

Rules and regulations for credit transfer in first and second cycle education

1. Introduction

Students' right to credit transfer related to studies, knowledge, and skills is regulated in the Higher Education Ordinance.¹ According to the Ordinance, a higher education institution is obliged to investigate if a student's previous education or other experience can be approved for credit transfer.

The right to credit transfer is important in several ways. For students, it increases the possibility to plan their studies and complete them faster, and student mobility is stimulated both nationally and between Sweden and the rest of the world. The opportunity to receive credit transfer for studies abroad is a foundation for the University's internationalisation efforts.

2. Definition of terms

2.1 Credit transfer

The Swedish Higher Education Authority defines credit transfer as a "Decision that a certain education, knowledge, or skills acquired in professional/vocational activities may be counted towards a course or degree".² It constitutes an acknowledgement of the knowledge and skills that an individual has already acquired.³

2.1.1. Credit transfer towards an entire course

Credit transfer towards an entire course concerns knowledge that is equivalent to an entire course and all the learning outcomes that are included in it.

2.1.2 Credit transfer towards part of a course

Credit transfer towards part of a course concerns certain education, knowledge, or skills that are equivalent to some but not all of the learning outcomes of a course. The learning outcomes that the student has achieved can be reported as completed course components.⁴

2.1.3 Credit transfer towards a degree⁵

Credit transfer towards a degree means that a student has acquired knowledge or skills that can be included in the degree that he or she pursues. One example of credit transfer towards a degree is course replacement. Decisions about course replacement are made by the programme coordinator and handled in accordance with a certain procedure.

¹ The Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100), Ch 6 Sect 6-8

² <https://www.uka.se/download/18.7391c377159bc0155b8478/1487841859995/begreppsmanual-statistik.pdf>

³ *Validering i högskolan – för tillgodoräkning och livslångt lärande*, SOU 2018:29, p. 18

⁴ For some learning outcomes, there are individual course modules for which results can be reported, while other learning outcomes may appear in several course modules or be part of a course module.

⁵ Previously called "Course replacement" at Karlstad University.

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2.1.4 Credit transfer of studies abroad

Credit transfer of studies abroad means that students who have studied abroad for a certain period may transfer these credits towards their studies at Karlstad University. If a student has studied abroad during a free semester, the results of the studies abroad are added to the degree certificate when the student applies for his or her degree.

2.1.5 Credit transfer of other education or professional/vocational activity

Credit transfer of other types of education than higher education and professional/vocational activity means that a student has acquired knowledge and skills equivalent to the content and learning outcomes of courses offered at Karlstad University or which can be included in the degree that the student pursues. The credit transfer can be reported as an entire course, as part of a course, or as general higher education credits in a subject.

2.2 Validation

Validation is a process that provides structured assessment, evaluation, and documentation as well as certification of the knowledge and competence of a person regardless of how such knowledge and competence have been acquired.⁶ At the European level, the process is divided into four separate steps: identification, documentation, assessment, and certification. Validation is the process used when a student wholly or partly refers to knowledge and skills that he or she has acquired in a professional/vocational capacity.

2.3 General higher education credits

If there is no course that corresponds to the previous learning it may be decided that the credit transfer will be reported as general higher education credits in a subject.

3. What can be subject of credit transfer?

3.1 Credit transfer for higher education

If a student at a higher education institution in Sweden⁷ has successfully completed a certain study programme, he or she has a right to transfer credits to courses and study programmes at Karlstad University, unless there is a considerable difference between the two courses of study.⁸

This also applies to students who have completed certain programmes in higher education listed in the Higher Education Ordinance, Ch 6 Sect 2.

A student has the right to transfer credits from another course of study than the ones listed if the knowledge and skills that the student refers to are generally equivalent in nature and scope to the education that the credit transfer concerns.⁹

3.2 Credit transfer for contract education

Contract education can warrant credit transfer towards higher education at the first or second cycle levels if it satisfies the same quality standards as those set for the corresponding higher education course/programme.¹⁰

⁶ The Education Act 2010:800

⁷ State universities or university colleges (Appendix 1 Higher Education Ordinance) or other educational organiser who has degree-awarding powers according to the Swedish Higher Education Authority (<https://www.uka.se/kvalitet--examenstillstand/examenstillstand/beslutade-examenstillstand.html>)

⁸ Higher Education Ordinance Ch 6 Sect 6 first paragraph

⁹ Higher Education Ordinance Ch 6 Sect 7 first paragraph

¹⁰ Contract Education Ordinance (2002:760) Sect 6 and 7

3.3 Credit transfer for other education or professional/vocational activity

A student has the right to credit transfer from other types of education or the equivalent knowledge and skills that he or she has acquired through professional/vocational activity or similar.¹¹ What is assessed is a person's overall, actual competence, what is also called prior learning, regardless of how, when, or where it was developed.

3.4 Credit transfer decided by another higher education institution

If a student has received credit transfer of certain knowledge or skills towards university-level courses or programmes at another higher education institution and requests to have the same qualifications acknowledged at Karlstad University, his or her case is assessed on the basis of the original qualifications.¹²

3.5 Credit transfer for exchange studies

If a student at Karlstad University studies abroad for a period, he or she can transfer these credits to Karlstad University.

Students who participate in an exchange programme should make a preliminary plan for their studies before they begin their exchange studies. This preliminary plan is formulated in a so-called Learning Agreement, which is drawn up for all outgoing exchange students. After completion of the exchange study period, the student applies for credit transfer and submits the Learning Agreement with the application.

A transcript of records from the host university and the Learning Agreement together constitute the basis for transfer of credits from courses taken abroad.

4. Application and process

4.1 Who can apply?

Only a student¹³ can apply for credit transfer and a student is defined as a "person admitted to and actively pursuing higher education"¹⁴. This means that it is not possible for someone to apply for credit transfer until he or she has been admitted to and commenced studies at Karlstad University. The University does not have the right to limit a student's right to apply for credit transfer only because a long time has passed since the student was registered for a course at the university.¹⁵

4.2 Documentation

4.2.1. Application for credit transfer for previous university studies

For an application for credit transfer to be processed, it must include a transcript of records, a course syllabus, and a reading list which confirm the student's previous education.

The application must also indicate the course code of the course that the student wants to be given credit towards and how many credits the student wants to transfer. If the student only wants to transfer credits for one or several course components it must be stated what course components are referred to.

¹¹ Higher Education Ordinance Ch 6 Sect 7

¹² Higher Education Appeals Board decision 2006-05-19, Reg. No. 41-329-06

¹³ Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100), Ch 6 Sect 8

¹⁴ <https://www.uka.se/download/18.7391c377159bc0155b8478/1487841859995/begreppsmanual-statistik.pdf>

¹⁵ Cf Higher Education Appeals Board decision 2008-04-11, Reg. No. 41-180-08

4.2.2 Application for credit transfer of other education or professional/vocational capacity

For an application for credit transfer of other education or professional/vocational capacity to be processed, the applicant must submit documentation of previous qualifications. The previous experiences, for instance professional skills, that the applicant wants to refer to must be documented in writing, and verified by another person. The applicant must also submit a written self-evaluation based on the learning outcomes of the course or course module together with the application.

4.3 Supplementary information

If an application is incomplete, the student is given one opportunity to supplement it. This is done through an e-mail request which specifies what is missing. The student may submit supplementary information within four weeks. The deadline for supplementation is stated in the e-mail request. If the student has not submitted supplementary information within four weeks, the application is processed on the basis of the original documentation. Supplementary information can also be provided through an interview with the student, for instance, or in any other way that the decision-maker finds relevant.

5. Assessment of credit transfer

5.1 Assessment based on course objectives

Assessment of previous education or professional/vocational activity for credit transfer is always based on the objectives of the course of study in question. The course objectives are listed in the Higher Education Act, in Appendix 2 of the Higher Education Ordinance, and in relevant programme and course syllabuses.

Assessing previous knowledge in relation to course objectives means that the way in which skills have been acquired is not decisive, but instead how well the acquired knowledge corresponds to the education in question.

5.2 Calculation of credits for transfer of completed studies at a university abroad

If the university abroad has a system for expressing the scope of study programmes similar to the Swedish credit system, that system should be used to calculate Swedish higher education credits. If the concept of a standard academic year is not used, the credits of a semester or a year are calculated as part of the sum total of credits that a degree for the programme in question involves.¹⁶

5.3 Grading in cases of credit transfer

Education that a student is given transferred credits for is not graded anew, instead the grades given by the examining university are valid. If a student has been given credits for knowledge and skills as part of a course, the examiner decides how the part that has been subject of credit transfer is assessed, based on the syllabus and grading criteria, when it is time for a final grade. Other education or knowledge acquired through professional/vocational activity is not graded.

¹⁶ This means that the sum total of credits required for a certain degree at the university abroad is divided with the number of semesters of full-time study that are required for a degree. For instance, if a study programme of 120 credits normally takes three years, it is calculated to be equivalent to 20 credits per semester.

6. Decisions on credit transfer

6.1 Acceptance

A decision of acceptance includes information on what previous qualifications have been considered for credit transfer towards what parts of the new course.

6.2 Rejection

A decision of rejection must include a clear justification of the reason.

6.3 Rejection and acceptance in the same case

The same form is used for decisions of acceptance and rejection. The decision must indicate what previous qualifications have warranted credit transfer towards what part of the new course, and what parts of the application have been rejected. A justification of the reason for rejection must be included on the form.

7. Additional information

7.1 Documentation of decisions

All cases of credit transfer are handled in the student registry system Ladok, where all the information pertaining to each case is also documented. While a case is processed, all measures taken outside Ladok (for instance contact with the student) must be documented by the responsible administrator.

If the student's application is accepted, this is documented through a credit transfer of the course component in question and a copy of the decision is uploaded in the case, which is then closed automatically in Ladok.

If the student's application is rejected, the decision is sent to the student together with an appeal instruction. A copy of the decision is uploaded in Ladok in the student's case to be documented together with the case. Notes regarding the decision and that the student has been informed of the decision are done in connection with the closing of the case. This is also true for cases when a part of the application is accepted and another part rejected. If a student appeals a decision, all documentation in the case must be kept by the Registry at Karlstad University.

7.2 Appeals

A decision about credit transfer for education or professional/vocational activity can be appealed in writing to the Higher Education Appeals Board.¹⁷ The written appeal must indicate what decision is involved, the change that is requested, and why this change is requested. It should be directed to the Higher Education Appeals Board but sent to Registrar, Karlstads universitet, 651 88 Karlstad. The appeal must reach Karlstad University within three weeks of the date that the student received notification of the decision.

¹⁷ Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100) Ch 12 Sect 2 paragraph 3