MEMORANDUM

TO: Robert Cooney  
   Chair, Mānoa Faculty Senate

FROM: Reed Dasenbrock  
       Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: “Back Credits” and Prior Learning Assessment

As I assume you are aware, the subject of Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) has been a concern of MFS for some time, and my office has been asked by CAPP and the SEC to monitor what is happening at the UH system level with an eye to something we all value, which is the quality and integrity of the Mānoa degree. We have agreed that Mānoa is not at this point joining any of the system initiatives in the direction of PLA, though we have also agreed that at this point, the implementation of PLA on other campuses doesn’t (yet) raise concerns about the Mānoa degree, since the areas of the curriculum with PLA currently in place are not transferable to Mānoa as they are more applied or vocational in nature.

I recently became aware of a practice at the Mānoa campus, with some system-wide implications as well, that seems a lot like PLA. Students with advanced competency in a language taught here can take a placement test. If they are put into a course higher than the first-semester course in the language (e.g. Japanese 101), and they pass that course, they are given without charge “back credits” for the courses in the sequence before the course they have taken. This gives the student who utilizes this anywhere from 3 to 16 credits in a language sequence. This is currently used by both LLL and Hawai’i‘u’ikkea for their language courses. I have attached the LLL flier advertising the program and a chart showing the number of students who have utilized this. This applies both to students of a language and also native speakers, so the way that this is PLA-like is that someone from Thailand, say, can gain credit for Thai courses while he or she will have gained the expertise necessary for the credit much more through life experience—growing up speaking Thai—than any formal training.

There is an unattributed policy dated 2010 on the General Education website which details this, and agreements from 2004 signed by Chancellor Englert and Dean O’Mealy of LLL creating reciprocity with two UH community colleges for this program. (These are also attached.) I honestly don’t remember the policy from 2010, so I suspect this is an update of
an earlier policy developed around the time of the MOUs or before, and my understanding is that this was in place at least as a practice in the 1990s.

Why am I bringing this up? Given the strong position on PLA articulated by the SEC and CAPP last year, I thought it was important to bring to your attention the fact that we are in essence doing a particular form of PLA already. So we could potentially be seen as inconsistent. There is, however, a second possible inconsistency: in PLA, students do not pay tuition for the credits they receive through PLA but there are customarily fees attached to the examination process which establishes the ‘prior learning’ for which credit is given, and the fees end up amounting to a perceptible fraction of the course. We, in contrast, are giving away our credits for free, even though the tuition value attached to a Mānoa credit is much higher.

My request is that MFS examine our current practice and policy concerning “back credits” and make a recommendation concerning this. One option could simply be to accept the current practice as it is. (We do, for example, accept AP, IB, and CLEP which are in some sense a form of prior learning assessment.) Another option might be to develop a schedule of appropriate fees for the awarding of “back credit” in keeping with PLA practice. Another might be to continue the current practice of placing students into more advanced language courses—which I can’t imagine anyone would question—but not award “back credits.” I am not raising this issue with a preferred or predetermined outcome in mind, rather with the thought that this should be up to the faculty to discuss, particularly since this particular practice seems in some tension with positions the faculty have recently taken.

Associate Vice Chancellor Halbert has looked at this issue on behalf of the OVCAA, and she would certainly be happy to meet with CAPP or SEC to discuss this.

Attachments

c: Debora Halbert
    Program Officer Goodwin
Policy on Hawaiian/Second Language Back Credits

Students with experience in a language other than English (including native speakers of that language) may in some cases earn "back credits," if they take a language course appropriate to their level, in which there is significant use of that language. Appropriate courses are not available in all languages. “Appropriate level” of a language will be determined by placement exam, department policy and/or the department’s director or advisor. “Significant use” of a language will be determined by the course content. Upon completion of this course, if students earn a letter grade of C (not C-) or better, they may receive between 3-16 back credits.

Hawaiian language back credits are earned according to specific program policies. Please see the Director of Kawaihuelani Center for Hawaiian Language for more information.

Implementation Guidelines:

Definition: Back credits are defined as credits received for previous language experience that do not qualify as transfer credits.

Eligibility: The back credit policy applies to those students who entered the UH system in Fall 2001 or later and are governed by the UHM Graduation Education Requirements adopted at that time.

One Language: Back credits may be earned for only one language of their choice and will be based on the first instance of taking a course for a letter grade in that language at UHM. A repeated or backtrack course is not eligible as a basis for back credits.

Placement/Competency Exam: In addition to appropriate course work, students may be required by the language department to take a placement or competency examination as part of the determination to earn back credits (e.g., appropriate placement in a course). See individual language departments for internal policies and procedures.

Grades: Back credits are earned with no grade assigned.

C or better (not C-): The language course a student places into must be completed with a grade of C or better (not C-). The grade of C or better (not C-) must be earned the first time the course is taken.

C/NC Grades and Credit by Exam: A grade of C/NC is not eligible for back credits. Students who have taken a language course with a mandatory C/NC grade, or who received credit by examination, may earn back credits if they satisfactorily complete an additional appropriate course determined by the language department. The course must be completed with a letter grade of C or better (not C-). Students with a “W” grade received for university language courses are not eligible for back credits when taking subsequent courses.

Number of Back Credits Earned: A student may earn from 3 to 16 back credits for first- and second-year language courses (e.g., courses numbered 101-202). The number of back credits earned will depend upon the number of credits allocated to lower-level courses in a particular language sequence.

Last revised on 12/6/10
Petition for Back Credits: Back credits are not automatically awarded. In order to receive back credits, students must complete a petition form. Forms are available through language department offices and on-line through the UHM website. In general, a petition is submitted the semester after the student's satisfactory completion of the language course, but no later than one semester before graduation.

Transfer Credits:
1. Transfer credits are defined as credits received for previous language courses completed at another institute of higher education that articulate with UHM language courses.
2. Transfer credits accepted for language courses completed at another institution of higher education are not eligible as a basis for back credits.
3. Students who transfer credits from language courses taken at another institution are not eligible for back credits at UHM.
4. Please see the UHM Policy for Transfer Credits for complete information regarding transfer credits.
   Access: [http://manoa.hawaii.edu/admissions/undergrad/policies.html#credits](http://manoa.hawaii.edu/admissions/undergrad/policies.html#credits)
   Individual language departments may also have their own internal policies and procedures for handling requests for transfer credits.

Community College and other UH System Back Credits:
1. Back credits earned at Kapi'olani and Kaua'i Community Colleges are transferrable to UHM.
2. Hawaiian Language back credits earned at other campuses within the UH system may be transferrable to UHM on a case-by-case basis. Please contact the Director of Kawaihuelani Center for Hawaiian Language.
3. Back credits in other languages earned at other campuses within the UH system may be transferrable to UHM on a case-by-case basis. Please contact the Associate Dean of the College of Language, Linguistics, and Literatures.

Study Abroad Credits: Study abroad credits earned through approved non-UHM programs are treated as transfer credits and cannot be used as a basis for earning back credits. UHM Study Abroad credits may be eligible as a basis for back credits and approval of any back credits will be made by the appropriate language department on a case-by-case basis.

AP Credits: Courses for which AP credits are earned cannot be used as a basis for earning back credits.

Graduate Students: Graduate students are eligible to earn back credits for Hawaiian or second language proficiency in languages taught at UHM. In addition to appropriate course work, graduate students may be required to take a placement or competency examination as part of the determination to earn back credits (e.g., appropriate placement in a course). See individual language departments for internal policies and procedures.

Last revised on 12/6/10
MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT
BETWEEN
THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I AT MĀNOA
AND
KAUAI COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM) and Kaua'i Community College mutually agree to honor each other's policies regarding the awarding of back credits to students for second language proficiency. Any back credits awarded by one campus will be transferable to the other. However, each campus will determine the eligibility of its own students for back credits. Neither campus will be asked to award its back credits for courses taken at the other institution. Copies of the policies are attached.

Periodic reviews of back credit procedures and standards will be conducted and can be initiated by either campus. Changes in campus policies, subsequent to the signing of this agreement, will require reconsideration of the agreement.

The awarding of back credits is effective for students admitted in Fall 2001 or for students choosing to complete their degree programs under UHM's General Education Program which became effective in Fall 2001.

University of Hawai'i at Manoa

Joseph O'Mealy
Interim Dean, College of Languages, Linguistics, and Literature

Date

Kaua'i Community College

Helen Sina
Interim Dean of Instruction

Date

Peter Englerth
Chancellor

Date

Peggy Cha
Chancellor

Date

NOTE: UH Manoa will recognize Kauai Community College second language back credits for students transferring to Manoa from Fall 2005.
MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT
BETWEEN
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI’I AT MĀNOA
AND
KAPI'OLANI COMMUNITY COLLEGE

After discussions regarding policies at the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa (UHM) and the Kapi‘olani Community College (KCC) regarding the awarding of back credits to students for second language proficiency, UHM and KCC mutually agree to honor each other’s policies. Any back credits awarded by one campus will be transferable to the other, but each campus will determine the eligibility of its own students for back credits. Neither campus will be asked to award their own back credits for courses taken at the other institution. Copies of the policies are attached.

Periodic reviews of back credit procedures and standards will be held and can be initiated by either campus. Changes in campus policies, subsequent to the signing of this agreement, will require reconsideration of the agreement.

The awarding of back credits is effective for students admitted in Fall 2001 or for students choosing to complete their degree programs under UHM’s General Education Program which became effective in Fall 2001.

University of Hawai’i at Mānoa

Joseph O’Mealy, Interim Dean
College of Languages, Linguistics and Literature
11-19-03
Signed

Kapi‘olani Community College

Leon Richards, Senior Academic Dean
Arts and Sciences
11-29-03
Signed

Peter Englert, Chancellor
11/7/04
Signed

John Morton, Chancellor
12/11/05
Signed
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Want to get a head start?

Do you know a language other than English?

If yes, did you know that you can earn **3-16 FREE BACK-CREDITS for any single second language at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa?**

This is how it works:
Let's say you know Japanese by having studied the language in high school or speaking it at home. You'll take a Japanese placement test from the Japanese department. If you are placed in Japanese 202 (the fourth semester of Japanese), upon the completion of the course with a letter grade of 'C' or above, you may apply for additional 12 back-credits (the credits for the courses you are exempted from; JPN101, 102, and 201) at no cost.

At UH-Mānoa, you can study and get back-credits in any of the following languages. During the 2009-2011 calendar years, a total of **1,100 students** earned back credits in these languages!

**Arabic, Cambodian, Chamorro, Chinese, Filipino, French, German, Greek, Hawaiian, Hindi, Ilokano, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Latin, Maori, Persian, Portuguese, Russian, Samoan, Spanish, Tahitian, Thai, Tongan, Vietnamese**

**Important:** Restrictions apply. Students should read and understand the back credit policy before petitioning or taking a course. The policy is available at:

If you would like to know about the 101-202 language courses offered at the UH-Mānoa, please contact the department where the language is offered:
http://www.lll.hawaii.edu/index.php/departments-centers-alt1/

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