

# Guidelines for the Credit Recognition Process

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## Foreword

Dear Colleagues,

When students seek to transfer credits for courses and examinations completed externally (i.e. in other TUM schools or departments or at other national and international institutions of higher education, etc.) to be counted toward their degree program requirements at TUM, the relevant Examination Board is required to decide on their request for credit recognition. As a rule, the Board calls upon the competent authorities in the students' fields of study (i.e. the module coordinators of the relevant degree programs) to assess whether there are any **substantial differences** between the **competencies** acquired.

This process raises a number of questions, such as, when exactly is a difference considered **substantial**? What exactly are **competencies** and how can these be identified and compared to one another? What does "reversed burden of proof" mean? And what procedures are to be followed when credit recognition is denied? The following guidelines provide assistance in these and many other matters concerning the credit recognition process.

The special aspects about recognizing credits from other institutions are also explained.

Sections I-V spell out the legal and organizational frameworks of the process, while sections V-XII offer further instructions and practical illustrations of the process stages. At the end, you can find a list of frequently asked questions (FAQ) with corresponding recommendations for handling these issues.

These guidelines do not address the periods of study to be officially recognized, although they are also mentioned in the new Article 86 of the Bavarian Higher Education Admissions Act (BayHIG).

Nevertheless, should you have questions about the credit recognition process or the assessment process for the main differences, which are not addressed here, or questions regarding any other Bologna Process, feel free to contact us personally at any time.

You can find our contact information at the end of this publication or at: <https://www.tum.de/studium/tumcst/teams-cst/>

Sincerely,

TUM Center for Study and Teaching – Quality Management

## I. An Overview of the Legal Framework for Credit Recognition

One of the central goals of the Bologna Process is to **facilitate the recognition** (i.e. transfer) of credits and examinations (referred to below as credits) among institutions of higher education, fostering student **mobility and flexibility** with regard to:

- international mobility (abroad - Germany),
- changing from one type of higher education institution to another (university of applied science to university), and
- changing majors within the home institution.

In addition, the credit system seeks to foster **permeability in the educational system** as a whole (e.g. between institutions providing vocational/professional training and institutions of higher education). The degree programs can be studied more effectively, since competencies that have already been acquired once do not have to be acquired again due to formalities. Moreover, creative freedom with learning is promoted by a positive credit recognition system. Institutions of higher education should create an open, welcoming culture and broaden the horizons in terms of competencies acquired at other institutions. To facilitate the process, it is important that information be provided and everyone involved behave transparently. Open communication, especially with students and applicants promotes mutual understanding.

The legal framework for the recognition of qualifications in higher education is contained in the **Lisbon Recognition Convention**, or LRC (Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region), which was drawn up in 1997 under the auspices of the Council of Europe and UNESCO and ratified by Germany in 2007. For the recognition of credits from institutions of higher education, the agreement introduces the notion of “substantial difference” to replace the criteria of “equivalency” applied in previous conventions. The regulations set out in the Lisbon Recognition Convention have been gradually introduced into the higher education laws of the German states (in Bavaria: Art. 86 BayHIG) and specified in greater detail in university examination regulations.

While recognition in these laws only concerns credits from institutions of higher education, credits from organizations that are not considered higher education institutions may be credited if they are equivalent in nature. The topic of recognition is addressed in a separate section of these guidelines. The following explanations pertain to the recognition of credits from higher education institutions:

### 1. Substantial Differences (cf. BayHIG, Art. 86, Lisbon Convention, Art. V1)

Qualifications will be recognized provided that no **substantial differences** with regard to acquired competencies exist.

### 2. Credits to be Recognized (cf. APSO § 16)

The competencies (also referred to as “learning outcomes”) describe the **outcome** of a learning process. How and where these outcomes were achieved (e.g. at another university or a Fachhochschule [university of applied science], nationally or internationally) generally does not play a role in the recognition process (**location- and institution-independent recognition**). **These criteria only have an indicative effect.**

In the absence of any substantial differences, the following qualifications will be recognized:

- Those acquired in **degree programs** at a university in **Germany**,
- Those acquired through **distance learning programs** in **Germany**,
- Those acquired in degree programs at a **university outside of Germany**,

- Degrees that were obtained on the basis of these types of degree programs
- Credits that have been acquired at a state-run or state-recognized institution of higher education in Bavaria within the scope of a module and continued studies, or during an early study program for secondary students, or from the **Bavarian Virtual University (VHB)**.

**Restrictions**, such as the establishment of minimum periods of study at the degree awarding institution, the setting of limits on the number of credits that may be recognized, or regulations precluding the recognition of certain types of modules (e.g. final theses), are **not permissible**. Similarly, the question of “whether” recognition is granted should only be indicative and not decisive in terms of how many credits are given for the student’s work to be recognized or for the competencies that were verified with a different form of examination.

### **3. Reversed Burden of Proof (cf. BayHIG, Art. 86, Lisbon Convention, Art III)**

In cases where recognition is denied on grounds of substantial differences in terms of competencies, the burden of proof lies with **the competent authority of the university** where the application for recognition was submitted.

## II. What is Being Recognized? Competencies

**Competencies** form the basis of the decision for the recognition of credits earned outside the degree awarding institution.

### Definition of Competencies

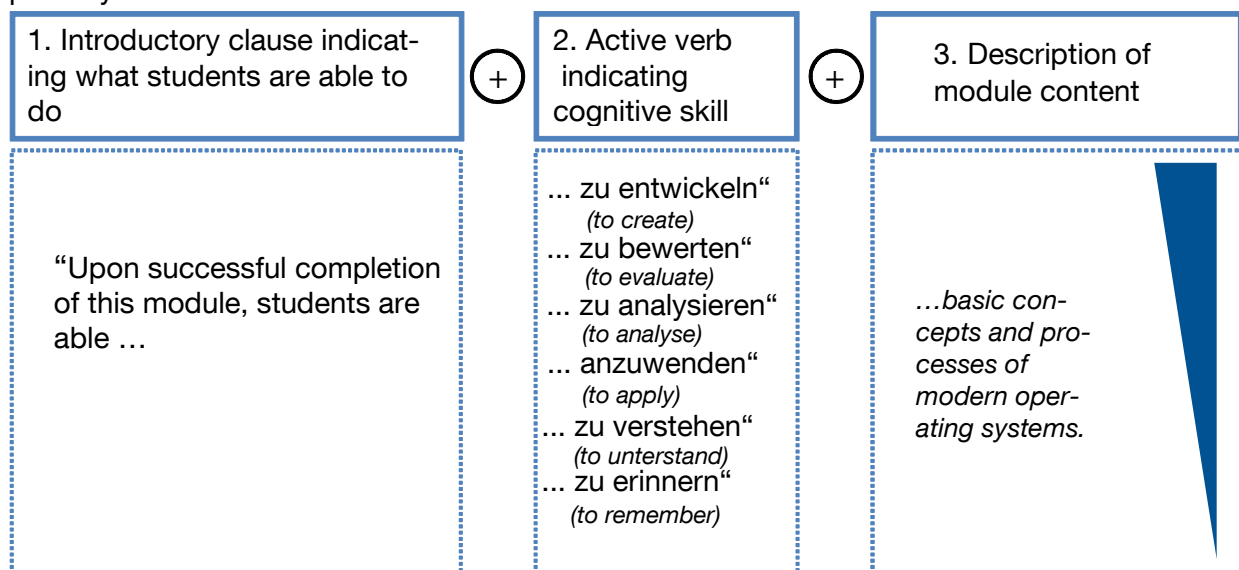
The competencies defined in the learning outcomes are measurable achievements formulated as statements that specify what students are able to know, understand and do, e.g. what skills, knowledge or behavior they are able to demonstrate upon completion of a learning unit or module.

### Taxonomy of Competencies

To ensure the comparability of competencies recorded in the learning outcomes at TUM, we require a **shared vocabulary** with which to describe them. For this, we refer to a **taxonomy** of cognitive processes providing information about the level, or cognitive stage, of the learning outcome.

On this continuum, “**remember**” represents the lowest and “**develop**” the highest **stage of cognition** (cf. fig. 1, no. 3), whereby it is generally understood that each higher stage of cognition subsumes those below it, e.g. “apply” (stage 3) includes “remember” (stage 1) and “understand” (stage 2).

The following schematic provides an example of how to formulate a statement about a competency:



**Figure 1: Schematic for formulating statements about competencies**

### Example: Competency of the fictive module “Operational Systems” (excerpt)

“After successful completion of the learning units of this module, students are able to understand the basic concepts and processes of modern operating systems and apply the most important commands of the Windows Vista operating system.”

### III. What is the Criterion for Recognition? Substantial Difference

- The LRC stipulates that periods of study must be recognized, “unless a **substantial difference** can be proved between the studies completed at the external (partner) institution and the studies required for the program, which would be replaced, i.e. for which recognition is being sought at the degree awarding institution.” → **In the absence of a substantial difference in competencies, credits are to be recognized in full.**
- The LRC, furthermore, provides for flexible and efficient recognition. → **Recognition should be granted whenever possible rather than hindered!**
- Competencies are examined to determine if substantial differences exist.  
→ As such, the careful and detailed description of **competencies in the module descriptions** and **qualification profiles in the degree program documentation** at TUM take on greater significance. For a more thorough discussion, please refer to the [guidelines](#) provided by Quality Management.
- **The purpose of recognition** is always the successful progress of study. Credit recognition is intended to effectively use already demonstrated competencies for acceptance to another course of study or admission to a doctorate program.

Rather than **comparing** competencies **in minute detail**, the objective is to review and assess **learning outcomes as prerequisites for students' continued studies** and their ability to **successfully complete their degree program**.

- The following criteria can offer **support**. → **Failure to meet one of these criteria, however, does not necessarily compromise students' ability to continue their studies successfully** and, thus, should not automatically result in credit recognition being denied: Rather, these criteria are indicators which can **signal** that a substantial difference may exist:

#### Quality

- Determine if the institution of higher education and, where appropriate, the degree program fulfill quality assurance standards (e.g. within the scope of accreditation).

#### Level of Qualification

- Question: At which level of qualification (bachelor's, master's) were the credits acquired (abroad)? The [Deutsche Qualifikationsrahmen](#) (DQR) [German Qualification Framework] provides assistance in attributing the level of qualification.

### Workload

- Workload is expressed in the form of **ECTS credits** within the European Higher Education System.
- A quantitative difference in credits (i.e. the number of ECTS credits awarded) does not, as a rule, serve as grounds for denying credit recognition. Emphasis is placed, instead, on qualitative learning outcomes, i.e. **acquired competencies and skills**.

### Profile

- Determine if the acquired competencies are relevant to the program profile of the institution awarding the degree (e.g. areas of concentration, qualifications and competencies to be acquired, orientation on research and application, etc.).
- Determine if there are substantial differences concerning prerequisites for admission to graduate programs (e.g. master's or doctoral programs)
- Determine if there are substantial differences in the areas of concentration of the degree programs

### If substantial differences are determined to exist:

- These differences must be clearly demonstrated to the student seeking recognition.
- The credit recognition request must be denied and the student must be notified thereof in writing.
- In the event credits are not recognized, students have a right to take legal action. Appealing the decision is **not** allowed. In accordance with the letter dated July 20, 2020, an information sheet on legal remedies is consciously not being given to students with their notice so that students are not pushed into filing a lawsuit within the short one-month period.
- Rather, students should be encouraged to make use of the remonstrance procedure, which is free of charge. In this procedure, the decision of the Examination Board is reviewed by the University's Board of Executive Directors and a recommendation is sent to the Examination Board, cf. 86(3) Sentence 5 ff of the BayHIG.



## IV. Reversed Burden of Proof and Students' Obligation to Cooperate

### Reversed Burden of Proof

Reversed burden of proof means that if the recognition of credits and examinations earned at an external institution or in another degree program at TUM is denied, it is the responsibility of the competent authority at the **degree awarding institution** to provide evidence of the existence of a substantial difference in competencies.

**Reversed burden of proof does not, however, release students from their obligation to cooperate in the recognition process. In fact, it is emphasized even more with the new Article 86(3) Sentence 2 of BayHIG. Students have the burden of presenting their case.**

### Obligation to cooperate:

According to the General Academic and Examination Regulations (APSO) of the Technical University of Munich, students are required to **“submit the documentation required for the recognition of credits. (...)**

The documents to be submitted include, but are not limited to, module descriptions including competencies, teaching formats, contents, workload and requirements, as well as the system applied for grading the module.” (APSO § 16(4)).

Titles of modules/module components or course reading lists alone are not sufficient to determine the existence of a substantial difference in competencies (the decision of an Augsburg Court, in which the student was required to present additional information on acquired credits for which recognition was sought, serves here as precedent).

### Limitations of the obligation to cooperate:

**If the institution where the relevant credits were acquired does not provide the required documents or if the documents are unattainable for him or her for other valid reasons (e.g., due to war or crisis situation), students should not be put at a disadvantage.** In such cases, students may provide information on competencies drawn from other sources, such as module descriptions, which many, if not all, universities and universities of applied science generally compile. Students must state the reason why they are not able to provide the desired documentation. Ultimately, the obligation to cooperate is always contrasted with the university's obligation to provide evidence. In cases of doubt, the credits are to be recognized.

#### **Recognition is teamwork!**

The recognition process can only end satisfactorily for all parties if both the students and decision-making authorities at the university **cooperate in a fair and transparent manner.**

### Deadlines

Article III.5 of the LRC stipulates that requests for the recognition of credits must be processed within a predetermined, **reasonable time period.**

TUM has adopted the recommendations of the Hochschulrektorenkonferenz HRK [German Rectors' Conference], which suggest a period of **4-6 weeks** after submission of the request.

## V. The Recognition Process in Practice: Three Steps

The assessment of competencies to determine if substantial difference exists is a three-step process, which, due to differences in disciplinary cultures from institution to institution and in the contexts in which this decision is made, cannot follow a rigid formula.

Nevertheless, we would like to provide some helpful recommendations in the form of a **three-step process** in keeping with the principles of **substantial differences, reversed burden of proof, and the obligation to cooperate**, as described above.

- Step 1:** Determine the competencies for the relevant credits at TUM
  
- Step 2:** Determine the competencies for the credits earned at the external institution and for which recognition is being sought
  
- Step 3:** Assess for substantial differences

### Step 1: Determine the competencies for the relevant credits at TUM

Determining the learning competencies for the relevant credits at TUM should be as simple as referring to the module description. **Module descriptions** provide information about the scope, content and targeted competencies of specific learning units at TUM.

The wording of module descriptions should thus:

- Focus on the competencies (outcome) of the learning process rather than on its content or input.
- Be neither too general nor too concrete.
- Be oriented on a particular level of cognition the student is to have obtained upon completion of the module (refer to the taxonomies (p. 5)).

→ **The more precise the description of competencies is, the easier it will be to make a decision about credit recognition.**

For more information on the wording of competencies, see the guidelines for “How to Write a Module Description”, which is available as a download from <https://www.tum.de/studium/lehre/downloads>.

### Step 2: Determine the competencies for the credits earned at the external institution and for which recognition is being sought

Ideally, you should be able to determine competencies for credits earned at an external institution by referring to the learning outcomes in that institution’s module descriptions. This, however, is often not the case. Competencies are frequently not included in module descriptions or, when they are, they are poorly formulated or provide insufficient detail. In such cases, you must refer to alternative sources to determine the competencies.

Within the scope of students’ **obligation to cooperate**, there is a range of possibilities for determining learning outcomes and competencies:

- You may speak to the student in person to acquire more details about competencies.
- You may examine teaching and learning materials (e.g. scripts, textbooks, literature lists, student notes, readers, case studies, homework, exercise sheets, protocols, learning portfolios, laboratory reports, presentation materials, etc.).
- You may review examination questions and grade components (e.g. seminar papers, essays, drafts, laboratory reports, oral presentations, etc.).
- You may search the Internet for more information on the relevant institution's degree programs.
- You may contact the relevant competent authority at the external institution.
- ...

If students can provide a valid reason why they are unable to submit the documentation necessary for determining competencies, the absence of desired documentation shall not work against them, in accordance with the principle of **reversed burden of proof**. Furthermore, the amount of effort required by the student to provide alternative sources of information for determining competencies shall not be excessive.

Furthermore, the following is **not permitted**:

- Requiring extensive, time-consuming summaries or synopses of lectures, teaching, learning or examination materials.
- Requiring students to take oral or written examinations to determine competencies.

Here, the rule applies that the student has already earned the credits in question through examination. Repeat oral or written examination at TUM contradicts the principle of recognition for credits already earned.

The difference between a personal interview with the student (permissible) and an oral examination (not permissible) lies in the nature of the inquiry.

- Oral Exam: Which competencies (knowledge, skills, abilities) obtained in the relevant module can the student recall within the course of the verbal exchange?

### Step 3: Assess for substantial differences

Once competencies for both the relevant credits at TUM and for the credits earned at the external institution have been determined, the competencies must be evaluated in the third step to see if there are any **substantial differences**.

The decisive criterion here is the **goal of recognizing credits**. Again, competencies need not be compared one-to-one in minute detail (comparing the learning outcomes of a module at a guest university against the learning outcomes of a module to be replaced at the home university), but rather they should be reviewed with regard to the student having the qualifications required for successfully continuing their studies. In this sense, assigning external credits to corresponding module credits at TUM, which the former are to "replace", is technical in nature.

Equivalency in terms of content and level of mastery is no longer the key factor in this assessment, although it can be a helpful construct. The review for substantial differences demands a great deal of flexibility, as well as a degree program design and modularization that foster mobility.

## VI. Assigning the Number of Credits

If there are no substantial differences in competencies, students receive, as a general rule, the number of **credits** assigned to the relevant learning unit(s) at TUM.

### *Substantial Differences in the Number of Credits*

According to the principle of substantial differences, the number of credits **do not have to be identical**. Substantially different credits are indeed only an indication that a substantial difference may exist.

#### **For the recognition of required module credits, the following applies:**

If the student earned **more credits** for the module completed at an external institution than are assigned to the corresponding required module at TUM, the student can only be awarded the number of credits assigned to the module as designated in the Academic and Examination Regulations of the degree program at TUM (FPSO). Any credits in excess of this number are forfeited. The grade earned by the student for the credits at the external institution will be the grade recorded for the required module at TUM.

If the student earned **significantly fewer credits** for the module completed at an external institution than are assigned to the corresponding required module at TUM and it has been determined that **no substantial difference in competencies exists**, the student is to be awarded the number of credits assigned to the module as designated in the TUM FPSO of the relevant degree program. Although the number of credits awarded for learning units need not be identical, a significantly lower number of credits may indicate that there are indeed substantial differences in the competencies acquired.

If the required TUM module encompasses competencies not contained in the module for which recognition is being sought, yet no substantial difference was determined to exist between the remaining acquired competencies of the two modules, students can be asked to demonstrate the missing competencies through the completion of supplemental requirements. However, this can only be the case if the module consists of real examination components or if it is separated into different sections in the module description in such a way that it can clearly be discerned how many credits are assigned to which sections and which competencies are acquired in each section. The principle applies that a module is the smallest unit. The module coordinator and the student are to work together to find a fair and reasonable form of compensation (possibilities include, a partial written exam, an oral exam, a short seminar paper, a presentation, etc.). Partial recognition must remain the exception. If it is not possible to clearly differentiate the competencies acquired, then partial proof of competence cannot be provided.

The overall grade for the module is calculated as a weighted average. The grades are weighted according to credits earned externally and at TUM (cf. example on p. 13).

#### **For the recognition of examination credits, the following applies:**

If the competencies acquired in a pass/fail course at an external institution correspond to those of a graded course at TUM, the grade for this course will not be included in the grade average (the denominator will be reduced accordingly). Fictive grades will not be awarded.

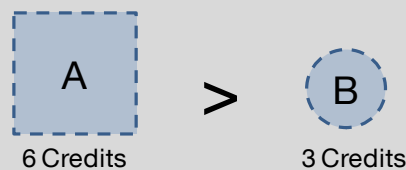
#### **For the recognition of required elective and elective module credits, the following applies:**

If the student earned **more credits** for the module completed at an external institution than are assigned to the corresponding required elective or elective module at TUM, a request can be submitted to determine if the excess credits can be applied to other (required) elective modules of the degree program curriculum.

If the student earned **significantly fewer credits** for the module completed at an external institution than are assigned to the corresponding required elective or elective module at TUM and it has been determined that **no substantial differences in competencies exist**, the student is to be awarded the number of credits assigned to the module as designated in the TUM FPSO of the relevant degree program.

### Example: Earning supplemental credits for required modules

6 credits are awarded for the required TUM module (A). For the recognized external module (B), only 3 credits are awarded.



If no substantial differences in competencies exist between module A and B, 6 ECTS credits are to be awarded for the module.

If this is not the case, the Examination Board can require the student to complete supplemental work in the amount of the deficient credits. It is recommended that the supplemental work correspond to the forms of evaluation used in the required TUM module.

For example, if the TUM module requires a seminar paper, the student may submit a seminar paper that has a workload equivalent to no more than 90 hours (= 3 Credits x 30 hrs).

#### Grade calculation:

The student earned a grade of 2.3 for module B.

A grade of 2.7 is earned for the seminar paper (equivalent to 3 credits) submitted to TUM.

→ The student earns a final grade of 2.5 for module B (now 6 Credits)  $[(2.3 + 2.7)/2]$

## VII. Grade Calculation

If the grading system applied to coursework and examinations administered at external universities or equivalent institutions of higher education corresponds with the grading system of TUM, the **grade assigned to the student's examination performance** by the external institution will be applied to the relevant credits at TUM.

If, however, the grading systems do not correspond with each other, grades will be converted according to the **modified Bavarian formula** (cf. APSO § 16(6)):

$$x = 1 + 3 \frac{N_{max} - N_d}{N_{max} - N_{min}}$$

x = converted grade to be determined

N<sub>max</sub> = best achievable grade

N<sub>min</sub> = lowest passing grade

N<sub>d</sub> = grade achieved

This formula accounts for differences in grading systems of other countries. This conversion method serves to ensure that the best achievable grade in other countries is equivalent to the best achievable grade within the German grading system and, likewise, that the lowest passing grades correspond to each other.

Information on various grading systems is available at [www.anabin.kmk.org](http://www.anabin.kmk.org). To navigate there, click on "Bildungswesen" on the upper right side of the header and select the relevant country from the dropdown list. Now, select "Notensystem der Hochschulen" from the navigation list on the left. There, you will find the values for N<sub>max</sub> and N<sub>min</sub>. As the KMK advises, it is important here to consider the standard practices of the respective country in the assigning of grades.

**When inputting the maximum value (N<sub>max</sub>) in the modified Bavarian formula, the actual grading practices of the university (school or department) where the credits were earned are to be taken into consideration. The final decision is always the responsibility of the Examination Committee of the school or department of the degree awarding institution (§ 16(6)(7) APSO). Students are to be informed in advance about the use and purpose of the Bavarian formula.**

### *Explanation:*

If the best achievable grade in a particular country is de facto never or seldom awarded, it is recommended that this grade not be used as N<sub>max</sub> **in the grade conversion** formula. The same applies to conversion methods using **percentages**, which are provided as additional values to facilitate conversion, as is the case in countries using letter-grading systems, such as the UK. It is often unrealistic to take 100% as the maximum value (N<sub>max</sub>), since it is almost never awarded in practice. Here, it is recommended that the mean of the best grade interval be used (e.g. if the best grade is awarded for 70% - 100% of acquired points, then N<sub>max</sub> would be equal to 85%) or the highest percentage achieved.

**In cases of doubt, the student** is obliged to present official documents from the external (partner) institution (e.g. the grade distribution for the relevant examination, statements attesting whether or not the best achievable grade is ever assigned, etc.). The **Examination Board of the degree-awarding institution** always determines the extent to which such a procedure may be used. This board is also responsible for determining an appropriate grade conversion key (§ 16(7) APSO), in cases where the Bavarian formula cannot be used.

We recommend, as a rule, the careful **documentation of grade calculations** to facilitate the recognition process in the future through reference to precedents, which will ensure equal treatment in all cases. Finally, such documentation must be available for reference should the student appeal the decision.

We also recommend that **students be informed** of the use and purpose of the Bavarian formula **in advance of their stay abroad**. Students should be made aware that varying grade scales and the conversion of grades using percentages may result in the assignment of a lower grade (i.e. the grade of A from the UK is not automatically equivalent to *sehr gut* in the German system). Moreover, students should be made aware of the difference between courses evaluated through examination and those operating on a “pass/fail” basis. Specifically, they should be informed that “pass/fail” courses will not be included in the calculation of grades at TUM.

## VIII. Rejecting the Credit Recognition Request

In keeping with the principle of **reversed burden of proof** (cf. p. 4), the request for recognition may only be rejected if the competent authority at TUM can prove the existence of substantial differences in **competencies**, as described above.

The Examination Board must present the grounds for its decision **in writing** or **at least in text form**, clearly communicating the justification of its rejection.

### *What information must the rejection contain?*

The statement of rejection must clearly explain that the competencies of the modules being assessed indicate that substantial differences in quality exist, e.g. there are substantial differences in content and/or cognitive levels:

- First, describe the competencies of the relevant credits at TUM. As in the module description, state what the student is able to do upon completion of the relevant learning unit.
- Juxtapose these competencies to those acquired by the student at the external institution, pointing to the specific differences.
  - For differences pertaining to cognitive levels, refer to the stages of cognition reference on page 5 of these guidelines.
  - For differences pertaining to content, refer to the specific competencies contained in the competency descriptions. Here, it is important that you maintain the focus on qualitative differences in the acquired skills, knowledge or ability that would hinder the student's continued studies rather than on the differences in minute detail (cf. p. 7) in order to justify your decision.
- Differences in the number of **credits**, the **type of institution** at which the credits were acquired (e.g. university of applied science), or in the **location** (country/German state) of the external institution are **not legitimate grounds for rejection**. These factors may only be seen as indicators for the potential existence of substantial differences, which remains to be presented and justified.

### **Sample of a Notification of Rejection**

"The review of your application for credit recognition has been completed in compliance with § 16(1) of the APSO. Accordingly, the credits acquired at external institutions of higher education will be recognized toward the student's degree program at TUM, unless substantial differences exist in the acquired competencies (learning outcomes).

For the purposes of this review, in compliance with § 16(4) of the APSO, you submitted the following documents: <<*list documents*>>

After careful consideration of the submitted documents, the Examination Board has decided to reject recognition of the following credits <<*title of module*>>.

The grounds for this decision are as follows: <<*Justification (to be completed by competent authority, as a rule, module coordinator)*>>

Signature of Examination Board Chair



## IX. Organizational Tips for the Recognition Process

When assessing credits for the existence of substantial differences, it is important to keep the following in mind:

### 1. Students should obtain information in advance of their transfer to TUM.

→ We recommend that students consult with a departmental student advisor before they enroll at TUM to determine which of their credits may be recognized. However, a legally binding decision on credit recognition can only be made after the student's official enrollment at TUM.

(cf. <https://www.tum.de/studium/im-studium/das-studium-organisieren/erkennung-von-studienleistungen>)

### 2. Module coordinators and students should maintain a positive working relationship.

→ In keeping with the principles of reversed burden of proof and the student's obligation to cooperate (cf. p.8), the following applies for students: The more complete and convincing the documents submitted with the application for review, the faster and simpler the recognition process will be. **The recognition process is teamwork!**

### 3. Module coordinators should reach their decisions on the request as quickly as possible.

→ As a rule, decisions about the existence of substantial differences in competencies should be made within a period of 4 weeks. If the recognition process is supposed to be completed before the new semester begins, students must take this deadline into account, which means they must contact the competent Examination Board in sufficient time.

### 4. The process is to be transparent.

→ Students seeking credit recognition will be informed of the decision by the module coordinator as soon as it has been reached. The module coordinator is to be available for discussion should the student have any questions about the decision.

### 5. Decisions regarding the recognition of credits can serve as precedents for subsequent requests.

→ Decisions regarding credit recognition are stored in a database by the Examination Board and may be referenced when subsequent credit recognition requests are processed (equal treatment). As each request is unique to some extent, it is important to consider the specific factors that influenced the original decision (e.g. the bundling of several modules, etc.).

### 6. All rejected requests must be documented.

→ TUM must give reasons for its decision. This means TUM must provide reasons for its decision to reject the request for credit recognition, i.e. it must provide specific and clear information justifying its decision to reject the request in each case.

## X. The *Learning Agreement* and the Recognition of Credits Earned Abroad

If recognition is or will be sought for credits earned in another country, students can conclude a **Learning Agreement in advance** of their study abroad.

The Learning Agreement is made between the student, the degree-awarding institution and the host institution. It is an instrument of the *European Credit Transfer System* (ECTS) introduced to facilitate recognition and, in turn, student mobility.

### How does the Learning Agreement work?

In advance of their **study abroad**...

... **students** declare which courses/modules they will complete and how many credits they plan to earn during their stay abroad (→ “Details of the Proposed Study Programme Abroad”). Completion of the Learning Agreement requires students to **closely** examine the course offerings of the external institution **well in advance** of their stay abroad.

...the **degree-awarding institution** declares that the credits earned at the external/partner institution will be recognized and credited upon the student’s return – **provided there are no substantial differences between the competencies acquired abroad and the relevant credits at TUM**. The assessment for substantial differences is the responsibility of the respective module coordinator, whose decision is forwarded to the appropriate Examination Board, which has the authority to decide about whether the credits are eligible for recognition. The Examination Board is responsible for the final decision. The Erasmus Representative of the student’s school or department signs the Learning Agreement.

...the **external/partner institution** confirms that the student’s planned course of study, as indicated on the agreement, can be achieved during the stay abroad.

Should **changes be made to the Agreement during the stay abroad**, these modifications must be entered into the Learning Agreement within one month of the student’s arrival at the partner university. The amendment is to be signed by a representative of the partner university and the International Affairs Delegate of the student’s school or department (→ “Changes to original proposed study programme”).

**After the stay abroad**, students are required to present a *Transcript of Records* listing the credits acquired during the period of study at the partner institution. The credits entered into the Learning Agreement will be recognized if they correspond to the coursework and examinations indicated in the Learning Agreement.

Therefore, the Learning Agreement is a way to verify competencies in advance; there are not any other substantial differences for the assessment of credits in other aspects.

### The Learning Agreement as Part of the ERASMUS Program

Students participating in an **ERASMUS program** are **required** to complete a Learning Agreement before the period of study abroad begins.

For assistance with or questions concerning this form, please consult with the Erasmus Representative of your school or department.

### The Learning Agreement for TUMexchange and Self-Organized Study Abroad Programs

A standardized Learning Agreement is not required for students participating in the **TU-Mexchange** program (an exchange program for purposes of studying at selected universities outside the EU) or for student-organized study abroad programs. Some partner universities provide forms analogous to the Learning Agreement.

The extent to which credits earned in such exchanges may be provisionally recognized in advance should be clarified with the International Affairs Delegate of the student's school or department.

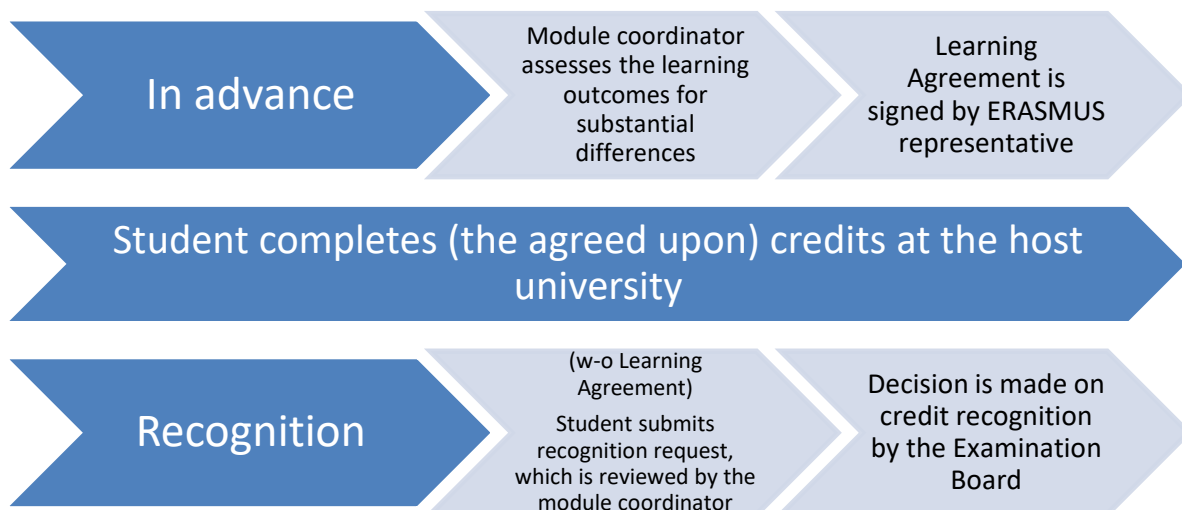
### Contact:

A list of **current International Affairs Delegates and ERASMUS Representatives** is available at the following link:

<https://www.international.tum.de/global/fakultaetskontakte/>

## XI. Procedural Schematic for Credit Recognition

Recommendation for the Recognition Process at TUM:



## XII. Transfer:

While credits from institutions of higher education must be recognized if there are no substantial differences, credits that are not from higher education institutions **may** be recognized if they are equivalent in nature, c.f. Art 86(2), Sentence 1 of the BayHIG. Unlike the process for recognizing credits from higher education institutions, the process here is not to determine if there is a substantial difference in competencies. The Examination Board, thus, has discretionary powers in terms of “whether” credits are recognized or not. However, this does not mean that credits from organizations that are not higher education institutions will be automatically be rejected. Whenever discretion is involved, it must be transparent that the Examination Board indeed has exercised its discretionary powers. Rejecting credits may not be based on the grounds that the credits from non-higher education institutions were already used to meet requirements for obtaining qualifications for admission to higher education. Competencies do not just dissipate over time.

Unlike the process for recognizing credits from higher education institutions, the process in this case is not to determine if there is a substantial difference in competencies. Stricter standards apply: These credits must be equivalent to credits earned at higher education institutions. This means that the coursework and examinations must be reviewed to see if they are equivalent in terms of content and cognitive level. The level is assessed on the basis of the competencies conveyed.

In cases where credits were not acquired from higher education institutions, the reversed burden of proof does not apply the detriment of TUM. This means that students must prove that the credits are equivalent in nature.

### **XIII. Contact:**

Do you have questions regarding credit recognition?  
We would be glad to help!

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Quality Management  
Arcisstr. 19, 80333 München  
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#### **Contact for all TUM schools and departments for general information on recognition**

Simone Gruber      Tel 089.289.25237      [gruber@zv.tum.de](mailto:gruber@zv.tum.de)

#### **Contacts for legal questions concerning recognition**

Gabriele Kunnes      Tel 089.289.25285      [kunnes@zv.tum.de](mailto:kunnes@zv.tum.de)

#### **Contacts for questions concerning recognition and study abroad:**

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