Boards

You do not need to send CE records to your board of nursing unless you're being audited. Otherwise, it's a good idea to keep records of your CE completion for at least two consecutive nursing license registration periods. (Check with your board of nursing for specific record-keeping requirements.) You only need to report your CE activities to your state board of nursing when you renew your nursing license.

Transfer credit, credit transfer, or advanced standing are the terms used by colleges and universities for the procedure of granting credit to a student for educational experiences or courses undertaken at another institution.

"Advanced standing" is also used to describe the status of a student granted credit, as distinct from normal course entrants who commence the stream of study at the beginning.

When a student transfers, he or she usually provides his or her academic transcript(s) which lists the course taken, grade, and other attributes from each institution they attended when applying for enrollment. Each transcript and the listed courses are tentatively evaluated to see if any of the courses taken satisfy the requirements of the receiving institution.

Transfer credit is not official until an academic officer of the college or university provides a written verification the award has been accepted and applied on the academic transcript meeting the degree requirement. Transfer credit is not guaranteed when a student transfers from one institution to another. Often, some prior course credit completed at another institution is not counted toward the degree requirement, extending the student's time to graduation.

Unanticipated factors and the general mobility of our society create numerous circumstances under which students must move from one institution to another without prior planning. Reasons for such movements can range from mismatches between students and institutions, employment, military movement, to geographic relocations by the families. The fundamental challenge with college transfer, whether planned or unplanned, is to aggregate coursework conducted at different institutions with different academic policies, different curricula, and different levels of expected rigor into an academic credential that the issuing institution can stand behind. College transfer is complex, because disparate and sometimes non-comparable coursework is brought together, often without prior involvement of the institutions from which the student enrolls and expects to graduate.

Credit transferring process

The process of transferring credits can be divided into four main parts: what transpires prior to a college transfer, what transpires during college transfer, what transpires after college transfer and what proactive efforts are managed to help define academic pathways and agreements between institutions to streamline college transfer.

Prior to college transfer, a student may engage and receive different levels of advising and counseling from an institution they attend. The advising process affects the course enrollment decisions a student makes, which often leads to expectations that course work will transfer or not, depending upon the acknowledged student aspirations and goals. Often, a student changes goals and aspirations as a result of their course exposure.

During college transfer, a student typically applies to a college or university as a prospective student. Different from traditional applicants, a transfer student's academic history is evaluated. This involves enrollment, transfer professionals and the faculty, and requires an in-depth analysis of every course taken by a student at another college or university and/or also including the evaluation of prior life experiences. A college transfer student applying to another college or university, must request academic transcripts from each institution they attended. Each potential receiving institution must wait until they receive the academic transcripts, assemble them by student and match them to the application.

The transcript and course evaluation process can be divided into three distinct stages which result in judgments independent of the student. First, an assessment of the quality of the course must be made. Second, the course must be evaluated on the basis of its comparability to courses at the receiving institution. Finally, the coursework for which credit is granted must be determined to be applicable to the program of study for which the student has applied.

For purposes of ensuring student success in handling the level of difficulty in the targeted academic program and the course work required of it, and protecting the integrity of academic credentials, all three judgments must be made for credit to be granted for the transfer student and to avoid having the student take the required courses as documented. Courses of poor quality, courses for which the receiving institution has no general counterpart, and courses that simply do not apply to the program of study being sought should not, and are not, typically counted toward degree requirements. This standard benefits students by ensuring that they are not inappropriately placed in programs of study and courses for which they are ill prepared.

Concrete determinations with regard to the three-part analysis described above can range in difficulty. Transfer professionals at institutions with significant transfers-in often have a course-by-course understanding of academic offerings of their sending institutions. This course-level understanding is typically arrived at through intensive reviews of course syllabi, textbooks and supplemental materials used in courses, knowledge of faculty and their qualifications at sending institutions, and lengthy consultations with departmental faculty at the receiving institution in connection with each course. Expensive and labor-intensive as sounds, this process represents the ideal method of course credit evaluation and decisions.

Once a particular course from a specific institution has been evaluated, if it is encountered again on a different student's transcript, the same course credit decision can be applied until the course content changes. At many institutions, evaluations are captured in course equivalency tables or databases that are available to evaluators as a means of expediting the process.

At most institutions, however, the process is entirely manual, and is driven by the experience and knowledge of expert evaluators. This further complicates how a student can be advised at sending institutions, since much of the knowledge on how course work will count is not readily available to the advisers or students at sending institutions. Usually in the movement from one institution to another, students are evaluated and receive all, partial or no transfer credit for completed courses already taken. The evaluation usually is preliminary prior to enrollment and won't be official until after the student is enrolled and the full degree audit report or checklist is completed and delivered to the student. As a result of the time lapse, students often learn they need to take additional course work or re-take course work that was not sufficient to meet the degree requirements for their selected program of study.

Institutions generally require a minimum satisfactory grade in each course taken. Students should check course equivalency maps and transfer guides to validate how courses in one institution will relate to the potential receiver institution. Even though prior courses may be comparable, it does not mean the receiving institution will count

the course credit toward degree completion. Prior courses taken could either be accepted as electives, accepted as filling a degree requirement or not accepted at all.

State and institutional initiatives

Historically, two- and four-year college transfer and articulation agreements were primarily institutional initiatives rather than state mandates. Now, nearly every state has some policy on college transfer of credits for students moving from public two- to four-year institutions. States and institutions advertise and promote transferability, pathways and methods differently across the education sectors.

State legislatures have enacted bills to mandate state oversight, audit and development of procedures that would provide uniformity and increased transparency. Yet, there still remains striking differences across the United States because there is no federal or national policy to support college transfer. Much debate has arisen around college transfer from its affect on affordability to how it has extended time to degree.

Student mobility is not just within states though. Some 40% of students transfer across state boundaries. College transfer policies and practices among the states usually avoid the cross state issues. As a result, these differences include not only how policies and practices were initially established, but also their degree of selectivity, granularity, coverage and uniformity is applied in practice at the institutional level.

There is no single model of college transfer and course articulation processes can be identified as the universal standard or even as the preferred model. In the United States, most states employ a combination of approaches ranging from informal efforts of transfer professionals that try to do right by the student, to more formal institution-based agreements, to state-mandated policies. College transfer has been very problematic and costly to students, institutions and the states subsidizing higher education. States such as Florida, Minnesota, Ohio, Arizona, New Jersey, Indiana, Illinois, Washington, California, Texas and Pennsylvania have stepped in to define regulations, methods and standards of practice for institutions to follow when evaluating college transfer applicants.

In particular, the state of Texas is actively looking at transfer issues as part of the *Closing the Gaps 2015* initiative. The National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students hosted a statewide conference on May 22, 2009. The Texas Transfer Success Conference will bring together higher education professionals from the states over 150 institutions of higher education.

National to regional accreditation transfer issues

Transferring credit from nationally accredited higher education institutions to institutions which have regional accreditation has proved particularly problematic.^{[5][6]} Regionally accredited schools are generally non-profit and academically oriented. Nationally accredited schools are predominantly for-profit and generally offer vocational, career or technical programs.^{[5][6]} Every college has the right to set standards and refuse to accept transfer credits. However, if a student has gone to a nationally accredited school it may be particularly difficult to transfer credits (or even credit for a degree earned) if he or she then applies to a regionally accredited college. Some regionally accredited colleges have general policies against accepting any credits from nationally accredited schools, others are reluctant to because they feel that these schools' academic standards are lower than their own or they are unfamiliar with the particular school. The student who is planning to transfer credits from a nationally accredited school to a regionally accredited school should ensure that the regionally accredited school will accept the credits before they enroll in the nationally accredited school.^{[5][6][7][8]}

Transfer schemes

Historically credit transfer has mainly been administered on an ad hoc basis by higher education institutions but it has now become an important area of national and transnational education policy, particularly in relation to mobility between countries and educational sectors. Consequently, agreements between groups of universities have been put in place, such as Australian Group of Eight Universities, and broader schemes have been developed to simplify transfer.

- Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme
- European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
- Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

Reference

- Defined under the Regulations as “*an academic service mechanism as a digital or virtual or online entity established by the Commission with the approval of the Central Government, to facilitate students to become its academic account holders, thereby paving the way for seamless student mobility between or within degree-granting Higher Educational Institutions through a formal system of credit recognition, credit accumulation, credit transfers and credit redemption to promote distributed and flexible teaching-learning*”
- Defined under Regulation 2(h) of the Regulations as “*the standard methodology of calculating one hour of theory or one hour of tutorial or two hours of laboratory work, per week for a duration of a semester (13-15 weeks) resulting in the award of one credit; which is awarded by a higher educational institution on which these regulations apply; and, Credits’ for internship shall be one credit per one week of internship, subject to a maximum of six credits*”
- Defined under Regulation 2(l) of the Regulations as “*the process of commuting the accrued credits in the Academic Bank Account of the students maintained in ABC for the purpose of fulfilling the credits requirements for the award of Degrees or Diplomas or Certificates or Course work for Ph.D. program etc., by the registered degree-awarding Higher Educational Institutions*”.
- Defined under Regulation 2(k) of the Regulations as “*the process of commuting the accrued credits in the Academic Bank Account of the students maintained in ABC for the purpose of fulfilling the credits requirements for the award of Degrees or Diplomas or Certificates or Course work for Ph.D. program etc., by the registered degree-awarding Higher Educational Institutions*”.
- Defined under Regulation 2(b) of the Regulations as “*an individual account with the Academic Bank of Credits opened and operated by a student, to which all academic credits earned by the Student from course(s) of study are deposited, recognized, maintained, accumulated, transferred, validated or redeemed for the purposes of the award of degree/diploma/certificates etc. by an awarding institution*”.