



Athabasca University

OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR

Transfer Credit Services

# Course and Program Review Guide

Version 1.0  
February 26, 2013

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## Introduction

### The Big Picture

Athabasca University “ .... provides undergraduate degree completion opportunities for university transfer students and college diploma graduates through credit coordination, credit transfer ...” (AU website: <http://www.athabascau.ca/aboutau/mission.php>) . As such AU is an active member of the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT) and the British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) as well as a signatory to the Pan Canadian Protocol. Each “CAT” and the Protocol bring with them roles and responsibilities that guide AU in the awarding of transfer credit and have contributed to the development of the Undergraduate Transfer Credit Policy (September 1, 2006).

### Statistics

The articulations unit completes about 1800 individual student course reviews, 500 ACAT/BCCAT course reviews and 150 program reviews in a year.

The evaluations unit typically does on average 6500 evaluations per year.

About AU students: ( from AU website: <http://www.athabascau.ca/aboutau/glance.php>)

The average undergraduate student is 29; the average graduate student, 39.

- 83 per cent work while they study.
- 67 per cent are women.
- 50 per cent of graduates support dependents.
- 70 per cent of graduates are the first in their family to earn a university degree.

### The Details

Within AU, transfer credit is handled by the “Transfer Credit Services” area in the Office of the Registrar and consists of two units; the Evaluations unit and the Articulations unit. The Evaluations unit applies the transfer credit to the students file and the Articulations unit facilitates the review process between the Faculty and the Office of the Registrar and keeps track of decisions. This training document will provide information regarding the following:

- Roles/Responsibilities
  - Athabasca University
  - Evaluations unit
  - Articulations unit
  - Faculty (Course Coordinators, Program Directors, Centre Chairs, Deans)
- Workflow/Process
  - Course Outline Review
  - Program Outline Review (precedent setting)

- Program Outline Review (non-precedent setting, I.e. student reviews)
- Guidelines to determine transfer credit
  - Individual Course reviews
  - Program reviews
- Frequently Asked Question's
- Policies

## Roles/Responsibilities

### Athabasca University

Has a responsibility to students to co-ordinate credits and offer degree completion routes. We also have a responsibility to both ACAT and BCCAT members to review in good faith and record transfer credit decisions, adhering to best practices where possible.

AU is a signatory to the Pan-Canadian Protocol which has the following as its objective:

“To have all degree-granting institutions in Canada approve, adopt and implement by September 1, 1995, a pan-Canadian protocol providing for the transferability of first- and second-year university courses (including the final year of studies leading to a diploma of college studies (DCS) in Quebec and the university transfer courses offered by community colleges and university colleges in British Columbia and Alberta).”

### Transfer Credit Services Area

- *Institution Acceptability*

The staff members in both the articulations unit and the evaluations unit are responsible for determining whether an institution is acceptable or not. The criteria used are outlined in section 1 of the [Undergraduate transfer credit policy](#). The acceptability has already been determined prior to sending a course or program for review.

Institutions that do not fall under the guidelines provided in the Undergraduate Transfer Credit policy can be reviewed under the [Approval of Non-Collegiate Organization Policy](#). This policy allows for institutions that are not otherwise accepted for transfer credit to be approved as eligible to submit transfer credit and articulation agreement requests.

- *Evaluations Unit*

The staff in the evaluations unit assesses the previous post secondary courses/programs for AU program students to determine their eligibility for transfer credit, how much and how it's applied. They use established transfer agreements from a variety of sources: ACAT, BCCAT and

AU databases to aid in their decision making. They are responsible for applying the credit to a student's file; this requires a great understanding of program regulations (including stale dating rules), AU courses, policies, etc. They also are responsible for reviewing the student's file upon application for graduation to determine if program requirements have been met.

During the evaluation process the Evaluations unit looks at:

- Institution acceptability
- Degree regulations - which includes looking at:
  - Stale dating – need to consider stale dating rules that are in place for the program that the student is in. If there are no stale dating rules (e.g. BGS) then the credit is applied. If there are stale dating rules the evaluations unit will determine if the student has met the requirements to waive stale dating (e.g. current in the field) based on the degree regulations.
  - Post diploma vs regular route (Block credit vs course by course credit)
  - Course fit – transfer credit must fit in the students program to be awarded.
  - Not to takes (see definitions) – recorded as “Do not register”.
  - Exemptions (see definitions).
- Exceptions – any exceptions made for this student/program/course are recorded

The evaluations unit will send program Directors requests (via email) for transfer credit or admission decisions for individual students, these are considered non-precedent setting decisions. Included with the request will be the students' transcript(s) and any relevant information the student has provided.

- *Articulations Unit*

The articulations unit is responsible for the acquisition of precedent setting transfer credit decisions for both programs and individual courses that are then recorded in AU's Student Information System (Banner) and are viewable and searchable on the Transfer Credit Services website (TCAS: <https://secure3.athabascau.ca/tcas/>). These decisions are used by the Evaluations unit to apply transfer credit to a student's file. This unit also monitors and processes requests made through the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfers (ACAT) and the British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfers (BCCAT) systems.

The Articulations unit facilitates the review process for AU Faculty to determine transfer credit. This involves obtaining all the necessary documentation and sending to the appropriate Faculty member. The Articulation unit staff are required to be familiar with AU program regulations, they maintain several databases with precedent setting decisions as well as have an in-depth knowledge of the Undergraduate Transfer Credit Policy, ACAT best practices, BCCAT best practices, and the Pan Canadian Protocol.

## **Faculty (Course Coordinators, Program Directors, Centre Chairs, Deans)**

As the Academic experts, Faculty are required to review the documentation sent to them and determine transfer credit, request additional information if required and respond to requests in a timely manner. Faculty are responsible for reviewing educational content, evaluating instructor credentials (see section 2.20) [Undergraduate Transfer Credit Policy](#), determining the level of a course, direct course equivalencies or assigning unspecified credit.

- *Course Coordinator*

The Course Coordinator is responsible for determining the transfer credit for a particular course that is sent to them as long as it falls within their area of expertise (a specific course they are responsible for e.g. MATH 215, or a generic course in the same discipline e.g. MATH 2XX).

The articulations unit matches the incoming course outline as closely as possible to the AU course syllabus and sends it to the appropriate Course Coordinator. We are not always able to find an exact match for the incoming course outline which may result in you having to return it to the Articulations unit. In these cases if you have a suggestion on who might be better able to review the course please send this information back with the outline.

- *Program Director*

The Program Director is responsible for reviewing and recommending transfer credit (usually block transfer) at the program level rather than for individual courses.

- *Centre Chair*

The Centre Chair is considered the second sign off on a transfer credit decisions and has the authority to override previous decisions. Centre Chair sign off is not required by all Faculties.

- *Dean*

The Dean becomes involved when there is a disagreement in the transfer credit decision and is responsible for dispute resolution.

## **Course Reviews**

### **Course acceptability**

By the time a course outline gets to a Course Coordinator it has already gone through a review to determine if it has enough of the required information for Faculty to make a decision. The following is a list of what we require on the outline:

- Name of institution
- Course name, number, and year completed
- Course objectives
- Detailed outline
- Length of course (weeks, months)
- Hours per week of lecture (laboratory/tutorial/seminar/studio work)
- Method of evaluation
- Method of grading
- Textbooks used
- Content of assignments
- Weighing of assignments
- Credential of instructor(s) – including area of discipline/specialization
- Prerequisite or co-requisite course titles (if any)
- Credit value

There are times when the articulations unit will send an incomplete outline for review; this will occur when numerous attempts have been made to secure a proper outline but it is simply not available. This will be noted in the TCPR and the Course Coordinator will be asked if they can make a decision based on the minimal information provided, often these decisions are considered “non-precedent setting”.

The Articulations unit also reviews the outline and compares against the students transcript (if available) to determine the credit value and/or contact hours.

- Course outlines received directly from the institutions through the ACAT or BCCAT system may vary from the “typical” course outlines that students provide. They may appear to be more of a guideline document and may sometimes be lacking specific information. They may not contain the Instructor Name or Credentials but as members of the Council on Admission and Transfers (CAT) they have agreed to meet the best practices as outlined by each respective CAT. These outlines are more generic due to nature of the BCCAT/ACAT systems. BCCAT/ACAT contacts are sometimes able to provide this additional information and as members we have established that (in most cases) they have met the required standards.

#### Transfer Credit Proposal Review (TCPR's)

Individual course reviews are normally sent to the Course Coordinator from the Articulations unit. These courses could originate from an evaluation being done for a particular student, a student on a Letter of Permission, ACAT, BCCAT or other external institutions for which we are doing a program review or reviewing individual courses. A Transfer Credit Proposal Review (TCPR) form is sent electronically as an email template:

*Subject Line: INSTITUTE, COURSE CODE, TCPR (ID# or ACAT or BCCAT or PROGRAM)*

Hello (COURSE COORDINATORS NAME),

Attached you will find the course outline for (COURSE CODE & TITLE) from (INSTITUTION NAME). Please indicate your transfer credit award electronically by selecting "Forward", filling out the appropriate information below and then sending to your Centre Chair. Please 'cc' articulate@athabascau.ca so we are able to track the progress of the review. Your email will be considered your digital signature.

The Office of the Registrars preliminary review suggests the following: (COURSE CODE & CREDIT VALUE).

PLEASE NOTE: The AU professor (Course Coordinator) is responsible for determining the appropriate transfer credit.

These awards will be considered precedent setting unless otherwise stated.

All reviews must be returned to the Office of the Registrar WITHIN TWO WEEKS.

If you require some assistance in determining transfer credit for this course, please refer to the guidelines at:

<http://intra.athabascau.ca/registry/TCPFGuidelines.htm>

Complete ONE of Section A or B:

**SECTION A: ESTABLISH CREDIT**

Choose one:

1. Credit to be awarded:

2. Recommend the following unspecified credit award:

(indicate subject, year level and credit value - i.e. ACCT 2XX (3))

•Also, students should NOT register in the following AU course (s):

**SECTION B: CREDIT DENIED**

Choose one:

1. Additional information required before final recommendation can be made (please specify):

2. No transfer credit recommended (detailed explanation MUST be provided):

A course description/outline, which has been supplied by the institution offering the course, is always sent with the TCPR Form. You are asked to review this information and recommend appropriate



transfer credit. If additional information is required, please specify and the Office of the Registrar will ask the sending institution or student to provide this information. Please note that in some instances it is not possible to obtain additional information and a decision must be made with the information provided. If you are recommending that no transfer credit be awarded, please explain why as we are required to provide the reason for this decision to the sending institution and to the student.

#### **Reasons why a course would not be sent to Faculty:**

- Incomplete course outline – request is sent back to originator to provide more detail
- Course does not have enough lecture hours
- Course is considered a zero credit course at the home institution
- Institution is not accepted at AU
- Course is clearly not at the University level, e.g. Keyboarding

#### **Reasons why a course would be denied credit by Faculty**

- The Academic content is not sufficient to warrant University level transfer credit (i.e. Not University level).

Any other reason will be questioned by the Articulations unit and Faculty will be asked to provide a clear rationale that can be provided to the student or Institution.

#### **Reasons why a transfer credit decision would be questioned by the Articulations Unit**

- Denying credit for University courses – a course offered at a University should be considered “University level” – exceptions do exist.
- Courses denied because AU does not have a direct equivalent, we are able to award unspecified credit.
- Course is too old, some programs do not have stale dating; stale dating is applied by the Evaluations unit at the time of the evaluation. If the Course Coordinator does not wish to award a specific credit, unspecified credit can be awarded.
- Credit award has changed with no clear rationale for the change.

#### **Level of Credit**

Faculty are responsible for determining the level of the course presented to them. Generally we can tell the level by looking at the numbering system; ie 100 = first year; 200 = second year; 300 = third year; 400 = fourth year. This isn't always the case however as there are many different numbering systems throughout the post secondary world. There are also differences between the different types of institutions (college vs. university). When presented with a course it is good to look at a number of criteria:

- What type of institution is the course coming from (college, university, professional designation, etc.)?
- Where does this course fit in the program at the home institution? Would that year be considered junior or senior level?
- Does this course have pre-requisites?
- How does the content align with the AU course?

As reference AU's undergraduate course numbering system has four levels :

- 100 level courses, e.g., ENGL 140, are preparatory level courses. Preparatory courses (designated by a number in the 100s) prepare students for university-level study in disciplines that require a high-school background.
- 200 level courses, e.g., BIOL 204, are junior level courses. Junior courses (designated by a course number in the 200s) are usually introductory or survey courses and are equivalent to first-year courses at most universities.
- 300 and 400 level courses are senior level courses. Senior courses (designated by a course number in the 300s or 400s) require a background of university learning and usually specify a junior course as a prerequisite.

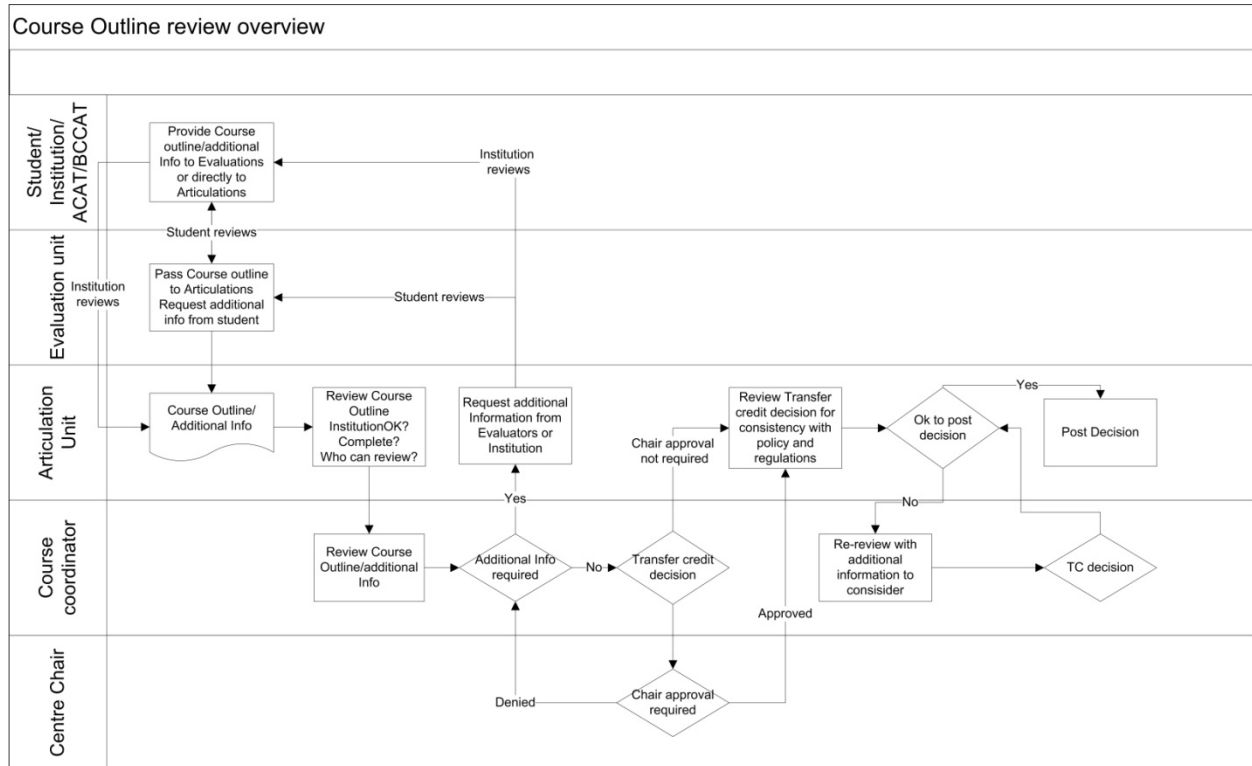
#### **Recording of Credit Awards (Unspecified credit)**

- As with AU courses, the level of transfer credit is recorded using the first numeric digit of the course code. For transfer credit, "X"s are used as the second and third digits of the course code to indicate that there is no direct AU course designation which corresponds to the transfer credit. The credit weight is indicated in brackets following the course code. Thus:
- FREN 1XX (3) = 3 credits in French at the Preparatory (100) level.
- ADMN 2XX (6) = 6 credits in Administration at the Junior (200) level.
- POLI 3XX (3) = 3 credits in Political Science at the Senior (300) level.
- ORGB 4XX (3) = 3 credits in Organizational Behaviour at the Senior (400) level.
- Please follow this format and indicate the specific year level in any recommendation you make.
- For courses that could cover more than one area of study and the award is unspecified credit, please indicate the area the credit should be applied to. For example: An award for GEOG 2XX (3) can be applied to either science or social science.
- After evaluating the course and providing your recommendation, please return the form to your Centre Chair (if required) for signature.

# Course Review General Guidelines

## Workflow/Process

### Course Outline Reviews (precedent setting decisions, ACAT and BCCAT)



- *Faculty steps*
  1. Receive the TCRP (the review should be completed within 2 weeks)
  2. Read the “Office of the Registrar’s Preliminary review suggestion” and following notes/history.
  3. Open and review the attached course outline.
  4. Determine:
    - a. what credit should be awarded, or
    - b. if additional information is required, or
    - c. if the course should be denied.
  5. Award, deny, or request additional information as appropriate with detailed reasoning (clearly stated in the email).
  6. Return review to the Articulations Unit ([articulate@athabascau.ca](mailto:articulate@athabascau.ca)) cc your Centre Chair if it is required by your Faculty.
  7. Answer any questions as required.

## General Guidelines

- Course hours – require 45 lecture hours but will go to a minimum of 36, two lab hours is equal to one lecture hour, 3 practicum hours are equal to one lecture hour. Note: some exceptions apply to University courses that are 3 credits but do not meet minimum hour requirement.
- Specific credit (e.g. MATH 215) can be awarded when the external course contains a minimum of 60% content.
- Unspecified credit (e.g. MATH 2XX) can be awarded when the external course is considered University level but does not cover enough content to warrant specific credit. Credit can be awarded at the discipline level (e.g. HIST 2XX) or at the area level (e.g. APST or HUMN). We want to keep in mind that we do not want the student to have to repeat coursework
- “Do not Register” – can be noted when the external course content is between 50% and 60% of our course and we have determined that it is not equivalent. In this case the course is awarded unspecified credit with a “Do not register” notation for the specific course which is then exempted.
- Combining courses – this can be done for two (or more) courses of a similar nature that build upon one another (e.g. finance 1 and finance 2) if there is not enough hours in one or both to allow us to award individual credit; or, if combining the two courses will allow for a specific credit that could not otherwise be awarded.
- All Faculty reviews are considered “precedent setting” and will be recorded in the database for future use. If, as the Faculty reviewer, you are not comfortable making the decision precedent setting (e.g. in the case where there is some missing information) you can indicate that the review is for this one particular student only, this decision will be recorded for historical purposes but will not be posted to the web for public viewing.

## The review

- *The Articulations Unit Responsibilities*
  - Check the institution for accreditation/acceptability
  - Review the course outline to ensure it contains the required information
  - Search the database/ACAT/BCCAT to see if the course has been reviewed at AU previously and provide the review history. Also, if it is an ACAT/BCCAT review we will provide information about what other institutes (usually the universities) have awarded for credit.
  - Enter the information into database
  - Choose AU course or discipline that most closely resembles external course and send to this coordinator
  - Forward to Centre Chair if not done already (if required)
  - Review transfer credit awarded to determine consistency with other awards and to policy
  - If all is OK, the decision will be posted to our student information system (Banner) and posted to the website, and if for a student, passed on to the evaluations unit to apply the credit as per the program regulations.
  - If inconsistent or unclear, contact Course Coordinator to discuss

- Forward on to Dean if mutual agreement cannot be reached

## Program Reviews (Formal Articulation – precedent setting)

Precedent setting program reviews are completed by the Program Director and establish formal articulations with a particular institution. A block of credit is awarded for a particular program from a college or university toward a specific AU program and is formalized through an Articulation statement that is sent to the external institution. This block credit will be applied when a student presents that particular credential.

### AU Programs that award Block Credit

- *Post Diploma programs*
  - Post Diploma regulations set out the block credit that can be awarded, their intent is to build upon the learning a student has achieved through their diploma program
- *Bachelor of Professional Arts (BPA)*
  - Programs are reviewed for admission to the programs and are not restricted to the 30 or 60 blocks. If a program is awarded less than 60 credits – it is noted with the comment “students must complete an additional XX credits to be eligible for admission to the program”. If more than 60 credits is awarded, the additional credit must be identified and fit within the program degree regulations.

### Types of external Programs eligible for block transfer credit

- Certificates
- Two Year Diplomas
- Three Year Diplomas
- Post Diplomas
- Applied Degrees (do not fall under 2<sup>nd</sup> undergraduate degree regulations)
- Associate Degrees

### Initiating the Articulation process

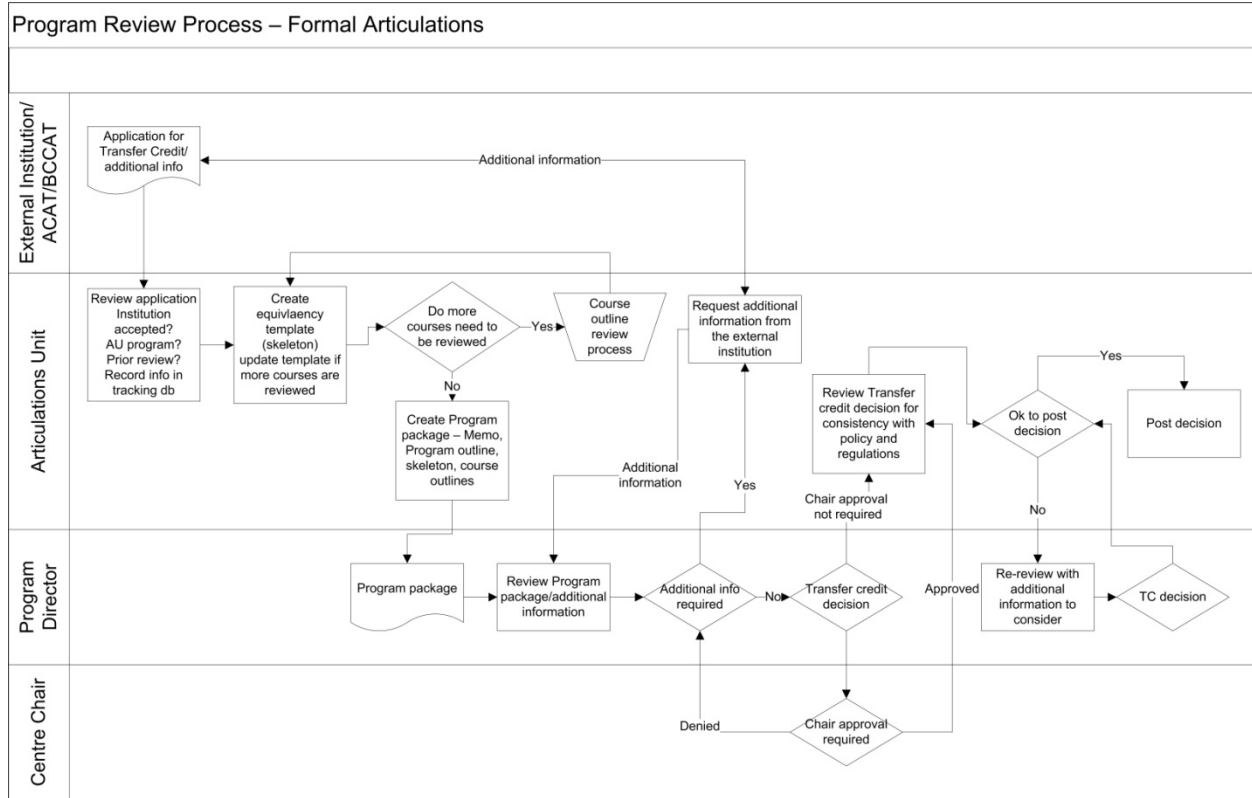
The Articulation process is started when AU receives a request; this request can come from the external institute, faculty or AU promotions people. Upon receiving an expression of interest from an external institution the Articulations unit will send out a “Request for Transfer Credit Application Form” to the interested party.

ACAT reviews are initiated through the online system by the articulations unit.

# Program Review Guidelines

## Workflow/Process

### Program Reviews (Formal Articulations – i.e. precedent setting decisions, ACAT and BCCAT)



- **Faculty steps**
  1. Receive the Program Package (the review should be completed within 1 month).
  2. Read the “Office of the Registrar’s Preliminary review suggestion” and following notes/history.
  3. Open and review the attached program overview, course outline, program template (excel spreadsheet).
  4. Determine:
    - a. what credit should be awarded, or
    - b. if additional information is required, or
    - c. if the program should be denied as per program regulations.
  5. Award or deny or request additional information as appropriate with detailed reasoning (clearly stated in the email).
  6. Return review to the Articulations Unit ([articulate@athabascau.ca](mailto:articulate@athabascau.ca)) cc your Dean or Centre Chair as determined by your Faculty.
  7. Answer any questions as required.

## The Review (the details)

- *Program Package for Faculty*

The AU professor (Program Director) is responsible for determining the appropriate transfer credit to be awarded for the credential sent to them by the Office of the Registrar. The Office of the Registrar compiles all necessary information into a Program Package that consists of:

- An email requesting the program review, with relevant history and block credit suggestion,
- a program template outlining the individual courses within the program and the transfer credit they receive (if any) from AU,
- the program outline and,
- the individual course outlines for the courses that are contained with the credential.

The Program Director reviews this information and recommends appropriate transfer credit within four weeks of receiving the information. If additional information is required, please specify and the Office of the Registrar will ask the sending institution to provide this information. Please note that in some instances it is not possible to obtain additional information and a decision must be made with the information provided. If you are not awarding transfer credit, please provide a detailed explanation as we are required to provide the reason for this decision to the sending institution.

- *Articulations Unit Responsibilities:*

- Check the institution for accreditation/acceptability
- Search the Diploma database to see if the program has been previously reviewed on either a precedent setting decision or for an individual student basis and add this information and any relevant history into the email that is sent with the program review.
- Request and then review the course outlines to ensure they contain the required information
- Create an excel spreadsheet (program template) listing the courses that make up the sending program and search for equivalencies in the course-by-course database to give an indication of what has been awarded in the past for the courses that make up the program. These are also used for exemptions, Not to Takes, and to ensure that the block credit awarded for the program does not exceed what the sending institute awards for credit.
- Programs that do not have any courses that have been previously reviewed will have a selection of courses sent for review. This selection includes any courses that we feel could receive specific AU credit – they will be applied as exemptions or “Not to takes” and recorded as “Do not register”, or, if there are no courses that may receive specific credit a random sample is sent in order to determine the level of the coursework within the diploma.
- Once the courses are returned from review the program template will be updated with the results.

- Compile all the information into a concise package; any history, previous reviews, program outline, course outlines, program plan, and the program skeleton. This is then sent to the Program Director with a block credit recommendation.
- When the review is complete it may be necessary to forward the package to the Centre Chair, a check is necessary at this point to determine if this was already done by the Program Director or if it is even required.
- When the program review is returned - review transfer credit awarded to determine consistency with other awards, to policy, and program regulations.
  - If all is OK:
    - the decision will be added into the Diploma Database and posted to Banner,
    - an Articulation Letter is sent,
    - For ACAT institutes an agreement is created in the ACAT system (no letter is sent)
  - If inconsistent with policy or program regulations or unclear, contact Program Director for clarification.
- Forward on to Dean if mutual agreement cannot be reached

Examples of when Articulations requires additional information on decision:

- Denying programs credit
  - Credit is not in line with previous reviews (program was previously reviewed and awarded a block of 60 and now is denied for credit or a reduced block of 30 is awarded)
  - Too much credit is awarded – we cannot award more credit than the home institution gives for the program for example; one year certificates should not receive more than 30 credits
  - Total credits do not add up (e.g. 51 total awarded (30 block + 24 other specified credits = 54 total)

### **What to consider when making a block credit determination**

- Block transfer credit recommendations must follow the regulations established for the degree.
- Transfer Credit Policy – The transfer credit policy was developed to ensure a standardized approach to transfer credit. The following are some of the excerpts that are applicable:
  - Do not grant more credit than the credential is worth at the home institution
  - A year of study (eight months) at a traditional institution is generally equivalent to 30 credits.
  - Credit is based on the credential presented, if there is a pre-requisite credential it must also be submitted.
  - Credit is not awarded for courses completed at the secondary level.
  - Credit can be awarded for graduate level coursework provided it is not coming from a completed credential
  - Block credit is granted for completed credentials only.



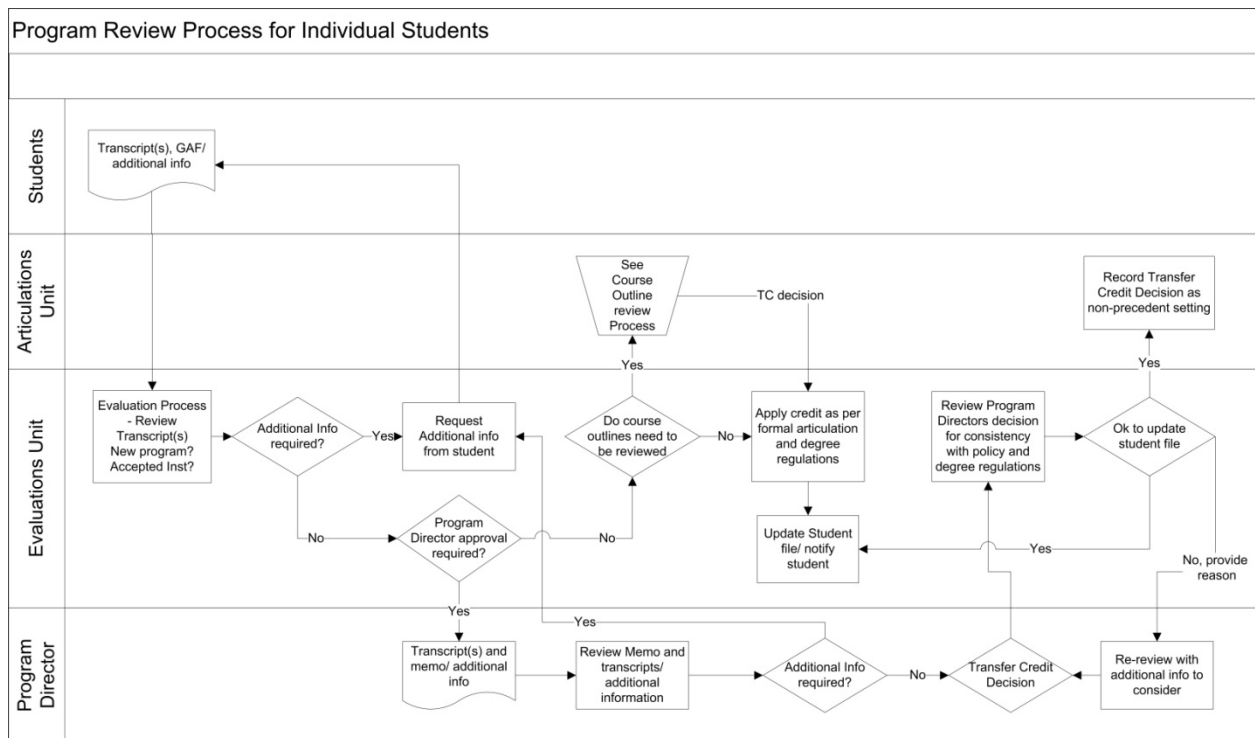
## Program Reviews - Student (non- precedent setting)

Program reviews for individual students are considered “non-precedent setting”, they are recorded and referred to internally; they will not be posted to banner or the web.

Students present a large variety of previous post secondary education to AU, not all credentials have been reviewed through the formal articulation process and recorded in the database. A non-precedent setting program review is based on the transcript the student submits. The transcript, along with any pertinent information is sent to the Program Director with a recommendation. The Program Director can either agree with the recommendation or change it. The award is subject to the same criteria as the precedent setting reviews in that it must align with the degree regulations and policy.

### Workflow/Process

#### Program Reviews (non-precedent setting decisions, i.e. student reviews)



- *Faculty steps*
  1. Receive the memo and individual student transcript via email (complete within 2 weeks)
  2. Read the memo with all the relevant information (ie. what the student is requesting – admittance into the relevant program), and recommendation. The transcript will be attached.
  3. Determine if credit should be awarded, or if additional information is required, or if the program should be denied, provide detailed reasoning (clearly stated in the email).
  4. Return review to the Evaluations Unit ([eval@athabascau.ca](mailto:eval@athabascau.ca)).
  5. Answer any questions as required.

## **Maintaining and renewing Articulation Agreements**

Courses and programs offered at other institutions and AU do change over time therefore we (AU) strive to keep agreements current and accurate. The articulations unit will initiate program reviews, if the articulation is greater than five years old and there have been significant changes. The re-review of existing agreements is usually the result of a student presenting the credential to the evaluations unit for assessment.

During the course of evaluating a student's prior education, the Evaluator will compare what the student has presented with the decisions recorded on the database to determine if there have been any changes to the course/program or if there have been substantial changes to our course or program. If there have been changes, this typically initiates a new review, the evaluator will request new course outlines and pass to the articulations unit to send for review.

## **Transfer Credit Tracking**

All precedent setting decisions made by Faculty are recorded in Banner and can be used for any student presenting the same course or program.

Occasionally Faculty make a decision for an individual student and request that it is not precedent setting – we will record this decision but it will not be posted to the website for public viewing. These decisions are referred to internally for added reference should it need to be reviewed again.

## Policies

- Undergraduate Transfer credit Policy  
(<http://ous.athabascau.ca/policy/registry/ugtransfercredit.htm>)

This policy covers:

1. Institution Acceptance criteria
2. Regulations regarding the Assessment of credit
  - Information requirements for courses and programs reviews
  - Instructor Qualifications
3. Assigning Transfer Credit
4. Pan-Canadian protocol
5. PLAR
6. Provincial Transfer guides
7. Record Keeping

Procedures

- Second Undergraduate Degree Policy  
(<http://ous.athabascau.ca/policy/registry/2undergraddegree.htm>)

This policy covers limits the transfer credit that can be applied from a previous degree to an AU undergraduate credential to 50%.

- Approval of Non-Collegiate Organization Policy  
(<http://ous.athabascau.ca/policy/registry/evaluationunaccredited.htm>)

This policy provides the general guidelines that will be used to approve an NCO's eligibility to submit transfer credit and articulation agreement requests.

## Definitions

**ACAT:** Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer

**Appeal of transfer credit:** Decisions on the evaluation and assessment of transfer credit are appealable under the [Student Appeals Policy](#).

**Area of study:** AU divides its courses into groups of related subjects. Arts is divided into Humanities and Social Sciences; Science includes all Science courses; Applied Studies includes the area of Business and Administrative Studies and Applied Studies. The area designation for each course is shown in each course description.

**Articulation:** A formal review of a program conducted by AU resulting in AU awarding a certain credit for the completion of a course(s)/credential(s). Articulations are recorded in banner and are viewable to the public on the website (<https://secure3.athabascau.ca/tcas/>)

**BCCAT:** British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer

**Block Credit:** This is the most efficient method of awarding credit for a completed certificate or diploma. Diploma or certificate courses may be transferable as a “block”. Students who are granted admission to a post diploma program, for example, may be granted a block of transfer credits based on a completed credential. In these cases, the student’s transcript is reviewed and transfer credit is awarded as a block of credit rather than on a course-by-course basis.

**Collaboration:** An agreement with another institution to provide learners with various pathways to university-level study. Could also be an agreement to offer AU courses onsite (grouped study) and degree completion initiatives.

**Credit:** The value assigned to a course. Normally, AU courses are either three-credit (one semester) or six-credit (two semesters) which corresponds to conventional universities. Some courses in the Bachelor of Nursing degree carry a practicum component with a weight of four and nine credits.

**Discipline:** Courses in a specific subject area, for example, English is a discipline in the Humanities, Biology in the Sciences, and Accounting in Business and Administrative studies.

### **Do Not Register:**

- **Not to takes:** Awarded when equivalent knowledge of a particular course has been identified within a student's assessment. NTT designations do not carry credit and will serve as a prerequisite if required.
- **Exemptions:** Holders of an approved diploma or degree may be awarded a block amount of credit. Within the previous diploma or degree, there may be equivalent courses that are required within the AU program. These courses will be awarded an "exemption". In order to

fulfill the program requirements, students will be required to replace exemptions with courses of the same (or higher) level, in the same area of study or discipline.

**LoP:** Letter of Permission. This permits a credential student to take one or more courses at another post-secondary institution that will be used for credit towards an Athabasca University degree, diploma, or certificate program.

**Non-Collegiate Organization (NCO).** An education provider (including universities, colleges, technical institutes, organizations, employers, and government agencies or departments) operating in Canada or elsewhere, either for-profit or not-for-profit that is one or more of the following:

- not a member of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) or the Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada (AUCC);
- a regional or national licensing body not already approved by AU;
- an employer not approved by AU;
- not an education provider approved to offer credentials in the Province of Alberta by Alberta Advanced Education and Technology and whose courses/programs are in the Alberta Council of Admissions and Transfer (ACAT) guide.

**Non-precedent setting (individual student reviews):** Not all decisions are recorded as “precedent setting”. Students present a variety of coursework that has not been through a formal review. In order to expedite the evaluation process and not hold up a student’s registration the evaluations unit and Faculty will often make decisions based on a transcript or with limited information. These decisions are recorded and are referenced internally but they will not be used to award credit for other students presenting the same course/program.

**Precedent Setting decision:** Decisions that will be used for any and all students seeking credit from within that specific time frame and these are publicly posted on our TCAS website.

**Stale Dating:** Usually, courses will be considered for transfer credit regardless of when they were completed. Some AU programs have stale dating regulations whereby a course or program will not be accepted for credit if older than the stale date noted for the program (regardless of the precedent setting articulation). For example, if an articulation for a program completed in 1999 is established, a student could not use that credential to an AU program in 2006 that had a five year stale date rule.

Individual courses within certain programs may also be stale dated.

If a student shows they are current in the field, however, stale dating can be waived (where allowed for in the degree regulations).

**Specified credit (Assigned credit):** Assigned credit may be granted when the transfer course matches an AU equivalent at a minimum of 60% content, completed at the university level (for awards at the 200 or greater level) and is noted as a specific AU course equivalent (ENGL 255 for example).

**TCPR (Transfer Credit Proposal Review):** This is the email template/form that is sent to you for a course review.

**Transfer Credit:** credit granted for the completion of a course/credential at another recognized institution

**Unspecified credit (Unassigned credit):** Unassigned credit may be granted in cases where the course to be transferred is less than a 60% AU course content match or in cases where AU does not offer an equivalent course. Unassigned credit can be at the discipline level (e.g., HIST 2XX) or at the area level (e.g., HUMN 2XX or MATH 3XX) and stipulates the year level.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

### 1. Type of course reviews (ACAT, BCCAT, Student, and Institution Articulation)

#### How do I determine what kind of review this is?

In the subject line of the email that you will receive, it will state in brackets ( ) what type of review it is. I.e. (ACAT), (BCCAT), if it is a student the ID number will show (1234567), Institution Articulations will have the program name in the brackets (Police and Security)

### 2. Why are courses combined?

Courses are combined for several reasons; such as they do not meet the minimum course hours or credits, they may be two courses and together they would cover the content of one of our course and be able to receive specified credit, sometimes students request that the courses be combined for credit (they are looking for a specific AU course for credit).

### 3. Precedent setting VS non precedent setting awards

#### Is this review Precedent setting?

Yes, all reviews sent to Faculty are considered precedent setting unless otherwise noted below.

#### When can non precedent setting awards be made?

- When additional information can not be provided but a decision needs to be determined regarding transfer credit. (e.g. LOP's and older courses)
- The institution changes the topics of the course every semester or if it is a directed studies course.
- The sending course is not offered yet: some institutes must have transfer credit agreements in place in order to be able to offer a course

### 4. Specified vs. Unspecified credit awards

#### What is specified credit?

Specified credit (Assigned credit): Assigned credit may be granted when the transfer course matches an AU equivalent at a minimum of 60% content, completed at the university level (for awards at the 200 or greater level) and is noted as a specific AU course equivalent (ENGL 255 for example).

#### What is unspecified credit?

Unspecified credit (Unassigned credit): Unassigned credit may be granted in cases where the course to be transferred is less than a 60% AU course content match or in cases where AU does not offer an equivalent course. Unassigned credit can be at the discipline level (e.g., HIST 2XX) or at the area level (e.g., HUMN 2XX or MATH 3XX) and stipulates the year level.

### 5. Determining Level of Credit:

### **How do I determine the level of credit to award?**

Faculty are responsible for determining the level of the course presented to them. Generally we can tell the level by looking at the numbering system; ie 100 = first year; 200 – second year; 300 = third year; 400 = fourth year. This isn't always the case however as there are many different numbering systems throughout the post secondary world. There are also differences between the different types of institutions (college vs university). When presented with a course it is good to look at a number of criteria:

- What type of institution is the course coming from (college, university, professional designation, etc.)?
- Where does this course fit in the program at the home institution? Would that year be considered junior or senior level?
- Does this course have pre-requisites?
- How does the content align with the AU course?

### **As reference AU's undergraduate course numbering system has four levels :**

- 100 level courses, e.g., ENGL 140, are preparatory level courses. Preparatory courses (designated by a number in the 100s) prepare students for university-level study in disciplines that require a high-school background.
- 200 level courses, e.g., BIOL 204, are junior level courses. Junior courses (designated by a course number in the 200s) are usually introductory or survey courses and are equivalent to first-year courses at most universities.
- 300 and 400 level courses are senior level courses. Senior courses (designated by a course number in the 300s or 400s) require a background of university learning and usually specify a junior course as a prerequisite.

### **6. AU has been discussing renumbering the course numbers, do I need to incorporate this in the award?**

At this time you do not need to worry about the course renumbering. This will be dealt with on a project basis when the decision is made to go ahead with the renumbering project.

### **7. Am I able to deny a course for credit?**

If the content is not at the depth and breadth of a University level course then credit should be denied. Courses from other Canadian Universities should be considered transferable unless there is evidence they are not "University level" (e.g. the course could be professional development). The Pan-Canadian protocol of which AU is a signatory encourages universities to accept first and second year coursework at face value.

### **8. Additional Information Requests:**



**What do I do if I require more information to make a transfer credit determination?**

Requests for additional information can be made to the Articulations unit ([articulate@athabasca.ca](mailto:articulate@athabasca.ca)). Please be specific as to what type of information you are after. The Articulations Unit will forward the request to the student. If the outline is from an ACAT/BCAT member then the Articulations Unit can try requesting the additional information

**What additional information can I request?**

More specific information such as a weekly listing of topics covered, additional readings, more detail in order to determine the breadth and depth of the content or content overlap. We are not able to request "Final Exams" but we can try to request practice/sample exams.

**9. How do stale dating rules apply to TCPR's?**

Usually, courses will be considered for transfer credit regardless of when they were completed. The Evaluations Unit applies the stale dating rules that are applicable to the program of study the student is in. This is done at the time of the evaluation as not all programs have stale dating and stale dating can be waived under certain circumstances.

**10. Is this an accepted institution at AU?**

The Evaluations Unit and Articulations Unit check institution acceptability when the course outline is received. This is a standard practice and if there is any additional information about the accreditation it will be provided in the notes (after the "Office of the Registrar Suggestion").

**11. What is the "Office of the Registrar Preliminary review" and do I need to award credit as suggested?**

This is only a suggestion, determined by recognizing the area and level of study as a starting point (i.e. College course vs University course), you are not required to follow it. As the Academic expert you are responsible for awarding credit. If the course does not fall under your area of expertise and you are able to direct us to the appropriate area, please do so. Any guidance is always appreciated!

**12. I have a course opening soon and I would like to award credit for it now, can I do this? The course is required to be open before we are able to award credit for it. You are able to award unspecified credit until the course is open. We can make a note to revisit the review at the time that it opens.**

**13. What is a "Do Not Register" or "Not to Take" (NTT) and when do I use it?**

A "Do Not Register" notation is used to prevent the students from taking the AU course. If you feel the transfer course meets the objectives of the AU course but it isn't a direct equivalent this notation can be used. We find it is used when the course does not quite meet the 60% threshold for specified credit, it is around the 50% - 59%, but the student would be repeating a considerable amount of course content.

**Humn 2XX (3) Do not register in Hist 224**

#### **14. Appeals:**

Students can appeal transfer credit decisions at any time for a variety of reasons for example, they feel that the course was not awarded the appropriate level of credit, they do not think that it was sent to the appropriate area for review (CMNS vs COMM), another course may have opened after the review, which they think could be closer in content.

What can I do to prevent appeals? Be as clear as possible when completing a review. Provide specific information/reasons about why a course is being denied for credit. Clearly indicate why a course is awarded junior level credit when senior level credit is being requested or why unspecified credit is being awarded rather than the requested specific credit.

## Related Links

Pan-Canadian Protocol on the Transferability of University Credits:

<http://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/198/Pan-Canadian-Protocol-Transferability-University-Credits.pdf>

Office of the Registrar Policies: <http://ous.athabascau.ca/policy/registry/registry.html>

Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT):

<http://alis.alberta.ca/ps/ep/aas/ta/transferralberta.html>

British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT): <http://www.bccat.ca/>

BC Transfer Guide: <http://www.bctransferguide.ca/>

Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer (ONCAT): <http://www.oncat.ca/>

Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC):

<http://www.cicic.ca/en/page.aspx?sortcode=2.17.22>