

Guidelines on

Transfer of Credits

Part of the Handbook for Study, Teaching, and Learning

Version 1.0

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Please note that the English version of this guideline is purely for your convenience and is not legally binding. Only the German version is legally binding.

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1. Aims and Case Groups

The main principles of recognizing assessments are:

- To prevent students from having to take an assessment they have already successfully completed again
- To avoid university capacities being used unnecessarily for repeated assessments
- To support mobility in the university system

Generally, credit transfers are relevant for five different case groups, where individuals:

- have changed course of study;
- have transferred to another university;
- have completed a stay abroad;
- are young students ("early admission");
- are enrolled in a dual degree program.

2. Legal Basis

The recognition of assessments is regulated in Section 63 a of the Higher Education Act – HEA of North Rhine-Westphalia. At RWTH, this provision is implemented in the respective examination regulations, Section 13 of the General Exam Regulations (GER), Section 16 GER LAB (Bachelor's in Teacher Training), as well as in Section 16 GER M.Ed. (Master's in Teacher Training) 2017, and Section 17 GER M.Ed. 2014.

3. Transferable Credits

Credit for courses completed at the following institutions can be transferred:

- national or nationally-recognized universities
- national or nationally-recognized vocational academies
- national or nationally-recognized foreign universities

Recognizing assessments from another course of study at the same university is not expressly mentioned in Section 63 a, (1) HEA NRW, but is understood to be implicitly included in this provision. In addition, other knowledge and qualifications may be recognized in accordance with Section 63 a, (7) HEA NRW if they are equivalent in content and level (see Point 6).

4. Procedure

4.1 Application to the Examination Board

The only way to initiate the recognition procedure is for a student to submit an application to the examination board of the course of study for which the transfer credit is sought.

The student must therefore submit appropriate documents in German or English to be reviewed to determine whether there are significant differences between the assessment that has already been taken and that which it should replace. If the submitted documents were issued in another language, the examination board may request certified translations to be included in the application. The documents must state the competences acquired in the course and the assessment(s) that were passed or completed as part of it. Appropriate examples of these documents are transcripts of records, or similar overviews of grades that have not been compiled by the student themselves, module descriptions, or other comparable documents (see Section 13, (4) GER, Section 16, (4) GER LAB, Section 16, (4) GER M.Ed. 2017, and Section 17, (4) GER M.Ed. 2014).

There is no set deadline to apply for credit transfer, so you can already submit your application together with your application for a course of study or for a higher course semester for example. A positive or negative outcome of the credit transfer request does not exclude you from applying for credit transfer for further assessments at a later date.

4.2 Sufficient Number of Assessments Left

It is only possible to recognize assessments if the student in the course of study for which credit transfer is sought still has to take or has already taken a number of credits to the extent that awarding an academic degree from RWTH is deemed justified. Usually, students must at least complete their Bachelor's or Master's thesis at RWTH.



Credit transfer for a thesis is not entirely out of the question. The student requesting this must however take or have taken assessments to an extent equivalent to the final thesis at RWTH in order to justify being awarded an academic degree from the University.

4.3 Review by the Examination Board

The examination board checks whether there are significant differences between the assessment that has been completed and the assessment it is intended to replace. This is the only case where credit transfer can be refused. The expression "significant difference" cannot be defined in abstract terms. The examination board must check whether the **content, scope, and requirements** of the competences acquired are equivalent to those of the assessment to be replaced on a case-by-case basis. A specialist for the respective course must be consulted to determine this. A purely schematic comparison is not allowed. Similarity in and of itself does not provide a sound basis for granting recognition.

The following questions help to identify whether there are any significant differences:

- What **content** is taught in the modules?
- What **learning objectives** should be achieved in the modules?
- Are the modules awarded the same or a similar **number of credit points**?
- Which **form of assessment** and **duration** are planned for the final module examinations?



If the assessments that are compared differ slightly in the credit points awarded or in their form of assessment, this does not usually constitute a reason to refuse recognition. Such a deviation may however indicate that, for example, the learning objectives of the assessment that should be replaced are not met.

Regarding the burden of presentation and proof, it should be noted that the applicant is initially obliged to submit documents that render a review for significant differences possible. If this is not the case, or the submitted documents are insufficient, the application for recognition must be rejected. If sufficiently informative documents are submitted, the burden of proof to determine any significant differences is on the examination board.

4.4 Decision

The examination board informs the student of its decision on the requested credit transfer with a notification that must include information on applicable legal remedies. If the decision is positive, a copy of the notification will also be sent to the Central Examination Office. In order for the Central Examination Office to transfer credit, the notification must contain the following information:

- The student's name and student ID number;
- The degree program which the course is granted credit for;
- Specific name of the RWTH course that will be deemed completed due to credit transfer;
- If applicable, the section it is assigned to (focus/specialization/vocational field);
- The grade or, in the case of non-comparable grading systems and ungraded work, the notification "passed" or "failed";
- The assessment date or the semester in which the work was completed (not necessary if this was undertaken before the student was enrolled in the course of study at RWTH);
- If the transferred credits do not replace a specific course in a course of study, the number of credit points and the English name of the course must also be stated.



If the examination board's decision differs in one or more points from the student's application, the actual and legal reasons which led to their conclusion must be explained. In particular, the reasons which led to the assumption of significant differences must be clarified in detail.

The decision must be made within three months of all the required documents being submitted (see Section 13, (6), sentence 3 GER, Section 16, (6), sentence 3 GER LAB, Section 16, (6), sentence 3 GER M.Ed. 2017, and Section 17, (6), sentence 3 GER M.Ed. 2014).

5. Consequences of Credit Transfer

5.1 Grade is Transferred

The course for which credit has been granted can and may no longer be taken at RWTH. The course grade will be accepted and included in the overall calculation of grades, provided that the grading systems are comparable. The recognition of qualifications is marked on the transcript of records.

5.2 Special Case: Foreign Grading Systems



Comparable foreign grading systems are listed in the Recommendation for the Conversion of Grades Gained During Study Abroad http://www.rwth-aachen.de/global/show_document.asp?id=aaaaaaaaaamlewj. The predominant grading systems of many countries have been transferred to the ten-level RWTH grading system, and are shown in a table here. The Recommendation also provides a conversion formula for all non-listed grading systems.



When grading systems are not comparable, only the note "passed" is included in the transcript of records and no grade is entered.

5.3 Classification Into a Higher Course Semester

As part of the recognition process, the examination board will also make a decision on whether to classify the student in a higher semester of study (see Section 63 a, (7) HEA NRW). According to Section 13, (3) GER, Section 16, (3) GER LAB, Section 16, (3) GER M.Ed. 2017, and Section 17, (3) GER M.Ed. 2014, students are placed in the subject semester equivalent to the number of credit points acquired via credit transfer in relation to the total number of credit points that can be obtained in the respective course of study.

Example: A student transfers from Hannover to Aachen, where they are enrolled in the Bachelor's in Mathematics (typical length of study of six semesters and a total of 180 credit points). At the beginning of their studies at RWTH, they apply for credit transfer for modules that they completed at Leibniz University Hannover, which amount to a total of 40 credit points. The respective examination board approves the credit transfer and classifies the student in the second course semester.

If credit transfer is associated with a placement in a higher semester, the Central Examination Office will send a copy of the notice of recognition to the Registrar's Office.

6. Special Case: Other Knowledge and Qualifications

Besides assessments, other knowledge and qualifications may also be recognized in accordance with the regulation stipulated in Section 63, (7) HEA NRW and Section 13, (9) GER, Section 16, (9) GER LAB, Section 16, (9) GER M.Ed. 2017, and Section 17, (9) GER M.Ed. 2014. This refers to achievements which have been demonstrated by a vocation or in vocational and further training. Recognition may be granted if the knowledge and qualifications acquired are equivalent in content and level to the assessment they are intended to replace. For example, certain components of a completed and relevant vocational training could be considered equivalent to an internship that is part of a course of study and can therefore be recognized.

It is generally inadmissible to recognize non-university skills amounting to more than half of the credit points required in a course of study.