

SPECIAL REPORT
of the
RULES COMMITTEE
concerning
**PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED IN THE APPROVAL OF PROPOSALS
FOR INCREASING THE NUMBER OF CREDITS FOR A COURSE**
(Adopted by the Rules Committee, acting on behalf of the Faculty Senate, July 28, 2014)

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MEMBERSHIP

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I. Background

This document supersedes previous legislation related to the approval of proposals for increasing the number of credits for a course.

Under previous Faculty Senate legislation, there have been three potentially applicable procedures for the approval of a proposal to increase the number of credits for a course:

- A. as a minor course change (see Approval Procedure Guide, <http://www.umass.edu/senate/approval-procedure-guide>; for information specific to course approvals, see <http://www.umass.edu/senate/course-proposal-info>);
- B. under Sen. Doc. No. 05-007: Special Report of the Academic Matters Council concerning Increasing the Number of Credits for a Course;
- C. under the GERICO process that was designed to expedite the efficient transition of General Education courses from three to four-credit courses during a transition period (Sen. Doc. No. 10-001A).

Normally, new legislation supersedes older legislation. On that basis, it could be concluded that the GERICO process was the priority procedure. However, under the sunset provision of Sen. Doc. No. 10-001A, GERICO ceased to exist on August 31, 2012, “at which point its responsibilities...shift(ed) to the General Education Council.”

During the Spring 2014 semester, the General Education Council, through its Chair, requested to be relieved of the responsibility of reviewing the occasional remaining requests to increase the number of credits for a General Education course from 3 to 4. In addition, the number of requests to increase the number of credits for non-General Education courses is increasing. Some of these requests are a result of some departments and academic programs implementing re-structured majors and concentrations based on re-designed 4-credit courses (rather than 3-credit courses); others arise for different reasons. Frequently, this is the result of a healthy process, whereby a department or program re-defines the learning outcomes it expects to achieve in the major, concentration, or other program and then re-distributes the resulting curriculum over a smaller number of 4-credit courses, rather than a larger number of 3-credit courses. It is possible that, over time, much of the undergraduate curriculum will migrate to the 4-credit course curricular model that is standard at the other constituent members of the Five Colleges Consortium.

II. Current Practice

Within the current structure of the Faculty Senate, proposals to increase the number of credits for a course naturally fall under the jurisdiction of the Academic Matters Council and the Graduate Council. In order to gain approval to increase the number of credits for a course, a proposer currently has two options:

- A. submit a proposal for a new course (mandatory for proposals to increase the number of credits by 2 or more, optional for 1-credit increases);
- B. utilize the “minor course change” process referenced in section I.A. above (valid only for a proposed increase of 1 credit).

If option II.A. is utilized, there is no challenge to the current approval process, but this lengthy process is perceived as unnecessarily burdensome by most proposers.

If option II.B. is utilized (for increases of 1 credit), the approval process is streamlined somewhat, and approval may be gained, without the involvement of the departmental or college curriculum committees or the Academic Matters Council, by approval from the following: department head, dean of the school or college, dean of the Graduate School (for courses numbered 500-999), Secretary of the Faculty Senate, and the Provost (or

designee). However, under the “minor change” process, any of these approvers is empowered to require review by curriculum committees or the Academic Matters Council if such review is deemed appropriate. Furthermore, any approver may disapprove the change requested and require that a full course proposal be submitted. Although this process is not necessarily flawed, on the merits, it is, undoubtedly, unnecessarily complex. It is far from “user friendly,” and many participants have difficulty determining the appropriate procedure to follow.

To address these problems, the Rules Committee proposes that the Faculty Senate adopt the revised procedures defined in Section III below.

III. Revised Procedures for Approval of Proposals for Increasing the Number of Credits for a Course
(to become effective September 1, 2014, superseding previous legislation)

- A. Any proposal for an increase of 2 or more credits to an existing course, or 1 or more credits in the case of an existing experimental course, will follow the standard process for the approval of a new course.
- B. A proposal for an increase of 1 credit to an existing course will be reviewed according to the following procedure, which constitutes a modified version of the former “minor course change” process:
 - 1. The proposer will submit a proposal using the Course and Curriculum Management System for the increase of 1 credit; the proposal will require the approval of the department head, the dean of the school or college, dean of the Graduate School (for courses numbered 500-999), the Secretary of the Faculty Senate (following the review of any pertinent councils and/or committees), and the Provost (or a designee).
 - 2. Upon receipt in the Faculty Senate office, a proposal for an increase of 1 credit to an existing undergraduate course will be assigned to the Course Subcommittee of the Academic Matters Council for review and recommendation; at the discretion of the Secretary of the Faculty Senate or Provost (or designee), a proposal for an increase of 1 credit to an existing graduate course may (or may not) be assigned referred to the Academic Standards Committee of the Graduate Council for review and recommendation.
 - 3. Upon recommendation by the Course Subcommittee of the Academic Matters Council, a proposal for an increase of 1 credit to an existing undergraduate course may then be implemented by subsequent approvals of the Secretary of the Faculty Senate and the Provost (or designee). Upon recommendation by the Academic Standards Committee of the Graduate Council, if requested, a proposal for an increase of 1 credit to an existing graduate course may be implemented by subsequent approvals of the Secretary of the Faculty Senate and the Provost (or designee). These final signatories may approve the proposed increase in credit to an existing course or else disapprove it and require that a full new course proposal be submitted.

IV. Standards to be Observed in Proposals for Increasing the Number of Credits for a Course

Proposers should address (and approvers should evaluate) the following:

- A. The current nationally recognized standard, the Federal Credit Hour Standard, defines a three-credit course as three fifty-minute classes per week over a fifteen-week semester (including final exam week), or the equivalent (for courses using a non-traditional format such as blended or online learning). 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. The current applicable interpretation of the Federal Credit Hour Standard may be found in the latest edition of the “Policy on Credits and Degrees” of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Institutions of Higher Education.

- B. The number of credits assigned to a course reflects the relative weight of that course towards the fulfillment of appropriate academic credentials—degree, diploma, certificate, major, minor, concentration or other program. Increasing the number of credits assigned to a course implies that the course should have a higher weight within the total number of credits required for a specific academic credential (degree, diploma, certificate, major, minor, concentration or other program requirements).
- C. Approval procedures for considering a course credit change up to one credit should take into account whether the course:
1. is designed for a certain degree program, as required or elective, but is not required by other majors;
 2. Is designed for a certain major, as required or elective, but is also part of the requirements for other academic credentials—degree, diploma, certificate, major, minor, concentration or other program requirements;
 3. carries a General Education designation.
- D. In all cases, proposals for increasing the number of credits for a course should address the following questions:
1. What is the purpose of these changes? Does the proposed change respond to a compelling need?
 2. Are the expectations for students' engagement and performance increased proportionately to the increase in credits?
 3. 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 and assessed?
 4. What is the estimated workload in total hours of the current version of the course, including time spent in class?
 5. Does the additional work represent 3 hours of work per week per credit hour over the length of the semester? (Requests for changing the number of credits without changing the workload need to provide a compelling rationale that the total workload is at least 180 hours for a four-credit course.)
 6. What specific changes in the current syllabus are proposed (lectures, online projects, lab/discussion/supervised activity in class, lab or studio, or a combination thereof) to reflect the proposed increase in credit?

The latest edition of the "Policy on Credits and Degrees" of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Institutions of Higher Education is currently available at:
http://cihe.neasc.org/downloads/POLICIES/Pp111_PolicyOnCreditsAndDegrees.pdf

V. Implementation

- A. When a change in credits for a course has received final approval, the sponsoring department should communicate the change broadly to other departments and majors that have the course listed as a requirement or as an approved elective.
- B. After students have enrolled in a course, a change in credit is not allowed, so the change can only be implemented for the following semester. In order to have a change in credit take effect in the Fall semester, final approval must have been received prior to the previous Spring Pre-Registration period; in order to have a change in credit take effect for the Spring semester, final approval must have been received prior to the previous Fall Pre-Registration period.

**MOVED:
01-15** **That the Rules Committee, acting on behalf of the Faculty Senate, approve the Procedures to be followed in the Approval of Proposals for Increasing the Number of Credits for a Course, as presented in Sen. Doc. No. 15-001A.**