



Awarding Academic Credit

Policy Number	4-409
Responsible Authority	Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Initiating Authority	Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs
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APPLICABILITY/ACCOUNTABILITY

This policy applies to all student learning activity awarded academic credit by the University of Central Florida. The policy applies regardless of delivery format, modality, location, or provider, and pertains to regularly enrolled undergraduate and graduate (including medical) students. Where indicated, policy provisions also apply to non-degree seeking students.

POLICY STATEMENT

In accordance with institutional accreditation requirements, the University of Central Florida (UCF) is responsible for the academic quality of any credit recorded on its academic transcripts. The university follows common practice and adheres to the federal definition of the credit hour when determining the amount and level of credit to award. The university awards credit for demonstrated learning that occurs through eligible mechanisms. Eligible mechanisms available to regularly enrolled students include:

- (1) direct delivery of UCF curricula (also available to non-degree seeking students);
- (2) transfer credit from eligible institutions of higher education; and
- (3) prior learning experiences for which academic credit was not previously awarded by an eligible institution of higher education and that meet additional eligibility parameters.

Academic credit may be awarded for state-recognized or university administered credit by exam learning experiences when completed prior to the initial term of enrollment as a UCF undergraduate degree seeking student. University-administered assessments of prior learning may also be used to meet certain graduate course requirements when the learning occurs prior to the initial term of enrollment in a UCF graduate program. These assessments of prior learning will not result in an award of graduate academic credit. However, prior learning credit may be awarded for completion of non-credit bearing courses for which an undergraduate or graduate UCF course equivalent is affirmed. The non-credit bearing course (e.g., a Massive Open Online

Course; non-credit continuing education course) must be completed prior to the initial term of enrollment as a degree seeking student and must be delivered by:

- a) an eligible institution of higher education; or
- b) another entity with which the university has entered into a course articulation agreement.

At the discretion of the program, a non-credit bearing course delivered by an eligible entity for which no UCF course equivalent is identified, may be eligible to:

- a) serve as a course substitution for a program requirement; or
- b) receive UCF general elective credit

A non-credit bearing course must meet appropriate standards for content and rigor, and be accommodated by the student's UCF program of study in accordance with applicable policies concerning the maximum amount of allowable credit for prior learning. UCF does not allow for the award of academic credit for life experience or prior employment, except through the prior learning mechanisms outlined above.

In making determinations concerning the amount and level of credit to award, the university adheres to all applicable state, federal, and accreditor requirements. This includes but is not limited to Standards 9.2 and 10.7 of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges Principles of Accreditation (SACSCOC). All determinations concerning the amount and level of UCF credit awarded must be made by faculty members with appropriate disciplinary expertise. UCF official student academic records must accurately represent the faculty determinations and the type of UCF credit awarded. The total amount of allowable credits awarded for learning activity delivered by providers external to UCF, must not exceed the total amounts allowable by SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation Standards 9.4 or 9.5 or programmatic accreditor standards and policy. Prior internal and SACSCOC approvals must be obtained before initiating programming models that trigger a substantive change to the university's current scope of accreditation.

At-a-glance Eligibility

Mechanisms for Awarding UCF Academic Credit	Undergraduate Career (regularly enrolled)	Graduate Career (regularly enrolled)	Non-degree Seeking
Direct UCF Delivery	Yes	Yes	Yes
Transfer of Credit	Yes	Yes	No
Prior Learning – Credit by Exam	Yes	No	No
Prior Learning – Course Equivalent	Yes	Yes	No

DEFINITIONS

Competency. The knowledge, skill, and/or ability students are expected to master within a course or academic program. It should be clearly defined and measurable.

Competency-based Education (CBE). An outcome-based approach to education that can

utilize a variety of instructional models and assessment efforts that evaluates the student's mastery of learning outcomes. Direct Assessment CBE measures learning based solely upon student demonstration of competencies and does not utilize traditional course-based units and traditional credit hour measures of student progress. Note the additional implementation considerations for CBE at UCF below.

Credit by Examination. A mechanism used to award undergraduate academic credit for verified competencies acquired through prior learning. Specific parameters are defined in the undergraduate catalog and include acceleration exam options addressed in Florida Statute 1007.27, Florida Board of Governors Regulation 6.006 (Acceleration Mechanisms), and university-administered credit by exam options addressed in the undergraduate catalog. Current UCF graduate policy does not allow for awarding credit by exam but allows program administered assessments to satisfy course requirements, at the discretion of the academic program.

Credit Hour. The metric used to measure student progress to completion in academic programs, informing student eligibility to receive Title IV federal financial aid. In accordance with federal regulation, at UCF a credit hour is defined as an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates not less than –

1. one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or the equivalent amount of work over a different period of time; or
2. at least an equivalent amount of work as required in item 1 of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

This definition aligns with the US Department of Education's definition of credit hour articulated in 34 CFR § 600.2 and is consistent with SACSCOC's Credit Hours Policy Statement.

Direct Delivery. The instructional delivery of UCF-owned courses that are approved through the university's curriculum review processes and delivered by the university directly to regularly enrolled and non-degree seeking students. It includes course work UCF delivers to high school students through their dual UCF enrollment.

Direct Instruction. Direct instruction includes n-person and online (synchronous and asynchronous) lectures, video presentations, monitored class discussions (including online discussion boards), administered assessments of learning (e.g., quizzes, exams), as well as supervised (in-person or virtual) internships, practica, and clinical placements. Direct instruction also includes asynchronous online content modules that serve the educational outcomes of the course.

Eligible Institution of Higher Education. An institution that is a member of the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC), which includes:

- (a) Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC)
- (b) New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE)
- (c) Higher Learning Commission (HLC)
- (d) Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)
- (e) Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU)
- (f) Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC)
- (g) Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Senior College and University Commission

Eligible institutions of higher education also include non-US institutions the university determines equivalent to C-RAC recognized institutions. Additionally, in accordance with FS 1007.24(7), institutions accredited by other accrediting agencies recognized by the US Department of Education that participate in Florida's Statewide Course Numbering System, qualify as eligible for transferring credit for courses approved for inclusion in the system.

Official Academic Record. The academic transcript produced and certified by the university registrar (or in the case of the MD program, the MD program registrar) serves as the student's official permanent UCF academic record.

Out-of-class Student Work. Engagement necessitated by the course that is not direct instruction. This may include such activities as reading, researching, writing, creating, practicing, or studying to improve the knowledge, skills, and abilities expected of students completing the course.

Prior Learning Credit. The practice of awarding college-level academic credit for knowledge, skills, and abilities acquired outside a traditional post-secondary course when such competencies are measurable and determined equivalent to the level of mastery expected in a traditional undergraduate college course. While less common, UCF may award prior learning credit at the post-baccalaureate level when required parameters are met. Alternatively, demonstrated prior learning may be used to meet a course requirement without awarding credit. Competencies are typically evaluated through exams, certifications, portfolio review, or other mechanisms deemed acceptable to the institution awarding the credit and may vary by discipline, course, or other relevant factors.

Regularly Enrolled Student. A student enrolled in a UCF undergraduate or graduate degree program or graduate certificate program. Non-degree seeking students are excluded.

Transfer Credit. Credit awarded when UCF faculty members with appropriate disciplinary expertise determine a UCF course equivalent to a course or combination of courses completed for academic credit (or the international equivalent thereof) at another eligible institution of higher education. Alternatively, if more appropriate, faculty may award transfer credit if they determine the external course to meet content and rigor standards for purposes of awarding undergraduate or post-baccalaureate general elective credit. Qualified faculty may also authorize course substitutions for program requirements when deemed appropriate. Additional

parameters on transfer credit are outlined in the undergraduate and graduate catalogs.

UCF Course Equivalent. A UCF credit bearing course that is determined by appropriately qualified faculty to share substantial common content and learning outcomes with a for-credit or non-credit bearing course delivered by an external provider that complies with Florida Department of Education and UCF established course evaluation standards.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

I. Determining Amount and Level of Credit

UCF faculty members on continuing university appointments and with appropriate disciplinary expertise are responsible for creating, approving, and modifying all university curricula delivered by UCF for academic credit. Such faculty are responsible for its content, quality, and effectiveness, including the establishment of appropriate course and program competencies and student learning outcomes. The faculty are also responsible for making course level and credit hour determinations in their areas of disciplinary expertise in accordance with university definitions. They do so with respect to student learning activity completed through credit-eligible mechanisms, including evaluations of UCF course equivalents, substitutions, and general elective options. Credit hour determinations must be based upon the total amount of engaged learning time expected of a typical student in any educational setting (e.g., traditional classroom, laboratory, studios, internship or clinical setting) and for any modality of instructional delivery (in-person, online, hybrid), whether synchronous or asynchronous in design.

As outlined in the UCF Faculty Constitution and Bylaws, the appropriate faculty curriculum council or committee, along with applicable college- and department-level faculty curriculum committees are responsible for implementation and compliance oversight of faculty-led reviews and determinations of academic credit. Through shared governance processes and operating within the parameters outlined in this policy, BOG regulation, and SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation Standards 9.4 and 9.5, the appropriate faculty curriculum council or committee makes university policy recommendations to the provost and executive vice president of academic affairs or designee, establishing the maximum amount of credits eligible for internal transfer to the current UCF program of study as well as the maximum amount of allowable external transfer or prior learning credit.

II. Systems of Accountability

The university administration is responsible to support the work of the faculty by establishing systems of accountability that document evidence of faculty determinations of the amount and level of academic credit to be awarded for UCF course and program direct delivery as well as for transfer or prior learning credit. These systems and associated business processes must ensure that determinations concerning the award of UCF academic credit are made by faculty members with appropriate disciplinary expertise. The administration must maximize process efficiencies without compromising the integrity of the faculty evaluation. The provost and executive vice president for academic affairs or designee, the vice provost for academic affairs,

bears responsibility for assuring implementation and appropriate oversight of effective systems of accountability.

III. Publication of Policy and Procedures

The provost and executive vice president for academic affairs or designee(s) must assure that university policy and procedures concerning the award of transfer or prior learning credit are published on appropriate university websites and in the UCF undergraduate and graduate catalogs, including appeal procedures. The vice provost and dean of the College of Undergraduate Studies serves as designee for the undergraduate level and the vice provost and dean of the College of Graduate Studies serves as designee for the graduate level except that the dean of the College of Medicine serves as designee for the MD program.

IV. Official Academic Record

The university registrar (or the MD registrar, in the case of the MD program) bears responsibility for producing and archiving student academic transcripts, and ensuring the record accurately reflects the faculty determinations of academic credit awarded by eligible mechanisms.

V. Vetting External Entities

As appropriate to the level of academic credit under consideration, the vice provost and dean of the College of Undergraduate Studies or designee and/or the vice provost and dean of the College of Graduate Studies or designee, is/are responsible for oversight of UCF course articulation agreements with external entities, including consortia. They must therefore determine that such entities meet the criteria for an eligible institution of higher education or the non-US equivalent. Prior to entering into an articulation agreement with any other external entity, the vice provost and dean of undergraduate studies and/or the vice provost and dean of graduate studies or their respective designees, must consult with the institutional accreditation liaison or designee and others as necessary, to jointly affirm that the external entity's educational delivery model and curriculum meet all appropriate UCF, State of Florida, and accreditation standards for awarding UCF academic credit. This includes confirming the external entity's course quality and rigor is equivalent to that of a course intended for transfer at an eligible institution of higher education.

VI. Substantive Change Reporting

The following actions may trigger substantive change reporting to SACSCOC, which may require notification to or approval by the Commission prior to implementation., UCF personnel initiating such actions must receive explicit documented approval by the SACSCOC institutional accreditation liaison and other appropriate leadership (e.g., their dean) prior to implementation.

- Changing an academic program's progress to completion measure from credit hours to clock hours or any other metric.
- Offering direct delivery of competency-based education programs, whether course credit-based or direct assessment-based.
- Transcribing on the official academic record, courses delivered by external entities as UCF directly delivered courses and awarding UCF academic credit accordingly (e.g., for student exchanges); *absent required approvals, externally delivered courses should be processed as either transfer or prior learning credit.*

- Increasing or decreasing the length of time it takes (in credit hours, including course-based CBE) for a student to complete a degree or graduate certificate program by 25 percent or more credit hours and by one semester.

Initiating parties are responsible for proactively coordinating all substantive change reporting with the Academic Program Quality unit under the direction of the institutional accreditation liaison in the Office of the Provost, in accordance with timelines published on the Academic Program Quality website.

PROCEDURES

1. Courses completed via UCF direct delivery are automatically reflected on the student's official academic record along with the corresponding amount of earned academic credit.
2. Courses completed for academic credit at another eligible institution of higher education may be automatically evaluated upon a regularly enrolled student's admission to the university (undergraduate students) or graduate program. Others will require the student to initiate a transfer credit evaluation request following procedures and timelines published in the UCF undergraduate or graduate catalogs. Transfer credit determinations will normally be made within the semester the review is requested, provided all necessary documentation is provided in a timely fashion. All determinations concerning the transfer of courses not included in Florida's Statewide Course Numbering System to the student's UCF official academic record, lie solely with UCF.

Students seeking UCF academic credit for coursework completed at an institution outside of the United States that is not accredited by a C-RAC member agency, bear the responsibility and the expense of acquiring an evaluation from an entity acceptable to UCF that documents the foreign institution's equivalency to an eligible US institution of higher education as defined in this policy. Students must obtain a course-by-course evaluation that determines each course's equivalent amount and level of credit according to general US standards. Qualified UCF faculty members will then make determinations concerning whether a particular course has a UCF course equivalent or if it may qualify as a course substitution or for general elective credit.

3. UCF will automatically record prior learning credit for successfully completed state-recognized credit by exam mechanisms on undergraduate student official academic records. The number of prior learning credits awarded must not exceed allowable amounts of credit.
4. Students requesting UCF academic credit for prior learning other than that described in Item 3 above, must follow procedures to request review as outlined in the UCF undergraduate or graduate catalog, unless otherwise defined in a course articulation agreement. Procedures include requesting review and providing all requested documentation, within the timelines proscribed in the appropriate catalog. The university

may request any of the documentation listed in Item 6 below to inform its decision. If UCF academic credit is awarded, it will appear on the UCF official academic record as a form of prior learning credit. UCF credit determinations will normally be made within the semester the review is requested, provided all necessary documentation is provided in a timely fashion. These same conditions apply to instances where demonstrated prior learning is permitted to meet a course requirement, but no credit is awarded.

5. If another eligible institution of higher education awarded academic credit for initially non-credit bearing prior learning activity, including for direct assessment competency-based education, the student must submit an official transcript from the credit issuing institution reflecting the award of credit. The transferability of that work will be determined with the same evaluation processes and criteria for other transferred courses. As with all requests for transfer of courses not included in Florida's Statewide Course Numbering System, the decision to award UCF credit for such experiences lies solely with UCF. The university may request any of the documentation listed in Item 6 below to inform its decision. If UCF academic credit is awarded, it will appear on the UCF official academic record as transfer credit. UCF credit determinations will normally be made within the semester the request is submitted, provided all necessary documentation is provided in a timely fashion.
6. Requests for credit review under Items 4 or 5 above require the following documentation in accordance with published timelines:
 - (a) a syllabus for the course;
 - (b) credentials of the faculty member(s) who taught the course;
 - (c) a course description that includes course objectives and learning outcomes for the course;
 - (d) confirmation that the course was satisfactorily completed; and
 - (e) other information requested by the subject area faculty member(s) to determine demonstrated mastery of course learning outcomes. This may include a proctored testing requirement.
7. Students seeking credit for prior learning through eligible course articulation agreements under which the partner does not award recognized academic credit, must submit a request for review, following procedures and timelines published in the UCF undergraduate or graduate catalog. The request must include evidence of successful completion of the course under consideration for the award of credit. If the articulation agreement outlines the process for credit review, that process supersedes the regular process for review. UCF credit for successfully completed articulated course work will appear on the UCF official academic record as a form of prior learning credit.
8. A student wishing to appeal the university's denial of transfer or prior learning credit may submit an appeal, in writing, to the vice provost and dean of the College of Undergraduate Studies or the vice provost and dean of the College of Graduate Studies, as appropriate to the level of credit sought. The student must submit the appeal within 30 calendar days from the date the denial communication is transmitted to the student. Grade appeals for UCF delivered courses must follow the student academic appeal

process published in the *The Golden Rule*, the UCF student handbook.

Additional Implementation Considerations:

Academic Calendars

In determining the amount of credit to award, approximations of student effort are considered within the parameters of the State University System of Florida semester-based calendar set forth in BOG-8.001 (University Calendars) and UCF-2.023 (Academic Calendar). Condensed sessions within a term and other authorized exceptions must still adhere to the definition of the credit hour.

University Closures

UCF must meet its obligations under Title IV to ensure the integrity of the credit hour during university closures, emergency or non-emergency. Specifically, the university must help students achieve the full extent of the learning outcomes associated with each course. Great flexibility is permissible in the strategies used to achieve intended learning outcomes and most circumstances will allow for minor adjustments to planned instruction and engagement. For example, solutions might include converting previously planned face-to-face lessons to online learning modules or assigning additional outside readings or other out-of-class assignments in lieu of planned in-class activities. Faculty normally bear the discretion in making appropriate adjustments to their course delivery that support intended student learning and adhere to expectations concerning regular and substantive interaction in distance education articulated in 34 CFR § 600.2. Extended university closures may necessitate more significant adjustments initiated by the provost and executive vice president for Academic Affairs. If determined necessary to ensure the integrity of the credit hour, such measures may include modifications to the academic calendar and/or adding additional class meetings on weekends or otherwise.

ACE Recommendations

Successfully completed courses for which academic credit was not previously awarded by an eligible entity may be evaluated for receipt of UCF academic credit based on the recommendations of the American Council of Education (ACE) when official credentials have been properly presented. While credit may be granted when courses are determined equivalent to those offered by the university, recommendations by ACE are not binding upon the university. Even though student records may have been evaluated by another eligible institution of higher education, it is important to have official credentials sent to UCF for evaluation.

Asynchronous Personalized Adaptive Learning Courses

Any UCF course intended to be offered asynchronously as a self-paced credit-bearing course, must first be approved through faculty curriculum review as a traditional course. The faculty initiating the course must provide all standard documentation required for a traditional course, including provision of a syllabus that describes the structure of the course in a traditional format. This information must provide the basis for the faculty determination of the amount of credit to be awarded for successful completion of the course.

UCF Credit for Non-traditional Courses

This policy serves as a companion to UCF-2.036 (College Credit for Nontraditional Courses)

Prior to Initial Enrollment), which meets the university's obligation under Florida Statute 1004.0961 (Credit for online courses) and BOG-6.020 (College Credit for Online Courses Completed Prior to Initial Enrollment). It also establishes a framework and procedures for awarding UCF undergraduate or graduate academic credit for courses or other eligible prior learning experiences where credit was not previously awarded, but appropriate criteria are met.

UCF and Competency Based Education

A single course may be designed for CBE delivery (e.g., UCF courses with the adaptive learning designation) and may be eligible to receive UCF academic credit through UCF direct delivery, transfer, or prior learning mechanisms. A significant proportion of a program may be designed for CBE delivery and is potentially subject to pre-approval by SACSCOC and/or an affiliated discipline-specific accreditor. CBE programming may be built using traditional course-based units with associated credit. Alternatively, although not currently authorized at UCF, individual courses or programs may use a direct assessment approach to CBE that departs from course-based units and traditional measures of student progression (credit hours), measuring learning instead based solely upon student demonstration of competencies. Hybrid approaches to program design are also possible (albeit, also not currently authorized at UCF), combining course-based delivery (awarding credit hours) with non-course based direct assessment (no awarding of credit hours). Depending upon the proportion of a program offered using the various CBE approaches, substantive change reporting and approvals may be required prior to implementation at UCF.

RELATED INFORMATION

[Education, 34 C.F.R. § 600.2 \(2020\).](#)

[Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement](#)

[Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges Credit Hours Policy](#)

[Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges Direct Assessment Competency-based Educational Programs Policy Statement](#)

[Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards Policy and Procedure](#)

[FS 1004.096 Postsecondary credit for military training and education courses](#)

[FS 1004.0961 Credit for online courses](#)

[FS 1007.24\(7\) Statewide Course Numbering System](#)

[BOG-6.006 Acceleration Mechanisms](#)

[BOG-6.013 Military Veterans and Active Duty](#)

[BOG-6.020 College Credit for Online Courses Completed Prior to Initial Enrollment](#)

[BOG-8.001 University Calendars](#)

[UCF-2.023 \(Academic Calendar\)](#)

[UCF-2.036 \(College Credit for Nontraditional Courses Prior to Initial Enrollment\)](#)

[UCF-2.037 \(Special Provisions for Veterans and Active Duty Military Students\)](#)

CONTACTS

[Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison](#)

[Academic Program Quality](#)

[Office of the Registrar](#)

[College of Undergraduate Studies](#)

[College of Graduate Studies](#)

POLICY APPROVAL (For use by the Office of the President)	
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Initiating Authority: 	Date: <u>2023-2-8</u>
University Policies and Procedures Committee Chair: 	Date: <u>1/21/2023</u>
President or Designee:  <small>Alexander N. Cartwright 2023.02.08 13:25:03 -05'00'</small>	Date: <u>2/8/2023</u>