Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Colleges
1866 Southern Lane
Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097

TRANSFER OF ACADEMIC CREDIT

A Position Statement

Maintaining academic quality and integrity remains the primary responsibility of each institution accredited by SACSCOC. This position paper should not be interpreted as supporting any idea that would undermine that responsibility or as impinging on the institution's right to establish and enforce its own policies. At the same time, SACSCOC encourages member institutions to consider ways in which they might ease the acceptance of transfer of academic credit while maintaining an acceptable level of academic quality reflecting their unique missions.

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) recognizes that issues surrounding transfer of academic credit continue to generate debate nationally. The debate touches on questions of accountability, access, and equity in the higher education community. SACSCOC encourages its member institutions to review their transfer policies and procedures with a view toward making transfer of credit easier for students while continuing to honor their obligation to maintain academic quality and integrity.

Transfer of academic credit remains a public policy issue for several reasons: (1) a sustained increase in student mobility, (2) the proliferation of – and wide participation in – dual credit courses, (3) the prevalence of distance education programs and common acceptance of their legitimacy, (4) the economics of expending public money multiple times for the same course, and (5) consumer protection from expending private money multiple times for the same course.

SACSCOC remains committed to institutional autonomy in determining standards for transfer of academic credit while also encouraging institutions to avoid barriers to the transfer process unrelated to the academic integrity of educational programs. Many systems and institutions have taken positive action such as negotiating articulation agreements, common course listings, common core curricula, and automatic acceptance of credit arrangements to facilitate the transfer of academic credit. Such proactive approaches, involving qualified faculty in the decisions, ease the way toward resolving transfer of credit problems while maintaining curricular coherence and academic and institutional integrity.

The accreditation standards of SACSCOC require member institutions to analyze credit accepted for transfer in terms of level, content, quality, comparability, and degree program relevance. While an institution may properly consider another institution's accreditation as an indicator for acceptability of credit, accreditation should not be the only criterion used for acceptability nor should it be represented as a requirement of SACSCOC, which it is not. Institutional accreditation is not a SACSCOC requirement for determining acceptability of credit if other criteria and procedures for evaluating acceptability are in place.

Recent studies have demonstrated that the availability and quality of academic advising play an integral role in the transfer process. SACSCOC accreditation standards require member institutions to provide adequate, appropriate, and effective academic and student support services. Member institutions are encouraged to evaluate and seek improvement in their transcript audit and academic advising services, especially when these services have the potential to address inequities or barriers in the transfer process.

Document History
Approved: Commission on Colleges, June 2003
Reformatted, September 2016
Revised: Executive Council, March 2022
Revised: SACSCOC Board of Trustees, December 2025