

Transfer Credit Articulation

TRANSFER CREDIT ARTICULATION

As one component of the Student Satisfaction Study, MGT completed a business process reengineering study of the transfer credit articulation process. When MGT reviewed the current transfer credit articulation process we found the process as shown in **Exhibit 1**. In practice, the process differs from that perceived by the academic departments, which is presented in **Exhibit 2**, and from the process as perceived by Student Affairs, presented in **Exhibit 3**. We present all three versions as examples of how perceptions of the process vary.

Once a transfer student is accepted, the process of articulating his or her previous work cannot begin until all paperwork has arrived. This includes transcripts, residency status and inoculation records.

A student arriving at UALR with an associate's of arts degree from a public university in Arkansas automatically meets the core requirements for a bachelor's degree plan. However, this is not necessarily the case for a student who earned the associate's degree at UALR and decides to stay at UALR to pursue a four-year degree. A UALR associate's degree does not automatically meet the core requirements for a UALR bachelor's degree, although a UALR Associate Degree in General Studies includes the 44-hour core curriculum requirements. An Associate of Arts in General Studies received at UALR, under the rubric of the Fall 2003 catalog or later, fulfills the core requirement.

If the student did not complete an associate of arts degree, but earned all transfer credits at public colleges or universities in Arkansas, the course equivalents should be listed in one of three places: the Arkansas Course Transfer System (ACTS), UALR Transfer Equivalency Guide (TEG) (which are online), or the State Minimum Core Curricula (SMCC), which is an equivalency booklet published yearly. Every course on the student's transcript is matched through these systems and articulated into the student's UALR academic record (or degree audit). This is the best case scenario; however, it does not apply to most transfer students.

Multiple interview respondents indicated a large majority of transfer students use the Special Exception Form. They estimated at least 75 percent of transfer students fill out at least one “Special Exception Form” because courses for each academic area are on separate forms. If a student’s coursework is not noted as equivalent to a UALR course in ACTS, TEG, or the SMCC, or the transcript comes from an out-of-state institution for which no equivalencies have been established, or a private institution in Arkansas, a student fills out the Special Exception Form to appeal for UALR equivalent course(s) credit. The form is then sent to the appropriate academic department(s).

Once the special exception form arrives in the academic department, it is reviewed and determined if the course has an UALR equivalent and/or can be used for core credit. Typically, an administrative employee must search online to determine how this course counted at the previous institution. If the transfer institution counted the course as part of its core curriculum, the course may be accepted to meet a part of the UALR core requirements. If the course is approved, the form is sent to the college housing the academic department (e.g., biology will send the approved form to the College of Science and Mathematics). Once the college approves the course, the form is forwarded to the Office of Records and Registration to be entered into the student’s academic record and/or adjusted in degree audit. The decision also is noted in a database so decisions on that course, from said institution, will be consistent in the future.

The course does not have to be accepted at UALR if it is core at the previous institution. If the course is denied for an equivalent or to meet a UALR core requirement by the academic department for any reason, the Special Exception Form is sent to the college, which can approve or deny the request. If the denied request is not for core credit, the student, major department, and college are sent copies of the Special Exception Form. At any point, if the college denies the request, Records and Registration will receive the transcripts and review them. Additionally, if the department and college do not agree, Records and Registration will receive and review the

transcripts. If Records and Registration approves the transfer work, the courses are entered into the student's degree audit and the decision is noted in a database to ensure consistent decisions in the future.

If the academic department and/or college denies the transfer request for UALR core credit, or if Records and Registration denies the transfer credit, Records and Registration forwards the form along with any appropriate documentation to the Admissions and Transfer Committee (ATC) to review the student's previous coursework. This committee can deny or approve the request. If the course credit is denied, the path is over, the course is not counted for core credit, and the decision is entered into a database so future decisions will be uniform. If the course is approved by ATC, Records and Registration staff enters the course into the student's degree audit and into a database to guarantee future resolutions are the same. **Exhibit 1** charts this process, while **Exhibit 2** provides the process that the academic units perceive to be the current process, and **Exhibit 3** displays the process as perceived by Enrollment Services.

The differences between the academic unit process and the MGT "As is" process occur in several steps:

Academic departments state that, if a student has an A.A. degree from any Arkansas public institution, the student's core requirements are met. MGT's study showed that was not the case for an associate's degree from UALR. Special exception forms have to be completed for an associate's degree from UALR.

The process also differs from the point at which the Special Exception form is submitted to the academic department. MGT's "as is" process shows that whether or not the form is approved or denied by the academic department, the form next goes to the college for approval or denial, and then to Records and Registration. The academic department's "as is" process moves the form to the college only if the form is accepted. In addition, denied credit forms go directly to

the Admissions and Transfer of Credit Committee without an opportunity for Records and Registration to review and approve.

MGT's "As Is" process and that of Enrollment Services also differ in that Enrollment Services states if a student has earned an Associate of Arts degree at UALR, the core requirements are met. Additionally, Enrollment Services states that the Special Exception Form does not go to Records and Registration for approval, but goes directly to the Admissions and Transfer Committee.

Students had significant complaints about the transfer credit articulation process, as shown by the comments from the Student Satisfaction Survey:

There needs to be a more efficient system of receiving approval or disapproval of Special Exception Forms. It is very frustrating when a student has to run around campus trying to get credits that should be valid accepted. This takes away from class time and work time because it is crucial to some students to get their transfer credits. If the credits aren't approved, nobody tells you why they were disapproved and/or how you may get them approved. I have had the worst experience with these forms and it has translated into a bad experience at UALR because most of the people I have had to talk to have not been all that successful.

My advisor was not helpful in regards to me choosing classes, and did not reveal pertinent information regarding what classes I needed to take (they failed to tell me that because I had transferred in an associate's degree, I would not need to take any more core classes - I could have spent this semester working on my major).

I could never get a person to call me back when trying to transfer from another university.

I have had a problem getting transferred. They told me several times that I didn't fill out the correct transfer admission application. And it has been hard to get everything in order.

I also felt like I was taken advantage of on my transfer credits. I passed many classes that even have the same title at the UAFS; instead of going to my major they transfer as electives.

Odd policy of transferred records for undergraduate classes being on the UALR transcripts, when taken and transferred to UALR after obtaining a Bachelor's Degree. Appears as though it would even be easier and simpler to place all records on the UALR transcript.

Some of my classes from a previous college did not transfer and I wanted to find out why, and they were not very good at explaining this process to me. I instead had to contact my previous school and they helped me understand.

I would like the campus to re-examine how they treat transfer students. We are treated like dogs. No-worse than dogs. It took me months to get some credits transferred. Even when my old school has the EXACT SAME CORE CURRICULUM, UALR refuses to accept credits from the transfer. This has to be stopped. I feel like I am a paying customer, and I left my old school because I thought UALR would be better for my money. It is academically better, but the cost of tuition does not reflect a grand attitude towards the students.

It would be most helpful, if students knew about what credits is transferable, and those that are not. And what courses they need to take, after being told to take them, and then find out they are not needed based on their transcript. This would help them to stop some of the expense of paying for courses not needed. And be able to get the courses needed.

Several transfer students have complained about their transcripts being lost repeatedly...I had to send mine 5 different times before they finally found it...this slowed down the acceptance and registration process and myself and two other students were not able to receive early registration due to the offices misplacing our transcripts.

The university needs to do a much better job with transfer students!!!!!!!!!!!!

In summary, the current transfer credit articulation process is inefficient, and more importantly, does not serve students well. UALR includes service to transfer student as a major component of its mission. To provide such service, the transfer credit articulation process needs major revision. MGT begins by enumerating a list of proposed principles that will underpin the proposed transfer credit articulation process:

1. The transfer of credits for core requirements is handled differently than transfer of credits for major requirements.
2. One office, the newly formed Transfer Credit Office (TCO) or perhaps University College (UC), has responsibility for making decisions about core credit transfer decisions.
3. Academic departments are responsible for making decisions on transfer credit related to the major.
4. Transfers of credit based on protocol established by the Arkansas Course Transfer System (ACTS) or the State Minimum Core Curricula (CC) book are well-established rules and therefore can continue to be applied by the Office of Records and Registration.
5. The student is responsible for providing TCO/UC with information needed to make transfer decisions. Many items (transcripts and a course's role in the student's previous university's curriculum, for example) are required to come directly from the institution to help verify authenticity.
6. Establish a definitive deadline date for transcript submittal for each semester.

The current committee model is limited because its decisions are not guided by policy; rather, decisions are made on a case-by-case basis and the decisions are recorded for later reference. Admittedly, this provides a good case history for establishing policy guidelines. The method, however, lacks a set of guiding principles from which to derive policies. Additionally, it alienates the student from a process that governs a fair amount of his or her education.

We recommend that the transfer of credit articulation process be divided into two separate cases: (1) transfer of credits for core requirements, and (2) transfer of credits for major requirements. One office should handle all decisions on transfer credit related to the core. That office could be part of University College or the current Office of Records and Registration. There are advantages to either placement. Transfer of core credits is charted in **Exhibit 4.**

The approval of core credits should be the responsibility of only one office or department. This will relieve the burden from the academic departments and colleges, and will ensure all core courses are treated the same way with regard to the transfer process. Currently, approval or disapproval for transfer credit varies by department. Also, this model will reduce the need for transfer students to go from department to department to get course credit approved. Presently, the special exception form can take several weeks to move from a department office to the college to the Office of Records and Registration and results in a timeline that appears to frustrate the students immensely.

The determination of whether or not a student has fulfilled the core requirements should be completed BEFORE the student registers for classes. Students complain that they have repeated courses and were determined to be ineligible to take certain courses with prerequisites because the decision on meeting core requirements did not occur until after registration.

We also recommend **an associate's degree earned at UALR count as fulfillment of the core requirements.** This change will be consistent with the treatment of associate's degrees earned at other public Arkansas colleges and universities.

As a prerequisite to any change, **the "Special Exception Form" should be renamed.** It is not a special exception, but rather is an integral part of the transfer articulation process.

Academic departments (i.e., the faculty) remain responsible for decisions on transfer credits related to the major. The process of transfer of credits for the major is illustrated in **Exhibit 5.** Although this process would be handled more efficiently if only one office or department was responsible for the major credit articulation process, faculty of various academic departments have differing standards for articulation of courses for the major. In addition, a student who has declared a major receives advising from the academic department, not University College or a general advising office. It is more efficient from the student's perspective if he or she is advised on what classes to take at UALR by an individual who understands and/or makes decisions on transfer of courses as a part of the academic major.

It would be ideal if one person in the academic department or college was responsible for approving or denying transfer credit for the major. That would promote consistency in decisions.

EXHIBIT 1
Transfer Credit Articulation “As Is” Process Map As Mapped By Mgt

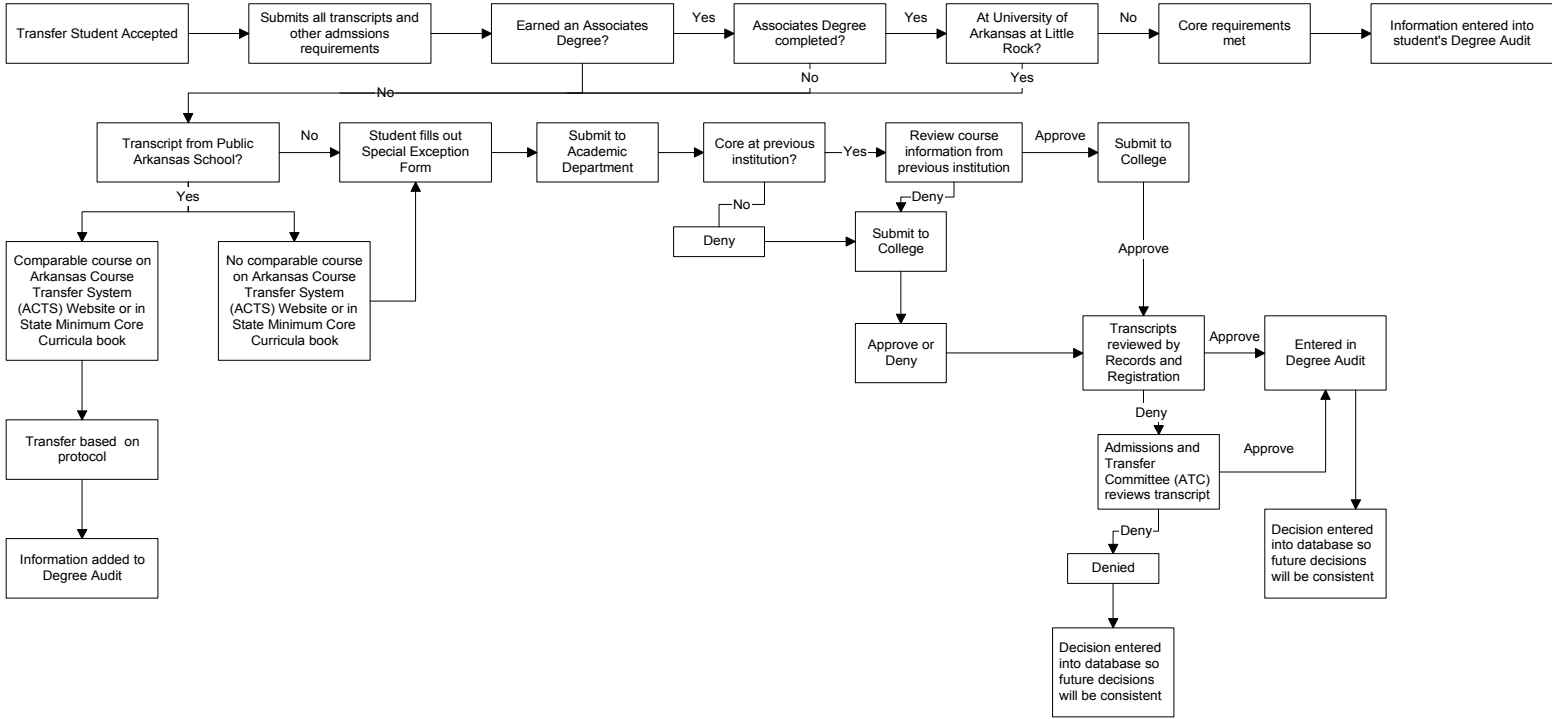


EXHIBIT 2
Transfer Credit Articulation “As Is” Process Map As Mapped By An Academic Department

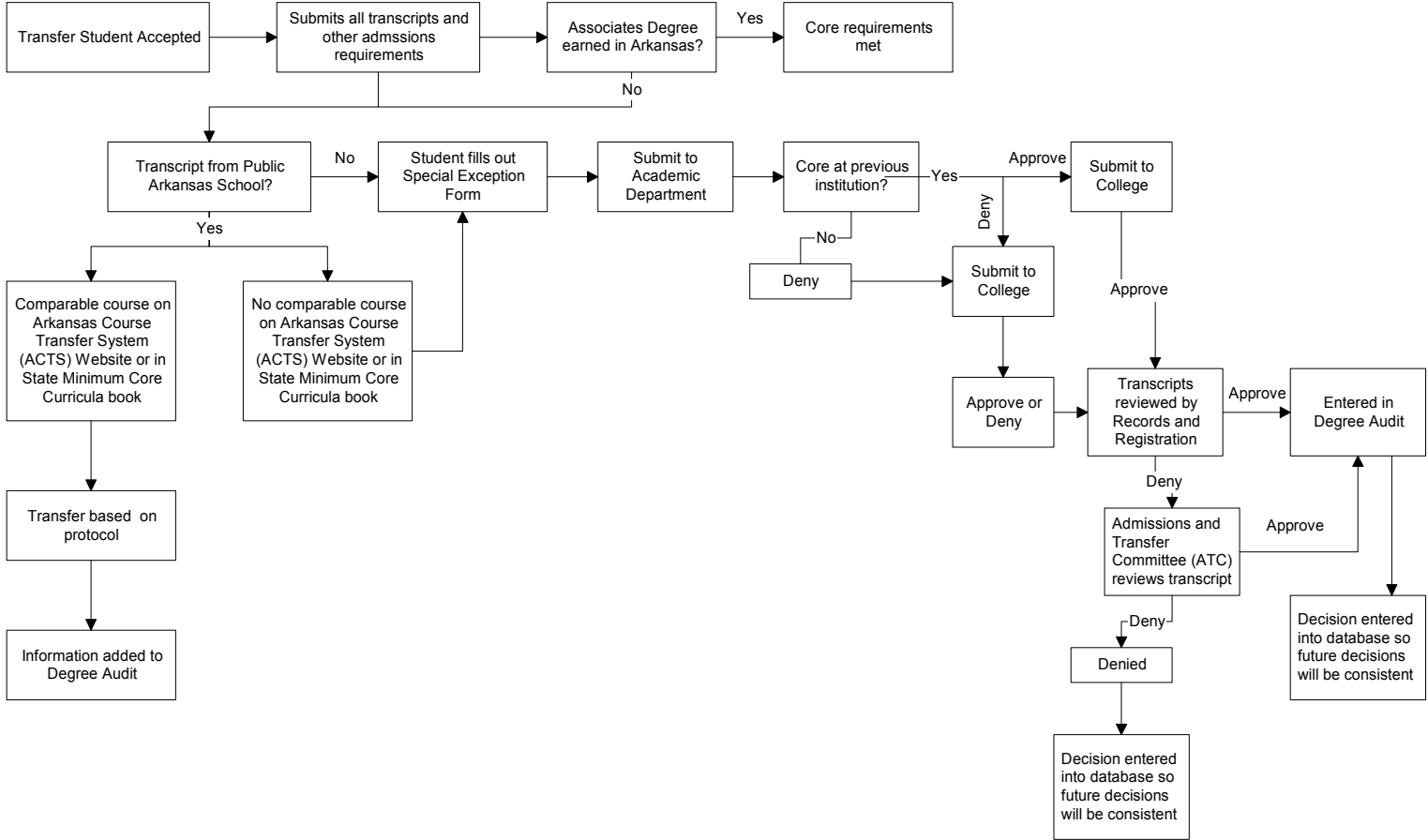


EXHIBIT 3
transfer credit articulation “as is” map as defined by enrollment services

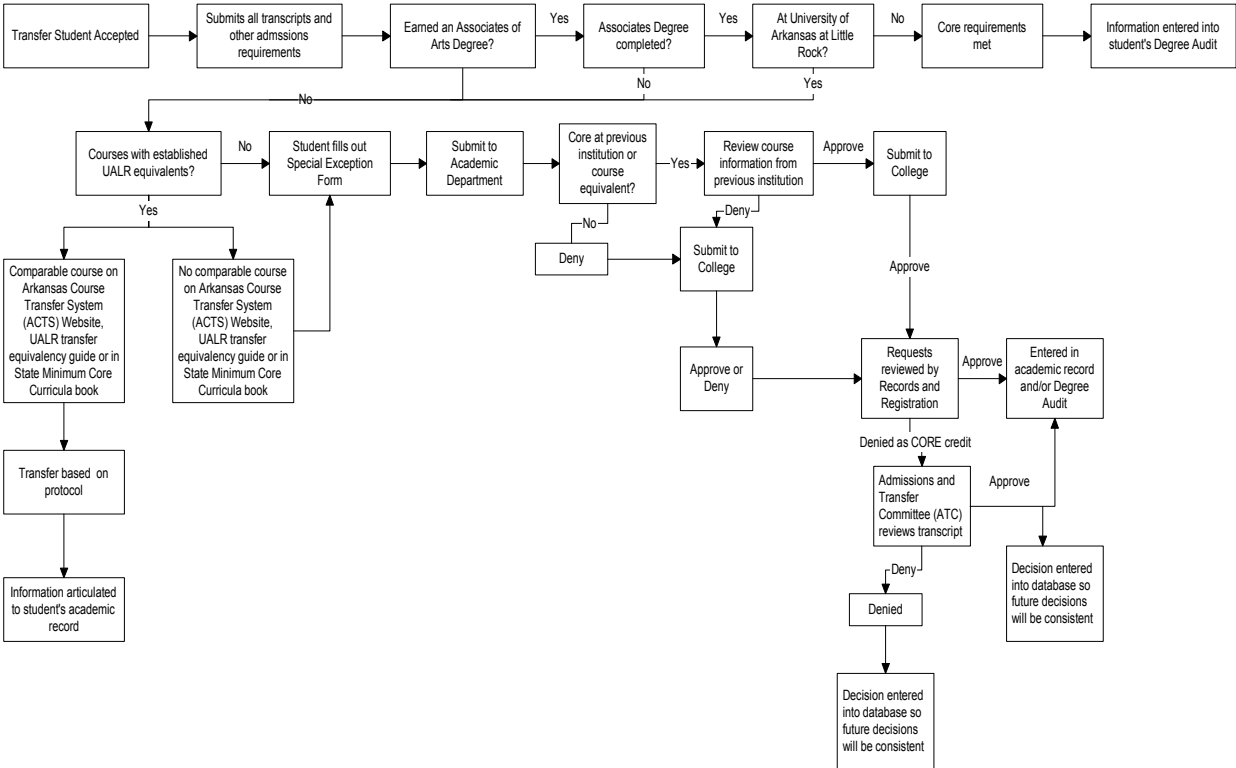
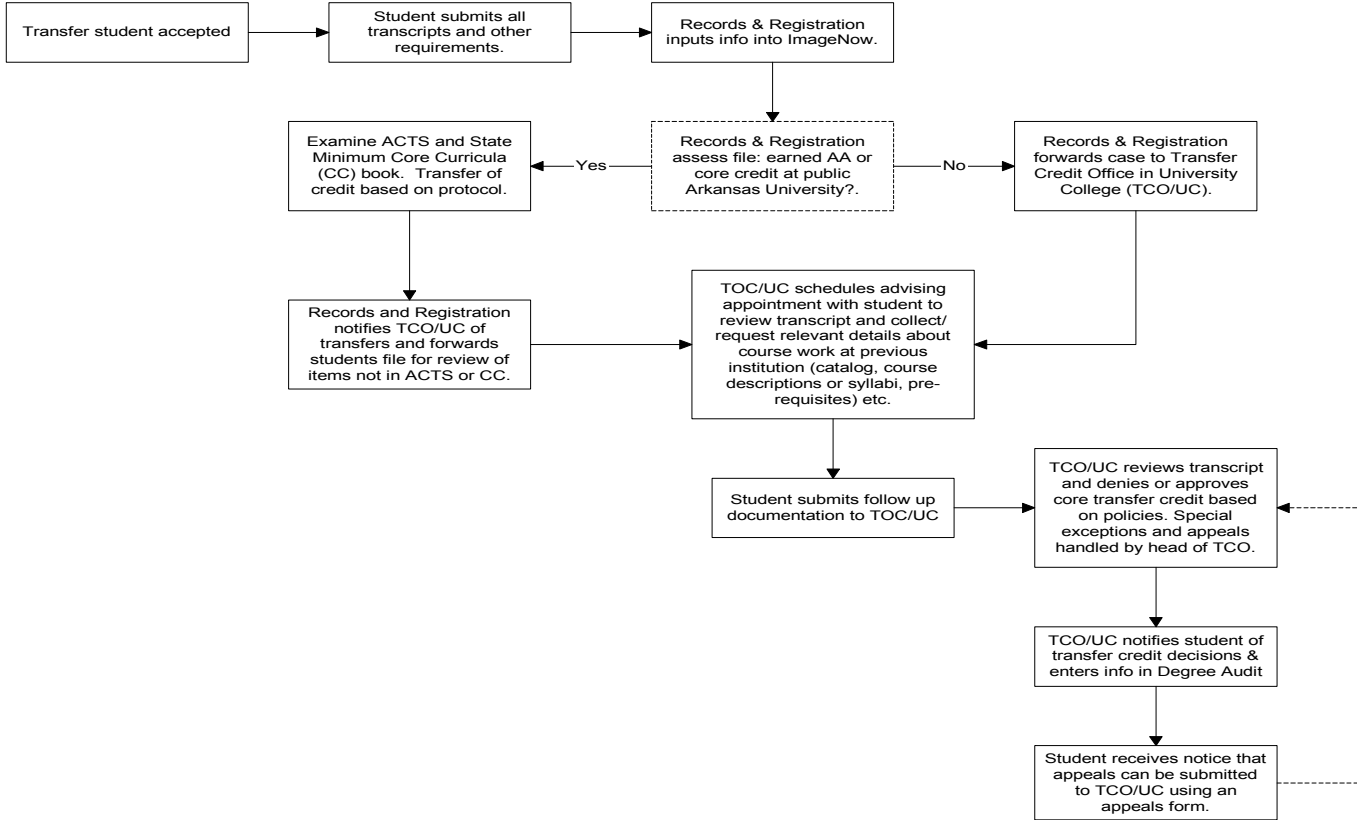


EXHIBIT 4
Proposed Transfer of Core Credit Process Map



**EXHIBIT 5
Proposed Transfer of Major Credit Map**

