

Memorandum

June 13, 2002

TO: John Moseley, Senior Vice President and Provost

FROM: John Nicols, Chair, Undergraduate Council

Karen Sprague, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies

SUBJECT: Credit/Contact Hours

Over the last few years, the curricular committees and Undergraduate Council have expressed concern about the increasing number of courses at the lower division level that are scheduled to meet for fewer hours than the credit hours they award. The general rule is that all courses should be scheduled to meet for as many hours as the credit hours they award. However, it is also generally agreed that "seat time" is not the only measure of student effort and learning and so the University has made some provision for particular courses to meet for fewer hours when they include substantial additional outside work. At present, there is little oversight of courses that meet for fewer hours. In addition, current written policy is anachronistic because it is based on a curriculum composed largely of 3-credit courses, rather than the present one where 4-credit courses predominate. In light of these concerns, the Undergraduate Council proposes the following approach to granting and monitoring exceptions to the general rule.

Principle for granting exceptions to the General Rule: A lower division course may be scheduled to meet for fewer hours than the credits it awards if the course includes a set of distinct out-of-class assignments, as well as evaluations of them, that are appropriate to the discipline and that provide students with additional learning opportunities judged to be equivalent to the unmet credit hours. The following guidelines (based on University Assembly legislation, 1992) should be used to make this judgment:

1 unit of credit requires 3 hours of work per week (or 30 hours per term), normally including one hour of class time and two hours of outside work per week. Courses that seek to award more credit than the number of hours the class meets (normally a difference no greater than 1) must demonstrate that the average student will need to spend the appropriate number of additional hours in study or other preparation. Specifically, such courses should require one of the following:

1. Significant weekly assignments that cannot be completed in the total hours of work per week that are associated with contact hours.

2. Major out-of-class projects (for example: research papers, field trips, or data analysis) that constitute some 30 hours of student effort per term.

Review Procedure: Departments will submit the following information to the appropriate college or school curriculum committee by December 6, 2002:

1. A general statement of departmental standards regarding courses that are scheduled to meet for fewer hours than the credit hours they award. Departments should take care that multiple offerings of the same course adhere to the same distribution of credit and contact hours.

2. For each lower division course that is scheduled to meet for fewer hours than the credit hours it awards,

- a description of the additional work that is required,

- an explanation of the means by which the student's performance

of the additional work will be evaluated.

Review Outcomes: Based on their review of the department reports, the school and college curriculum committees will recommend that particular courses be allowed to meet for fewer hours than the credit hours they award. The committee recommendations will be forwarded to the University Committee on Courses for a final decision. If a course is not approved, its credit hours will be reduced to the number of hours it is scheduled to meet. Courses awarding fewer than 4 credit hours will not satisfy group requirements. A course that is not approved may be revised by the department and submitted for reconsideration.

Ongoing Review: Following the initial review, the University Committee on Courses will prepare a list of all courses that may meet for fewer hours than the credit hours they award. All new courses of this sort will be reviewed in the ordinary course review process. If new courses are approved to meet for fewer hours, they will be added to the annual list. The Registrar's office will be responsible for monitoring courses offered and will notify departments if unapproved courses are scheduled to meet for fewer hours than the credit hours they award. The credit associated with such courses will be reduced, and their group-satisfying status withdrawn, until they have been examined through the review process and returned to the approved list.