

"Ensuring Quality in Higher Education"



STUDENT TRANSFER GUIDELINES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN ZAMBIA



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Preface

Among the functions of the Higher Education Authority outlined in section 6 of the Higher Education Act No. 4 of 2013 is the development of standards for various aspects of higher education, including transfer of students among higher education institutions and between learning programmes. In order to fulfil this mandate, the Authority has developed the Student Transfer Guidelines.

The need for student transfer guidelines stems from the fact that, historically, Zambia has had no common framework to guide the transfer of students from one higher education institution to the other and from one learning programme to another. In some instances, it has been virtually impossible to transfer students from one institution to the other without repeating coursework done due to lack of a national system to facilitate such transfers. This situation has acted as a barrier to student mobility among Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). These guidelines seek to address these challenges by providing a common framework for student transfer within and among HEIs.

The purpose of Student Transfer Guidelines, in this regard is to provide guidance to HEIs in the development and institutionalisation of student transfer policies and procedures. It is anticipated that this will lead to the development of credible, efficient, equitable and transparent processes by higher education institutions that will allow students to transfer credit and courses between learning programmes; get exemption of credits or courses towards a qualification and accumulate credits in a learning programme or towards a qualification.

The development of the Student Transfer Guidelines was spearheaded by a committee of experts drawn from the Higher Education Authority, the Ministry of Higher Education, higher education institutions and other quality assurance agencies such as the Zambia Qualifications Authority (ZAQA) and Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA). Consultations with HEIs and other key stakeholders were conducted through validation meetings which were held in Lusaka and Ndola in order to allow for wide participation in the process.

The guidelines provide principles to be used in the development of institutional student transfer policies, restrictions on student transfer, roles and responsibilities of HEIs and guidance on procedures and processes for formulating institutional policies.

The Authority expects all higher education institutions registered under the Higher Education Act No. 4 of 2013, to follow the laid down principles and guidelines in the development of their student transfer policies. Ultimately, the Authority hopes that the development and implementation of student transfer policies by higher education institutions will promote student mobility among HEIs and avoid unnecessary but costly duplication of learning.

Prof. Stephen Simukanga

Director General

Higher Education Authority

Definition of Terms

Authority" means the Higher Education Authority established under Higher Education Act No.4 of 2013:

"credit" means a measurement of the quantity or volume of learning of a module, course, or programme of study;

"credit accumulation" means the process of acquiring credits for learning towards a qualification;

"credit transfer" means the process in which credits are recognised to enable learners to progress in their studies without unnecessarily having to repeat material or levels of study;

"credit rating" means the quantity or volume of learning of a programme, course or module and includes recognition of non-formal learning;

"Higher Education Institution" means an institution that is registered or established under the Higher Education Act and provides higher education on a full-time, part-time or distance learning basis;

"Learning programme accreditation" means the evaluation and recognition of learning programmes to ensure that they meet the necessary quality requirements;

"Learning Programme" means a process by which learners acquire knowledge, skills and competence, or a course of study or instruction, apprenticeship, training, and employment;

"Notional hours" means the total time deemed to be spent by a learner in all modes of learning in respect of a specified programme;

"Learner" means a person who is enrolled and receiving knowledge, skill, or competence at a higher education institution;

"Qualification" means the formal recognition of a learner's achievement of the required number and range of credits or other requirements at a specified level of the National Qualifications Framework.

1.0 Introduction

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) draws its mandate from the Higher Education Act No.4 of 2013. The Act mandates HEA to, among other functions, design and recommend an institutional quality assurance system for student transfers between academic programmes among Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). To fulfil this mandate, HEA has embarked on developing Student Transfer Guidelines to promote the transfer of students from one HEI to the other and between learning programmes.

The guidelines will enable students transfer their already completed courses and/or accumulated credits to the receiving institution without having to start afresh. The main aim of these guidelines is to ensure that students are provided with an opportunity to move from one institution to the other with their accumulated credits/courses in the appropriate learning programmes. These guidelines will also enable students move from one programme to another within an HEI. Ultimately, the guidelines will promote the use of already gained credits or courses and avoid unnecessary duplication of learning.

The Student Transfer Guidelines are developed in line with the Zambia Qualifications Authority (ZAQA) guidelines for the development of Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (CATS) by appropriate authorities. Further, the guidelines have been benchmarked with regional and global best practices.

1.1 Rationale for Student Transfer System

Historically, Zambia has had no common framework to guide the transfer of students from one higher education institution to the other and from one learning programme to another. In some instances, it has been virtually impossible to transfer students from one institution to the other due to lack of a national system to facilitate such transfers. This situation has acted as a barrier to student mobility among HEIs. As a result, students wishing to transfer to another institution or learning programme have often been compelled to repeat courses which they have already completed in their previous programmes, resulting in duplication of learning.

In this regard, these guidelines are aimed at addressing these challenges in the Zambian higher education sector by providing a common framework for student transfer within and among HEIs. The guidelines seek to provide a basis for the development of equitable and fair student transfer policies by HEIs.

In the application of these guidelines, it is important to note that the diversity of institutions, programmes and learners will make it impractical to look for a perfect match between two programmes. Instead, the aim is to look for comparability of programmes and courses. This will be more realistic and practical and promote

fairness and flexibility in the transfer of students among HEIs and between programmes.

1.2 Purpose and Objectives of Student Transfer Guidelines

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide guidance to HEIs in the development and institutionalisation of student transfer policies and procedures. Ultimately, it is anticipated that this will lead to the development of credible, efficient, equitable and transparent processes by higher education institutions that will allow students to (a) transfer credit and courses between learning programmes; (b) get exemption of credits/courses towards a qualification and (c) accumulate credits in a learning programme or towards a qualification.

The specific objectives of developing these guidelines are to:

- a. eliminate repetition of learning and promote a continuum of learning;
- b. facilitate student mobility among higher education institutions locally and internationally;
- c. promote collaboration among HEIs in learning programme design and delivery;
- d. facilitate information sharing among HEIs on matters relating to learning programmes and qualifications;
- e. facilitate transfer of students in case of deregistration or permanent closure of an HEI;
- f. facilitate recognition of credits from foreign HEIs; and
- g. promote student exchange programmes between local HEIs and foreign HEIs.

1.3 Scope of the Student Transfer Guidelines

These guidelines shall apply to learning programmes offered on part-time and full-time basis. The guidelines deal with student transfer in the context of the following:

- 1. Horizontal credit/course transfer, that is, the transfer of credit/courses from another institution or programme or both, if that learning programme is accredited and is at the same qualification level;
- 2. Vertical credit/course transfer, that is, the transfer of credit/courses from a lower qualification to a higher one; and
- 3. Transfer from one learning programme to another within the same HEI.

Student Transfer Guidelines shall apply to all HEIs under the higher education sub-framework.

2.0 Guiding Principles for development of student transfer policies by HEIs

In developing and implementing student transfer policies and procedures, an HEI shall take into consideration the following:

- a) All student transfer processes and procedures shall be conducted in accordance with HEA requirements and guidelines;
- b) Student transfer shall be applied to all modes of delivery, namely Conventional, and Open Distance and eLearning (ODeL);
- c) Credit and course transfer from another institution shall only occur when the HEI is satisfied that a course(s) is relevant or comparable to the course(s) in the Learning Programme of the receiving HEI;
- d) Credit and course transfer between learning programmes within the same HEI, shall only occur when the HEI is satisfied that the course(s) is relevant and fits into the curriculum of the learning programme the student is transferring into:
- e) Credit transfer from foreign HEIs shall only occur after verifying that the foreign HEI is accredited by the relevant regulatory authorities in that country;
- f) Vertical credit transfer shall occur where the lower qualification courses form a foundation of learner knowledge and skills for the higher qualification and ensures progression in learning;
- g) Credits obtained from studies that do not lead to full qualifications can be used towards and/or count for credit accumulation and transfer for a full qualification;
- h) For purposes of credit transfer, each HEI shall ensure that credits gained in a learning programme are entered on the learner's transcript of results;
- i) For the purposes of recognising prior learning, all learning shall be considered for credit award provided that the learning outcomes have been adequately evaluated and meet the requirements of the learning programme applied for.

3.0 Restrictions on Student Credit/Course Transfer

- a) Transferred students shall earn credits only for successfully completed courses, that is, credits shall not be earned in courses that have not been passed;
- b) Exemptions based on accumulated credits shall be limited to no more than 50% of credits/courses. This means that no student must be exempted from more than 50% of the credits/courses required for any qualification. However, in the case where the student wishes to transfer from one learning programme to the other within the same HEI, the institution may consider giving exemptions beyond 50%;
- c) Credits cannot be duplicated. Therefore, the same set of credits cannot be transferred to more than one learning programme or qualification within an HEI;

- d) Full qualifications shall not be awarded to a student solely based on transferred credits;
- e) In the case of vertical transfer, receiving HEIs shall only accept students from learning programmes that are approved or accredited by the appropriate authority;
- f) Credit transfer shall not occur in situations where formal studies used as a basis for requesting credit transfer were completed more than ten (10) years before application for credit transfer;
- g) One can only transfer courses that have 80% or more comparable content or credits as the course being sought for transfer;
- h) Credit transfer based on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) through informal or non-formal learning shall only occur where such learning used as a basis for requesting credit transfer meet the learning outcomes of the specified course for which credit transfer or course exemption is being sought.
- i) Credit shall not be given for which a grade of "compensatory pass" and "supplementary pass" has been achieved.

4.0 Formulation and Development of Student Transfer Policies and Procedures

In the formulation and implementation of student transfer policies and procedures, HEIs shall take into consideration the following:

4.1 Credit Rating

Credit refers to the quantity or volume of learning of a programme, course or module and includes recognition of non-formal learning. Credit is awarded on achievement of defined learning outcomes at a specified level. The process of determining the quantity or the volume of learning, resulting in the attaching of a numerical value to a programme, course or module, is called credit rating. It involves an evaluation of intended learning outcomes, minimum body of knowledge and the assessment of a learning programme, course or module. Credits provide a basis for determining comparability of learning among programmes, courses or modules. In Zambia, the credits are determined using notional hours.

4.2 Notional Hours

In its guidelines for the development of CATS, the Zambia Qualifications Authority define notional hours as the total time deemed to be spent by a learner in all modes of learning in respect of a specified programme. A notional hour/notional study hour/notional learning hour is not limited to time-tabled teaching/lecturing hours in classrooms but includes attendance in classes, experiments in laboratories, supervised

or unsupervised sessions, practical learning in workshops, independent study, and any other form of study undertaken by the learner.

In these guidelines, the notional hours shall be used because they are applicable to different modes of delivery, including open and distance learning, online and blended modes. Below are some of the principles that govern the notional hours:

- (i) 10 notional hours are worth one credit. This is also in line with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and other international conventions.
- (ii) The notional hours for a given programme comprise all the learning activities of the student, inclusive of contact time, private study, research, assignment writing and assessment.
- (iii) Depending on the learning institution, terms or semester systems may be used to accumulate course/module credit. Regardless of the system being used, HEIs shall find means of translating study hours into credits.
- (iv) To aid the development of policies and procedure for credit accumulation and transfer, HEIs shall work out the number of credits that should be allocated to all learning activities such as lectures, tutorials, practical work, seminars, projects, field work, assignments, self-directed study and continuous assessment for all learning programmes, courses and modules.
- (v) In line with ZAQA guidelines, to assign appropriate credits to learning, the following assumptions shall apply:
 - a) An average higher education student puts in a minimum of 1200 hours of work per year,
 - b) Translated into credits, a one-year programme of 1200 notional study hours is equivalent to 120 credits.

The qualifications, standard durations, notional hours, and credits are specified in Table 1.

Table 1: Qualifications, Notional Hours and Credits

Qualification	Standard Duration	Notional Hours	Credits
Certificate	1-2 years	1200-2400	120 – 240
Diploma	3 years	3,600	360
Bachelors' Degree	3 – 6 years	3,600 – 7,200	360 – 720
Graduate Certificate	6 months – 1 year	600 – 1,200	60 - 120
Graduate Diploma	1 – 2 years	1200 – 2,400	120 – 240
Bachelor Honours Degree	1 year	1,200	120
Masters' Degree	1 – 2 years	1,200 – 2,400	120 – 240
Doctorate Degree	3 years	3,600	360

4.3 Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes as used here refers to the set of knowledge, skills, competencies that an individual has acquired and is able to demonstrate after completion of a learning process. Therefore, the courses for consideration of credit transfer shall be evaluated based on the learning outcomes of the learning process. The receiving HEI shall have the responsibility of ensuring that the learning outcomes are comparable to the course for which they are seeking exemptions.

5.0 Other Factors to consider in the Development of Student Transfer Policies and Procedures

In addition to credit rating, notional hours and learning outcomes, the following shall be taken into consideration:

- i. **Transparency, objectivity and clarity** an HEI shall ensure that its policies and procedures provide for a clear, transparent, and objective process for credit/course transfer;
- ii. **Information** an HEI shall ensure that the learners are informed of the opportunity to accumulate or transfer credits/courses and the procedures for doing so;
- iii. **Committee on student transfer** an HEI shall have an office or committee to facilitate student transfers;
- iv. **Application for credit transfer** an HEI shall ensure that the application process for student credit transfer is well defined and clear;

- v. **Assessment of evidence** -an HEI shall develop mechanisms for assessing evidence towards student credit transfer;
- vi. **Feedback** an HEI shall develop timelines within which an application lodged and within which a learner can receive a response.

6.0 Main elements to be included in the Student Transfer Policy

The following key elements shall be included in the student transfer policy of an HEI:

- i. The governance structure (includes committee on student transfer, terms of reference for the committee and responsibilities of staff)
- ii. Conditions under which credit transfer or exemptions shall be granted;
- iii. Application procedures (includes requirements for transfer and timelines);
- iv. Feedback mechanisms and timelines:
- v. Mechanisms for recognising prior learning;
- vi. Credit transfer evaluation procedures;
- vii. Appeals procedure; and
- viii. Grounds for withdrawal of credit.

7.0 Roles of students

A student wishing to transfer shall:

- (i) Satisfy the admission requirement for the Learning Programme in which the student wishes to transfer into;
- (ii) Have preliminary information about the receiving HEI's Learning Programmes and course(s) which are available at the HEI before requesting for a transfer;
- (iii) Abide by the terms and conditions regarding the sought Learning Programme at the receiving HEI.

8.0 Roles of the releasing HEI

Where a student has requested for a transfer to another institution, the releasing HEI shall:

- (i) Adhere to the principles and responsibilities as outlined in these guidelines,
- (ii) Facilitate the student's transfer and provide the necessary information to the student and the HEI/Learning Programme the student wishes to transfer to;
- (iii) Provide relevant information and academic record of the student.

9.0 Roles of receiving HEI

The receiving HEI shall:

- (i) adhere to the principles and responsibilities as outlined in these guidelines,
- (ii) set fair and transparent admission criteria that are consistent with the learning programme;
- (iii) satisfy itself that the student seeking transfer has met the conditions for transfer;
- (iv) provide a guide on student transfers;
- (v) ensure that the student is indexed by HEA and other regulatory bodies where applicable;
- (vi) keep records of the student's credit transfer request and outcome.

ABOUT THE HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHOURITY (HEA)

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) is a statutory body established by the Higher Education Act No. 4 of 2013, with the mandate to regulate and monitor standards in HEIs in order to ensure quality services and contribute to the enhancement of human capital and accelerated national development.

The Authority's functions are outlined in the Higher Education Act and include:

- 1. Regulate Higher Education Institutions and coordinate the development of higher education.
- 2. To establish a coordinated higher education system which promotes cooperate governance and provides for a programme based higher education.
- 3. To develop and recommend policy on higher education, including the establishment of public higher education institutions and the registration of private higher education institutions, and
- 4. To promote quality assurance in higher education.

Vision: "A dynamic Quality Assurance body promoting internationally recognised Zambian higher education."

Mission: "To promote standards of higher education in order to ensure knowledgeable, skilled and well-disposed internationally recognised graduates for enhanced human capital and accelerated national development."

HEA's Core Values:

Honesty, Transparency, Integrity, Teamwork, Courtesy, Confidentiality, and Commitment.



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