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MALDIVES COLLEGE OF
HIGHER EDUCATION

Academic Policy

Recognition of Prior Learning and Transfer of Credit

Policy on recognizing prior learning and transfer of credit.

Approved on: 13th March 2005
Approved By: Academic Board
Contact Person: Registrar

1. Introduction:

An important principle incorporated in the Maldives National Qualifications Framework is life-long learning. It is recognized that the 21st century learner will be characterized by his or her mobility and studies undertaken in stages throughout life. To enable such “staged” learning, flexible pathways through credit transfer are essential.

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) and credit transfer facilitate the transfer of credit of some subjects or units of study successfully completed in previous qualifications towards another qualification. In special circumstances it is possible to obtain exemption from subjects or units of a course if the competencies stipulated in the subject or unit are shown to be possessed by the applicant as evaluated by independent assessors of the College.

This policy sets about the principles of recognizing prior learning. It is also the case that this policy focuses on credit transfer at undergraduate level. At higher degree levels, credit for prior learning is normally considered on a case-by-case basis.

2. Definitions:

Credit: Credit is the agreed measure of the amount of learning (estimated by a provider or developer) typically required in gaining a qualification. A significant factor in estimated credit is the time spent in learning and the rigour of that learning. This estimate of learning time includes direct time spent with teachers, time spent preparing for and doing assignments and time spent in assessment. Credit is awarded when achievement is assessed and meets specified standards. Evidence of achievement can be collected from a variety of sources. At present, 90 credit points constitute a full-time annual academic load.

Credit Transfer: Credit transfer is a process whereby credit already achieved at a quality assured tertiary institution is recognised towards another qualification. It involves the evaluation of a student’s transcript, course outlines and other information relevant to the application. This may occur on a case-by-case basis between providers

/qualifications developers and individuals or as a structured agreement between two or more organisations or providers.

Cross credit: This term refers to the amount of credit granted on the basis of a completed qualification at MCHE or elsewhere.

Specified credit: Specified credit means credit for an identified MCHE subject. Specified credit that has already been granted can be used to fulfil prerequisites, major and degree requirements.

Unspecified credit: Unspecified credit is given when the prior study does not exactly match any MCHE subjects. Unspecified credit can make up a number of subjects required for a degree or other qualification, but cannot be used for prerequisite or co-requisite purposes, or be substituted for compulsory subjects.

Exemption: An exemption can be granted for a particular subject on the basis of a course of study, high level of attainment or experience. If exempted from a subject the student must do an equivalent amount of work to make up the total points requirement for the programme, unless such work is waived by the Academic Review Committee.

Arranged credit: Guaranteed credit on commencement of a course of study on the basis of previous study, e.g., College may make an arrangement with an external provider to admit students who have completed a qualification at that provider's institution and be granted credit for that qualification to an amount agreed between the two parties.

Advanced Standing: A term used between 1998 and 2005 within MCHE documents for credit transfer, now used in a general sense.

3. Principles

1. Qualification, course and programme development and design should promote and facilitate credit recognition and transfer without compromising the quality or standards of qualifications.
2. The key focus of credit transfer decisions should be on the benefit for students and supporting effective learning pathways.
3. Learners must have recourse to review and appeal of credit transfer processes and decisions.
4. Transparency in credit recognition and transfer decision-making across the education system must be established and students must have recourse to review and appeal credit transfer decisions.
5. Credit given as a result of either recognition of prior learning or recognition of current competency is of equal standing to credit awarded through regular studies and should be able to be carried with the student once awarded.
6. In order to ensure quality assurance and establish transparency all recognition of prior learning (RPL) must be based on evidence.

4. Guidelines:

1. The integrity, quality, currency and relevance of all MCHE courses must be retained in all decisions regarding transfer of credit.
2. To maintain the distinctiveness of MCHE courses named in Guideline 1 and maximise the chances of success, a student seeking transfer of credit may be required to meet minimum grade standards, participate in a challenge examination or complete a bridging programme before enrolment.
3. The appropriateness of the level and content of previous study against the subjects from which exemption is sought will be evaluated by appropriate means in granting cross credit.
4. Credit cannot be given for disciplines, courses or subjects for which MCHE is not accredited to offer.
5. Credit transfer will be time-bound. Credit transfer applications for study completed within the last five years will be considered automatically. If the previous study had occurred before that period, then case-by-case decisions will be made to evaluate the relevance and rigour of previous learning in the current context.
6. Where possible, course rules must state the amount of credit transfer appropriate for that particular course.
7. All credit transfer decisions must be made by skilled staff conversant with the structure and content of the course and must be approved by the Dean on behalf of the Academic Board. The Dean may refer credit transfer decisions to a panel of subject matter experts.
8. All credit transfer decisions must be documented. As with all decisions, students may appeal if they believe that their application has not been treated fairly.
9. Applications for transfer of credit from incomplete qualifications imply that the student does not intend to complete the original qualification at a later date.

5. Minimum points to be completed through MCHE.

Irrespective of what has been noted elsewhere in this document and regardless of the number of subjects completed at other institutions, a student shall normally be expected to complete at least the following through MCHE to claim an MCHE qualification.

1. For a four year qualification, at least 50% of credit points required.
2. For a three-year qualification, at least 1/3 of the of course credit points required, 50% of which must be at 300 level.
3. For a postgraduate or graduate qualification, 50% of the credit points required.
4. For an advanced diploma, diploma or advanced certificate, 50% of the credit points required.
5. for certificates at levels 1 – 3, there shall be no transfer of credit unless the course is MCHE owned.

6. Administrative and Appeal Procedures

1. Where formal articulation agreements are in place, credit transfer arrangements will be well documented and automatic. Students entering MCHE under such arrangements should not incur a transfer credit application fee.
2. The award of credit for previous study does not necessarily guarantee entry into a proposed course of study. Limitation of entry regulations or specific pre-requisites may apply.
3. In all credit transfer arrangements not governed by formal articulations, it is the student's responsibility to provide all necessary documentation, including relevant course outlines. It is the MCHE's responsibility to publicise the process for a credit transfer application in a transparent and explicit way; process the credit transfer application in a timely manner; and advise students of other study options when a credit transfer application outcome is unfavourable, e.g. bridging courses.
4. MCHE will publish on the web all formal articulations. In addition, it will provide an up-to-date database of established precedents for students, staff and other institutions to access.
5. All credit transfer applications must be made using the appropriate form. This form must have a statement to the effect that the student may appeal against the decision to the Rector and the outcome of the decision in writing will be provided.
6. It is important to apply for credit transfer, generally at the time of enrolment. A transfer of credit application is not valid unless the student had a copy of the approved form.
7. An administrative fee will be charged for processing the application.
8. There is no charge for transferring credit from one incomplete/completed MCHE qualification to another.
9. Credit for informal learning:
 1. If credit is to be given for informal learning, then an assessment of a portfolio of supporting materials or use of a challenge examination may be required. It is the responsibility of the faculty/centre to carry out such assessments.
 2. Credit will be awarded for learning and not solely for experience itself.
 3. Credit can be only for specific subjects.
10. Where unspecified credit has been given for previous study the following statement must be included in the official transcript:

"Unspecified credit granted for previous study."
11. In calculating GPA, only the subjects the student had actually studied in the current course should be used.