



Detailed Report on

**PROFESSIONAL ADVISING LEADERSHIP
(PAL) FELLOWS PROGRAM**

Spring 2008

Research Topic:

**Understanding Transfer of Credits for Foreign Credentials
In US International Admissions**

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*“International credential evaluation is an art and not a science.”
– Peggy Hendrickson.*

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2.0 Introduction:

I was chosen to be a Fellow of the PAL program 2008 which provides professional development for senior educational advisers. My topic was “Understanding Transfer of Credits for Foreign Credentials in U.S. International Admissions”.

1.1 Objectives

- To expand existing advising skills on the topic by obtaining input from experts.
- To find out what factors are considered when evaluating transfer of credits of international applicants.
- To understand the process of evaluating foreign transcripts for transfer admission purposes.
- To apply the knowledge gained from this program by designing and executing workshops that will guide international students who want to transfer credit from their home country to the U.S.
- To become a well-informed resource person on the subject of transfer admissions and be able to be an effective mentor on this topic to others in the profession.

2.2 Expected Outcomes:

- To apply the knowledge gained from this program to better guide Sri Lankan students who want to transfer credit from their home country.
- To become a well-informed resource person on the subject of transfer admissions and be able to be an effective mentor to others in the profession.
- Develop a comprehensive handout and a workshop template which can be shared by all in the profession

At the time I sent in my proposal for the PAL Fellowship I was very confused about the topic and I know I was not at all effective when I advised my students who wanted information on transfer of credit. After attending the program I can now confidently talk to them and explain the generalities of the topic while making them understand that each university handles transfer of credit using their own specific policies. This will help my advisees to make successful transfers with minimal credit losses

2.3 Background to the research:

I have always been rather puzzled about the process taken by different universities on the transfer of credit from international credentials.

At the 2007 NAFSA conference I had the privilege of organizing and presenting at a pre-conference workshop titled “Transfer of Foreign Credit” with Jim Frey of Educational Credential Evaluators (ECE). At this full day workshop I was able to observe how the actual evaluations were done by comparing the transcript against the course content of the university. The research that went into organizing this workshop made me want to learn more about the process. I was determined to find out more.

During the PAL program I visited the following universities/colleges:

- Fairleigh Dickinson University

- University of Maryland
- Montgomery Community College
- Johns Hopkins University &
- Georgetown University

I also visited the following credential evaluators:

- World Education Services (WES) – 3 day internship
- American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers (AACRAO)

In addition the following at 2007 and 2008 NAFSA conferences added on to my knowledge on the topic:

- Session on “The Use of Information Resources in International Credential Evaluation” at NAFSA 2008.
- Contact during 2008 NAFSA conference with International Admissions Officer at University of North Texas (UNT) and had discussions on the topic.
- Information gained from NAFSA 2007 workshop on “Transfer of Foreign Credentials”

2.4 Research Questions:

I used a check sheet with 15 questions when meeting with personnel from academic institutions and used an edited version with credential evaluators. The following questionnaire for my research:

1. What sources/references do you use when evaluating Sri Lankan credentials?
2. What office is responsible for creating the evaluation of transfer credit?
3. At which point of application evaluation do you calculate the transfer of credits?
4. What if the student produces foreign credentials after being enrolled?
5. Is proof of financial support required prior to creation of a transfer credit evaluation?
6. Will evaluation be an exact mapping of courses to their actual equivalent subjects OR will the credit simply be recognized as acceptable and totaled?
7. When is the student notified regarding their transfer credit?
8. What format would you adapt to inform the applicant about the transfer of credit?
9. If the prospective student asks your advice on which credits to take in advance, would you recommend? (from 2+2 programs)
10. Do you require evaluations by credential evaluators?
11. How do you calculate the GPA for the transferred credits?

12. After being enrolled, will the student have help in selecting the balance courses?
13. Will there be a sequence for the balance courses
14. What can the prospective student do to help you to make a fair judgment of the acceptance of credits?
15. How can the EducationUSA Advisers help you in your evaluation of foreign credits?

3.0 Analysis of data:

The process of transfer of credit varies from institution to institution. Hence a comparison sheet was not feasible.

Overview of findings:

(Sample: 6 colleges/universities and 2 credential evaluators)

3.1 Resources/references used when evaluating Sri Lankan credentials

50% of the colleges use an evaluator while the others have their own staff to advise on the process. (graph 1 – pg 6).

In addition they also use references such as Commonwealth Year Book, UNESCO, web sites (e.g. Ministry of Education), data base built on the topic by specialists and other references.

Regrettably, 33% of them and one evaluator refer the AACRAO PIER publication even after two decades of its publication.

The view/s of credential evaluators:

They have specialists on credentials from the regions/countries to do the evaluations. Thousands of schools depend solely on evaluators to do their evaluations. There are 3 types of schools:

- a) Group 1: these are the large schools and have experts to do their own evaluations in-house.
- b) Group 11: tend to be smaller and due to financial aspects do not have staff to do evaluations and depend on evaluators.
- c) Group 111: have no idea about evaluations and do not have strict rules when transferring credit.

(Refer page 26 for more details on the 3 types of schools)

3.2 The office responsible for creating the evaluation of transfer credit

This is specific to each institution. At two colleges both admissions and the ISS are involved. Two others use only the ISS office while another two use the admissions office. At one, the registrar is responsible while the other college has its own office of transfer credit.

Table 1: Office responsible for creating the evaluation of transfer credit

Admissions	ISS	Registrar	Transfer credit office
3	3	1	1

3.3 The timeline for the evaluation of transfer of credit

Most expect the student to state all post-secondary course information at the time of application. Only the community college accepts the credits at anytime during the program. Most give time till the end of the first semester to produce final transcripts.

UNT specifically states that if the student did not inform about credentials earned before admission, they regard the student as having lied from omission on their application. UNT will determine whether or not they will be able to continue to stay enrolled at their university.

The view/s of credential evaluators:

Both evaluators will complete the report within 7 days after all documents are received.

3.4 Requirement of financial support prior to creation of a transfer credit evaluation.

All except one college evaluates transfer credit after admission is confirmed. The process is tied to the issue of the I-20 and hence proof of financial support has to be indicated.

3.5 How the acceptance of transfer credits is indicated.

All would indicate the acceptance of credit in a specific program. Some do a course-by-course evaluation. However all accept the courses but the evaluation will not indicate actual grades and they are not factored into their GPA.

The view/s of credential evaluators:

A course-by-course evaluation will be done. In this, the level, period of study and credit allocation are indicated. If the course taken is 2 years, 2 years' credit will be awarded. The number of transferable credits will be indicated and it will also convert the grades and credit to the US system. The reports are non-judgmental and are only an advisory opinion.

3.6 When will the applicant be notified about the acceptance/rejection of credits?

Most indicate the number of credits that might be accepted. (Note: this is not a confirmation but only an indication) Confirmation is in general made after the student registers and meets with the academic adviser to discuss the transfer of credit. At this point the student should submit all syllabuses to help the evaluators make a fair judgment.

3.7 What format will be used to inform the student about the acceptance of credit?

At admission all colleges will inform the students of the number of credits that are transferable. After enrollment the student will be informed in specific terms what subjects within a degree program do not have to be taken in order to complete the degree. This allows the student to

determine the number of subjects/courses and semesters required to complete the degree. Thus the student can assess the cost of completion of the degree.

3.8 Would the US college advise any prospective student on the courses to take in advance (at a 2+2 program)

Most would not do so in specific terms but would direct the applicant to the web site that has all required course work listed. The person/department responsible for the evaluation of transfer credit expects the applicant to have researched the university they intend to apply later and be well informed before they begin to communicate. Liberal Arts courses are the easiest to transfer and they may take some introductory courses. However they should be cautious about taking English courses as most such would not be transferable. Any advice given is only as a courtesy.

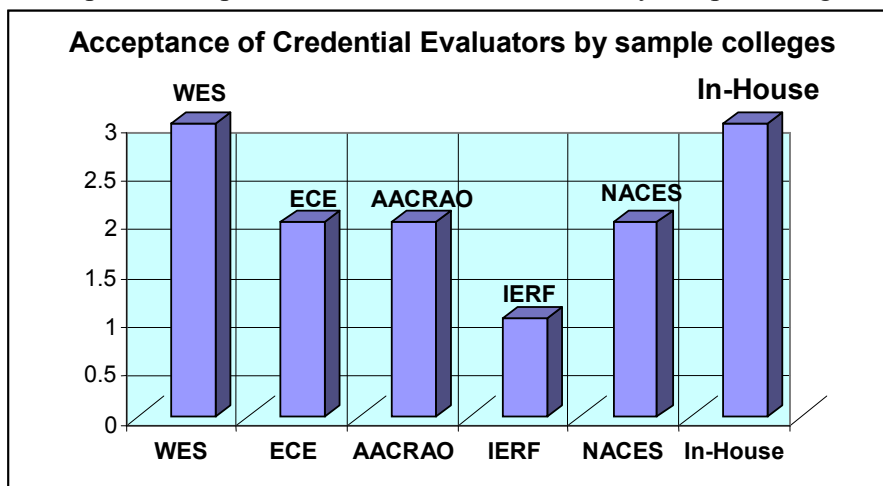
The view/s of credential evaluators:

One evaluator regards 2+2 programs as “transcript laundering”.

3.9 Acceptance of evaluations by credential evaluators

The following is an analysis of acceptance of credential evaluators:

Graph 1: Acceptance of Credential Evaluators by sample colleges.



The colleges that do their evaluations in-house have credential experts on their staff. (refer: pg. 21 for comments by AACRAO) If they want any specific information they contact the EducationUSA Advisers for guidance. The student should send official transcripts for evaluation, preferably with the application.

The community college accepts assessments by all 5 evaluators and would accept evaluations by other evaluators as well.

3.10 Calculation of GPA for the transferred credits.

All colleges accept only grades that are C or better. When the evaluation for transfer credit is made, grades are disregarded and only courses are accepted for transfer.

The view/s of credential evaluators:

The report gives the number of acceptable credits. It is up to the institution to accept them. This might mean that at times not all credit would be accepted.

3.11 Assistance available for the transfer student

All colleges provide assistance to the transfer student and in each institution it is the academic adviser who will be available.

Some start assisting the student even before registration but mostly in an unofficial manner. Formal advising starts during orientation. The academic adviser will discuss the required courses and advice students on how best to choose their program.

The students get assistance in mapping out their balance program and the adviser guides them through the balance course selection process.

3.12 Sequence for the balance courses.

Everyone agrees that courses that have pre-requisites have to be taken in the relevant order. Some majors would have sequences. The student should do his/her research on the program before deciding on the semester to transfer so that they would not lose time between courses.

3.13 What can the prospective student do to help the evaluator make a fair judgment of the acceptance of credits?

- Send the course descriptions, syllabus and official transcripts.
- Should research the university and go through the web site.
- Understand the U.S. classroom situation.
- If the student can declare the minor at the time of application, it would be helpful as some of the credits may be transferable towards the minor.

3.14 How can the EducationUSA Advisers help in the transfer of credit process?

- Make the student understand the complicated process of transfer credit evaluation
- Dispel all expectations of students. Make them understand that the process is university specific and each university would evaluate credentials in their own unique manner. Credits accepted by one college may vary from that of another.
- Explain the importance of being in contact with the International Office.
- Encourage students to do the web research and know everything about the policy of the college.

4.0 Information gained from NAFSA 2007 workshop on “Transfer for Foreign Credentials” (Presenter: Jim Frey, Senior Advisor and Founder, Educational Credential Evaluators Inc. – ECE. Co-presenter and organizer: Nelum Senadira)

4.1 Transferable courses:

The US universities have their own requirements for admission and graduation. The decision of one university does not necessarily be accepted by another.

One year of full-time study at a university recognized by that country’s government is quantitatively equal to one year of full-time study at any other university.

4.2 Course content affects transferability of credit

- If the course content of a course considered for transfer of credit closely matches the content at the receiving institution, the transferred course can replace the other course.
- If the contents of the two courses differ significantly, the course for transfer of credit might not be accepted to replace a specific course.
- Just as the course content can differ between two with the same titles, so can two courses with different titles have the same course content.

4.3 Non Transferable Courses:

At times certain aspects of course content can make a course non-transferable: e.g. a business law course based on the legal system of another country or if a language course is taught in an environment in which that language is not the only language in the country of education.

A course accepted for elective credit might be considered as either a departmental elective or a free elective. A departmental elective can be applied to the credit requirement within that department while a free elective can only be applied towards the minimum number of credits required to complete the degree.

4.4 General

- In the US, *lower level* classes are those taken during the first two years and the *upper level* classes are taken during the last two years and represent study beyond the introductory level. A lower level course will not usually be taken as a replacement for a course at the upper level.
- Many US universities set a limit on the number of credits they will accept.
- In the U.S. a student usually must complete the final year of study in a bachelor's degree program at the institution that will award the degree. Usually at least half of the courses complete in the final year must be courses in the major field of study. As a result a student who receives a large number of credits through the transfer process might need to earn more than the minimum number of credits in order to complete all the requirements of the degree program.
- Most do not grant transfer credit toward the requirement of a master's degree program. Doctoral degree programs are sometimes flexible in granting transfer of credit.
- Most U.S. universities consider the *quality* of the student's performance. Even though the course content is transferable it may not be transferable if the student received the lowest passing grade (D in the U.S.)
- In most cases credits are transferred but grades are not.

Acknowledgement for 3.0: James S. Frey, Senior Advisor and Founder, Educational Credential Evaluators Inc.

Edited from reference handout: Transfer of Credit.

5.0 Session on “The Use of Information Resources in International Credential Evaluation” at NAFSA 2008.

This session was mainly for the credential evaluators from U.S. colleges/universities.

5.1 Useful resources when evaluating international credentials

- Web – Free and for purchase
- Professional Associations and contacts
- Publications – Free and for purchase (from AACRAO, NAFSA, UCAS, NOOSR, ECE, 10 Speed Press, and many others)
- School library
- Newsletters
- Conference handouts.

(The handout is available at www.nafsa.org)

6.0 Conclusion

The transfer of foreign credentials is a complicated process. As advisers we should be able to guide our students to transfer with the maximum possible credit.

The student should be very mindful that each college would have its own requirements for admission and graduation and appreciate that each one determines the circumstances under which an applicant could transfer courses taken elsewhere. If they would recognize this they would then know that their transfer process involves many intricacies and would not be a simple procedure.

Those who want to transfer credit should start their research on the requirements and course contents of the colleges they want to transfer to, *before they start their academic program at the first institution*. Information required about the courses and the college requirements is available on-line and at times there might even be personnel to help them at some institutions. This would help them to identify the courses that match each other and are easily transferable They should make use of these facilities and design their academic program in such a way that they are able to transfer as much of the course load they have completed..

It is also important for the student to understand the actual process of matching course work. EducationUSA advisers are not credit evaluators. But if they could help the students understand the manner in which the course work is compared between the universities it would take away many myths about the process of transfer of credit. The students should be made aware about the courses that are transferable as well as those that could be deemed non-transferable by the receiving institution. It is also important for the student to understand that the course content and the quality of their performance also affect the transfer of credit.

The process of transferring foreign credit to the US system involves many intricacies. The student should make an informed decision of the courses s/he wishes to take with an intention of transferring. We as EducationUSA advisers can assist them by giving the necessary advice and help them to become familiar about the procedure.

7.0 Attachments:

7.1 Analysis of data received from each institution.

7.1.1 Academic Institutions

Fairleigh Dickinson University (FDU)

1. What sources/references are used when evaluating Sri Lankan credentials?
Syllabuses are important. London A/Ls (Edexcel) exams are accepted for transfer while Sri Lankan A/Ls are not due to the latter not being an international examination. When transferring credits from 2+2 programs, middle states accreditation is needed.
2. What office is responsible for creating the evaluation of transfer credit?
Office of transfer students' credit. However some departments (e.g Business) do the transfers directly
3. At which point of application evaluation do you calculate the transfer of credits?
International credit will be transferred only after a commitment is made. I.e. after they enrolled. Nursing programs is at the beginning.
4. What if the student produces foreign credentials after being enrolled?
The FDU policy is to accept requests for transfer of credit up to 3 weeks into the semester. But could be extended based on circumstances.
5. Is proof of financial support required prior to creation of a transfer credit evaluation
Yes. Transfer requests are accepted only after admission.
6. Will evaluation be an exact mapping of courses to their actual equivalent subjects OR will the credit simply be recognized as acceptable and totaled?
Yes. It will indicate the acceptance within a specific degree program or in general.
7. When is the student notified regarding their transfer credit?
Only after they arrive on campus. The student should handover the requests to the academic advisers. The adviser discusses the transfers with the student.
8. What format would you adapt to inform the applicant about the transfer of credit?
At registration students would be informed about the number of credits that are transferable. They also inform the student in specific terms what subjects within a degree program do not have to be taken in order to complete the degree, thus helping the student to determine the number of subjects, semester required to complete the degree and hence the cost of completion of the degree.
9. If the prospective student asks your advice on which credits to take in advance, would you recommend? (from 2+2 programs)

Advisers would need information of the school they plan to take the courses. If it has middle states accreditation, credits can be transferred directly. No official advice would be given but would be directed to the web site which has the information.

10. Do you require evaluations by credential evaluators?

Yes. WES evaluations are required but would accept ECE as well.

11. How do you calculate the GPA for the transferred credits?

FDU policy is to transfer credits only where grades A – C were obtained. Below C (2.0) are not accepted. Disregards the GPA but accepts the courses on the above policy.

12. After being enrolled, will the student have help in selecting the balance courses?

Yes. At times might even be able to communicate before enrolment.

13. Will there be a sequence for the balance courses?

Advises balancing the general courses with the majors. Certain courses that are pre-requisites have to be taken at the correct point. Free electives can be taken at any time.

14. What can the prospective student do to help you to make a fair judgment of the acceptance of credits?

- Send the syllabuses or the WES evaluation at the time of application if possible. It is advisable to declare a minor at the time of application as some of the credits might be transferable towards the minor.
- Read the packet sent by the university. Be patient because the transfer of credit is a complicated process and would be overwhelming. Talk to people concerned to sort out matters.

15. How can the EducationUSA Advisers help you in your evaluation of foreign credits?

Make students understand the difficulty of the process and dispel all expectations of the number of credits that would be accepted.

Other information:

- If transferring less than 25 credits FDU wants to see the high school transcript. Until such time the grades are available and unofficial transcript could be done.
- 3 year Bachelors degrees for graduate courses are accepted. But for transfer of credit, an evaluation is needed.
- Best is to get an evaluation from WES. FDU policy is to transfer only up to 50% of the credits required to graduate. Students could lose credits if they change majors. Might have the option of getting free elective components accepted.

University of Maryland, College Park (UMD)

1. What sources/references are used when evaluating Sri Lankan credentials?

PIER in combination with other data bases, especially web-based data for international comparison. When needed, they also ask for advice from AACRAO. Original transcripts (or authenticated from Fulbright Commissions) are requested. It is advised to provide syllabuses where ever possible.

2. What office is responsible for creating the evaluation of transfer credit?

Evaluation of foreign credentials is first done by the International Student Services (ISS) and then sent to the registrar (along with the syllabuses). Subsequently they are sent to the Department for faculty evaluation.

3. At which point of application evaluation do you calculate the transfer of credits?

After they are admitted.

4. What if the student produces foreign credentials after being enrolled?

Applicants are required to enter all post secondary work. So UMD does not have to honor any subsequent request. However, to be fair by students who do not know the US system the students are asked to write a letter explaining why they did not state these credentials at the time of application. Based on this letter UMD would follow up. Time line – approximately a semester.

5. Is proof of financial support required prior to creation of a transfer credit evaluation

Yes. It is part of the application and without information of the financial ability the student's admission will not be confirmed.

6. Will evaluation be an exact mapping of courses to their actual equivalent subjects OR will the credit simply be recognized as acceptable and totaled?

Evaluation will indicate the acceptance of credit within a specific degree program.

7. When is the student notified regarding their transfer credit?

Depends on admission. If admitted the evaluation would be done within about 1-2 months.

8. What format would you adapt to inform the applicant about the transfer of credit?

UMD informs the student in specific terms what subjects within a degree program do not have to be taken in order to complete the degree This allows the student to determine the number of subjects and semesters required to complete the degree and hence the cost of completion of the degree. The students also have access to the database and can see what credits have been accepted or not.

9. If the prospective student asks your advice on which credits to take in advance, would you recommend? (from 2+2 programs)

All information is on the web site. International Student Services expects the students to have researched UMD. They should be well informed before they begin to communicate.

10. Do you require evaluations by credential evaluators?

No. They require the official credentials.

11. How do you calculate the GPA for the transferred credits?

Only C grades or higher and a GPA of 2.0 are accepted for transfer of credit. The grades are not regarded when calculating the GPA at UMD. The courses are accepted as transferable.

12. After being enrolled, will the student have help in selecting the balance courses?

Yes. During the orientation the Academic Adviser will help the student to understand the required courses.

13. Will there be a sequence for the balance courses?

This depends on the requirements of the Department. Pre-requisite courses will have to be taken accordingly. The Academic Adviser will discuss these with the student.

14. What can the prospective student do to help you to make a fair judgment of the acceptance of credits?

- The applicant should send the complete file at the time of application. (such as transcripts, financial information, visa information, proficiency in English, Sponsor information etc).
- Very helpful if syllabuses of all courses are sent.

15. How can the EducationUSA Advisers help you in your evaluation of foreign credits?

- Encourage the students to do the web research and know everything about UMD before filling up the online application.
- Correspond directly with the contacts at ISS regarding students who have problems or complications with their applications.
- Inform students what UMD looks at as a complete file.

Other information:

- Not many students are admitted on transfer basis. For Fall 2008 only 2 foreign students were admitted with transfer of credit. UMD's feeder school is Montgomery College.
- If sponsored by Maryland citizen, in-state tuition is charged.

Montgomery Community College (MCC)

1. What sources/references are used when evaluating Sri Lankan credentials?

Evaluation is done by a credential evaluator. A course-by-course description is required.

2. What office is responsible for creating the evaluation of transfer credit?

Admissions office

3. At which point of application evaluation do you calculate the transfer of credits?

Evaluation of credit is not required for admissions. The student could send the evaluation at any time. If an evaluation was done at the time of application, the I-20 would indicate less time (usually 3 years). This would be helpful if finances are a concern for the student.

4. What if the student produces foreign credentials after being enrolled?

The credits would be evaluated. 90% of the students complete the 1st semester without a credit evaluation if they have taken specific courses.

5. Is proof of financial support required prior to creation of a transfer credit evaluation?

The process is tied to the I-20. Hence financial support is required prior to evaluation.

6. Will evaluation be an exact mapping of courses to their actual equivalent subjects OR will the credit simply be recognized as acceptable and totaled?

Evaluation will indicate the acceptance of credit within a specific degree program.

7. When is the student notified regarding their transfer credit?

With offer of admission.

8. What format would you adapt to inform the applicant about the transfer of credit?

At time of admission, students will be informed of the number of credits that are transferable. Specific terms such as what subjects within the degree program will be informed only after discussions with the academic adviser.

9. If the prospective student asks your advice on which credits to take in advance, would you recommend? (from 2+2 programs)

- The 2+2 programs should have either regional or national accreditation.
- On-line counseling is available. The student should if possible discuss with the 4 year college s/he intends to transfer prior to taking classes at MCC.
- The best courses to be transferred would be the liberal arts courses and perhaps the introductory courses.
- The students should be mindful that English courses are usually not transferable.

10. Do you require evaluations by credential evaluators?

Yes. Accept evaluations by WES, AACRAO, IERF, NACES and Joseph Silney Associates.

11. How do you calculate the GPA for the transferred credits?

Only credits that have a C grade or better are accepted. But grades are disregarded while courses are accepted.

12. After being enrolled, will the student have help in selecting the balance courses?

Yes.

13. Will there be a sequence for the balance courses?

Study plan for each major is laid out. An individual plan could be arranged if there are no pre-requisites involved.

14. What can the prospective student do to help you to make a fair judgment of the acceptance of credits?

- If the transcripts are in the native language, they should send an official translation in addition to the original transcript.

- The applicant should check with the department for any additional documents needed.
- Syllabuses and transcripts would be helpful to expedite the process.

15. How can the EducationUSA Advisers help you in your evaluation of foreign credits?

- Guide the students on the US education system and explain the intricacies of transfer of foreign credit.
- Make the students understand that they probably would not have answers to their questions on the topic when they arrive. It will take time to complete the analysis.
- Explain that English courses would not be transferable if taken in a country where English is not the first language.

Other notes:

- Allied health related courses such as Chemistry are not valid if taken 5 years back.
- SAT 11: According to the program, courses can be waived if student has a good score in the related SAT 11 subject test.
- G.C.E A/L will get credit if relevant to the program.
- MCC accepts evaluations by many evaluators. If a student is applying to multi-universities, they should check the other colleges and decide on an evaluator common to all.
- G.C.E A/Ls preferred to transfer of credit from 2+2 programs.

When transferring from MCC to another college:

- Contact other schools about their transfer policies. Some 4 yr colleges specify the evaluator. If the student knows where s/he would continue after MCC, they should see that the evaluator matches the needs of the other universities so as to be able to transfer with minimal losses. At times it may be possible the second school will offer more credits for courses taken prior to MCC.
- The second school a student transfers to, may or may not accept evaluations done by others.
- Students can access the web site that has all the colleges in MD and match themselves with the colleges they want to go to before selecting courses at MCC.
- Transfer of credit would be easier to carry over if the student continues at a college in the same state as the community college.
- When taking courses at a community college with an intention of transferring to a 4 year college later, they should study the course plan in the college and decide on the ones that match both when taking classes at the 2 year college.
- There have been many instances where, in spite of articulation agreements the college has not taken all the credits that were taken before coming to MCC.

Johns Hopkins University. (JHU)

1. What sources/references are used when evaluating Sri Lankan credentials?

JHU uses the school policy. Since SLKN credentials will be reviewed by the faculty, they would need the syllabuses. Official transcripts are needed. Transcript should indicate whether it is a full semester course. JHU needs to know how many credits for a semester, how a C+ is calculated and the course description.

2. What office is responsible for creating the evaluation of transfer credit?

Admissions office is responsible while the registrar gets involved. Faculty is needed for final approval.

3. At which point of application evaluation do you calculate the transfer of credits?

At a minimum, the admissions office needs to see that the student has completed 24 credits to do an evaluation. Admissions office does the final calculation after the student has sent the deposit. If needed, JHU would give an approximate estimate (not a guarantee) to help the student to decide.

4. What if the student produces foreign credentials after being enrolled.

No time limit at present. However it is best if the transcripts are given early. JHU needs additional proof that the credits are not from secondary schools.

5. Is proof of financial support required prior to creation of a transfer credit evaluation

Need the deposit as proof of admission.

6. Will evaluation be an exact mapping of courses to their actual equivalent subjects OR will the credit simply be recognized as acceptable and totaled?

Evaluation will indicate the acceptance of credit within a specific degree program. Students should make an attempt to map all courses.

7. When is the student notified regarding their transfer credit?

As long as the applicant has sent all transcripts, the student will be notified once they commit to enroll by paying the deposit.

8. What format would you adapt to inform the applicant about the transfer of credit?

JHU will inform the students in specific terms about the transfer of credit. This information will include what subjects within a degree program do not have to be taken in order to complete the degree.

9. If the prospective student asks your advice on which credits to take in advance, would you recommend? (from 2+2 program)

The student would first be guided to the web site. JHU can do some generalizations could be made and would be happy to inform the applicant as a courtesy.

10. Do you require evaluations by credential evaluators?

No. All evaluations are done by JHU.

11. How do you calculate the GPA for the transferred credits?

No GPA will be awarded for the transferred credits. Only courses with a C+ will be accepted for transfer.

12. After being enrolled, will the student have help in selecting the balance courses?
Yes.

13. Will there be a sequence for the balance courses?
Some major have some sequences and pre-requisites.

14. What can the prospective student do to help you to make a fair judgment of the acceptance of credits?

- Applicants should send all required material such as official transcript, final grades and course description.
- In addition, Transfer Student's Admission Profile should be returned. This consists of a series of questions to know more about the applicant. This needs to be completed as it helps in evaluations.
- Applicants should answer their e-mails.

15. How can the EducationUSA Advisers help you in your evaluation of foreign credits?

- Very helpful if Advisers can have information on U.S. documentation such as the calculation of GPA.
- Make the applicants aware that it is their responsibility to get the evaluations done and they must get the documents across to the person who is really doing the evaluation.
- Advisers should make the foreign applicants understand that at times courses should be taken in sequence and that it may not be the correct time to transfer. Missing a pre-requisite might mean the student wastes time.

Other notes:

- There is no spring intake at JHU
- If a student has taken a few courses from another university they can transfer up to 12 credits and still apply as a freshman.
- As a transfer student the applicant can transfer up to 60 credits.
- For graduation the student should do 60 credits over 4 semesters.
- Only accept traditional academic subjects for transfer evaluation.
- Does not accept Edexcel Advanced Subsidiary (A/S) results.
- JHU transfers are done in a centralized manner and the faculty also becomes involved to check on the equivalence.

For Graduate admissions:

- The department makes the final decision on graduate admissions,
- At times a department might enroll a student even without a bachelor's degree as the primary need is experience in research.
- The contents of the syllabus is more important than the length of the program (3 yrs / 4 yrs)

Georgetown University (GU)

1. What sources/references are used when evaluating Sri Lankan credentials?

2. What office is responsible for creating the evaluation of transfer credit?
International Office.

3. At which point of application evaluation do you calculate the transfer of credits?
Evaluations are done only after the student is admitted. 1 to 2 weeks after the International Office is contacted the evaluations would be completed.

5. What if the student produces foreign credentials after being enrolled?
A time limit is given at orientation.

6. Is proof of financial support required prior to creation of a transfer credit evaluation?
Yes. Evaluations are only done after admissions.

7. Will evaluation be an exact mapping of courses to their actual equivalent subjects OR will the credit simply be recognized as acceptable and totaled?
Indicates the acceptance of credit in a specific program.

8. When is the student notified regarding their transfer credit?
On admission.

9. What format would you adapt to inform the applicant about the transfer of credit?
Inform the student in specific terms what subjects within a degree program are accepted.

10. If the prospective student asks your advice on which credits to take in advance, would you recommend? (from 2+2 programs)
The applicant would be guided to the web site.

11. Do you require evaluations by credential evaluators?
GU accepts evaluations by WES, ECE or AACRAO.

12. How do you calculate the GPA for the transferred credits?
Accepts only C+ grades. However grades are disregarded and only courses are accepted for transfer.

13. After being enrolled, will the student have help in selecting the balance courses?
Yes the academic adviser will assist the student.

14. Will there be a sequence for the balance courses?
At times. Depends on the pre-requisites.

15. What can the prospective student do to help you to make a fair judgment of the acceptance of credits?

- Send the course descriptions and official transcripts.
- Should research the university and go through the web site.
- Understand the U.S. classroom situation

16. How can the EducationUSA Advisers help you in your evaluation of foreign credits?

- Explain the importance of being in contact with the International Office.
- Help the student appreciate the cultural differences between the two countries.

Other notes:

- No transfer of credits for MBA programs. 60 Credits (two academic years) have to be taken at GU. If the applicant already has another MBA s/he cannot apply unless the course work is different.
- When considering an application GU looks for the equivalent of a U.S. applicant.
- Emphasis is on personal characteristics.

University of North Texas (UNT)

1. What sources/references are used when evaluating Sri Lankan credentials?

UNT uses a variety of sources to determine equivalency. Equivalencies are set using the AACRAO/NAFSA PIER report, IERF new country index, NAFSA's Guide to Educational System Around the World the AACRAO's EDGE etc and the experience of UNT evaluators and are available at www.international.unt.edu/credentials/equivalencies/level.

If any credential falls outside the parameters, questions are sent out on the inter-l listserv and EducationUSA advisers are contacted.

2. What office is responsible for creating the evaluation of transfer credit?

International Admissions does the evaluation of all international credentials.

3. At which point of application evaluation do you calculate the transfer of credits?

Transfer credits for undergraduate students are calculated in two parts: the grades and hours (and GPA on a 4.0 system) are determined during the admissions process by International Admissions, while the placement of those credits into a student's degree plan is done by the academic advisor in the department during orientation before registering for their classes.

4. What if the student produces foreign credentials after being enrolled?

This depends, on each situation.

- If the student was merely in progress, and UNT knew about it, they have to submit their final credential during their first semester, and UNT will evaluate the new credentials and award credit as soon as possible.
- If they did not tell UNT about the credentials, and they were earned before coming to UNT, they have basically lied from omission on their application. At

such a time UNT has a meeting to determine whether or not the student will be able to stay enrolled at UNT.

- If they earn credits while enrolled at UNT (during the summer or during a semester they sat out from UNT), such credits will again be evaluated during the semester they submit them.
- Most of the time, international credentials are evaluated within 2-3 weeks, regardless of whether it's a brand new application or a final transcript.

5. Is proof of financial support required prior to creation of a transfer credit evaluation

Proof of financial support has no bearing on someone's ability to get admitted, so it is one of the last things UNT asks for, and they only require it if the student has been admitted. UNT tells the student about it up front, but it is not mandatory in order to have an evaluation of their application materials. The initial requirements for evaluation are: application and fee, proof of English proficiency, and official academic credentials.

6. Will evaluation be an exact mapping of courses to their actual equivalent subjects OR will the credit simply be recognized as acceptable and totaled?

- If the student has attended a college or university in another country, UNT does a course-by-course evaluation and determines the exact credit hours and grades whenever possible (some countries do not give grades, merely pass or no pass, while other countries don't always award hours).
- If they have credits from a post-secondary program that's not actually university level (such as A levels from British systems or the German Abitur, as the most common examples or even Advanced Placement from US high schools), UNT gives them credit for taking those subjects, and they will not have to re-take them at UNT.
- However they do not get actual grades, and they are not factored into their GPA.

7. When is the student notified regarding their transfer credit?

If they are applying as transfer students, they will be notified in several ways by International Admissions:

- Student can login to the UNT computer system and it will show the total hours for which they are getting credit.
- Their admission letter (assuming they are admitted) will show them how many transfer credits they will receive and what their GPA is.
- UNT will follow that letter with a transfer equivalency report within a few weeks of their acceptance.
- However, the exact placement of their courses into their degree plan will not be determined until they meet with their academic advisor in their department, during which time they should provide a syllabus or course description for maximum credit.

8. What format would you adapt to inform the applicant about the transfer of credit?

9. If the prospective student asks your advice on which credits to take in advance, would you recommend? (from 2+2 programs)
- UNT has a website that is made by their Registrar's office that lists core courses (and they can compare that to the university catalog to see what subjects are covered in each course).
 - UNT cannot make specific recommendations for international universities in advance because there is so much variance from country to country

10. Do you require evaluations by credential evaluators?

UNT does their own evaluations in-house and do not accept evaluations from outside evaluation agencies.

11. How do you calculate the GPA for the transferred credits?

A course-by-course evaluation is done to determine exact credit hours and grades whenever possible.

However, they do not get actual grades and they are not factored into their GPA.

12. After being enrolled, will the student have help in selecting the balance courses?

Yes. The Academic Adviser.

13. Will there be a sequence for the balance courses

If there are pre-requisites those have to be taken in sequence.

14. What can the prospective student do to help you to make a fair judgment of the acceptance of credits?

- The international office does the transfer evaluation purely based on math. They grant approximately 15 hours of credit per semester for undergraduate students.
- The subjective part comes in when they go to their academic advisor, and UNT encourages students to bring as much information about their courses as they **can**.

15. How can the EducationUSA Advisers help you in your evaluation of foreign credits?

International Office at UNT mostly contacts EducationUSA advisors to get help with credentials or for help in identifying school recognition.

7.1.2 Credential Evaluators

American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers (AACRAO)

1. What sources/references are used when evaluating Sri Lankan credentials?
 - Mainly PIER workshop – 1986 and Commonwealth Year Book.

- In addition AACRAO subscribes to a number of resources such as International Year Book.
- All evaluators are very experienced with an approximately 20 years work in evaluations. Most specialize in a country and system and therefore they have contacts from these countries.
- EDGE: 125 country profiles are completed to date. EDGE is web-based and can be updated instantly. Cost to institutions is kept as low as possible and gives the smaller schools more opportunity to access the information. EDGE does not have every credential but is able to provide solutions to 85% of queries. Vocational credentials are not available. Expects to complete within an year.

2. Will evaluation be an exact mapping of courses to their actual equivalent subjects OR will the credit simply be recognized as acceptable and totaled?

- AACRAO does the course-by-course analysis. It lists the courses in indigenous grade and suggests a US grade and places it in a semester credit hours. It does not analyze the course.
- It is up to the university to do the course comparability. (E.g. If the student has taken Chemistry 101 in home country it equals Chemistry 101 in the U.S.)
- Most institutions do not need to do a course comparability unless it is an international credential.

3. What format would you adapt to inform the applicant about the transfer of credit?

This depends on the kind of evaluation required. The report gives the acceptable credits. It is up to the institutions to accept them. This may mean that not all credits would be accepted.

4. Do you have agreements/arrangements with colleges/universities for credential evaluations?

Around 1400 schools have regular evaluations done by AACRAO. Some need every international credential evaluated. Others get only the complicated ones while some others get their evaluations done during their busiest times.

5. How do you calculate the GPA for the transferred credits?

AACRAO does the equivalence if it comes from a system that encompasses the GPA system.

The report clarifies the grades as superior, above average and average.

At times the foreign credential may not indicate the failing grades. At this point AACRAO does both evaluations: with and without failing grades.

6. What can the prospective student do to help you to make a fair judgment of the acceptance of credits?

- Complete the application and answer all the questions required by AACRAO.
- If transcripts are not in English, the student can produce a translation. Personnel at AACRAO who are transcript-fluent will check the translations. The translations help to speed up the process.

7. How can the EducationUSA Advisers help you in your evaluation of foreign credits?

- Advisers should help the students understand the terminology used in the US Education system.
- They can help the applicants to fill up the information on the applications correctly.

Other notes:

Towards the EDGE program:

- Advisers could send a sample copy when an institution in their home countries changes its transcript.
- They can inform AACRAO of any new institutions or examinations.

Opinion regarding 2+2 program:

- Consider foreign 2+2 programs as “Transcript Laundering” institutions.
- There have been instances when Regional Accreditors - e.g. the Southern Accreditation Council, has asked certain universities to stop the issue of transcripts to students from non-accredited institutions. If the university continues, its accreditation could be subjected to cancellation.

AACRAO has classified 3 different types of schools regarding evaluation.

- Group 1: These schools tend to be large institutions that receive 1000+ + applications per year. They evaluate on their own. The evaluations are based on how many students they want that year and the selectivity of the class they are looking at. They have always done their own evaluations and will continue to do so
- Group 2: These tend to be smaller. They receive fewer applications. Probably based on financial aspects they have taken a decision not to have staff to do evaluations. They get an evaluator to do it. Some have particular evaluators while some are not particular. This group asks students to get the evaluation done. Some send the documents through the school. Others ask the students to get them done.
- Group 3: This group of schools has no idea of evaluations.
- For the applicant all 3 types above may appear to be similar. However some evaluators may grant credit for courses for which another may not give any.
- AACRAO created the PIER and now the EDGE and is comfortable with the standards and approved services. There are about 300 evaluators. It has impacted the immigration for work visas as immigration does not know what is right and wrong. There are many differences in award of credit. Many smaller schools are outsourcing evaluations. It is not worth for them to do evaluations and not worth to hire and train personnel. The document can come to AACAO either through the student or the institution.

Internship at World Education Services (WES):

During the 3 days at WES I observed how the credentials were evaluated and reports compiled. All documentation is now done electronically. When the credentials arrive, the documents including the envelopes are scanned, evaluated, checked by proofers and checked by senior

evaluators and area managers before the final report is completed. The electronic system allows for consistency and accuracy as well as save time in evaluating documents. If all documents are received, the reports are available within 7 days. If the school requires the original documents, WES will send the scanned ones along with the report.

Reports by WES are only advisory and not binding.

1. What sources/references are used when evaluating Sri Lankan credentials?

Research, UNESCO, WES data base.

2. Will evaluation be an exact mapping of courses to their actual equivalent subjects OR will the credit simply be recognized as acceptable and totaled?

WES prepares a course-by-course analysis. In this, the level and period of study and credit allocation are indicated.

3. What format would you adapt to inform the applicant about the transfer of credit?

WES does the evaluation on the basis of verification of documents. The report indicates the courses, grades and the credit. The final decision is by the college/university. The report also empowers the student to know what s/he has equal to the U.S. system.

4. Do you have agreements/arrangements with colleges/universities for credential evaluations?

Yes with around 1000 schools.

5. How do you calculate the GPA for the transferred credits?

6. What can the prospective student do to help you to make a fair judgment of the acceptance of credits?

- Use the web site for information on the process before sending the application.
- Send all documentation needed to expedite the process.
- Syllabuses are helpful.

7. How can the EducationUSA Advisers help you in your evaluation of foreign credits?

- Explain the importance of timely action on the student's part.
- Make them go through the web site and help them to understand the documents needed.
- Inform WES of changes in-country.

8.0 Advice to future PAL Fellows

- Start talking to people who know the subject. It helped me. I talked to my REAC Kathleen Alam about my interest on this subject. She persuaded me to organize and co-present a one day workshop at the NAFSA in 2007 with Jim Frey, who is an expert on credential evaluation. At this workshop I was able to observe how comparisons of credits

are done. I met my NAFSA 2008 Fair Alliance Partner, Peggy Hendrickson and got information on how the evaluations are done at University of North Texas. These initiatives took me beyond my scheduled itinerary.

- Develop a set of questions to ask on your visits to institutions. At the beginning you may not know what questions to ask. Ask experts. They are ready to help you. See that there is a good step-by-step flow in the questionnaire. Leave sufficient space between questions to make your notes during interviews. Remember that you will be taking notes while talking to them. Hence have a duplicate for each university. At the end of the day somehow make time to re-write your notes on the second sheet. You will end up with a comprehensive analysis of that interview.
- Be ready with presentations and carry your USB port with you to each meeting. You never know when the hosts would ask you to for information. If you are ready, you make a huge difference and it becomes very impressive. Remember to have a couple of slides on EducationUSA. I was asked to make a presentation about the Sri Lankan education system to 28 evaluators at WES. Thankfully I had it in my USB Port. I only had to include a few slides on EducationUSA and Janine Farhat at College Board very promptly sent them to me.

9.0 Abbreviations

A/Ls	G.C.E Advanced Level
A/S	G.C.E Advanced Subsidiary
AACRAO	American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers
ECE	Educational Credential Evaluators
Edexcel	British G.C.E exams (GCSE)
EDGE	Electronic Database for Global Education
FDU	Fairleigh Dickinson University
GPA	Grade Point Average
GU	Georgetown University
IERF	International Education Research Foundation
ISS	International Student Services
JHU	Johns Hopkins University
MCC	Montgomery Community College
MD	Maryland
NACES	National Association of Credential Evaluation Services
NAFSA	Association of International Educators
PAL	Professional Advising Leadership Fellows Program
PIER	Projects for International Education Research
SLKN	Sri Lankan
UMD	University of Maryland
UNT	University of North Texas
WES	World Education Services