Methods for Evaluating External Academic Credentials for Equivalent Southwestern University Credit

The Southwestern University Registrar’s web site has links to pre-approved credit charts for most AP test scores, some IB test scores, and many frequently transferred courses with numbers from the Texas Common Course Numbering System (used by all public community colleges in Texas and some universities). Approval for these is automatic, subject to certain constraints (see Catalog or Registrar’s web site).

All test scores and college courses not on this list are still considered for acceptance, once official score reports or official college transcripts are received. This document describes the methods used to create these tables and to evaluate credentials not covered by them.

Approving Credit Formulas and Charts

Many Southwestern University Students present AP test scores. In consultation with SU department chairs, the Office of the Registrar reviews information on all AP tests each year and determines what course credit will be awarded the following year for scores of 4 and 5. The results are posted on the Registrar’s website in a table. Fewer students present International Baccalaureate scores, but the same process is used for scores of 5, 6, and 7. Because frequencies have been lower, more IB subjects are absent from the table and fall to the individual evaluation process below.

In Texas, all junior and community colleges and some public universities use the Texas Common Course Numbering System, and a TCCNS Committee monitor course content to ensure equivalence. The vast majority of dual credit and transfer work presented by SU students is reported using numbers from the TCCNS. Southwestern University has evaluated many of the most commonly received courses by reviewing Catalog descriptions, and has posted an equivalence table on the Office of the Registrar website. This table, too, is reevaluated each year, and feedback from department chairs is considered, as are changes in the SU courses.

Credit Evaluation for Items Not on Charts.

When IB scores are presented in an area where we do not have much prior experience with performance by students with those scores, and are therefore not in the published table, the Office of the Registrar will ask department chairs to help assess the level of achievement, and determine the appropriate credit.

Many college transfer courses are not on the commonly transferred TCCNS equivalence list, or come from colleges not using TCCNS. There are evaluated using college catalogs, and sometimes course syllabi. Subject to constraints such as the Last-33-Hour-Rule, If presented with a grade of C- or higher on an official transcript from a regionally accredited university, and in a non-remedial area...
where SU offers courses, some credit will be granted by the Assistant Registrar. If no specific match can be found, credit for a non-specific lower level or upper level topics course may be given. A spreadsheet with past history of transfer of specific courses from specific colleges is helpful in showing past approval patterns and saving department chairs some time, while avoiding inconsistent evaluations. The student is then free to try to use course syllabi, papers, or knowledge of the subject matter to convince the appropriate SU department chair that credit in some specific course is warranted. If the school is not accredited, the syllabus is consulted more heavily, the school credentials examined, and the student is sometimes encouraged to take a departmental placement exam.

If SU students are considering taking a course not listed on the pre-approved charts, they are strongly encouraged to complete the transfer course approval form IN ADVANCE, allowing the Assistant Registrar or the department chair to approve an equivalence.