

# Council For Higher Education Accreditation

## FACT SHEET #4

### *A Framework for Meeting Transfer of Credit Responsibilities*

May 2002

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

**T**HE COUNCIL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION ACCREDITATION (CHEA) initiated its work on accreditation and transfer of credit in 1998. In 2000, CHEA published *A Statement to the Community: Transfer and the Public Interest*. This statement was the result of CHEA's concern that accredited status of a program or institution assist, not hinder, students in the transfer process.\*

CHEA's work on accreditation and transfer is based on three important considerations:

- *Accredited* status of an institution is an important, but not the sole factor, to consider in transfer of credit decisions.
- *Considering* transfer requests serves students and the public. The public interest and students are best served when institutions commit to at least consideration of transfer requests, not rejecting such requests out of hand.
- *Accepting* transfer credits is the responsibility and prerogative of institutions.

The CHEA *Statement* offered four criteria that accrediting organizations and institutions are asked to consider as decisions are made about transfer of credit and academic quality. These criteria are:

- **Balance in the use of accreditation status in transfer decisions:** Institutions and accreditors need to assure that transfer decisions are not made solely on the source of accreditation of a sending program or institution.
- **Consistency:** Institutions and accreditors need to reaffirm that the considerations that inform transfer decisions are applied consistently.
- **Accountability for effective public communication:** Institutions and accreditors need to assure that students and the public are fully and accurately informed about their respective transfer policies and practices.
- **Commitment to address innovation:** Institutions and accreditors need to be flexible and open in considering alternative approaches to managing transfer when these approaches will benefit students (CHEA *Statement*, p. 3).

Following its work on the *Statement*, in 2001, CHEA and the 19 recognized institutional accrediting organizations met to identify key responsibilities that accrediting organizations and institutions are asked to consider if the CHEA *Statement* is to be used effectively.\*\*

The Transfer Framework is the result of this effort and describes the responsibilities to students and the public that accrediting organizations and institutions are asked to consider when addressing transfer of credit requests and academic quality. Meeting these responsibilities can result in accrediting organizations and institutions working together to further strengthen accreditation as a force for good in the transfer of credit process.

For accrediting organizations and institutions that have already addressed these responsibilities, the Framework serves as an important reminder that transfer is an issue that continues to require careful attention. For other accrediting organizations and institutions that have yet to address transfer, the Framework can serve as a basis for the development of sound transfer policy and practice.

The Transfer Framework is offered as an advisory document for accrediting organizations and institutions. CHEA and the accrediting organizations believe that efforts to strengthen transfer would be most successful if approached in a collegial manner; the Framework does not constitute an accreditation or recognition standard.

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\*The CHEA *Statement to the Community: Transfer and the Public Interest* is available on the CHEA Website at [www.chea.org](http://www.chea.org).

\*\*"Recognized" accrediting organizations are those bodies that have been reviewed and meet the standards for recognition of either CHEA or the United States Department of Education (USDE). For additional information about CHEA or USDE standards, please visit their Websites at [www.chea.org](http://www.chea.org) and [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov).

## **TRANSFER OF CREDIT AND RESPONSIBILITIES TO STUDENTS AND THE PUBLIC**

Each of the four criteria in the CHEA *Statement* can be met through accrediting organizations and institutions attending to key responsibilities to students and the public when addressing transfer of credit:

- *Attention to Accrediting Organization and Institutional Transfer Policy and Procedure*
- *Development of Accurate and Timely Information for Students and the Public about Transfer of Credit*
- *Ongoing Communication with Students and the Public about Transfer of Credit*
- *Attention to Improvement of Transfer Practices Through Technology*

### **Attention to Accrediting Organization and Institutional Transfer Policy and Procedure**

The first CHEA *Statement* criterion, balance in the use of accredited status in making transfer decisions, is advanced by a sound policy foundation:

- Developing and maintaining clearly stated policies and procedures for consideration of transfer of credit.
- Assuring organizational and institutional accountability for following established policies and procedures.
- Providing sound mechanisms for ongoing review and updating of policies and procedures.

### **Development of Accurate and Timely Information for Students and the Public about Transfer of Credit**

The second CHEA *Statement* criterion, consistency in the considerations used to evaluate transfer requests, is advanced by accurate information about transfer that is readily available:

- Providing current and reliable information about transfer of credit policies and procedures in a routine manner.
- Distinguishing the information obligations of institutions to students and the public when they function as *sending* institutions (institutions from which students wish to move) from when they function as *receiving* institutions (institutions to which students wish to move).
- Identifying to students and the public the essential academic factors that are involved in transfer of credit decisions, e.g., existing course equivalencies; articulation agreements that recognize experience and credits in a range of areas as well as course equivalencies; grades; comparability; course level, content, and applicability toward a degree or major; and course or program prerequisites.
- Identifying to students and the public the specific steps that must be taken when attempting transfer of credit, e.g., meeting deadlines for consideration of transfer requests, identifying material to be sent to receiving institutions, and obtaining needed assistance from a sending or receiving institution.

### **Ongoing Communication with Students and the Public about Transfer of Credit**

The third CHEA *Statement* criterion, accountability for effective public communication, is advanced through careful attention to the means and scope of communication:

- Maintaining ongoing exchange with students and the public about transfer of credit opportunities and limitations through, e.g., catalogs, counseling and advising, student chatrooms, and Websites.
- Sustaining ongoing contact and information exchange among institutions that routinely send and receive transfer students.
- Providing information to students and the public about special circumstances that may affect the ease or difficulty of course, program, or degree transfer of credit.

### **Attention to Improvement of Transfer Practices Through Technology**

The fourth CHEA *Statement* criterion, to address innovation in managing transfer, is advanced through the capture of the benefits of electronic technology in the service of smooth transfer of credit practices:

- Providing, where feasible, access to software programs that offer customized transfer information to students and making these programs readily available online.
- Expanding the use of accrediting organization Websites to provide information about accreditation transfer policies and procedures.
- Expanding the use of institutional Websites to provide transfer information, e.g., software programs that provide tracking data and other information to students, advisors, and counselors.
- Introducing, where feasible, electronic applications for transcript analysis and other key functions that must be carried out to make transfer of credit decisions.

Student mobility and opportunity in higher education rely in part on successful transfer of credit. Recognized accrediting organizations and CHEA are committed to the enhancement of both mobility and opportunity through transfer of credit.

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