

Prior Coursework Review Process

For graduate students in the Kahlert School of Computing, University of Utah

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There are various reasons for students to document equivalency or rigor of prior courses in the graduate program. These include:

- Course Waivers and Substitutes
- Credit for Prior Courses (PhD Students)
- Transfer Credits

Refer to the handbook, or to the [brief explanation at the end of the document](#) about the details for each of these options.

To simplify, we will distinguish between “**waivers**” and “**credits**”, where “credits” refers to both credit for prior courses and transfer credits, unless the distinction is necessary.

Compiling the Information

The School of Computing uses a standardized process to evaluate requests for course equivalency and general degree credit.

Course Equivalency: To be considered equivalent, a previously completed course should have approximately 80% overlap with the corresponding University of Utah course. If approved as equivalent, the course may be used to satisfy specific track requirements.

General Degree Credit: Students may request credit for a course that does not have a direct University of Utah equivalent by indicating “No Direct Equivalent” in the spreadsheet below. The course will be evaluated based on whether its academic rigor and standards are comparable to those of the University of Utah. If approved, the course may count toward the total credits required for the degree but will not satisfy specific track requirements.

To request course equivalency or general degree credit, make a copy of or download the following form:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1XesjA0rbAVpzzwDh3dg14PNn6E55QlhBdVyexou02k4/edit#gid=0>

Fill out the details for each course that you want to be evaluated. You may either provide links to syllabi and assignments, exams, etc (preferred) or attach PDF versions of these documents.

Please use meaningful filenames, starting with the equivalent Utah Course Number, such as:

CS 6630 equiv at SFU Visualization Syllabus.pdf

CS 6630 equiv at SFU Visualization assignments.zip

Include your transcripts, starting with the university name:

SFU Transcript 2016-2018.pdf

University of Toronto Transcript 2018-2020.pdf

If you want to provide any additional written explanations, please attach a file called "README" in txt or PDF format.

Documenting no Prior Usage (Transfer Credits Only)

For transfer credit (not waivers) students must be able to show that the coursework was not used toward any other degree. This is typically done by providing transcripts for the prior degree that may not list the courses that a transfer is requested for.

Committee Chair Evaluation (PhD only)

The PhD committee chair is the first person that makes an evaluation for PhD students. Before you submit these documents to the graduate advisors, review the documents with your advisor (committee chair). Only if they endorse the courses should you submit it for further processing.

Submitting the Information

Once you have completed the spreadsheet and compiled the necessary documents, send a zip file of the spreadsheet in Excel format and of all the documentation to your graduate advisor.

Credit Hours

For courses taken in another country, you need to provide documentation on the equivalency of the workload. The spreadsheet asks you to provide a link to an official source, or an official document explaining the workload for the credit units.

For example, at the University of Utah, the following policy applies: "A University credit hour shall represent approximately three clock hours of the student's time a week for one semester."

<https://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.php>

For ECTS, as used in the European Union, the following rule applies:

"60 ECTS credits are the equivalent of a full year of study or work."

<https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/inclusive-and-connected-higher-education/european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system>

The form asks you to give a conversion factor. For ECTS, this would be:

60 ECTS is a full year of study. 8 courses with 3 credits each (24 credits) are a full year of study at Utah. $24/60 = 0.4$ – so 0.4 is your conversion factor from the foreign system to Utah Credits.

Evaluation Process

Your request will be processed in the following order:

- [PhD students only] Pre-Screening by your Committee Chair before submission.
- Initial Screening by the Graduate Advisors (completeness, correctness, compliance with handbook).
- Evaluation by the track or program director. The track/program director is encouraged to forward your request to a faculty member familiar with the Utah equivalent course and ask for a recommendation. **Note:** If a student changes tracks, any previously approved prior coursework evaluations are no longer valid and must be re-evaluated by the new track director.
- The track/program director makes decisions about each course individually and confirms the compliance with the handbook. The track director exports to PDF, dates and signs.
- The director of graduate studies reviews and gives final approval via e-mail to the grad advisors.
- For Transfer Credits: In addition to the prior coursework review, students should fill out the [Graduate Transfer Credit Authorization form](#) with all necessary information, and send the completed form and proof that the course was not applied towards a previous degree to their Graduate Advisor. The Graduate Advisor will review the document, communicate with the appropriate track directors, obtain the DGS signature, and submit the form to the Office of Admissions on behalf of students.

Waivers vs Transfers vs Credit for Prior Courses

In the following, we summarize waivers, transfers, and credit for prior courses. For details and restrictions, please refer to the relevant graduate handbook.

Course Waivers

Waivers are granted if a student has taken a course that is equivalent to a required course in the program before. If the previous course is found to be equivalent, the student doesn't have to take the equivalent course at the University of Utah. Waivers don't impact the number of credits a student has to take for a degree. Waivers can be granted even if the prior course was used towards a degree.

Example: Alex is a PhD student in the Data Analysis and Management Track and must complete 30 credits as part of his degree program. He previously completed a graduate-level algorithms course at another institution. If his course waiver request is approved, he will not

need to take Graduate Algorithms at the University of Utah; however, he must still complete a total of 30 credits toward his degree.

Course Transfers

Students who have done graduate study at other recognized institutions may transfer credit hours to the University of Utah. Students must be able to show that the course work was not used toward any other degree. Transfer credits will appear on the University of Utah transcript and can count toward a Milestone MS. Course transfers must meet current [Graduate School transfer requirements](#). As of Fall 2026, only 6 graduate credit hours can be transferred.

Credit for Prior Courses (PhD Students Only)

PhD students may already have a master's degree and may use credit for prior courses from such a degree within the limits outlined in the handbook. Unlike for Course Transfers, no Graduate School process is necessary. The credit can be assessed within the School of Computing. Credit for Prior courses cannot count toward milestone Master's degree requirements.

Example: Alice is a PhD student who completed a three-credit Advanced Algorithms course as part of a previous master's degree. She applied for and received approval to count this course toward her PhD coursework requirement. However, the course is not transferred to the University of Utah and will not appear on her University of Utah transcript. If she wants to apply for a Milestone Master, this course will not count toward the Master's degree course requirement.