

## **Cornell University Transfer Credit Policy for Undergraduate Students**

This policy establishes university-wide standards and methods for assigning transfer credits. It applies to all undergraduate colleges and schools of Cornell as well as any additional campus and extension sites that award transfer credit to Cornell undergraduate students. The determination of acceptability of transfer credit for coursework completed at another institution of higher learning is based on the standards set forth in this policy, as follows:

- Any U.S. institution from which transfer credit is sought must be regionally accredited by the United States Department of Education.
- Transfer credit will be awarded only upon the student's submission of a syllabus for the course for which the student is seeking credit and an official transcript from the institution at which the credit was earned.<sup>1</sup>

### **Equivalency Determinations**

- An external course is deemed equivalent to a Cornell course if it is approximately 80% similar along the dimensions of scope, content, and learning outcomes to the Cornell course to which it is being compared.
- A combination of external courses (typically, two) may provide equivalency to a single Cornell course.
- Equivalency is evaluated by the academic department/major that offers (or is the parent department of) the Cornell course in question.
- Equivalency is determined based upon a review of a course syllabus.
- Customarily, a syllabus should suffice to evaluate equivalency along the above dimensions. If a syllabus is insufficient, a student may be required to provide an annotated syllabus or course outline that furnishes more detail. In those unusual instances when it is not feasible to assess equivalency based on provided materials/information (i.e., the syllabus and, if requested, a supplemental syllabus and course outline), the course will be treated as a course without equivalency.
- Equivalency may not be denied based upon type of institutional setting (e.g., community college) or course instruction mode (e.g., online).
- If a department/major consistently applies a strict standard of giving only in-person exams in its courses, an external course could be held to an equivalent standard. If, however, a department/major is not consistent in its own application of a standard that all assessments must be held in person, then external courses could not be held to a different standard.

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<sup>1</sup> If a course has already been evaluated for equivalency at Cornell, repeat submission of a syllabus may not be necessary.

- A student who has completed a course at another institution that is determined to be equivalent to a Cornell course may elect to retake the course at Cornell, but the student may only receive academic credit for one of the two courses.<sup>2</sup>
- Once made, OUR will enter equivalency determinations into a database, currently, the Transfer Evaluation System (TES), and colleges/schools and academic departments/majors shall adopt these equivalency determinations.
- Equivalency determinations will be reviewed by the appropriate academic department/major every three years.
- If it becomes evident that a course deemed equivalent does not adequately prepare students for a higher-level Cornell course, or an external course or its Cornell equivalent has substantially changed since the equivalency evaluation, a new equivalency review may be triggered within the three-year period.
- As a rule, courses completed seven or more years ago are not eligible for transfer credit, but it will be up to the academic department/major that evaluates equivalency whether to assess the course as equivalent.<sup>3</sup> If the course is deemed nonequivalent, it is up to the college/school or program whether to grant any type of transfer credit.

### **Courses Without Equivalencies**

- Each Cornell college/school or program determines how external courses without equivalencies may be used to meet degree requirements.<sup>4</sup>

### **Minimum Transfer Grade**

- The minimum grade for transfer is C (e.g., to fulfill distribution requirements).
- A Cornell college/school or academic department/major may require a grade up to a B for an external course that a student applies towards a major, whether it be a specific course required for the major or a course that satisfies elective credits for the major, regardless of whether the same minimum grade requirement applies to an equivalent Cornell course.
- A Cornell college/school or academic department/major may not require a grade higher than either of the two minimum grades set forth above unless the Cornell course deemed equivalent is subject to the same higher-grade requirement.

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<sup>2</sup> Unless students are permitted to take the course more than once at Cornell, in which case a student may receive equivalency credit for the external course and take the course at Cornell for credit.

<sup>3</sup> For some courses, relevant content may remain largely unchanged over a long period of time. Individual departments/majors are in the best position to determine whether a course is outdated and, thus, not equivalent.

<sup>4</sup> Degree requirements are courses that fulfill requirements for a major, minor, concentration, and/or college/school distribution requirements. Some courses may count for both major and distribution requirements. Distribution requirements are college/school-specific courses required to fulfill breadth and depth requirements (each college/school defines their own).

- Courses that are ungraded or graded pass/fail or satisfactory/unsatisfactory may receive credit as long as the institution provides a written statement that the mark represents a grade of C or better.

### **Conversion of Quarter Credits**

- Quarter credits from other U.S. institutions will be converted to semester credits by multiplying the number of quarter credits by two thirds.

### **Limit to Number of Credits Transferred**

- With the exception of students in the College of Engineering and in the Department of Architecture in the College of Architecture, Art, and Planning, students are permitted to transfer up to 60 credits, including coursework and credit by exam (e.g., Advanced Placement [AP], International Baccalaureate [IB], and Cornell Advanced Standing [CASE] exams). In the College of Engineering, which requires 123-137 credits to graduate (depending on the major), students are permitted to transfer up to 66 such credits. For Architecture, which is a five-year program and requires 154 credits to graduate, students are permitted to transfer up to 64 such credits.<sup>5</sup>
- All undergraduate students, with the exception of students in the Department of Architecture, are required to complete a minimum of 60 credits at Cornell to graduate. Students in Architecture, which is a five-year program, are required to complete 90 credits at Cornell.
- First-year students may receive transfer credit for pre-matriculation coursework, subject to the limits stated above and college/school policies about the type of coursework for which transfer credits will be awarded.
- After matriculation, students who wish to enroll in courses at other institutions and transfer credits into Cornell must receive prior approval from their respective college/school or academic department/major; otherwise, they risk taking courses for which they might not receive transfer credit. The limit to transfer credits awarded, subject to the maximums stated above, is determined by the admitting college/school.
- Study abroad experiences during the fall or spring semesters that are approved by Cornell's Office of Global Learning will not count towards the transfer credit limits set forth in this policy.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> If the College of Engineering or the Department of Architecture reduces the number of credits required to graduate, the limit to the number of permissible transfer credits would be reduced accordingly (not to fall below 60 credits). In the case of Architecture, such a reduction in graduation credits would also result in a concomitant reduction of the number of credits that students are required to complete at Cornell (not to fall below 60 credits) (see next bullet).

<sup>6</sup> Students in the College of Arts and Sciences are cautioned to check with the College to determine if a particular program that they are considering has been approved by the College.

### **Independent Study and Research Courses**

- Independent study and research courses will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the relevant college/school or academic department to determine if/how a course should be awarded transfer credits.

### **Internships/Externships**

- Internships and externships should not carry credit by themselves unless they are part of a college-approved program. However, an individual student may arrange with a Cornell faculty member for an independent study, research, or other academic project to be based on the internship. Credit should be arranged within academic departmental rules for independent or directed study and should meet the usual departmental standards.
- Internal transfer students transferring from one Cornell college to another may receive transfer credit for Cornell-approved internships/externships and independent/directed study, subject to college/school rules.

### **Reserve Officers' Training Corps Courses**

- Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) courses will be assessed for equivalency by the relevant branch of Cornell ROTC. If an external course is deemed to be equivalent to a Cornell ROTC course that provides academic credit, a student shall receive academic credit for that external course. If the Cornell ROTC course does not provide academic credit, likewise, the equivalent external course shall not provide academic credit.

### **Non-transferable Courses**

- Credit is not permitted for courses that are not designed for transfer to baccalaureate degree programs at Cornell. Such courses are usually highly specialized or are vocational in nature.
- Courses not eligible for transfer include:
  - College orientation, study skills, or career development courses
  - Math courses below the pre-calculus level
  - Credits from specialized or proprietary institutions or industry-based education programs
  - Remedial or developmental courses offered for non-credit
  - Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)

Cornell colleges/schools may grant exceptions to the above list of non-transferable courses as they deem appropriate.

### **Credit by Exam**

- There are several ways to receive academic credit for non-collegiate learning experiences. Students may receive credit from standardized national exams they took in high school such as the Advanced Placement (AP) program, the International Baccalaureate (IB) program, or the General Certificate of Education Advanced Level

(GCE A-Level). If transfer course credit and standardized credit by exam result in duplicate credit, only the transfer course credits will be accepted.<sup>7</sup>

- For external transfer students, to receive credit by exam, by the last day of instruction (as indicated in the academic calendar published by OUR) of the student's first semester enrolled at Cornell, a student must:
  - contact the relevant testing agency and request that the testing agency send their scores to Cornell and
  - submit a written request to their [college/school registrar](#) that the credit earned by exam be applied to their degree requirements.

### **International Transfer of Credits**

- International coursework will generally transfer from undergraduate programs of colleges and universities recognized by a national Ministry of Education or alternative appropriate accrediting organization, including regional accreditation from the U.S. Credit for coursework taken at other institutions will be transferred subject to the following considerations:
  - The mission of the institution. Credit normally is not transferred from specialized or proprietary institutions, military schools, or industry-based education programs.
  - The equivalency of courses to Cornell courses based upon the criteria listed above in the "Equivalency Determinations" section.
  - The appropriateness of the coursework for meeting baccalaureate degree requirements at Cornell.
- Cornell accepts a broad range of academic courses; however, remedial, English as a Second Language (ESL), and international military courses are not transferable. English courses from abroad must be evaluated by the Department of Literatures in English based on course syllabi.

### **Grade Records**

- A student's transfer grade point average (GPA) is not computed into their Cornell GPA.
- Transfer courses, credits, and grades will not appear on the Cornell transcript.
- The name of a student's transfer institution and total transfer credits accepted by Cornell will appear on the transcript.

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<sup>7</sup> Cornell also offers a Cornell Advanced Standing Examination (CASE exam) in some academic areas. These proficiency examinations and special examinations for credit are at the discretion of academic departments. Students who pass the department-specific exam may receive credit for or place out of the respective Cornell course.

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