

Ensuring Students Receive Proper Credit: The Relationship Between Hours and Units

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Overview

- Units of Academic Credit
- Hours to Units in the CCCs
- Calculating the Correct Units
- Sample Calculations
- Challenges for Curriculum Committees

CCC Credit Hour

- §5502.5 defines the “Credit Hour” for the California Community Colleges
 - (a) One credit hour of community college work (one unit of credit) requires a minimum of 48 hours of lecture, study, or laboratory work at colleges operating on the semester system or 33 hours of lecture, study or laboratory work at colleges operating on the quarter system.
 - (b) A course requiring 96 hours or more of lecture, study or laboratory work at colleges operating on the semester system or 66 hours or more of lecture, study, or laboratory work at colleges operating on the quarter system shall provide at least 2 units of credit.
 - (c) The amount of credit awarded shall be adjusted in proportion to the number of hours of lecture, study or laboratory work in half unit increments.
 - (d) A district may elect to adjust the amount of credit awarded in proportion to the number of hours of lecture, study or laboratory work in increments of less than one half unit.

Program and Course Approval Handbook

- The PCAH (http://extranet.cccco.edu/Portals/1/AA/ProgramCourseApproval/Handbook_5thEd_BOGapproved.pdf) has suggested guidelines about how local colleges/districts can implement the Title 5 regulations on units of credit (p. 80 – 83).

Federal Credit Hour

USDE 34 CFR 600.2

- *Credit hour:* Except as provided in 34 CFR 668.8(k) and (l), a credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates not less than—
 - (1) One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or
 - (2) At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

Local Policy

- Each College/District must develop a policy on how they assign units that is consistent with Title 5, the PCAH, and federal regulations
- **Note:** The suggestions and calculations given in this presentation are consistent with regulations, but they may not be consistent with your local policy. Make sure you review your local policy and modify the examples to fit your college.

Hours of Student Learning

- 1 Unit of college credit is granted for 48 – 54 hours of student learning (48 hours is based on 16 weeks at 3 hours per week, 54 hours is based on 18 weeks at 3 hours per week).
- Student learning can take place in the classroom or outside of the classroom through the completion of assignments.

Basics for Curriculum Committees

- For Curriculum, calculations of units are based on total “student learning hours,” which includes all in-class and out-of-class work.
- Hours recorded on the Course Outline of Record (COR) represent the *maximum* potential hours for a course. Actual hours for a given section vary based on calendars and scheduling.
- The CCCCO recommends that hour to unit calculations for CORs should be based on 18 week semesters, even when a local college uses a 15, 16, or 17-week calendar.
- Course Outlines of Record should record total hours for each instructional category and total student learning hours.

Lecture vs. Laboratory

- For lecture courses, it is assumed that students will complete a minimum of 2 hours of outside assignments for every hour they spend in class
- For laboratory courses, it is assumed that students will complete all of their work during in class hours

Basics of Calculating Units

To Calculate Units :

Lecture Hours + Lab Hours + Homework Hours

54

**54 is used for this example based on the recommendation from the Chancellor's Office that local districts use an 18 week semester as the basis for calculating hour to unit ratios on Course Outlines of Record. Likewise, . .*

Sample Calculation

- Imagine that a course requires 72 hours of lecture, 54 hours of laboratory, and 144 hours of homework. Then the total number of units would be:

$$\frac{72 + 54 + 144}{54} = \frac{270}{54} = 5 \text{ units}$$

Example 1

English 101 meets for 4 hours of lecture per week, over a 16 week semester.

- ▣ How many hours of outside-of-class work should be listed on the COR?
- ▣ How many total student learning hours?
- ▣ How many units of credit should be recorded on the course outline of record?

Solution 1

English 101 meets for 4 hours of lecture per week, over a 16 week semester.

- ▣ How many hours of outside-of-class work should be listed on the COR?
 - ▣ 2 hours of outside work for every hour in class. Therefore, $4 \times 2 \times 18 = 144$ hours
- ▣ How many total student learning hours?
 - ▣ 72 hours of lecture + 144 hours outside = 216 hours
- ▣ How many units of credit should be recorded on the course outline of record?
 - ▣ 4 units

Example 2

Welding 130 meets for 3 hours of lab per week for 18 weeks.

- ▣ How many hours of outside-of-class work should be listed on the COR?
- ▣ How many total student learning hours?
- ▣ How many units of credit should be recorded on the course outline of record?

Solution 2

Welding 130 meets for 3 hours of lab per week for 18 weeks.

- ▣ How many hours of outside-of-class work should be listed on the COR?
 - ▣ 0 hours are required for laboratory courses
- ▣ How many total student learning hours?
 - ▣ $3 * 18 = 54$ hours
- ▣ How many units of credit should be recorded on the course outline of record?
 - ▣ 1 unit

Challenging Scenario

Carpentry 101 – Introduction to Framing

Students are required to complete 710 hours of classroom time over 20 weeks, but there are no specifics on how those hours are divided between lecture, lab, or other categories.

- A. How would the faculty and the curriculum committee determine the appropriate breakdown of hours between lecture, lab, or other instructional formats?
- B. What elements on the COR would be reviewed to determine if the hours had been assigned to the appropriate instructional formats?
- C. How many units of credit?
- D. How many hours per week in each category?
- E. What potential conflicts and pressure could enter in to this course approval?
- F. What is the role of local policy and practice in this case?

Scenario Answers

- A. Local policy, process, and standards based on guidelines in T5 and PCAH. COR elements can provide direction.
- B. Homework, evaluation, assignments, content, outcomes, objectives, content.
- C. Depends! Pure Lab= 13 units, Pure Lecture=39 units, Lec/Lab = Variable
- D. Faculty Load, Cost of Enrollment, External Acc.
- E. To provide guidelines that answer this question from inception and delineate between prescriptive and permissive aspects of regulation re: unit calculation.

How would you handle this?

- Your athletics faculty are proposing a new course for your college's men's golf team. Your faculty know that the student athletes can only have so many units in athletics, so they propose that this new course be 2 units of laboratory. Since Title 5 allows a maximum of 350 hours per sport, your faculty propose the course to have a total of 350 hours. How would you address this situation?

Challenges for Curriculum Committees

- Many districts pay less for lab than lecture, which could have faculty claiming that a course is lecture when it is a lab course. Train your committee to evaluate lecture versus lab.
- Transfer degrees have a 60 unit limit. There may be pressure to reduce the number of units in courses to facilitate the creation of new ADTs. Create a local process to evaluate the course based upon the content being covered and follow it. Cutting out hours to create a new ADT could have a negative impact on the articulation of your course.

Summary

- Develop a local policy that is consistent with regulations and make sure that everyone knows what the policy is.
- Train your committee to calculate units and evaluate when a course is lecture, laboratory, lecture/lab, or something else.
- Issues like faculty workload are not issues for the curriculum committee. Leave them to your union.

Questions?

- Thank you for joining us!
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