

SPECIAL REPORT
of the
ACADEMIC MATTERS COUNCIL
concerning
**INCREASING THE NUMBER OF CREDITS
FOR A COURSE**

Presented at the
633rd Regular Meeting of the Faculty Senate
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I. Background/Rationale.

The Faculty Senate's "Course Approval Procedures—Regular Courses, Experimental Courses, and Minor Changes" stipulate that a course credit change up to one credit can be considered as a "Minor Change" (Sen. Doc. No. 95-015, page 3). In response to several requests to change the number of credits associated with existing courses from three credits to four credits, the Rules Committee of the Faculty Senate has asked the Academic Matters Council to:

1. Examine the need to establish unified standards to be used in evaluating each request;
2. Evaluate the impact on the curriculum of increasing the number of credits for a large number of existing classes.

II. AMC Observations.

1. The current nationally recognized standard, the "Carnegie Unit," defines a three credit-course as three fifty-minute classes per week over a fifteen-week semester (including final exam week). This standard assumes that each credit hour generates two hours of assigned work for every hour of in-class contact. Thus, the guiding rule is 45 hours of work per semester for each unit of credit. For laboratory courses or their equivalent, one credit-hour is assigned for three hours of laboratory, workshop, studio, fieldwork, independent study, etc.
2. The number of credits assigned to a course reflects the relative weight of that course towards the fulfillment of appropriate degree, diploma, certificate, major, minor, or other program requirements. Increasing the number of credits assigned to a course implies that the course should have a higher weight within the total number of credits needed for graduation. This carries specific importance for courses fulfilling the General Education requirements, which specify a certain number of courses, not credits. If all General Education courses were to be increased to four credits, the weight of the General Education requirements increases from the current 30% of the total curriculum to 40%. Such change greatly increases the probability that students in certain disciplines such as engineering and several others would not be able to graduate in four years.

III. AMC Recommendation.

The Council recommends that the approval procedures for considering a course credit change up to one credit be modified to take into account whether the course:

- a. is designed for a certain degree program, as required or elective, but is not required by other majors;
- b. is designed for a certain major, as required or elective, but is also part of the degree requirements for other major(s);
- c. carries a General Education designation.

Changes in courses within the first category (III. a.) will follow the current Faculty Senate procedures for minor changes, with the proviso that the Senate Secretary will require an impact statement from the Department in every case. Changes in courses in the second category (III. b.) will be referred to the Academic Matters Council and will require the additional approval of all affected majors/programs before being proposed as a minor change.

Proposals for an increase in credits for any of the General Education courses (III. c.) will not be regarded as minor changes and will be jointly evaluated and approved by both the Academic Matters Council and the General Education Council after a full review.

In all cases, requests for increasing the number of credits for courses should address the following questions as part of the request:

- What is the estimated workload in total hours of the current version of the course, including time spent in class? (Requests for changing the number of credits without changing the workload need to provide detailed justification that the total workload is approximately 180 hours for a four credit course.)
- What changes in the current syllabus are proposed (lectures, 3-hr lab/discussion/supervised activity in class, lab or studio, or a combination thereof)?
- What is the purpose of these changes? Does the proposed change respond to a compelling need?
- Are the expectations for students' performance increased proportionately?
- How will the additional work be evaluated and what will be the criteria for assessment? If the increase is in on-task-time outside the classroom, how will it be accounted for?
- Does the additional work represent an average of 3 hours of work per week per credit hour over the length of the semester?

Berkeley guidelines:

http://slc.berkeley.edu/ucftr/unit_value.pdf

Carnegie Foundation (No Date). *History* [Online]. Available: <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/history.html>
[1998, April 5]

**MOVED:
05-05 That the Faculty Senate approve the Special Report of the Academic Matters Council
concerning Increasing the Number of Credits for a Course, as presented in Sen. Doc.
No. 05-007.**