

Best Practices Definition of an Official Transcript

Periodically, our association members are asked to provide guidance to transcript recipients regarding what constitutes an official transcript. While the definition of an *official transcript* varies from institution to institution, OACRAO encourages recipients to apply as many of the following guidelines as possible in determining whether a transcript is official.

Best Practices Definition: An *official transcript* is one that has been received directly from the issuing institution. It must bear the institution's seal, an appropriate signature and a date.

What the recipient should look for: The following additional criteria are considered significant in authenticating an *official transcript*:

- Was it sent directly from the institution's transcript office through the U.S. Mail in a sealed institutional envelope using an institutional postage meter (rather than a postage stamp)?
- Does the transcript have a recent date of issuance?
- Is the format of the transcript consistent with others received from the same institution?

The Burden of Acceptance: The definition recognizes that the burden of acceptance lies with the recipient; it is the recipient who ultimately determines whether the document is *official*.

Information Contained on an Official Transcript: An *official transcript* contains all essential academic data such as dates of attendance, courses taken, grades/credits awarded, overall GPA, degrees received, etc. It may also contain information related to the student's current status at the institution. There is generally a legend on the back of the transcript or on a separate sheet of paper which explains grades, grading system, repeats, etc. Most transcripts are printed on security paper to deter photocopying.

If you have questions: Telephone the Registrar's Office of the issuing institution to verify the authenticity of a document you have received. Write for more details or return the actual document (or a copy) to the issuing institution for verification. You may wish to interview the individual regarding the document. If you have received a document other than an official transcript, ask the person to request that an official transcript be sent directly to you.

Endorsement: These guidelines regarding what constitutes an *official transcript* are provided by the Ohio Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (OACRAO) and can be found on the association's web site at www.oacrao.ohiou.edu.