



## Rules for credit transfers

**Reg. no.:** 4315-1.1.2-2019

**Decided by** the vice-chancellor, 25 February 2020

**Valid from:** 25 February 2020

**Replaces:** Rules for credit transfers at Södertörn University, reg. no. 1331/1.1.2/2014

**Appendix:** Routines for credit transfer applications and processing for staff and students

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## 1. Background

### 1.1 What is a credit transfer?

A credit transfer decision means that a specific course, or skills or knowledge acquired through work or similar activities, may be included as part of another course or programme. A credit transfer decision is a recognition of the skills and knowledge that a person already possesses. The purpose is that students should not need to take equivalent courses and can thus reduce their time in education. The right to a credit transfer is therefore very important for an individual's opportunities to continue studying and to promote mobility and lifelong learning. Adapting education based upon what the individual already knows is important for the efficient use of resources.<sup>1</sup>

### 1.2 Regulations on credit transfer

Chapter 6, Section 1 of the Swedish Higher Education Ordinance contains provisions on education at the first, second and third cycles.<sup>2</sup> Credit transfer is regulated in sections 6–8 of this chapter.

Södertörn University's local rules for credit transfers are also based upon:

- Förordning (2002:760) om uppdragsutbildning vid universitet och högskolor [Ordinance on Contract Education at Universities and University Colleges]
- Rekommendationer om tillgodoräknande av utländsk högskoleutbildning i grundutbildningen [Recommendations on credit transfer for foreign higher education at first cycle level] from the Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions (SUHF) reg. no. 27/99.
- Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region – the Lisbon Recognition Convention
- The Reykjavik Declaration

## 2. CONTENT OF REGULATIONS ON CREDIT TRANSFER

### 2.1 Chapter 6, Section 6 of the Higher Education Ordinance on credit transfer

*If a student at a higher education institution in Sweden has successfully completed a higher education course or study programme, she or he is entitled to transfer the credits awarded for a course or study programme at another higher education institution. This does not apply, however, if there is a substantial difference between these courses or study programmes.*

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<sup>1</sup> *Validering i högskolan – för tillgodoräknande och livslångt lärande. Delbetänkande av Valideringsdelegationen 2015-2019 sou-2018:29.pdf*

<sup>2</sup> Chapter 6, Higher Education Ordinance SFS 1993:100

*The same applies for students who have successfully completed a course or study programme: 1. at a university or higher education institution in Denmark, Finland, Iceland or Norway or a signatory to the Council of Europe's Convention of 11 April 1997 on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Swedish Treaty Series 2001:46), or 2. at Nordiska högskolan för folkhälsovetenskap (NHV — The Nordic School of Public Health). Ordinance (2006:1053).*

#### 2.1.1 Comment on Section 6

For credit transfers of Swedish or European higher education, Section 6 is what will generally be applied. Under this provision, the university must demonstrate that there is a significant difference between the course or programme in the application and the course or programme to which the credits should be transferred.

### **2.2 Chapter 6, Section 7 of the Higher Education Ordinance on credit transfer**

*A student is entitled to transfer credits from a course or study programme other than that laid down in Section 6 if the nature and extent of the knowledge and skills cited by the student are such that they correspond on the whole to the course or study programme for which the credits are to be recognised. A student may also be given credit for corresponding knowledge and skills acquired in a vocational or professional capacity. Ordinance (2006:1053).*

#### 2.2.1 Comment on Section 7

Under Section 7, a student may also have the right to transfer the credits from education other than that mentioned above. A student may also be given credit for equivalent knowledge and skills that were acquired in a vocational or professional capacity.<sup>3</sup> When applying Section 7, the applicant must demonstrate that the claimed knowledge and skills generally correspond to the course to which they are intended to be credited. For credit transfers of courses that do not have a direct equivalent at Södertörn University, or if the content of the syllabuses and reading lists does not entirely correspond to the university's, a liberal interpretation must be applied.<sup>4</sup>

For higher education at Södertörn University, there are no specific provisions in the Higher Education Ordinance that regulate credit transfers from one course to another at the same university. However, common practice is that students have the right to have applications for such credit transfers assessed. This assessment is made using the rules in Section 7, i.e. through an evaluation of whether the course taken by the student is generally equivalent to the course against which the application is being assessed.

### **2.3 Chapter 6, Section 8 of the Higher Education Ordinance on credit transfer**

*The higher education institution shall assess whether credits can be awarded for the prior course or study programme or professional or vocational experience. Credits may only be*

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<sup>3</sup> See sh.se: Information on credit transfers for prior learning as part of courses or programmes, reg. no. 4290-1.1.2-2020.

<sup>4</sup> Read more under item 6.2

*awarded to those who are students unless otherwise provided by statute or ordinance. Ordinance (2010:1064).*

### 2.3.1 Comment on Section 8

The university is obliged to assess an application for credit transfer submitted by a student. Credits may only be awarded to those who are students, unless otherwise provided by statute or ordinance. That a course can be included in a degree without a credit transfer is not a reason for rejecting an application.

## **2.4 Definition of a student, Chapter 1, Section 4 of the Higher Education Ordinance**

*In this ordinance 'student' refers to those who have been admitted to and pursue higher education studies, 'third-cycle student' to those who have been admitted to and pursue third-cycle studies, in both cases in so far as not otherwise specifically stated. Ordinance (2006:1053)*

### 2.4.1 Comment on the term 'student'

The Higher Education Appeals Board writes in its decision (reg. no. 41-180-08) that "There is no support in legislation or in common practice to show that only the aspect of time is decisive in when a person is no longer considered to be studying and thus no longer a student. There can be many reasons why studies can be delayed without being concluded. In the opinion of the board, in addition to time, there must generally be some additional circumstance for a person to be considered as no longer studying... What this additional circumstance, other than time, may be, must therefore be assessed from case to case."

## **2.5 Ordinance on Contract Education at Universities and University Colleges, Section 7<sup>5</sup>**

*A person who has completed contract education such as that stated in Section 6<sup>6</sup> is entitled to have it credited as higher education at first or second cycle levels. Ordinance (2007:424).*

### 2.5.1 Comment on credit transfers from contract education

Contract education may have credits transferred to higher education at first or second cycle levels, provided that the contract education fulfils the same quality requirements as those for the equivalent higher education. One condition for contract education being considered as having the same quality as first and second cycle education is that there are course/programme syllabuses and that examiners are appointed in the same way as for first and second cycle education.

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<sup>5</sup> SFS 2002-760

<sup>6</sup> *(legal text) Section 6 Participants in contract education may be awarded grades and certificates under the provisions for higher education at first and second cycle levels, if the same demands for quality are placed on the contract education as for the equivalent higher education. This applies even if the participants are not eligible for higher education. Ordinance (2007:424).*

## **2.6 Recommendations from the Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions**

The Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions (SUHF, reg. no. 27/99) writes in its recommendations, *Rekommendationer om tillgodoräknande av utländsk högskoleutbildning i grundutbildningen [Recommendations on credit transfer for foreign higher education at first cycle level]*, that the right to transfer credits is important in promoting lifelong learning, mobility within Sweden and between countries, and in association with the university's work on internationalisation. SUHF also states that universities must have a generous approach to credit transfers. For example, credit transfers must be possible even if a similar course is not available at the home university or if the content of syllabuses and reading lists from the foreign studies is not entirely the same as the home university's. SUHF's guidelines are intended as a complement to Chapter 6 of the Higher Education Ordinance regarding foreign higher education and as a university's lowest common denominator on these issues.

## **2.7 The Lisbon Recognition Convention**

The Lisbon Recognition Convention entails recognition of higher education certifications in the European region, i.e. countries who have signed it must recognise each other's courses/programmes for access to education, credit transfers for study periods and admission to continued studies. These principles on mutual recognition of higher education are now incorporated in the Higher Education Ordinance.

## **2.8 The Reykjavik Declaration**

The Reykjavik Declaration is a Nordic declaration on the recognition of certification for higher education. It is based upon the Lisbon Recognition Convention and aims to facilitate the Nordic countries' cooperation on credits transfers for study periods, among other things.

# **3. APPEALS**

## **3.1 Higher Education Appeals Board**

The university's decisions on credit transfers for course/programmes or professional activities can be appealed to the Higher Education Appeals Board.<sup>7</sup>

Decisions by the Higher Education Appeals Board cannot be appealed.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100), Chapter 12, Section 2, item 4.

<sup>8</sup> Higher Education Ordinance, Chapter 12, section 5.

## 4. APPROACH TO CREDIT TRANSFERS

### 4.1 The university's approach to credit transfers

Södertörn University follows the recommendations from the Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions (SUHF) and aims to promote a generous approach to credit transfers for education from other education providers (in Sweden or abroad).<sup>9</sup>

## 5. LOCAL RULES FOR CREDIT TRANSFERS

### 5.1 Advance notification about credit transfers

Södertörn University is not obliged to provide advance notification about credit transfers to a person who is not a student at the university.<sup>10</sup> By advance notification, the university means preliminary, non-binding information and advance assessment of a potential credit transfer. Advance notification is always linked to the specific conditions that apply at the time of the request. A positive notification only entails that, in circumstances equivalent to those the student describes in their request for advance notification, a credit transfer can probably occur. For a decision on credit transfer, the course must be completed by the student with a minimum pass grade, and the student must be admitted to the equivalent course at Södertörn University. The university investigates and decides each individual case when an application for credit transfer is submitted. The employee who decides on the credit transfer also provides the preliminary information and advance assessment.

Some specific rules apply to advance notification to students who will travel abroad to study under the auspices of Södertörn University. Cf. item 7.

### 5.2 Applying for a credit transfer

See the appendix to this document: *Routines for credit transfer applications and processing for staff and students.*

### 5.3 Requirements for documentation by the applicant

See the appendix to this document: *Routines for credit transfer applications and processing for staff and students.*

### 5.4 Courses at other education providers

If a student has studied specific courses at a Swedish or foreign education provider, and passed these courses, they may have the credits transferred to higher education at Södertörn University. The basic rule is that the courses must be complete and completed in the Ladok study documentation system. Parts of courses may be included in a programme if

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<sup>9</sup> Read more in Government Bill 2004/05:162, *Ny-värld-ny-högskola*

<sup>10</sup> Higher Education Ordinance SFS 1993:100 Chapter 6, Section 8 and Chapter 1, Section 4.

the module can be clearly defined, i.e. is a subject defined from the other modules with a separate examination for that module (also includes parts of courses from a larger incomplete course).<sup>11</sup>

A student's course/s (complete and/or modules) from other education providers may be included in the degree certificate without a formal credit transfer procedure if, at the time of applying for the degree, the student requests/fulfils the requirements for this.

A student who wants to have credits transferred for a course/module to another equivalent course/module must apply for this at the university and have the case assessed. Applications may not be rejected with reference to the second paragraph of 5.4.

### **5.5 Overlapping courses**

Courses for which the applicant wants the credits transferred may not overlap the applicant's previous merits that will be included in the same qualification. This means that the content of the courses being assessed may not wholly or partly overlap with already completed studies/courses at Södertörn University.

### **5.6 Language studies**

Studies in another country in a language that is Swedish, or an A, B or C language in Swedish upper secondary education, must have the credits transferred to a general qualification if it can be proved that the studies are at a level above that of Swedish upper secondary education and correspond to higher education.<sup>12</sup>

### **5.7 Approved courses/modules for which credits are awarded**

Only documented courses for which credits are awarded and have been assessed with at least a pass result can be considered for credit transfers. This applies to complete courses and to modules.

### **5.8 Grades on courses/modules for which credits have already been transferred**

Students who will have credits transferred from another academic school or from another education provider in Sweden must retain their original grades, provided that the grading scales are compatible.

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<sup>11</sup> Decision of the Higher Education Appeals Board reg. no. 243-228-14

<sup>12</sup> Recommendations reg. no. 27-99\_2000-03-24.pdf

## 6. ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATIONS FOR CREDIT TRANSFERS

### 6.1 Assessments of applications for credit transfers of Swedish or foreign higher education<sup>13</sup>

The scope and level of the studies must be comparable.

The assessment of whether the credits for a specific course or programme can be transferred does not primarily entail a course for course comparison. Instead, the intended learning outcomes for the course must be the decisive criteria for a credit transfer.

### 6.2 Assessment of an application for the credit transfer of professional experience/other education/prior learning<sup>14</sup>

The concept of validation of prior learning is used for the credit transfer of professional experience and education other than higher education. The concept of prior learning stands for the collected competence possessed by a person, regardless of whether they have formal proof of it or not. An assessment can therefore be made in association with the evaluation of eligibility and credit transfers. Someone who wishes to have education (other than first-cycle courses and programmes) and/or professional experience assessed for a credit transfer must, in their application, describe in detail this education and/or the knowledge and skills they acquired professionally. As far as possible, these descriptions must be documented with certificates, grade transcripts or similar. A decision is made through assessment by the relevant academic school. According to the recommendations of the Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions (SUHF)<sup>15</sup>, credit transfers must not be affected by how this professional experience was gained (e.g. through temping, internships, part-time work).<sup>16</sup>

### 6.3 Guiding decisions from the Higher Education Appeals Board (ÖNH)

ÖNH's website presents guiding decisions on credit transfer cases.<sup>17</sup>

## 7. FOREIGN STUDIES

### 7.1 Learning Agreement

Outgoing exchange students must always know which foreign studies can have the credits transferred before their outbound travel. This is ensured by the applicant completing a

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<sup>13</sup> Refers to Higher Education Ordinance, Chapter 6, Section 6

<sup>14</sup> Refers to Higher Education Ordinance, Chapter 6, Section 7

<sup>15</sup> Recommendations *Rekommendationer om tillgodoräkande av utländsk högskoleutbildning i grundutbildningen [Recommendations on credit transfer for foreign higher education at first cycle level]*

<sup>16</sup> See sh.se: Information on credit transfers for prior learning as part of courses or programmes, reg. no. 4290-1.1.2-2020.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.onh.se/avgoranden/tillgodoraknande.html>

Learning Agreement. For a Learning Agreement to be approved by a higher education institution, the student must be able to submit the syllabuses and reading lists.<sup>18</sup>

Courses that are approved via a Learning Agreement must have the credits transferred to Södertörn University on the student's return, provided that the student has passed the courses. This must be done without the student being required to present course documentation again. However, the student must apply for the credit transfer of courses studied when abroad.<sup>19</sup>

Courses at foreign higher education institutions must normally generate credits, be at a specific level and accepted by the person who decides on credit transfers before studies commence.<sup>20</sup>

Every change to the choice of course while studying abroad must be approved by the home university to guarantee that credits can be transferred on the student's return.<sup>21</sup>

If possible, students who intend to study abroad as freemovers (outside an exchange agreement) should also have a Learning Agreement.

## **7.2 ECTS credits and Swedish credits when studying abroad**

For credit transfers from universities that use ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) credits, one year of full-time study according to the standards of the host university is equivalent to 60 Swedish credits. When converting freestanding course, 1.5 ECTS credits are the same as 1.5 credits.

For other universities, which do not use the ECTS but which have a system for stating the scope of studies in credits or similar, a conversion is made using the host university's standards for full-time study. If the foreign university does not have credits or similar associated with studies, then one year of full-time study will normally be equivalent to 60 credits (40 weeks).

## **7.3 Complementary studies abroad**

Complementary studies do not need to be equivalent to a course at Södertörn University and could also be studies in subjects that are not offered by Södertörn University.

Complementary studies can either be transferred as credits in a subject or as credits in a disciplinary domain (Humanities – Arts or social science, natural science, technology – Science).

## **7.4 Grades for foreign studies**

Study performance must be graded by the foreign higher education institution, but this is not translated when the credits are transferred. If the grade for a credited component is decisive

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<sup>18</sup> Application form, LearningAgreement

<sup>19</sup> Ansökan-Tillgodoräknande-av-utländska-högskolestudier-eller-breddningsstudier

<sup>20</sup> Vem-beslutar-vad-utlandsstudier-tillgodoräknanden-en-tabell

<sup>21</sup> Form-changes-to-the-original-agreed-study-programme-learning-agreement

for the final grade, the foreign grade from the original document may be weighed in when grading.

### **7.5 Conditions for approval of non-Nordic higher education**

- That the course/programme is government funded, recognised by the government or under government supervision.
- That the course/programme is recognised by a regional authority that the government has tasked with the recognition of education.
- That the course/programme is recognised by an organisation that the government has tasked with accrediting education, or by a generally accepted accreditation body.
- That the course/programme has been held as part of Södertörn University's cooperation agreement/exchange agreement.

## **8. WHERE DECISIONS ARE MADE**

### **8.1 Local credit transfers**

Local credit transfers may involve a subject at Södertörn University where the level, scope and content of the studies will be assessed, or moving a component from one course to another, both studied at Södertörn University. The decision is made at the academic school where the applicant is studying. (See also paragraph two under heading 2.2.1.)

### **8.2 National credit transfers**

National credits transfers may involve course(s) or parts of course(s) from one Swedish higher education institution that will replace part of an existing course or, in some cases, an entire course at Södertörn University. The decision is made at the academic school where the applicant is studying.

### **8.3 International credit transfers that are not complementary studies**

International credit transfers can be for foreign studies that will replace one or more parts of an existing course at Södertörn University. In some cases, the foreign courses may be equivalent to an entire course at the university.<sup>22</sup>

### **8.4 International credit transfers, complementary studies**

International credit transfers for complementary studies may apply to studies that are intended to be part of a degree programme but which do not need to be equivalent to a

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<sup>22</sup> See table: Vem-beslutar-vad-utlandsstudier-tillgodoräknanden-en-tabell

subject at the university or be at a specific level. In these cases, assessments are made based on the scope and character of the studies.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> See table: Vem-beslutar-vad-utlandsstudier-tillgodoräknanden-en-tabell