



2998 WORKGROUP

OREGON TRANSFER MODULE OVERVIEW AND SURVEY

The Oregon Transfer Module (OTM) provides for the completion of a subset of general education courses, equivalent to three academic quarters, which all “count” as transferable to satisfy general education requirements. It satisfies the majority of university general education requirements, and represents approximately half of an associate degree or the first year of a baccalaureate degree. The OTM’s primary benefits for students include improved efficiency in credit transfer between postsecondary institutions; an organized framework for students who have not determined their academic majors or who change majors early in their college careers; and provision of a reliable early start on a college degree for high school students who take OTM-approved coursework. As it relates to efficient credit completion, however, the benefits of the OTM may be limited; use of the OTM as an organizing principle for general education solely reflects fulfillment of those general requirements without attending to the ways in which credit may/may not also fulfill destination institution, degree type, or major requirements and recommendations. Furthermore, evidence suggests that rather than serving as a stepping-stone to be completed early in a student’s postsecondary education, students completing only the OTM (without also completing an associate’s degree) do not typically complete the full module until after significant investment in their postsecondary education.

Research conducted by the HECC in 2015 found that the average number of credits for an OTM-only completer was 90.5 credits (in 2014-15). While OTM completions have increased over the past few years as institutions began auto-awarding on completion, the fact that most students do not complete it first on the way to an AAOT, ASOT or other credential suggests that it is not being deliberately used as an academic planning tool or milestone.

HECC Research and Data also found inconsistencies in how the OTM is recorded and reported. This preliminary evidence, in addition to anecdotal discussions with the field, suggest the OTM was underutilized, little regarded, or poorly understood by students, faculty, and even advisors. In conjunction with JTAC (Joint Transfer & Articulation Committee), HECC conducted in September 2017 an unscientific survey of faculty, advisors, and other academic professionals to gauge the level of utility and understanding of the Oregon Transfer Module for the field. The results follow the official OTM guide in these background materials.

[http://handbook.ccwwebforms.net/handbook/definitions/associate-degrees/oregon-transfer-module-\(otm\)](http://handbook.ccwwebforms.net/handbook/definitions/associate-degrees/oregon-transfer-module-(otm))

OREGON TRANSFER MODULE (OTM)

The Oregon Transfer Module (OTM) is an approved 45 unit subset of general education courses (foundational skills and introduction to discipline courses) that are common among Oregon's colleges and universities. Courses are selected from an approved list of 100- and 200 level general education requirements as determined by each Oregon community college, public university, or participating Oregon independent college or university. It is designed to improve student access to a college degree by enhancing opportunities for the transfer of credits earned at one institution to another.

Any student holding an Oregon Transfer Module that conforms to the guidelines below will have met the requirements for the Transfer Module at any Oregon community college or public university. Upon transfer, the receiving institution may specify additional course work that is required for a major or for degree requirements or to make up the difference between the Transfer Module and the institution's total General Education requirements.

Benefits to Students

- Improved efficiency in credit transfer between postsecondary educational institutions.
- Faster completion of degree as all credits "count" and are transferable.
- High school students who take OTM-approved coursework get a reliable early start on their college degree.
- Savings on the cost of tuition by maximizing the number of courses taken and not having to retake courses at multiple postsecondary institutions.
- Advanced advising tool allowing students to effectively select applicable courses.
- An organized framework for student who have not determined their academic majors or who change majors early in their college careers, and provides clear milestones that students can accomplish to serve their future goals.
- Supportive of students who transfer early to a four-year institution by allowing for seamless transfer of student's first year of coursework.

Required Coursework

The Oregon Transfer Module includes the following coursework, which is equivalent to 3 academic quarters. The coursework must be chosen from the courses approved for the categories below by the institution issuing the credit. In the case of community colleges, these will be courses approved for the Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer (AAOT) degree; in the case of universities and 4-year colleges, they will be courses approved for the General Education part of a baccalaureate degree. All courses must be passed with a grade of "C-" or better and must be worth at least 3 credits (quarter system). Students must have a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.0 at the time the module is posted.

General Education

- **Writing:** Two courses of college-level composition (WR121, WR1 22, WR123 or WR227). *Information Literacy is included in the Writing component.*
- **Oral Communication:** One course of fundamentals of speech or communication.

- **Mathematics:** One course of college-level mathematics.

Introduction to Discipline Studies

Students are encouraged to complete at least one course with the embedded Cultural Literacy component in order to complete AAOT requirements.

- **Arts and Letters:** Three courses.
- **Social Sciences:** Three courses.
- **Science/Math/Computer Science:** Three courses, including at least one biological or physical science with a lab.

Community Colleges: Generally, these will be courses approved for the AAOT degree.

Universities and 4-year Colleges: Generally, they will be courses approved for the general education part of a baccalaureate degree.

As required to bring the total credits to 45. Courses must be from the Introduction to Disciplines areas (Arts & Letters, Social Science, or Science/Math/Computer Science).

Electives

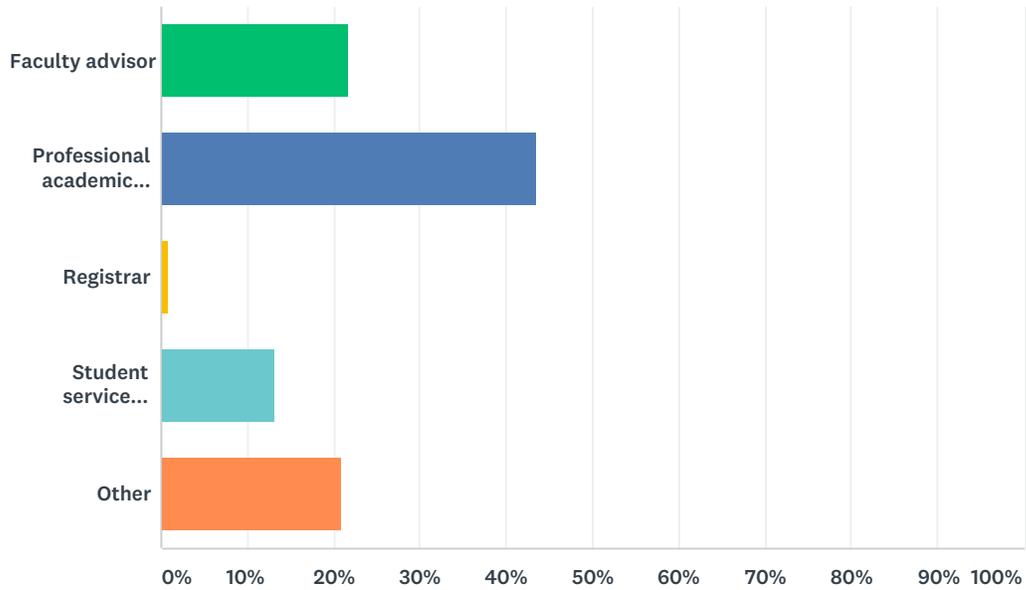
As required to bring the total credits to 45. Courses must be from the Introduction to Disciplines areas (Arts & Letters, Social Science, or Science/Math/Computer Science).

Notes and Clarifications

1. Courses that are designed to prepare students for college-level work are not applicable to the transfer module.
2. When choosing courses in science and mathematics, students and advisors should check the specific requirements at receiving schools. Courses that include a laboratory component, or that deal with specific subjects, may be required for majors or degrees.
3. Computer Science courses used in the Math/Science/Computer Science area must meet Oregon Council of Computer Chairs criteria for a science course. See list of courses at [Oregon Council of Computer Chairs](#).
4. In Arts and Letters, the second year of a foreign language may be included, but not the first year. American Sign Language (ASL) is considered a foreign language. Demonstrated proficiency in an American Indian language can meet all or part of the second language requirement, as certified by the governing body of any federally recognized tribe.
5. All Oregon community colleges and public universities will offer students the opportunity to complete an Oregon Transfer Module and the OTM designation will be posted on the transcript by the issuing institution (either by auto-award process and/or upon request). Regionally accredited private colleges and universities within the state are also welcome to offer and issue Transfer Modules, which will be accepted at any Oregon community college or public university.
6. At least one, minimum 3 credit course needs to be taken at an institution in order to receive the OTM at that campus, since Oregon institutions do not produce a transcript without a course taken.
7. Oregon Transfer Module credits may not match program requirements in the receiving school. The OTM supplements, but does not supplant, existing articulation agreements and does not replace effective advising.

Q9 Are you

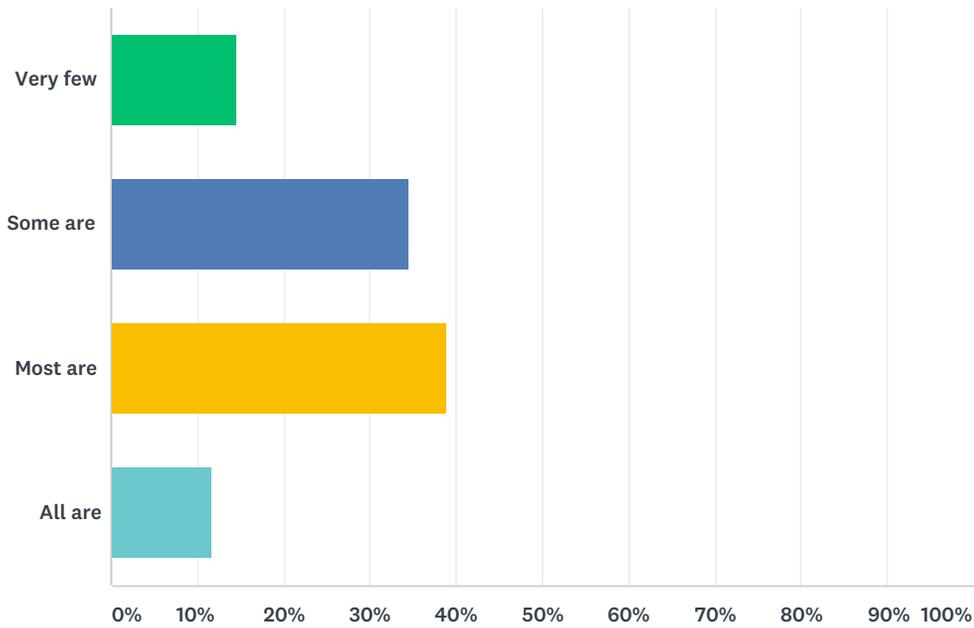
Answered: 129 Skipped: 7



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Faculty advisor	21.71%	28
Professional academic advisor	43.41%	56
Registrar	0.78%	1
Student service administrator	13.18%	17
Other	20.93%	27
TOTAL		129

Q1 Are your institution's advisors aware of the Oregon Transfer Module (OTM)?

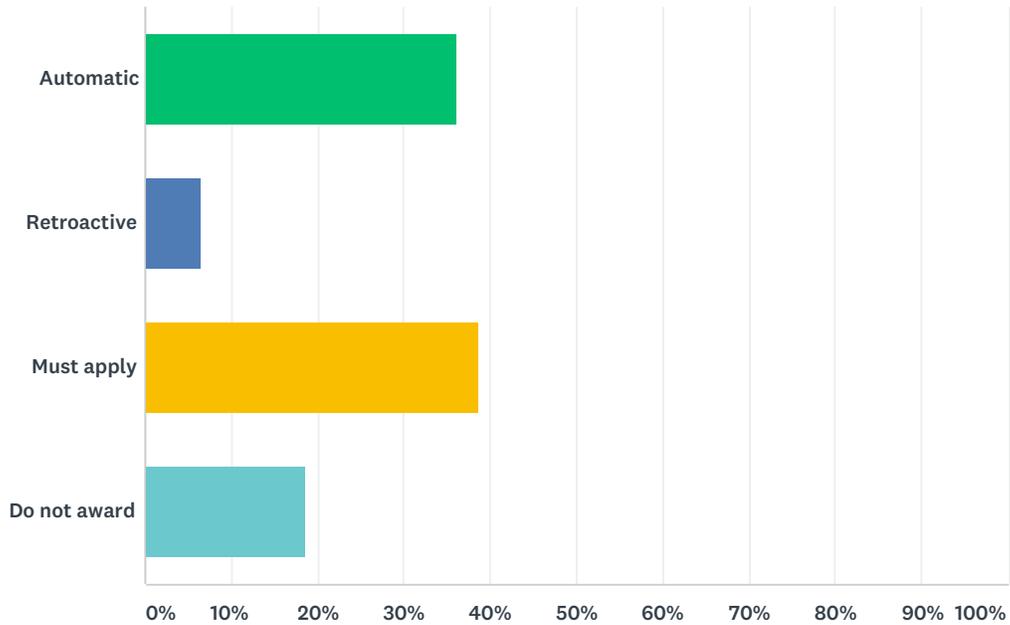
Answered: 136 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very few	14.71%	20
Some are	34.56%	47
Most are	38.97%	53
All are	11.76%	16
TOTAL		136

Q2 Does your institution award the OTM, and if so how?

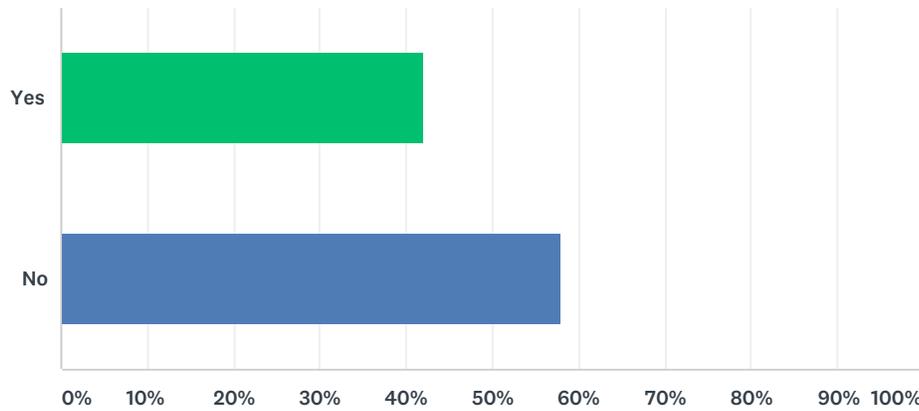
Answered: 124 Skipped: 12



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Automatic	36.29% 45
Retroactive	6.45% 8
Must apply	38.71% 48
Do not award	18.55% 23
TOTAL	124

Q3 For Community Colleges: Do community college advisors advise students to plan coursework around the OTM?

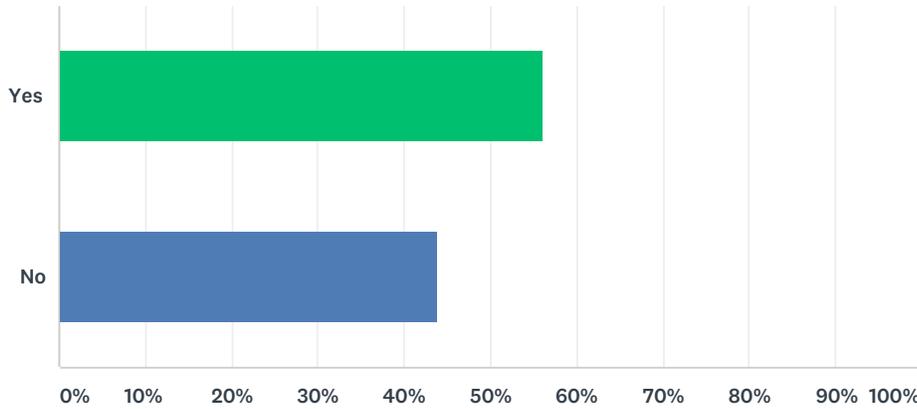
Answered: 112 Skipped: 24



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	41.96%	47
No	58.04%	65
TOTAL		112

Q4 Do community colleges (sending) or universities (receiving) treat OTM as a first year transfer curriculum?

Answered: 125 Skipped: 11



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	56.00%	70
No	44.00%	55
TOTAL		125

Q5 If you answered NO to question 4, why not?

Representative responses

Answered: 66

Our institution is much more focused on the AAOT and ASOT-B for transfer students

We don't have a standardized first year curriculum, students get to choose between BA/BS requirements. Students with OTM can transfer in with Sophomore standing purely from having enough credits to be a Sophomore. And certainly OTM has no bearing on whether a student is on track with their major.

For many years at this institution, the OTM was seen as a waster of time. A credential that took you no where.

The OTM is really a suggestion about courses students should take to advance towards completion of a four year degree. I would not call it a "curriculum"; there is nothing particularly cohesive or complete about it.

Universities don't see its value

There is no discussion around the OTM, most know that it exists, but there are no transfer guides that we use with students.

If "treat OTM as a first year transfer curriculum" means "advise students that it will fulfill first year requirements at a 4 year institution", we (CC) do not advise students that this is the case because it is not. At least 4 of the former OUS schools (as confirmed by their Registrars, most recently in June 2017) do not provide any specific benefit to students with an OTM; it is simply treated the same way as any other 45 transferrable credits, the individual courses are articulated or not based on the content, and fulfill individual gen ed requirements (or don't) based on those individual course-by-course articulations. Similarly for incoming students, we (CC) do not grant any specific benefit to students holding an OTM from another institution.

We (community colleges) do but only if it fits the student transfer goals.

Q6 If you could redesign or reform the OTM, how would you do it?

Answered: 62

Representative Responses

I would make it a block transfer for first year work and offer sophomore standing at the transfer institution with successful completion. I would also want to integrate a guided pathway model, so that the 45 credits was encompassing the needed prerequisite for specific majors

It may be easier to award in our system if it were a Certificate program. I would also provide more information about each of the OR public universities' core curriculums (link to each site?) so students know they need to be careful in their choosing depending on their transfer school.

Make it have a point that students can understand. Make it the core of the eventual redesign of AAOT that all universities will accept.

I would get rid of it. It is overall meaningless. When I worked at a community college most were not interested in it.

Honestly, any degree/certificate/module that markets itself as allowing students to transfer cleanly to EVERY school for EVERY major is deeply dangerous. Students MUST communicate early with their transfer institution about their graduation requirements and their major's requirements. Students who transfer in here with an OTM or AAOT routinely come in needing more credits than they expected because they thought the OTM or AAOT alone would allow them complete their chosen degree in 2-3 years. I've seen enough student issues at transfer that I almost feel like the promotion of OTM and AAOT border on the unethical. That said, having worked at both college's and a university, I see OTM's as mostly irrelevant. I have never had a student ask about in 8 years of advising. Also, the OTM forces students to take health and communication courses that aren't needed at our institution. Students can also graduate here without taking math if they 2 years of a second language, and the OTM forces students to take math but not language. Some majors require a language, best done starting in their first year. Requiring math over language is not in the best interest of all students.

I don't know that it is the OTM that needs redesign or reform. I think the whole state system of transferability between colleges and universities should be looked at. Possibly looking into common course numbering and making it more transparent at the University level what courses from the Community Colleges will work toward not just General Education, but majors as well. Taking that information and creating common transfer degrees that the universities will acknowledge as meeting their Idc general education and major requirements so that students truly have two years (90 cr approx) to finish their Bachelor degree. If we had common transfer degrees, this would allow students to move or "swirl" between community colleges as well, without losing credits and/or having to take additional credits.

Q6 If you could redesign or reform the OTM, how would you do it?

Answered: 62

Representative Responses

I wouldn't. I would let it die its natural death. I think the OTM was an attempt to solve a perceived problem, but it was not fully supported by advisors, and therefore, rarely embraced. I think to reform it, we would need to determine the actual problem it is trying to solve and work on that. There is not a common curriculum across the state, and that presents challenges to having a single plan that works for everyone.

I was at a meeting where I heard a story about where the OTM came from: that Inter-Institutional Faculty Senate had developed the OTM because they had heard that if they didn't the state was going to step in. So they created the minimal product (the OTM) that could get the state off their backs about transfer. I don't know if that story is true. But if I could redesign the OTM, I would do it with the primary goal of serving STUDENTS, not the primary goal of serving faculty and institutional autonomy from oversight.

Q7 What do you think works best about the OTM?

Answered: 91

Representative Responses

I don't use the OTM

Nothing. It can do more harm than good.

The transferability of the OTM to the various community colleges and universities in Oregon.

It gives students a clear idea of when they can transfer and be considered a "transfer student," and what the base requirements are for admittance.

It is a good option for quicker transfer to a 4 year college and it is clear and simple (but perhaps falsely so)

streamlines education and reduces time and cost to student

Guarantees a minimum of math and writing.

Early progress incentive is a motivator for low-attention span students

The OTM provides some framework for students to choose courses who are on a short-time frame, but it is only useful if used with an academic advisor, most likely. How is a student supposed to know that it should be paired with the Direct Transfer requirements for a 4-year. I've worked at two different community colleges in the last six years, and I've met with approximately 3000-5000 students per year, and I've never used the OTM beyond being trained on how to use it.

Allowing students in their first year to explore their interests is important, so some flexibility is key. All students should take at least one writing class in their first term.

It is the bullseye in the dart board of education. Students can start in the center, regardless of degree path and work outwards towards major requirements. Most universities accept OTM courses as part of a Baccalaureate Core- so accepting courses "unwrapped"

If it is accepted at the four year institutions, it provides students an opportunity to get a full year under their belt and recognize that they are college material prior to transferring to larger institutions.

The uniformity, but Universities are working to undermine the usefulness of the degrees and transfers by adding so many classes that can only be taken at the university level the degree cannot be completed in two years after transferring. Also, universities are breaking their own rules and pushing junior level courses into sophomore year. Please read the League of Women Voters review of higher education in Oregon published this last year.

Q8 What would you like us to know about the OTM, the first year of college, and transfer students?

Answered: 93

Representative Responses

If the Universities are not going to be flexible with transfer coursework, doing something on the OTM level is a waste of time.

Students are really excited to get something tangible, so awarding a one year OTM certificate may be a way to create milestones for the student. While the OTM is flexible, it may encourage the student to take classes before a clear transfer goal is made contributing to excessive credit accumulation. Both of these things need to be taken into account.

At the community college level, it would be great to have a way to mark our transfer students as "complete" even if they don't get an Associate's degree. This may have been the point of the OTM, but I don't think it has quite worked at our institution.

That they need to have more guidance to show them options but keep them on track so that they do not take unnecessary classes or miss required classes. In the end, we want them to complete their education in a timely manner and reach their career goal.

Faculty are very particular about what will and won't be accepted for requirements. Statewide common agreement would need to be mandated in order to work. And if you can, move us to semesters. :)

Students are not taking the correct level or sequence of science courses for STEM majors.

How does it benefit the student to receive the OTM?

Many transfer students are undecided- even if they choose a major. For example "Business" and "Computer Science" are huge categories with specific majors inside them. Business is really "Marketing, accounting, etc" and computer science is really "programming, help desk, graphics" . The OTM makes it possible for students with these "big majors" to make progress towards a degree while still exploring major requirements.

This is very important - very much in sync with Guided Pathways work, and will help students save time and money in the long term.
