



## Transfer Credit Process and Proposed Improvements

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### I. UAF Outline of the current transfer process

1. The transfer credit evaluators use transfer tables to determine specific course equivalencies for GERs ([http://www.uaf.edu/catalog/current/admissions/transfer\\_placement\\_chart3.html](http://www.uaf.edu/catalog/current/admissions/transfer_placement_chart3.html) and [http://www.uaf.edu/catalog/current/admissions/transfer\\_placement\\_chart4.html](http://www.uaf.edu/catalog/current/admissions/transfer_placement_chart4.html))
2. The transfer credit evaluators transfer other courses that meet the requirements (generally, 100 level or above, courses completed with a C- or better at a regionally accredited institution; see [http://www.uaf.edu/catalog/current/admissions/transfer\\_placement.html#Transferring\\_Credits](http://www.uaf.edu/catalog/current/admissions/transfer_placement.html#Transferring_Credits))
3. Transfer credit evaluators award credit for certain military training, credit by examination, and other accomplishments using established equivalency tables.
  - a. Military training is reviewed and awarded based on American Council on Education (ACE) recommendations. Almost all such training transfers as electives, with the exception of Basic Training, which has been approved by the UAF Military Science Department to transfer as 10 credits of MILS courses.
  - b. Credit by exam would include College Level Examination Program (CLEP), Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), which are pre-approved for credit and are published in the catalog.
  - c. Many professional certificates are pre-approved for credit by the appropriate UAF departments. A list of approved certificates is kept in OAR and maintained by transfer credit staff.
4. Acceptable transfer courses that are not established equivalents of UAF courses, or which are not found to be equivalent upon review by transfer credit evaluators (sometimes in consultation with appropriate departments), are transferred as electives in the subject area, e.g., an English course would transfer as an “English elective”, with the course level (100-400) indicated on the student transcript. Electives may have a category designator, such as “H” for humanities, “M” for mathematics, “N” for natural sciences, or “S” for social sciences. If so, they will meet the corresponding requirements for BA or BS degrees.
5. For courses transferred as electives to meet major or minor requirements or GER requirements, or for courses transferred as equivalent UAF courses to be substituted for said requirements, they must be reviewed and approved by the corresponding department and by the Core Review

Committee in the case of GERs. The student needs to submit a petition to initiate the review process:

- a. [http://www.uaf.edu/reg/forms/undergrad\\_petition.pdf](http://www.uaf.edu/reg/forms/undergrad_petition.pdf)
- b. [http://www.uaf.edu/reg/forms/core\\_petition\\_form.pdf](http://www.uaf.edu/reg/forms/core_petition_form.pdf)

This means that some courses that initially transfer as electives, or as UAF equivalent courses that do not meet degree requirements, will ultimately count toward degree requirements. This can be a source of confusion for many students. Some may be dissatisfied by the initial results of the transfer process, but after further review, often more of the credits count toward their degrees.

Sometimes courses that transfer as UAF equivalents do not count toward the UAF degree they are pursuing. That is, some students change majors as well as changing universities. For instance, if a student studies physics and transfers to UAF as a mechanical engineering major, not all physics courses would satisfy specific engineering requirements, even though they are accepted as equivalent to UAF courses.

Some programs with specialized accreditation have strict limits on accepting transfer credit from other programs that are not accredited by the same organization. This can be especially frustrating for students, because the course titles and much of the content may be similar to the UAF course. However, the accrediting organizations have these requirements to assure quality, because unaccredited institutions often have less-qualified faculty or less rigorous curricula.

UAF is working to improve our communication with prospective transfer students, so that they will know in advance which of their courses will count toward GER or specific degree requirements and which will not.

## **II. UAA Outline of the current transfer process**

Student submits official transcript. Within 1 day student receives email to indicate the transcript has been received. Within 1-3 days of receipt of transcript an evaluation is complete and student receives email indicating completion of evaluation and possible next steps (see attached). The transfer evaluation takes place independent of admission processes for new students. UAA no longer waits until the student has been admitted.

Office of the Registrar evaluates transcript with following considerations:

1. All UA courses which are GER at the institution where course is taught are brought in as equivalent GER credit per BOR policy.
2. The transfer credit specialists evaluate and transfer all undergraduate courses completed with a C- or better at a regionally accredited institution.  
<http://catalog.uaa.alaska.edu/academicstandardsregulations/transferecredits/>
3. Transfer credit evaluators award credit for certain military training, credit by examination, and other accomplishments using established equivalency tables, specifically:
  - a. Military training is reviewed and awarded based on American Council on Education (ACE) recommendations.
  - b. Credit by exam would include College Level Examination Program, Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), which are pre-approved for credit and are published on our website. <http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/records/tce/nationalexam.cfm>
  - c. Many professional certificates are pre-approved for credit by the appropriate UAA departments. A list of approved certificates is listed in the UAA catalog.  
<http://catalog.uaa.alaska.edu/academicstandardsregulations/nontraditionalcreditpolicies/>

4. Acceptable transfer courses which are not found to be a direct equivalent to UAA courses are then reviewed for a GER substitute or elective status.
5. Transfer courses that do not meet a specific UAA course may be petitioned to fulfill student's degree requirements. With department and college approval elective credit can be applied to a student's specific major or minor requirements. This allows the student and faculty to best tailor the student's degree plan to their needs. All petitions are reviewed by minimally two individuals within the student's college and Registrar's Office to ensure checks and balances.
6. Additionally, UAA has a process to pre-approve transfer courses to ensure transferability upon return to UAA. Although it can be used in any situation it is required for students going on exchange.
7. Course equivalencies are updated on UAA Transfer Evaluation Service sight as informational item for students, faculty and advisors. This ensures consistent evaluation.

### **III. UAS Outline of the current transfer process**

1. The transfer credit evaluator(s) use Banner to check if there is an existing equivalency, checking that the equivalency is not older than 5 years and if there are any other changes such as title (the course will be re-evaluated). The chart in the academic catalog for the UA transfer courses is used as a reference; however most of the courses are in Banner with the appropriate coding for GER placement.
2. The transfer credit evaluator(s) transfer other courses that meet requirements (generally, 100 level or above, courses completed with a C- or better at a regionally accredited institution; UA courses with a D- are transferred as appropriate.
3. Transfer credit evaluator(s) award credit for certain military training, as well as standardized tests like DANTEs, CLEP and AP.
4. Acceptable transfer courses that are not established equivalents of UAF courses are transferred as electives in the subject area, e.g., an English course would transfer as an "English elective", with the course level (100-400) indicated on the student transcript. If UAS does not have an equivalent subject the courses are coded as Electives. However, once the student is in their major, advisors will submit a course substitution form to apply credits appropriately into major requirements.

### **IV. Plan for improving transfer processes at University of Alaska institutions**

Both specialized and institutional accreditation require that faculty set the standards for awarding transfer credit and evaluate courses to determine whether or not they meet degree requirements. Some changes to transfer processes will require faculty approval (\*). **Target dates** are suggested for completing each step in the review and improvement of transfer processes.

At UAF some potential improvements have already been identified, but they will require investments in software, additional staff, or both.

UAA has embarked on an overall review of all policies, processes, and procedures. It welcomes this discussion of its transfer and petition processes as part of its continuing quality improvement.

1. Each university reviews processing of transfer credit (**December 1, 2014**):

- a. Describe the transfer process in detail.
    - i. The process is well-known to the people who carry it out. However, a clear description will help with communication to other groups, including students and faculty.
    - ii. UAA has completed a thorough review of the evaluation process and implemented changes highlighted in Amazing Stories (see attached). Additionally UAA holds workshops each semester open to faculty, students, and staff to explain transfer process and participates in transfer student orientations.
  - b. Identify opportunities to improve processing time.
    - i. UAF has already identified two issues. (1) At certain times of year (registration opening and start of semester) there is much more volume, and the staff cannot process all transfer credits as quickly as students want. (2) Currently, employees need to manually enter every transfer course into Banner. With the implementation of OnBase's transcript data capture at the end of July, this portion of the processing time will gradually improve. Full implementation will happen over the course of the 2014-15 academic year.
    - ii. In 2012, UAA reviewed the procedure for evaluating credit and implemented changes that reduced the average processing time from 45 days to 3 days. UAA has continued to maintain a processing time of 3 days or less. By processing as the transcript arrives versus waiting for admissions it removes the transfer office from admissions deadlines. This has removed bottlenecks that previously occurred in summer and instead has led to year-round consistent processing times, enabling staff reductions.
  - c. Are there instances of errors or inconsistent evaluation? If so, correct.
    - i. UAF has quality controls in place to reduce errors as much as possible. The Banner database of equivalencies and department chair approvals is updated on a regular basis.
    - ii. UAA has worked to clarify policies and eliminate inconsistent evaluation.
    - iii. UAA purged transfer decisions made beyond 3 years to ensure that both internal and external data was in line with current policies.
    - iv. Additionally UAA is now able to run a report each semester to find any UA courses which were not evaluated by the guidelines above due to human error. These errors are corrected and the corrections are communicated out to the students.
  - d. If processing and posting are not timely (e.g., require more than 1 week), consider a process to keep students informed of progress (May 2015):
    - i. UAF is developing information to add to the admitted student's packet that informs them how to monitor the progress of their transfer evaluation. Another proposal is to add to the transfer students' communication plan, informing them that an evaluation will automatically be done providing contact information for transfer credit staff.
    - ii. UAA emails students notification that their transcript has been received and again when their evaluation has been completed.
2. Each university reviews processing of petitions (June/July 2015):
- a. Describe the petition process in detail.
    - i. The process is well-known to the people who carry it out. However, a clear description will help with communication to applicants, students, administration, and others.
    - ii. Information on the UAA academic petition process can be found in the catalog and detailed instructions and steps are provided on the form.  
<http://catalog.uaa.alaska.edu/academicstandardsregulations/academicpetition/>

- iii. UAA's petition process is facilitated with an advisor and is routed through the department chair and college dean before being submitted for application to the Office of the Registrar. This multi-level review leads to checks and balances and ensures consistency with evaluation.
  - iv. As the Office of the Registrar sees common petitions they reach out to the departments to consider articulation agreements or direct equivalencies.
  - v. UAS does not have a petition process as outlined above. However, if a student questions the transfer evaluation of a course, UAS requires a syllabus be submitted for the course to be reconsidered. UAS advisors submit a course substitution form to apply classes to specific requirements to their major program of study.
- b. Identify opportunities to improve processing time.
- i. At UAF processing time substantially depends on the department and Dean review timelines. Work to improve timeliness and tracking of petitions is needed.
  - ii. If Core Committee review is required (for GERs that are not UAF course equivalents), a web-based approach to review that does not require the committee to physically meet could improve the process.
  - iii. Students, faculty and staff need the ability to see where a petition is at any given time and to electronically sign and send on. We would like to investigate DocuSign (or a similar software) that would enable the process to be transparent and more efficient.
  - iv. UAA has compliance concerns about using DocuSign and is exploring the use of an existing capability in Banner for an electronic petition process. Regardless of the electronic process, it will be important to obtain an original student signature.
- c. Are there instances of inconsistent evaluation? If so, correct (May 2015):
- i. UAF believes that the Degree Works reporting tool will prove helpful with this.
  - ii. UAF: To improve both b. and c., we will consider establishing a resource similar to the Transfer Credit Resource Site ([https://uaonline.alaska.edu/banprod/owa/bwsk2tcr.P\\_Tcs\\_Search](https://uaonline.alaska.edu/banprod/owa/bwsk2tcr.P_Tcs_Search)) that (a) includes past course transfer determinations, but (b) makes them applicable to other students for a limited period of time.\*
  - iii. UAA has had a few cases of inconsistent evaluations, and any examples are immediately corrected. If inconsistency was generated from conflicting policy or practice, clarifications are established and entered into the evaluation procedure manual.
  - iv. UAA has begun to work with various stakeholders in the petition process to discuss shared approaches and values, e.g. this fall the Registrar and Vice Provost for Undergraduate Academic Affairs are meeting with the professional advisors and plan to initiate a series of discussions, including with chairs and Associate Deans. The Academic Policy Advisory Committee is another venue for these discussions.
- d. Currently the approval of transfer courses for major/minor requirements is the purview of department chairs, who may not follow decisions of past chairs or use consistent criteria. Consider ways to make this review consistent, e.g., written standards; accessible records of past decisions.\*
- i. UAF is considering a mechanism for capturing criteria and decisions to assure consistency (and likely, increase the speed of processing). The Degree Works reporting tool will be helpful for tracking purposes.
  - ii. The UAA evaluation team makes all initial transfer decisions. If courses are direct equivalents no faculty approval is needed. Electives or GER substitution courses may be applied to the major/minor by academic petition. Multiple layers for review and

approval ensure consistency, as does a focus on the student learning outcomes of courses and requirements, such as the GER categories. That being said, UAA is also interested in reviewing its tracking capabilities at the different levels.

- e. Consider establishing a process of review or reconsideration of individual department chair decisions.\*
  - i. Degree works offers a reporting tool that we are exploring. It allows review of exceptions to degree requirements (petitions) and gather data that will be helpful in determining where the majority of exceptions are being made.
  - ii. Currently there is Registrar's office review of questionable petitions, looking for patterns or trends that should be addressed. UAF intends to develop a checklist of criteria for reviewing petitions, to quickly deny those that are clearly not approvable.
  - iii. UAF intends to develop a formal appeal process for students who don't agree with a decision.
  - iv. The UAA petition process builds in several levels of approval.
  
- f. If processing and posting are not timely (e.g., require more than 1 week), consider a process to keep students informed of progress. (Petition processing can take time and so keeping students informed is a more important issue than for credit transfer). (August 2015)
  - i. Students, faculty and staff need the ability to see where a petition is at any given time and to electronically sign and send on. We would like to investigate DocuSign (or a similar software) that would enable the process to be transparent and more efficient.
  - ii. UAA is exploring an existing Banner capability to facilitate an electronic petition process.
  
- g. Identify programs with significant intra-UA transfer activity. (November 1, 2014)  
For such programs, establish articulation agreements for major requirements if those don't already exist\* (May 2015)
  - i. After identifying the applicable departments, transfer credit staff can coordinate with them to articulate classes (add equivalent information to Banner database) that are routinely taken.
  - ii. All three universities subscribe to the Transfer Evaluation System (TES). This data base has the ability for us to compare other catalog courses to ours and will also give us the ability to track changes year to year.
  - iii. UAA departments such as medical assisting, justice, renewable energy, and nursing have taken steps to align curriculum and/or inform the UAA evaluation team when UAF/UAS courses should be transferred as direct equivalents, if they are not already transferring as such.
  - iv. UAA recommends that as part of the plan UA reviews options for enabling prerequisite checking in Banner to include inter-UA courses.
  - v. UAS currently has articulation agreements for the BA Elementary Education with the UA schools; Fisheries Technology program has articulation agreements with various branch campuses across the state.