

## 10.8

### Evaluating and Awarding Academic Credit

The institution publishes policies for evaluating, awarding and accepting credit not originating from the institution. The institution ensures (a) the academic quality of any credit or coursework recorded on its transcript, (b) an approval process with oversight by persons academically qualified to make the necessary judgments, and (c) the credit awarded is comparable to a designated credit experience and is consistent with the institution's mission.

#### Judgment

Compliant  Non-Compliant  Not Applicable

#### SACSCOC Reviewer Comments

##### Non-Compliance

The institution's response is in violation of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) policy, "Reports Submitted for SACSCOC Review," by including live links in its response and electronic documentation that is not consistently bookmarked, indexed, and searchable.

The institution has in place a comprehensive system of policies and practices for evaluating, awarding, and accepting credit not originating from the institution, which is enacted through the faculty governance process. Articulation agreements define the process of awarding from other participating institutions and from a statewide articulation agreement origination from the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education. Transfer credit is determined either by qualified faculty evaluators or by qualified evaluators trained by, overseen by, and evaluated by qualified faculty. A roster of qualified faculty and their suitable qualifications is provided. Credit for graduate course work from other institutions "must be relevant to the program and have course content and a level of instruction equivalent to that offered by the institution's own graduate programs," including courses for professional degrees. All these policies and practices together ensure the academic quality of any credits appearing on the institution's transcripts. An illustrative example of related policy use and implementation could not be found, nor was there provided a valid explanation for this.

##### Campus Response

While SACS recognizes the University's institutional policies and procedures for evaluating awarding and accepting external credit, the University was cited as non-compliant for not providing illustrative examples of those comprehensive policies and procedures. For this reason, our response includes illustrative example of the transfer credit evaluation process; the display of transfer work in the form of equivalencies on the unofficial transcript used for academic advisement; and the notation of transfer work on the official transcripts.

All transfer credit evaluation practices across all campuses and levels are guided by University policy [ACAF 2.15 Evaluation of Transfer Credit](#). Per ACAF 2.15, more tailored policy statements are outlined in UofSC Columbia's Undergraduate Bulletin, Graduate Bulletin, Law Bulletin, Medical Bulletin, and Pharmacy Bulletin as well as in the bulletins for each Palmetto College campus: Lancaster, Salkehatchie, Sumter, and Union.

##### Undergraduate Transfer Credit Policies

Transfer work, submitted to the institution by transfer students at the undergraduate level, both on the UofSC Columbia and Palmetto College campuses, is evaluated according to a common bulletin policy statement on transfer credit which can be found at the following locations in the bulletins:

[Columbia Undergraduate Studies Bulletin, Academic Regulations, 2020-2021 \(pp. 9-10\)](#)  
[Lancaster Bulletin, Academic Regulations, 2020-2021 \(PDF pp. 8-9\)](#)  
[Salkehatchie Bulletin, Academic Regulations, 2020-2021 \(PDF pp. 8-9\)](#)  
[Sumter Bulletin, Academic Regulations, 2020-2021 \(PDF pp. 8-9\)](#)  
[Union Bulletin, Academic Regulations, 2020-2021 \(PDF pp. 8-9\)](#)

The undergraduate transfer credit policy states that:

*Students transferring to the University from another college or university must, before enrolling in class at the University, have their transcripts evaluated by the University. It is only in the light of such evaluation that students will know definitively the transferability and equivalency of each transfer course. Degree applicability will be determined by the college or school in which the student is enrolled.*

*Transferability refers to the conditions under which the University accepts credit for inclusion in the student's record. Transfer courses must have been taken at a regionally accredited post - secondary institution, or, if taken at a foreign post-secondary institution, have been recommended by a NACES - member external evaluation service. Exceptions to this rule may be made by the Office of the Registrar when state scholarship eligibility rules require inclusion.*

Equivalency entails equating transfer credit, both in hours and content, to University of South Carolina coursework. The Registrar's Office works with UofSC colleges and schools to coordinate the process of transfer evaluation to equate transfer courses directly to courses in the UofSC course catalog; to subject codes which represent subjects not offered at UofSC; or to subject codes that identify courses as remedial/technical/non-accredited coursework. A list of transfer equivalencies for the Columbia catalog of courses can be found at:

[http://www.sc.edu/about/offices\\_and\\_divisions/registrar/transfer\\_credits/course\\_equivalency.php](http://www.sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/registrar/transfer_credits/course_equivalency.php)

Applicability of credit toward a degree refers to the prerogative of academic divisions to count specific credit toward the fulfillment of a student's degree requirements. The student's college or school of enrollment is responsible for determining applicability. However, a transfer course is not applicable towards any University of South Carolina academic program or degree if:

- The transfer course was essentially remedial in nature (example: Developmental English). The transfer course was occupational or technical in nature (examples: welding, paralegal, or radiography courses).
- A grade lower than 2.0 on a 4 point scale, or equivalent, was earned in the transfer course.
- The transfer course was taken by a degree-seeking University of South Carolina student without prior approval as described in the Earning Credit in Transient Status section of this bulletin.
- The transfer course was taken while a student was on an academic suspension from the university.
- The student received any grade other than W in an equivalent course at this university, unless the student was enrolled full time at least one year at the transfer institution.

Exceptions to the rules of applicability may be made only by petition to the dean for undergraduate studies of the College or School in which the student is majoring.

Further the transfer evaluation process is managed centrally on the UofSC Columbia campus for both UofSC Columbia and Palmetto College Campuses. In accordance with the policy the Office of the University Registrar coordinates the process of transfer evaluation with subject matter experts across various academic disciplines. Undergraduate transfer evaluations are processed through a specialized software called TES (Transfer Evaluation System) which houses course descriptions from institutions across the country and integrates that information with a convenient workflow and approval system. Once transfer courses are evaluated and equivalencies are assigned in TES, the transfer equivalencies are added to UofSC's transfer equivalency tables which are available publicly.

## Undergraduate Transfer Credit Examples

### Domestic Transfer Work

The documents provided below illustrated how domestic transfer credit is awarded according to the undergraduate transfer credit policy. [Document UG1](#) illustrates how an evaluation occurs for a student's coursework at the undergraduate level. For this document, per policy, the student requested the domestic transfer institution to send UofSC an official transcript. The courses listed on this transcript were entered into the Transfer Evaluation Workflow and Approval System, TES, to be evaluated by transfer evaluators. For one course (example one), the evaluation required a review beyond the course description and the UofSC course evaluator requested the course syllabus to ensure that the transfer voice course had a juried exam. For another course (example two), the UofSC course evaluator reviewed both the course description and the course syllabus but could not determine a direct UofSC course equivalent. As a result, the evaluator equated the course to a 200-level speech elective. [Document UG2](#) illustrates how the student's undergraduate transfer work appears with the assigned transfer equivalencies on the unofficial transcript used for academic advisement. [Document UG3](#) illustrates how the student's transfer work is noted on the official transcript.

### Study Abroad Transfer Work

The documents provided below illustrate how study abroad transfer credit is awarded according to the undergraduate transfer credit policy. [Document UG\\_SA1](#) illustrates how an evaluation occurs for a student's coursework at the undergraduate level for work taken at a study abroad institution. For this document, per policy, the student requested the study abroad institution to send UofSC an official transcript. The courses listed on this transcript were entered into the Transfer Evaluation Workflow and Approval System, TES, to be evaluated by transfer evaluators. [Document UG\\_SA2](#) illustrates how the student's undergraduate transfer work appears with the assigned transfer equivalencies on the unofficial transcript used for academic advisement. [Document UG\\_SA3](#) illustrates how the student's transfer work is noted on the official transcript.

## Undergraduate Exam Credit Policies

Exam Credit, submitted to the institution by transfer students at the undergraduate level, both on the UofSC Columbia and Palmetto College campuses, is evaluated according to Guidelines established by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education, [ACAF 2.15 Evaluation of Transfer Credit](#), and bulletin policy statement in the Admissions policy and procedure section. The Palmetto College Campuses follow the same exam credit evaluation policies and procedures as UofSC Columbia.

- [Commission on Higher Education Exam Credit Policy \(pages 1-2\)](#)
- [UofSC Academic Affairs Policy 2.15 Evaluation of Transfer Credit \(pages 1-2\)](#)
- [UofSC Undergraduate Studies Academic Bulletin - Admissions Policies and Procedures - 2020-2021 \(page 21\)](#)

The Commission on Higher Education Exam Credit Policy requires all public post-secondary institutions to recognize appropriate CollegeBoard Advanced Placement exams on which students score a three or better and higher-level

International Baccalaureate exams on which students score a four or higher.

The [UofSC Undergraduate Studies Academic Bulletin - Admissions Policies and Procedures - 2020-2021 \(page 21\)](#) defines the list of post-secondary exam credit organizations which UofSC considers when evaluating and awarding exam credits to include:

- Advanced Placement (AP) Exams;
- International Baccalaureate (IB) Exams;
- College Level Examination Program (CLEP) Exams;
- Cambridge International A Level Exams;
- and Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES) Exams

The policy refers to the list of acceptable exams credits and scores found on the [Office of the University Registrar Transfer Credit page](#). The policy also describes the way in which the credit is transcribed to the student's academic record. As the policy states:

*Multiple successful exam credit scores submitted for the same equivalent course will only be recognized in one instance of the course on students' official academic record at UofSC.*

*Exam credit will be transcribed to the academic record similar to a transfer course. Successful exam scores will be equated directly to courses in the UofSC course catalog or to subject codes which represent subjects not offered at UofSC. Exam credit course equivalencies will be posted to the record along with a grade of "CR," the attempted hours, and earned hours. The exam credit will appear on students' advising transcript in Self Service Carolina, while only exam credit earned hours will appear on the official transcript.*

Similar to the transfer credit evaluation process, subject matter experts in academic units determine which exams will be considered for academic credit at UofSC.

### **Undergraduate Exam Credit Examples**

The documents provided below illustrate how CollegeBoard Advanced Placement exam credit has been awarded at the University of South Carolina to an undergraduate student. [Document UG\\_AP1](#) illustrates the Advanced Placement Exams and corresponding scores which are accepted by the University of South Carolina. [Document UG\\_AP2](#) illustrates how the student's AP Exam Credit appears with the assigned USC transfer equivalencies on the unofficial transcript used for academic advisement (see Spring 2016, Spring 2017, Spring 2018 terms on page 2). [Document UG\\_AP3](#) illustrates how the student's AP Exam Credit is noted on the official transcript.

### **Graduate Transfer Credit Policies**

Transfer work, submitted to the institution by transfer students at the graduate level, is evaluated according to the bulletin policy statement on transfer credit which can be found at the following location in the Graduate Studies bulletin:

[Columbia Graduate Studies Bulletin, Academic Regulations, 2020-2021 \(PDF pp. 14-15\)](#)

As stated in Graduate Bulletin:

*. . . approval for acceptance of transfer credit to a student's program of study at the graduate level is approved and justified by the student's academic program and submitted to the dean of the Graduate School for final approval on the Request for Transfer of Academic Credit (G-RTC) form.*

### **Graduate Transfer Credit Examples**

The documents provided below illustrate how credit is awarded according to the graduate transfer credit policy. [Document GR1](#) illustrates a completed *Request for Transfer Credit (G-TRC)* form at the graduate level approved by the student's Academic Advisor, Graduate Program Director, and Dean of the Graduate School. [Document GR2](#) illustrates how the student's graduate transfer work appears with the assigned transfer equivalencies on the unofficial transcript used for academic advisement. [Document GR3](#) illustrates how the student's graduate transfer work is noted on the official transcript.

### **Professional School Transfer Policies**

Transfer work, submitted to the institution by transfer students at the law school level, is evaluated according to the bulletin policy statement on transfer credit which can be found at the following location in the School of Law bulletin:

[School of Law Bulletin, Academic Regulations, 2020-2021 \(pp. 23-24\)](#)

According to the School of Law bulletin, after transfer students are admitted into the School of Law,

*Students are required to meet with the Registrar/Director of Academic Services to review transfer of hours, grade point average, graduation requirements and registration. Although graded hours may exceed 30 hours, no more than 30 earned hours will be accepted toward the 90 hours required for graduation.*

## Professional School Transfer Examples

The documents provided below illustrated how credit is awarded according to the School of Law transfer credit policy. [Document LW1](#) illustrates a memo from the School of Law Registrar requesting that a transfer student in the UofSC School of Law be awarded transfer credit from the University of Miami. [Document LW2](#) illustrates how the student's law transfer work appears with the assigned transfer equivalencies on the unofficial transcript used for academic advisement (see [Fall 2020 term on page 8](#)). [Document LW3](#) illustrates how the student's law transfer work is noted on the official transcript.

## Articulation Agreements

Academic Affairs Policies [ACAF 2.05 Consortial Academic Contracts and Agreements](#) and [ACAF 2.06 International Academic Agreements](#) ensure the quality and integrity of the courses or credits recorded on a University of South Carolina transcript when offered through a cooperative academic arrangement and all articulation agreements with domestic partner institutions adhere to ACAF 2.05 and those with international partner institutions adhere to ACAF 2.06. Both ACAF 2.05 and ACAF 2.06 define the standards and processes according to which consortial academic contracts and agreements are developed, governed and reviewed. All consortial academic contracts and agreements are subject to the authority of the Board of Trustees. The Office of the Provost oversees their development and review for the University of South Carolina Columbia and the regional Palmetto College campuses (referred to as Regional in the policy).

The institution maintains formal agreements between the parties involved and consortial academic contracts and agreements will usually have five-year terms unless otherwise stated in the agreement. The responsibilities of all parties to the agreement, provision for ensuring the quality of the programs and courses offered through the agreement, and provision for evaluating the agreement in relation to the mission of the institution are addressed in either the contract review and renewal form or agreement.

### Articulation Agreement Example: College of Education at USC Columbia with Midlands Technical College.

Per ACAF 2.05, the articulation agreement documentation provides the anticipated beginning date of the agreement along with a description of the agreement (see [Contract approval form, page 2](#)) and the Memorandum of Understanding ([page 3](#)) presents a clear indication of the responsibilities of all parties to the agreement as well as a provision for ensuring the quality of the programs and courses offered through the agreement. For example, the agreement states that "each institution agrees to notify the other when any changes are made, so that the agreement can be reviewed and amended as needed." It also states that "in instances where State teacher certification requirements change prior to a student's entry into the USC College of Education, that student would be required to meet any new requirements to be eligible for certification." The agreement is signed by all parties ([page 3](#)) and has been approved by the Board of Trustees ([page 32](#)). The agreement lists the specific courses that will transfer for each program included in the agreement (see [page 5, for example](#)) and states that Midlands technical College will provide syllabi for specific courses on an annual basis for review by the College of Education to ensure content is consistent with that of UofSC Columbia courses (see [page 4, for example](#)).

### Joint Degree Articulation Agreement with International Partner Example: M.S.E.M., Sport and Entertainment Management, Joint Degree with Hamid Bin Khalifa University in Qatar

Per ACAF 2.06, the agreement was approved by the academic unit head, the dean, Global Carolina, the Office of the Provost, and the Office of General Counsel (see [SPTe HBKU Joint Degree APPS Proposal page 4](#) for academic unit head and dean approvals; see [SPTe HBKU Joint Degree 2020 page 1](#) as evidence of Provost Office and Global Carolina approval). As the agreement was with an international partner, the program also went through Global Carolina's Mobility System for approval (see [SPTe HBKU Joint Degree in Mobility](#)). In addition, since the agreement resulted in the creation of a new joint degree program, a program proposal was submitted in the Academic Program Proposal System (APPS) to be reviewed through the faculty governance review process as outlined in University Policy ACAF 2.00 Creation and Revision of Academic Programs (see [SPTe HBKU Joint Degree APPS Proposal](#), approvals are noted on page 4).

As required by ACAF 2.00, the joint degree was then approved by the Board of Trustees and SC Commission on Higher Education (CHE) (see [SPTe HBKU Joint Degree 2020 page 10 for evidence of Board approval and page 11 for evidence of CHE approval](#)). Note that the proposal submitted to the Board and CHE was a program modification proposal since the joint degree was with an existing degree program; per CHE's policies "Program modifications are...the creation of a joint program by merging existing related programs at two or more institutions" (see [CHE Policies and Procedures for Academic Programs, page 7](#), and [SPTe HBKU Joint Degree CHE Proposal](#)). As required, a prospectus has been submitted to SACSCOC, but we have not yet received approval as of the writing of this report.

In addition, since the agreement is with a non-SACSCOC accredited institution, the agreement includes a disclaimer noting this information (see [SPTe HBKU Joint Degree 2020 page 4](#)). The agreement is signed by all parties and presents a clear indication of the responsibilities of all parties well as a provision for ensuring the quality of courses offered through the agreement, including a listing of all courses to be taught by each institution (see [SPTe HBKU Joint Degree 2020, pages 2-4, 6, 7 and 9](#)). Because this program has not yet been implemented (we are still waiting on SACSCOC approval), we do not have a transcript example for this degree program. However, the agreement shows how USC Columbia ensures the academic quality of any credit or coursework to be recorded on the transcript and the credit awarded is comparable to a designated



credit experience (see [SPTE HBKU Joint Degree 2020](#)). Further, the faculty governance review of the joint degree program demonstrates an approval process with oversight by persons academically qualified to make the necessary judgments (see [SPTE HBKU Joint Degree APPS Proposal](#), page 4).

## Sources

### Bulletin Information

-  USC Graduate Academic Bulletin - Academic Regulations - 2020-2021
-  USC Lancaster Bulletin -Academic Regulations - 2020-2021
-  USC Salkehatchie Bulletin - Academic Regulations - 2020-2021
-  USC School of Law Academic Bulletin - Academic Regulations - 2020-2021
-  USC Sumter Bulletin - Academic Regulations 2020-2021
-  USC Undergraduate Studies Academic Bulletin - Academic Regulations - 2020-2021
-  USC Undergraduate Studies Academic Bulletin - Admissions Policies and Procedures - 2020-2021
-  USC Union Bulletin - Academic Regulations - 2020-2021
-  10.8 Evaluating and Awarding Academic Credit Off-Site Committee Response
-  ACAF 2.15 Evaluation of Transfer Credit
-  ACAF\_2\_05\_Consortial\_Academic\_Contracts\_and\_Agreements
-  ACAF\_2\_06\_International\_Academic\_Agreements
-  CHE\_Policies\_and\_Procedures\_for\_Academic\_Programs
-  Commission of Higher Education Exam Credit Policy
-  GR1\_\_Graduate\_Request\_for\_Transfer\_Credit\_Approval\_Redacted
-  GR2 - Graduate Unofficial Transcript Redacted
-  GR3\_\_Official\_Transcript\_Redacted
-  LW1\_\_School\_of\_Law\_Transfer\_Memo\_Redacted
-  LW2\_\_School\_of\_Law\_Unofficial\_Transcript\_page\_8\_Redacted
-  LW3\_School\_of\_Law\_Official\_Transcript\_Redacted
-  MOU1 - TransAgree\_MidlandsTech\_EarlyChildhood\_ElemEd
-  MOU2\_\_Undergraduate\_Unofficial\_Transcript\_Redacted
-  MOU3\_\_Undergraduate\_Official\_Transcript\_Redacted
-  MOU4 - SPTE HBKU Joint Degree APPS Proposal
-  MOU5 - SPTE HBKU Joint Degree 2020
-  MOU6 - SPTE HBKU Joint Degree in Mobility
-  SPTE HBKU Joint Degree CHE proposal
-  Transfer Credits - University Registrar \_ University of South Carolina
-  UG1\_Undergraduate\_Transfer\_Evaluation\_Approval
-  UG2\_Undergraduate\_Unofficial\_Transcript\_Redacted
-  UG3\_Undergraduate\_Official\_Transcript\_Redacted
-  UG\_AP1 Undergraduate Exam Credit Policy
-  UG\_AP2\_Undergraduate\_Unofficial\_Transcript\_Redacted (002)
-  UG\_AP3\_Undergraduate\_Official\_Transcript\_Redacted
-  UG\_SA1 Undergraduate Study Abroad Transfer Evaluation Approval
-  UG\_SA2\_Undergraduate\_Unofficial\_Transcript\_Redacted
-  UG\_SA3\_Undergraduate\_Official\_Transcript\_Redacted