

# CREDIT TRANSFER POLICY

## of Saint Joseph University of Beirut

The French text of this Policy was approved by the University Board during its 222<sup>nd</sup> meeting on October 23, 2024

### 1. Objective

The Credit Transfer Policy (hereinafter referred to as the “Policy”) of the Saint Joseph University of Beirut (USJ) governs the validation of learning for students seeking to join ongoing programs or for USJ students who have earned credits abroad. Grounded in the principles of equivalence and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), the Policy ensures flexibility while establishing clear criteria to evaluate the knowledge and competencies acquired at institutions outside USJ. Where such learning is deemed equivalent to the relevant USJ program, the corresponding credits shall be transferred.

The Policy is characterized by transparency and consistency, thereby safeguarding a fair procedure for all students. It is designed to uphold the academic quality of USJ degrees while providing eligible students with the opportunity to transfer into ongoing programs.

### 2. Scope of Application

This Policy governs credit transfer requests in the following cases:

- From a program at an institution, whether in Lebanon or abroad, to a program of the same academic cycle at USJ.
- From one program to another within the same academic cycle at USJ.
- Following international mobility, with a framework agreement and an individual learning contract for each student with the host university.

The USJ Equivalence Commission is responsible for implementing this Policy. It validates equivalence proposals submitted by institutions and grants final approval for credit transfers.

### 3. Implementation

The Policy is available on the University’s website.

#### 3.1. Transfer from Other Universities in Lebanon or Abroad to USJ

- All higher education institutions accredited by the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education are recognized by USJ.
- For international institutions, recognition by the relevant national authorities is required. While accredited institutions are preferred, non-accredited institutions are not automatically excluded.
- According to Law 285 on higher education general provisions and the regulation of private higher education, and in accordance with Article 17 of USJ’s Internal Regulations of Study, credit transfers from another institution to a program of the same cycle at USJ may not exceed 50% of the total number of credits required for the degree.
- The student must submit to the relevant institution a file for an admission in an ongoing program with the following documents:
  - A motivation letter clearly specifying the desired program.
  - The Lebanese Baccalaureate (General Secondary Certificate) or an officially recognized equivalent diploma.
  - Proof of registration and transcripts of courses validated by semesters or academic years.
  - A diploma supplement for the validated courses.
  - Official recognition of any prior degree by the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education, unless the degree was issued by USJ or the Lebanese University.
- Pending official equivalencies from the Lebanese Ministry, the candidate may submit a file to the relevant institution. The registration will be conditional; it will be finalized once these documents are obtained. In this case, the student signs a commitment letter acknowledging this condition.
- The file is reviewed by an ad hoc committee chaired by the Dean/Director and including relevant instructors. The committee decides to accept or reject the file with the necessary justifications. It ensures that the

- learning outcomes of the courses subject to equivalence align with the corresponding USJ courses.
- Approved files are forwarded to the USJ Equivalence Commission, with a detailed equivalence proposal uploaded to the Information System, including the necessary justifications and remarks.
- The equivalence proposal enables a comparison of the relevant course content. To qualify for equivalence, required courses should align with at least 70% of the learning outcomes. Equivalence may be conditioned by additional requirements. Courses not meeting the equivalence threshold may be credited as electives, within the allowed elective credit limit.
- For USJ General Education Program courses: a course that satisfies a General Education requirement is equivalent to the course that meets the same requirement without considering the threshold of content similarity.
- If there is a difference in the number of credits awarded to a course between the originating university and USJ, the USJ number of credits will be validated.
- The credit system (ECTS or American) of the originating institution will be considered when calculating credits.

### **3.2. Transfer between programs within USJ**

- According to Lebanese law and Article 17 of USJ's Internal Regulations of Study, credit transfers between programs within the same academic cycle at USJ shall not exceed 50% of the total number of credits required for the degree.
- As the transfer applicant is a current USJ student, they only need a motivation letter to complete the application file.
- The file is reviewed by an ad hoc committee chaired by the Dean/Director and including relevant instructors. The committee decides to accept or reject the file with the necessary justifications. It ensures that the learning outcomes of the courses subject to equivalence align with the corresponding USJ courses.
- Approved files are forwarded to the USJ Equivalence Commission, with a detailed equivalence proposal uploaded to the Information System, including the necessary justifications and remarks.
- The equivalence proposal enables a comparison of the relevant course content. To qualify for equivalence, required courses should align with at least 70% of the learning outcomes. Equivalence may be conditioned by additional requirements. Courses not meeting the equivalence threshold may be credited as electives, within the allowed elective credit limit.
- For USJ General Education Program courses: a course that satisfies a General Education requirement is equivalent to the course that meets the same requirement without considering the threshold of content similarity.
- If there is a difference in the number of credits awarded to a course between the originating university and USJ, the USJ number of credits will be validated.
- Validation of non-degree program credits: candidates may transfer credits validated outside the program, provided they comply with the limits set by Article 18(a) of the Internal Regulations of Study.

### **3.3. Credit Transfer for International Mobility**

- Outgoing Mobility: the student may transfer credits for one or two semesters at a foreign higher education institution with a framework agreement and an individual learning contract with the host university. In this case:
  - The student must fill out the learning contract for outgoing mobility, aligning the courses in their USJ program, typically equivalent to approximately 30 credits per semester, with the courses offered by the chosen host institution during the mobility period. The student is assisted in this process by their academic supervisor or tutor.
  - The file, comprising the learning contract and course descriptions, is reviewed by an ad hoc committee chaired by the Dean/Director and including relevant instructors. The committee may adjust the student's initial plan to ensure compatibility and complementarity of learning outcomes between the foreign program and USJ's program (cf. ECTS Guide 2015).
  - The file is then submitted to the Equivalence Commission for review and decision. If the decision is unfavorable, students must revise the plan based on the Commission's feedback. If the decision is favorable, the file is forwarded to the host institution.
  - If the host institution requests changes to the initial plan, the revised plan must be resubmitted to the Equivalence Commission for approval, along with the necessary justifications. The

Equivalence Commission will then issue its decision and, if applicable, grant final approval.

- Upon completion of the mobility period and receipt of the transcript from the host institution, the ad hoc committee will approve the validated credits.
- The file is then submitted to the Equivalence Commission, which will validate the credits in accordance with the mobility project.

- Dual Degree: the student and the Dean/Director sign the learning contract mentioning the dual degree agreement. The equivalence of credits earned abroad is validated by the USJ Equivalence Commission in accordance with the terms of the dual degree agreement, noting that equivalence cannot exceed 50% of the credits required for the relevant program.

## 4. Specific Provisions

Institutions may propose specific provisions to the Equivalence Commission to address unique credit transfer cases. Upon approval by the Equivalence Commission, these provisions will be integrated into the institution's Internal Regulations of Study, and submitted to the University Board for validation.

## 5. Policy Review

This Policy will be reviewed and updated as necessary, at least once every five years from its adoption by the University Board, and will be subject to approval by the Board of Trustees.