

Credit for Prior Learning

Responsible Administrator: Dean of Student Services

Southwest Tech provides competency-based, postsecondary educational programming leading to associate degrees and technical diplomas. Students must complete a minimum of 25% of the technical core program credits through Southwest Tech in order to earn their degree or diploma through Southwest Tech.

In providing credit for prior learning, Southwest Tech seeks to provide students with opportunities to obtain credit toward the completion of their technical college educational programming that:

- Recognizes the validity of a variety of prior learning experiences;
- Recognizes the inherent mobility of students, both geographically and between and among postsecondary educational institutions;
- Accelerates the achievement of educational goals while maintaining the integrity of the technical college curriculum.
- Provides flexibility for students by providing multiple ways of gaining credentials needed to move ahead in their careers;
- Leverages prior learning experiences to lessen the cost of duplicative postsecondary education to students, parents and taxpayers; and
- Responds to local economic needs to validate and expedite the training of skilled workers in a variety of technical fields.

Five (5) general principles that govern the awarding of credit for prior learning at Southwest Tech:

1. In assessing prior learning experiences for the purpose of awarding credit values to them, the college shall provide maximum recognition for work completed through other nationally or regionally accredited postsecondary institutions or other education, training or work experiences pertinent to the student's present educational programming and graduation requirements.
2. Credit granted for prior learning shall be entered on the student's transcript and be counted toward the total number and distribution of credits required for program completion. Credit awarded for prior learning shall not carry a letter grade or count in the computation of the student's grade point average.
3. Credit for prior learning may be awarded for courses for which there is not a direct course equivalent if they can be appropriately applied toward satisfying general education, electives, and other program requirements.

4. To preserve academic integrity, the decision regarding the awarding of credit for prior learning to any particular student must be approved by the appropriate dean. The dean should rely on program and/or subject area faculty expertise in questionable situations.
5. The college will award credit for prior learning experiences toward completion of a program based on the college assessment of the applicability of the skills, knowledge, and competencies achieved to program completion requirements.

This policy shall be consistent with the Policy on Credit for Prior Learning adopted by the WTCS Board. This policy is located at http://www.wtcsystem.edu/board/pdf/policy_manual_08nov.pdf

Procedures included in this policy will be consistent with Procedures for awarding Credit for Prior Learning as documented in the WTCS Educational Services Manual available at <http://systematic.wtcsystem.edu/Instruction/ESM/default.htm>

Students may be granted credit for prior learning under six categories:

- 1) Postsecondary credits earned at WTCS colleges;
- 2) Postsecondary credits earned at non-WTCS colleges;
- 3) High school credits for which students later seek college credit;
- 4) Credits earned completing a WTCS program of apprentice-related technical instruction;
- 5) Subject area competency demonstrated by passing a district or national examination;
- 6) Previous work experience, education or training, or other prior learning demonstrated as comparable in content and rigor to a specific technical college course or courses.

1) Post-secondary credits earned at WTCS colleges

Southwest Tech will award credit for prior learning to students who present appropriate documentation of credits earned while attending other WTCS colleges. Transcribed credits, which are defined as college courses, qualify for credit for prior learning under this category. Southwest Tech supports the full transferability among WTCS colleges of similar courses and those courses adopted as part of system-wide curricula.

Southwest Tech will honor as fulfilling general education requirements those credits awarded as fulfilling general education requirements at another WTCS college. SWTC will evaluate credits awarded as fulfilling program course requirements to determine their applicability to new program requirements for students who enroll in a different program within the college or who transfer from a different WTCS college.

Southwest Tech will evaluate occupational-specific and general education credits earned as part of a technical diploma program or career pathway based on course competencies if

students seek to transfer these credits as counting toward completion of an associate degree program.

2) Post-secondary credits earned at non-WTCS colleges

Southwest Tech will award credit for prior learning to students who present appropriate documentation from any nationally or regionally accredited institution. The College will evaluate these credits according to documented college curricula to determine the extent to which the credits apply to program requirements, general education requirements, or other program-specific graduation requirements. A comparison of course competencies of the credits to be transferred to those of the receiving program will determine transferability. The evaluation of technical core credits will be completed by the dean of the accepting subject area in conjunction with course faculty when possible.

Students who have a postsecondary or professional degree from a nationally or regionally accredited institution of higher education will receive credits towards fulfilling WTCS associate degree general education core requirements. Students who qualify for 21 general education credits may need to complete some additional general education core requirements based on documented program-specific general education requirements. For example, a student with a business degree seeking to enroll in a Southwest Tech health occupations program may need to complete additional general education science courses.

3) High school credits

When a student enrolls at Southwest Tech, the College will award technical college credit for high school credits earned by students that are: (a) covered by articulation agreements between a high school and Southwest Tech; (b) part of a recognized Youth Apprenticeship program; or (c) other advanced high school course work, not covered by an articulation agreement, but that Southwest Tech deems comparable in scope and content to a specific Southwest Tech course or courses, including course work completed by home-school students.

Students must present appropriate documentation to support their requests of credit for prior learning for credits earned while high school students. Southwest Tech will accept technical college credit awarded through an advanced standing articulation agreement by other WTCS college(s) for similar courses or those courses adopted as part of system-wide curricula.

4) Completion of a WTCS program of apprentice-related technical instruction

Southwest Tech will recognize successful completion of a WTCS program of apprentice-related technical instruction and possession of Certificate of Apprenticeship issued by the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards (DWD-BAS) as fulfilling the 39-credit minimum Technical Studies requirement of the Technical Studies – Journey Worker Associate of Applied Science degree. The WTCS apprentice program must include at least 400-hours of prescribed apprentice-related technical instruction to fulfill the 39-credit minimum.

5) Credit by Exam

Southwest Tech will award credit for prior learning to students who demonstrate subject-area competency through oral, written, performance or practical exam, or by a combination of these methods. National exams include, but are not limited to, the College Board Advanced Placement (AP) exams, the International Baccalaureate exams, CLEP, DANTES, and nationally recognized exams in specific occupational areas.

Southwest Tech reserves the right to specify minimal acceptable scores on examinations with nationally recognized standards. Students must earn a minimum score of three on AP exams to qualify for credit for prior learning for applicable technical college courses.

6) Experiential Learning

Southwest Tech will award credit for prior learning based on previous work experience, business and industry training, military education or experience, or other prior learning which the appropriate dean and faculty members judge as comparable in content and level of rigor to the specific technical college course or courses.

Minimum Criteria for Acceptability of Credit for Prior Learning

A student must have attained a minimum grade of "C" in coursework completed at another nationally or regionally accredited institution of higher education in order for it to be considered for the awarding of credit toward completion of a course/program. Accepted credits will be recorded on student transcripts as transfer credits with no grade attached and will not be included in student GPA calculations.

Time limits shall not restrict the awarding of credit for prior learning unless the college has documented a specific programmatic reason for time limits.

Student Process to Request Credit for Prior Learning

1. All student requests for credit for prior learning will be made to the appropriate program counselor.
2. The program counselor will complete the Southwest Wisconsin Technical College Advanced Standing/Proficiency Testing form including his/her recommendation for credit transfer. NOTE: If the student request for credit for prior learning is limited to a course or courses that are WTCS state-wide curriculum courses, and/or courses that appear on the Transfer Information System (TIS) as transferable from the issuing institution to Southwest Tech the counselor will approve and process the request through the appropriate Student Services personnel.
3. All other requests will be forwarded by the program counselor to the appropriate academic dean for a decision. Course documentation will be attached to each request.
4. The appropriate dean in conjunction with appropriate faculty member(s) will review the request, make a decision and return the documentation to the program counselor. If

additional information is needed prior to making the decision, this information will be requested through the program counselor.

5. The program counselor will inform the student of the decision.

Review & Appeal of Credit for Prior Learning Decisions

If the student's request is denied, and the student elects to appeal the decision, s/he must submit the appeal with reasons addressing why the decision should be changed to the appropriate division dean no later than seven (7) business days from receipt of the decision. The dean will review the record and appeal materials and can affirm or modify the original decision. The dean will issue a review decision as soon as practicable.

If the decision to deny is upheld by the division dean, the student may submit a written appeal to the Vice President of Learning Services. The Vice President of Learning Services will schedule a meeting with the division dean and the student. The decision of the Vice President of Learning Services will be forwarded in writing to both parties within five (5) business days of the meeting. The decision of the Vice President of Learning Services is final.

Approval Date: 7/6/09

Revision Date: