
Undergraduate Transfer Credit Policy

Department Policy Number

132

Effective Date

September 1, 2006

Purpose

To outline the regulations that Athabasca University (AU) applies in the assessment of external courses or programs for transfer credit to AU. In evaluating external courses or programs consideration is given to the nature of the issuing institution, the educational content, comparability of the material, characteristics and level of studies and the applicability of the work to the individual student's educational objectives. This policy outlines the minimum criteria for evaluation; some programs may impose further requirements.

Definitions

Block Credit	Credit granted based on completion of the transfer credential.
Course-by-course credit	Credit granted for the successful completion of course work at another recognized institution.
Eligible for transfer credit consideration	Provisions regarding organizational/institutional recognition/accreditation are satisfied however, it has not yet been determined if credit will be awarded.
Exemptions	Holders of an approved diploma or degree may be awarded a block amount of credit. Within the previous diploma or degree, there may be equivalent courses that are required within a program. These courses will be awarded an "exemption". In order to fulfill the program requirements, students will be required to replace exemptions with courses of the same (or higher) level, in the same area of study or discipline.
Not-to-take (NTT)	Awarded when equivalent knowledge of a particular course has been identified within a student's assessment. NTT designations do not carry credit and will serve as a prerequisite if required.

**Precedent setting decisions**

Course or block awards that have been approved by faculty, entered into the database and are used as precedents for future requests. Not all awards are precedent setting.

Stale dating

Some AU programs have a stale dating policy whereby a course or program will not be accepted for credit if older than the stale date noted for the program (regardless of the precedent setting articulation). For example, if an articulation for a program completed in 1999 is established, a student could not use that credential to an AU program in 2006 that had a five year stale date rule.

Transfer credit

Credit awarded for the successful completion of post-secondary course work completed at another recognized organization.

Policy

As a credit coordinating body, AU articulates programs and courses to facilitate student transfer. The regulations outlined in this policy help ensure a standardized approach to the evaluation of external learning and provide a number of avenues to degree completion at AU.

The evaluation of external curriculum is a detailed process and may involve more criteria than what is outlined in this policy. Each AU program assesses courses or programs according to the requirements of the student's current program. While it is recognized that the evaluation of course work is different than full programs, the regulations stipulated in this policy apply to both individual courses and complete programs.

Regulation

1. Accreditation/Recognition To be eligible for transfer credit consideration, the external institution or organization must satisfy one of the following conditions:
 - 1.1 A Canadian institution that is a member of the Colleges and Institutes Canada or the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC).
 - 1.2 An Alberta-based institution/program approved by the Campus Alberta Quality Council.
 - 1.3 An institution from the United States of America (USA) that is a member of one of the following regional accrediting bodies:
 - Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Higher Education
 - Northwest Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities Commission on Colleges and Universities
 - North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, The Higher Learning Commission
 - New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education



- New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Commission on Technical and Career Institutions
 - Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges
 - Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
 - Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities
- 1.4 Institutions outside of Canada or the USA must be approved by its home country's Ministry of Education (or equivalent) as determined by the AU Evaluations Unit or an approved credential evaluation service.
 - 1.5 Regional or national licensing bodies (professional associations) that have been approved by the appropriate Program Council.
 - 1.6 Public sector employers that have been approved by the appropriate Program Council.
 - 1.7 Educational providers that have been approved to offer credentials in the Province of Alberta by Advanced Education and are listed in the ACAT Guide.
 - 1.8 Courses or programs from unrecognized institutions that have been documented as transferable to another AUCC institution (only the course or program that transfers to the AUCC institution will be considered).
 - 1.9 Organizations that have been approved by the Academic Planning, Policy, and Standards Committee (APPSC) through the AU Approval of Non-Collegiate Organization Policy. Such approval is program specific and unless specified by APPSC, applies to current and future students only.
2. Program/Course Transfer Credit Evaluation In the evaluation of a course or program, the following applies:
 - 2.1 All credit granted to a student is done on a program-specific basis. External institutions' programs are articulated to specific AU programs and individual student awards are based on the student's current program of study. If the course or program will not fit into the student's current degree regulations, no credit is granted.
 - 2.2 Transfer credit is not normally evaluated for students in the unclassified category, unless a provision is outlined in a collaborative agreement.
 - 2.3 Credit for courses completed via the challenge evaluation process at another institution will be eligible for transfer credit consideration.
 - 2.4 AU will not normally grant credit to any course that is offered on a non-credit basis at the home institution.



- 2.5 Under no circumstances will AU grant more credit than what is earned at the home institution (assuming credit principles are the same as AU).
- 2.6 Generally, a year of full time study at a recognized institution will be considered the same as any other institution. No more than 30 credits will be granted for one academic year (eight months). Exceptions to this are those students who study for a third semester within one calendar year or who overload their course work.
- 2.7 The amount of credit awarded is based strictly on the credential, no additional credit is granted based on a prerequisite credential.
- 2.8 Credit from a completed undergraduate level credential may be transferred. Students who wish to "ladder" a certificate or diploma into a 3 or 4 year degree program will be eligible to transfer up to the entire contents of the credential if applicable. Students who wish to transfer courses that are used toward a completed undergraduate degree will be restricted according to the program requirements at AU (may be subject to second degree regulations etc.). Courses completed that were not used toward a degree (extra to degree, ETD) can be transferred beyond the second degree restriction (students are responsible to determine the ETD course work). This includes course work completed prior to a professional degree program and that did not contribute to the professional degree.
- 2.9 No credit will be granted for courses completed at the secondary school level (the equivalent in Alberta is considered to be the first 12 years of formal education beyond kindergarten). This includes overseas secondary school equivalents such as the UK system of "A", "O" and "AS" levels. It may be appropriate to award an exemption; however, the credit must be replaced as required. If the program permits, preparatory transfer credit can be granted. Studies must be at a university level for credit to be granted at the 200 (or higher) level. International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement courses, while completed in secondary school, are at the post secondary level and can be transferred as articulation agreements stipulate.
- 2.10 Up to 18 graduate-level credits can be applied toward an undergraduate credential from incomplete graduate credentials only (if the credential has been completed, no credit will be awarded). AU will award 400 or higher level credit for graduate course work used toward an undergraduate credential. If graduate course work is used toward an undergraduate credential, it cannot then be used toward a graduate credential.
- 2.11 Courses or programs completed through Continuing Education (CE) will be considered for credit provided the CE department is within an institution that is a member of AUCC or Colleges and Institutes Canada. Courses or programs offered through CE of a recognized institution are reviewed by faculty. If the institution offers an equivalent course in their regular program the Evaluations Unit may grant credit.



2.12 Depending on the program and the course, transfer credit may not be accepted if stale dated. Stale dating requirements will be noted in the AU calendar with the program's regulations. Factors such as the student's continued involvement in the field may waive this requirement.

2.13 The following information may be required to evaluate an external institution's course or program:

2.13.1 Program Information

- Program name as it appears on the transcript
- List of courses (names and codes) that comprise the program
- Instructor qualifications
- Years the program has been offered in its current configuration
- Statement of program objectives
- Number of weeks to complete the program

2.13.2 Course Information (for each course in the program)

- Statement of course learning objectives and detailed course outline
- Name(s) of textbook(s)
- Instructor qualifications
- Evaluation method (type and weighting) including a description and explanation of assignments
- Pre or co-requisites
- Credit value
- Total number of hours of:
 - Lectures/classroom instruction
 - Lab work (if applicable)
 - Field placement/work experience (if applicable)

It may be possible for Faculty to review a request for transfer credit without having a complete package of information. Normally a full program and course outline will be provided unless otherwise indicated.

2.14 Credit for individual student assessments will be evaluated from source documents only (i.e., official transcripts sent directly from the issuing institution). AU will not transfer credit that appears as transferred credit from another institution.

2.15 No minimum grade is required for a course to be eligible for consideration of transfer credit, however the student must have passed and gained credit at the home institution. Note, some programs require more than a minimum grade for the course to be used toward an AU credential.



- 2.16 If credit principles appear to represent values similar to AU, no further assessment will be done. A minimum of 45 hours of instruction is normally required for a three-credit equivalent; a minimum of 90 hours of lab time is required for a three-credit equivalent; and a minimum of 120 hours of practicum/field placement/work experience is required for a three-credit equivalent. Note that for every hour of classroom instruction, an additional outside two to three hours of study are assumed. This is based on a traditional 13 week instructional period coupled with a two week exam period, representing 120 hours of instruction and self-study.
 - 2.17 Courses offered in the USA quarter system will be converted to credits as follows: To earn three AU credits, students must have completed four quarter hour credits. It may not be possible to grant credits if the student has not completed more than one course in a single subject area. One quarter-credit also equals 0.667 semester credits.
 - 2.18 Courses offered in the unit system will be converted to credits by multiplying by two (primarily at the University of Victoria and formerly at North Island College, BC).
 - 2.19 Credit must be earned over a period of time that permits outside study (i.e., for every hour of classroom instruction an additional outside two to three hours of study are assumed). It is not possible to grant credit for courses offered strictly over a one week period even though the classroom hours may be sufficient unless there is evidence of extra work required prior to or after completion of the course.
 - 2.20 Course instructors must have the appropriate qualifications. Generally, a minimum of a Masters degree in the appropriate discipline is required. For individual student awards, normally no investigation into instructor qualifications is conducted.
 - 2.21 Students who present transcripts from outside of Canada or the USA must have their transcripts evaluated by the International Qualification Assessment Service (IQAS) or other approved credential evaluation service (students must request a detailed/comprehensive assessment). A copy of the original transcript (photocopy is acceptable) must also be provided to AU.
 - 2.22 No ENGL credit will be granted for those students who have studied the English language in a country where English is not the official language. This would be considered English as a second language (ESL) study. Credit is possible where the studies are of English literature or are clearly not ESL study.
 - 2.23 Doctrinal based course work will not be eligible for AU transfer credit.
3. Transfer Credit Assignments After the evaluation, the following regulations surround the granting AU transfer credit:
 - 3.1 Assigned credit may be granted when the transfer course matches an AU equivalent at a minimum of 60% content, completed at the university level (for awards at the 200 or greater level) and is noted as a specific AU course equivalent (ENGL 255 for example). Unassigned credit may be granted in cases where the course to be transferred is less



than a 60% AU course content match or in cases where AU does not offer an equivalent course. Unassigned credit can be at the discipline level (e.g., HIST 2XX) or at the area level (e.g., HUMN 2XX or MATH 3XX) and stipulates the year level.

- 3.2 The Evaluations Unit or AU faculty are responsible for granting credit. The Evaluations Unit normally assigned individual non-precedent setting student credit for courses/programs and in certain areas the Evaluations Unit will seek clarification from faculty. The appropriate Centre Chair must also approve all precedent setting course by course faculty reviews.

Precedent setting block reviews are approved first by the appropriate Program Director and secondary sign off is required by the appropriate Centre Chair. For programs housed in the Faculty of Business, the Program Director first approves the block awards and the program is then approved by the Director of the Faculty of Business.

In the case of the Bachelor of Professional Arts programs, block reviews are approved by the Program Coordinator and secondarily by the Centre Chair (although if the Program Coordinator is also the Centre Chair, then the Director of Arts and Science will provide the secondary sign off).

- 3.3 Only faculty reviewed courses/programs will become established precedents. All reviews completed by the Evaluations Unit will be on an individual student basis only. All courses currently offered by ACAT institutions in Alberta will be sent to faculty to ensure inclusion in the ACAT Guide.
- 3.4 AU course coordinators are responsible for determining precedent setting transfer credit awards that fall within their area. The Assistant Registrar, Admissions will review evaluations from subject areas outside of AU's course offerings.
- 3.5 Credit is awarded on a block or course-by-course basis. Block credit is granted for completed credentials only and to a specific AU program. This credit is awarded as recognition of the total skill set and knowledge that is obtained through the completion of the diploma or certificate and is not based on a direct course-by-course correspondence. The total value of the course-by-course credit must not exceed the block credit for the same program.
- 3.6 Transfer credit evaluation normally reflects the subject area designated at the home institution. Some broad categories are available for use in cases where AU does not have an equivalent or for broader scope areas such as applied studies.
- 3.7 The discipline used to award credit is not required to be a discipline offered by AU.
- 3.8 Minimum value of transferred credit is three (or multiples of three). AU will not grant one or two credit values for transfer credit. Credit values of four are granted for nursing course work only.



- 3.9 Students will be granted a "not to take" (NTT) designation for an AU-equivalent course that is contained within a completed transfer credential but is not required for completion of the AU credential. NTT designations do not carry credit. Exemptions are granted for courses contained in a completed transfer credential (block transfer) that are equivalent to courses required in the AU credential. Exemptions do not carry credit; the credit value must be replaced with a course at the same or higher level as well some programs may require the same course area of study as defined by AU.
- 3.10 A student's transfer credit evaluation will be considered permanent as long as the student remains in the same credential and the student maintains an active status. Where updates in evaluation produce an assessment that is to the student's benefit, the student's evaluation will be revised accordingly upon a request from the student or a request for a change in program or calendar year.
- 3.11 Credit may be denied if any of the principles contained within this policy are not met. Students must be supplied with the rationale for a denial.
- 3.12 Faculty have full purview regarding the granting of the course or block award based on principles contained in this policy; however, the maximum credit allowable is vetted by the Office of the Registrar. In cases of disagreement on the credit award, the Registrar or designate has final authority for transfer credit.
4. Pan-Canadian Protocol on the Transferability of Learning The Pan-Canadian Protocol developed by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) stipulates that any first- or second-year course completed at a recognized Canadian post-secondary, provided it fits into a student's program of study and meets university level learning requirements, will be recognized for transfer. All Alberta Universities are signatories to this agreement.
5. Prior Learning and Recognition (PLAR) Credit
 - 5.1 For students who attend a Campus Canada partner institution, AU will transfer PLAR credit as applicable and as per agreement. For students who receive assigned (or unassigned) course-based PLAR, AU will transfer that course if applicable.
 - 5.2 For students who wish to transfer general program based PLAR credit a new evaluation and PLAR fee may be required. If PLAR credit is contained in a completed credential and that credential is transferable, AU will not "unpack" or re-evaluate the PLAR credit.
6. Provincial Transfer Guides A number of Canadian provinces have produced course/program transfer guides. In Alberta, the Alberta Council of Admissions and Transfer (ACAT) guide will be the main reference for transfer agreements for courses or programs completed in Alberta and will dictate credit awards. The Guide produced the year the student completed the course will be used to determine the credit award, however, Guides from up to two years earlier or later may be consulted. Guides produced by other provinces are generally used to ensure College courses are transferable to that province's universities.



7. Record Keeping The Office of the Registrar maintains records of all precedent-setting transfer credit awarded and ensures that these principles are applied and added to the transfer credit database. Articulations with other institutions should be vetted through the Articulations Unit in the Office of the Registrar to ensure the credit granted will meet program regulations and these principles.
 - 7.1 All reviews completed by faculty are entered onto the database for use as precedents. The date the course or program was completed/evaluated is recorded and future requests that are granted according to this precedent should consider this date. Evaluation will also consider the individual student's case against the precedent, the number of years that has elapsed since the precedent was established, the nature of the program (computer programs will change more rapidly than communications programs for example) and generally compare the courses or credentials to ensure appropriate credit awards.
 - 7.2 Any assessments for transfer credit done outside the Office of the Registrar will be regarded as informal.

Procedure

1. Upon receipt of official transcripts, students in credential programs may, upon request, have their previous course work evaluated prior to starting any AU courses or after completion of six AU credits and by paying the associated fee, if applicable. Students will receive a written notification of their evaluation from the Evaluations Unit that will outline the transfer credit awarded.
2. For full program articulations requested by external institutions, notification outlining the credit granted will be sent to the external institution from the Articulations Unit. This information will be recorded in the database and will serve as precedent.
3. The Office of the Registrar will forward requests for transfer credit evaluation to faculty in cases where a student's course work is unable to be determined by the Evaluations Unit and in all cases of a precedent-setting, full program articulation.
4. Faculty will review the educational content and instructor qualifications. The Office of the Registrar will ensure all other criteria required by this policy are met.
5. A student may appeal a transfer credit decision by following the directions outlined in the Student Academic Appeals Policy.

Related References, Policies, and Procedures

[Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer
General Guiding Principles for Good Practice in the Assessment of Foreign Credentials](#)

Provincial Assessment Committee, Canada, April 1998



[Joint Statement on the Transfer and Award of Credit](#)

American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, USA, 2001
American Council on Education, USA, 2001
Council for Higher Education Accreditation, USA, 2001

[Ministerial Statement on Credit Transfer in Canada](#) [Pan-Canadian Protocol on the Transferability of University Credits](#)

Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC), October 2002
Responsibility for Awarding Transfer Credit Policy (Office of the Registrar #125)
[Student Academic Appeals Committee Policy](#) (Office of the Registrar #79)

Applicable Legislation/Regulation

Council of Ministers of Education (CMEC), Canada, February 1995

Responsible Position/Department

Assistant Registrar, Admissions, Office of the Registrar

Keywords

transfer credit, credit transfer, block transfer, course transfer, credit granted, assessment, evaluation

History

Office of the Registrar, October 22, 2016 (revised)
Athabasca University Academic Council; April 19, 2006, Motion No. 196-8