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## Credit transfer for first- and second-cycle courses and study programmes

### **Policy document Örebro University**

Category: Procedures

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## Introduction

The purpose of these procedures is to establish a uniform university-wide approach to credit transfer on the first and second cycles and to ensure that the university, as a public authority, fulfils the legal requirements that apply to such decisions. The aim is to provide clear and straightforward guidance that strengthens legal certainty in connection with credit transfer decisions.

## Conditions for credit transfer

### Higher Education Ordinance

The possibility for students to have both previous studies and equivalent knowledge and skills acquired through professional or vocational practice recognised is regulated in Chapter 6, Sections 6–8 of the Higher Education Ordinance. These provisions apply to first- and second-cycle courses and study programmes.

A student at a Swedish higher education institution who has successfully completed higher education studies has the right to have these recognised in higher education studies at another Swedish higher education institution.

A student has the right to have other types of education credited if the knowledge and skills on which the application is based are of such a nature and extent that they essentially correspond to the education to which the credits are to be transferred. A student may also be credited for equivalent knowledge and skills acquired through professional or vocational practice<sup>1</sup>.

The university must assess whether previous education or professional/vocational practice can be accepted for credit transfer. Credits may only be awarded to those who are students unless otherwise provided by statute or ordinance<sup>2</sup>. A student is defined as someone who has been admitted to and is pursuing higher education<sup>3</sup>.

### Credit transfers

The university must always assess a student's application for credit transfer of previous education or professional/vocational practice. Applications may not be rejected based on general positions. Instead, an individual assessment must always be made of the student's knowledge and skills in relation to the course or study programme to which the requested credit transfer refers.

The credit transfer assessment must always be made against the intended learning outcomes of the course or study programme towards which the requested credit transfer refers. The assessment can therefore be made against the intended course learning outcomes or the intended learning outcomes for the award of the degree. If assessed against intended course learning outcomes, the decision is made by the school offering

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<sup>1</sup> Higher Education Ordinance, Chapter 6, Section 7

<sup>2</sup> Higher Education Ordinance, Chapter 6, Section 8

<sup>3</sup> Higher Education Ordinance, Chapter 1, Section 4

that course. If assessed against intended degree learning outcomes, the decision is made by Student Services in connection with the student's application for a degree certificate.

For credit transfers for previously completed higher education, no new grade is issued. The original grade from the examining higher education institution stands. Since credit transfers are an administrative decision rather than an examination, no grade is awarded in connection with such a decision. If credit is granted for part of a course or component, the grade for the credited part or component must be incorporated into the overall grade for the entire course or the entire component.

The university has no statutory obligation to provide advance notices regarding credit transfer. As a matter of practice, advance notices are generally issued only in connection with exchange studies. The reason being that the credit transfer is not settled until the decision has been made and that non-binding advance notices may otherwise cause uncertainty.

### **Exchange studies**

As part of planning international exchange studies and based on common practice, the universities issue an advance credit transfer notice to students who have been nominated for a student exchange. The advance notice constitutes a preliminary assessment of the university's position in an upcoming credit transfer assessment. Advance notices are issued by the person authorised to decide on credit transfers. Unlike a credit transfer decision, an advance notice cannot be appealed. The official credit transfer decision is taken after the student has completed the exchange and applied for credit transfer.

### **Consequences for continued studies**

A credit transfer may affect the student's continued studies, for example regarding the scope of studies, eligibility for student finance, tuition fees for fee-paying students, scholarships, and whether courses used as the basis for credit transfer may be included in a degree.

It is therefore important that students are informed of these consequences. Students intending to apply for credit transfer are encouraged to contact a study adviser in advance.

### **Processing times**

Processing times vary depending on the case. Normally, it should not exceed two months from the date a complete application is received. An application is considered complete once all documentation required for assessment has been submitted. If extensive measures to investigate the issue are needed, a longer processing time may be justified<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Administrative Procedure Act, Sections 11-12

## Procedures

When an application for credit transfer is received, these procedures must be followed to uphold legal certainty and equal treatment. The processing of credit transfers results in a public authority decision which may be appealed to the Higher Education Appeals Board (ÖNH). The procedures described below are based primarily on the Higher Education Ordinance and the Administrative Procedure Act.

Örebro University uses Ladok for managing and archiving credit transfer cases. If, for special reasons, the case must be handled on paper, the decision must still be registered in Ladok by the case officer to ensure traceability and proper documentation.

### Application for credit transfer

Students are responsible for submitting their own applications. Information about the process is available on the university's website. Applications for credit transfer on the first and second cycle are submitted via *Ladok Students*.

The application must include all necessary information about the requested credit transfer and relevant supporting documents must be attached verifying the education or professional/vocational practice on which the application is based (see section Documentation of qualifications).

To allow processing, all documents – including the application and attachments – must be in Swedish or English.

### Documentation of qualifications

Students are responsible for providing sufficient supporting documentation for the university to make an assessment<sup>5</sup>.

If an application is incomplete or unclear, the university must first assist the student in accordance with its general duty of service as a higher education institution<sup>6</sup> by indicating which supplements are required (see Supplementing an application).

### Documentation of previous higher education

To facilitate a decision on credit transfer for previous higher education, students must attach appropriate documents to support the credit transfer. Such documents include:

- Course syllabus or equivalent description verifying the cited course or study programme's content the semester in which it was completed, showing course structure, intended learning outcomes, mode of assessment, level and scope. The reading list is to be submitted to facilitate assessment.
- Independent project (degree project, essay or equivalent) if cited as the basis for the application.
- Laboratory report if laboratory components constitute the basis for the application.

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<sup>5</sup> Administrative Procedure Act, Section 19

<sup>6</sup> Administrative Procedure Act, Section 6, second paragraph

- Transcript of records for education other than at a Swedish higher education institution. The transcript must include information about the course or study programme, the education provider, and the date of completion. The transcript must be signed or electronically signed by a representative of the course/study programme and include the date of signing. The transcript must be verifiable.
- Official Transcript of Records for foreign higher education or equivalent in the original language, together with a translation by an authorised translator into English or Swedish. A mere translation of a certificate of grades will not be accepted. The transcript must include higher education institution, course names, dates of completion, level, credits and grades. Information about the higher education institution's education and grading system must be included. Transcripts must be signed or electronically signed by the higher education institution. The transcript must be verifiable.

Documents in languages other than Swedish or English must be submitted in the original language together with a translation into Swedish by an authorised translator.

### **Documentation of professional or vocational practice**

Applicants seeking credit for professional or vocational practice must clearly describe the knowledge and skills acquired in the role and explain how these correspond to the intended learning outcomes as described in the course syllabus. This should be supported as far as possible with certificates, diplomas, or similar documents.

Certificates of professional/vocational practice must include details of:

- Employer and contact information for line manager
- Duration of employment
- Scope of employment (in per cent of full-time working hours)
- Description of duties and responsibilities

Certificates must be dated and signed by a representative of the employer.

### **Processing the application**

All submitted applications for credit transfer are received in Ladok. They are then forwarded to the case queue for the school in question, where a case officer is assigned.

If for special reasons any part of the case must be handled outside Ladok, this must be recorded in Ladok once the processing of the case is complete to facilitate traceability. If the application is assessed against intended course learning outcomes, the relevant school is responsible for processing the case; if assessed against the intended learning outcomes for the award of the degree, Student Services process the application in connection with the student applying for a degree certificate.

The case officer is responsible for sufficiently investigating the case<sup>7</sup> to ensure that all necessary documentation is available for the continued processing of the credit transfer.

## Supplementing an application

If an application is incomplete, the student must be given the opportunity to submit supplementary documentation<sup>8</sup>. The request for supplements must include a deadline and information about the consequences of not providing the requested documents. An assessment will then be based on the documents submitted in the case. The student must be given reasonable time to submit the supplements. How long may vary depending on what documentation is required to facilitate an assessment.

## Assessment

Assessment involves a factual review of the student's knowledge and skills obtained from previous higher education or professional/vocational practice in relation to the intended learning outcomes of the course or part of course to which the credit transfer refers<sup>9</sup>.

An application for credit transfer for part of a component (examination code) can only be made if the component consists of different parts, the results of which are reported separately. In such cases, the decision must specify which of these parts have in that case been credited and which parts the student must complete to receive a grade for the entire component.

## Decisions on credit transfer

A credit transfer application may be approved in full, approved in part, rejected, or closed. The decision applies only at the higher education institution that issued it. Students must always be notified in writing, whether the decision is favourable or not.

Decisions are made in accordance with Örebro University's delegation of authority. Favourable decisions are registered in Ladok, which automatically notifies the student.

If the decision is wholly or partly rejected, it must include the reasons for this<sup>10</sup> with a reference to applicable regulations and the decisive circumstances. The grounds for the decision must be presented in a way that is clear and easily understood by the student. If the application is approved in full, no grounds for the decision are required.

All decisions that are wholly or partly unfavourable must include information about how to appeal (see *Appealing a credit transfer decision*)<sup>11</sup>. Decisions must be in Swedish but may be accompanied by an English translation if needed.

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<sup>7</sup> Administrative Procedure Act, Section 23

<sup>8</sup> Administrative Procedure Act, Section 20

<sup>9</sup> *Validering i högskolan - för tillgodoräkning och livslångt lärande* (Validation in higher education - for credit transfer and lifelong learning) (Swedish Government Official Reports 2018:29)

<sup>10</sup> Administrative Procedure Act, Sections 31-32

<sup>11</sup> Administrative Procedure Act, Section 33

## **Amendment of credit transfer decisions**

Until the decision has been communicated, the university may amend it. 'Communicated' here means that the decision has been sent to the student or registered in Ladok.

A student cannot both receive a passing grade for an examination and have it credited. Therefore, if a student receives a passing grade after applying for credit transfer, they must withdraw the credit transfer application for that particular examination. This withdrawal is documented in a note in Ladok and communicated to the student via email.

A decision that aligns with the student's application cannot be amended or revoked, either by the university or at the student's request. Favourable administrative decisions may only be amended if based on incorrect circumstances.

## **Correction and review**

If a credit transfer decision contains an obvious error, such as a typing or calculation mistake or similar oversight, the university may correct it. If the correction is to the student's disadvantage, the student must be given the opportunity to comment before the correction is made<sup>12</sup>.

If the university finds that a decision is obviously incorrect owing to new circumstances or for some other reason, the university shall change the decision if this can be done quickly and easily and without detriment to any individual party. This obligation applies even if the decision is appealed against unless the appellant requests that the decision be invalid until further notice. The obligation does not apply, however, if the university has submitted the documents in the matter to a higher authority or if there are otherwise special grounds for the university not to amend its decision<sup>13</sup>.

## **Appealing a credit transfer decision**

Decisions on credit transfer for previous education or professional or vocational practice may be appealed to the Higher Education Appeals Board (ÖNH)<sup>14</sup>. Decisions by ÖNH cannot be appealed further.

Appeals must be addressed to ÖNH but sent to Örebro University, Records Office, 701 82 Örebro, or emailed to [registrator@oru.se](mailto:registrator@oru.se).

Appeals must be received by the university within three weeks of the student being informed of the decision. The student must state which decision is being appealed and what change the student is requesting.

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<sup>12</sup> Administrative Procedure Act, Section 26

<sup>13</sup> Administrative Procedure Act, Section 27

<sup>14</sup> Higher Education Ordinance, Chapter 12, Section 2 and Administrative Procedure Act, Section 42

## Appeals process

1. The appeal is submitted to the university and registered in accordance with standard procedures.
2. An initial check is made to determine if there are grounds for changing the decision because it for some reasons is obviously incorrect (that is, the error is so obvious that no investigation is needed).
3. The university then checks whether the appeal was submitted within the legal time limit under the Administrative Procedure Act, that is, within three weeks of the student being informed of the decision. Late appeals must be rejected. The records office makes a note of the date of receipt.
4. If there are grounds to amend the appealed decision, a new decision must be issued amending the previous one.
5. The appeal and the decision (approval or non-approval) and all related documents, including the original decision and any new or amended decisions, must be forwarded promptly to ÖNH.
6. No new decisions or amendments may be made by the university once the case has been submitted to ÖNH.
7. When ÖNH has made its decision, it is sent to the university's records office, who forwards it to the relevant school or department.