Review & Update of OSU Credit Hour Policy

Curriculum Council, June 7, 2013

New federal regulations and subsequent policy announcement at NWCCU call attention to institutional policies and oversight procedures for conferral of academic credit. In response, new NWCCU credit hour policies were adopted and published by NWCCU in November 2012. These policies will be a focus of the Year Three (Resources & Capacity) Evaluation scheduled for Spring 2014.

Here is further background on these developments based on a presentation by the Stanford University Registrar. OSU currently has a credit hour policy that conforms to federal and NWCCU regulations. However it may not be reviewed or updated by the Curriculum Council since 1995. The policy is articulated in slightly different ways in two places in the OSU General Catalog and again in the Policies & Procedures section of the APAA website. The actual text and proposed updates for each of these entries appears below.

The following background discussion is taken from a PowerPoint presentation that was given by the Stanford University Registrar. The Registrar’s site there has an extensive set of guidelines for implementation of their updated credit hour policies and procedures. We may wish to emulate some of those guidelines. They could be published either on the Registrar’s site or at APAA.

1. OSU General Catalog: Catalog Definitions

Credit: Credits vary, depending upon the type of course and level at which it is offered. One credit is generally given for represents approximately three hours per week of actual work in and out of class for the average student over the course of a full academic quarter. For example, each hour of class lecture is generally expected to require two hours of work out of class for preparation or subsequent reading and study. One credit would be given for a lecture course that met for one 50-minute period each week over a 10-week period; i.e., 10 contact hours between faculty and students. One credit is typically given for a laboratory course that meets for two to three hours per week for an entire term. Equivalent credits are given for recitations, discussions, and other types of courses. Where the time is wholly occupied with studio, field, online, or laboratory work, or in the classroom work of conversation classes, three full hours per week through one quarter are expected of the student for each unit of credit; but, where such work is supplemented by systematic outside engagement under the direction of the instructor, a reduction may be made in the actual studio, field, laboratory, or classroom time according to standards developed by the academic unit. All credits given in the General Catalog refer to quarter credits. When transferring in course work from a semester system institution, multiply the number of credits by 1.5 to determine how many quarter credits will be transferred (3 semester hours x 1.5 = 4.5 quarter credits). If planning to transfer OSU credits out to a semester system institution, multiply the number of quarter credits by .67 to determine how many credits will transfer (4 quarter credits x .67 = 2.68 semester credits).
2. OSU General Catalog: Academic Glossary

Credit: The academic value assigned to a course based on the type and level of the subject material, as well as the expected number of hours spent on class preparation. One credit is generally given for represents approximately three hours per week of actual work in and out of class for the average student over the course of a full academic quarter.

3. APAA Website: Policies and Procedures

Credits - Definition and Guidelines

The OSU Catalog states that “One credit is generally given for represents approximately three hours per week of actual work in and out of class for the average student over the course of a full academic quarter.” Thus, one quarter credit represents 30 hours of work.

The following guidelines come from C.J. Quann’s “A Handbook of Policies and Procedures”: “Academic credit is a measure of the total time commitment required of a typical student in a particular course of study. Total time consists of three components:

(1) time spent in class;
(2) time spent in laboratory, studio, fieldwork, or other scheduled activity;
(3) time devoted to reading, studying, problem solving, writing, or preparation.

One quarter credit is assigned in the following ratio of component hours per week devoted to the course of study: (1) lecture courses—one contact hour for each credit (two hours of outside work implied); (2) laboratory or studio course--at least two contact hours for each credit (one hour of outside preparation implied); (3) independent or online study—at least three hours of work per week for each credit."

While there may be natural diversity among academic units in administering these standards, they should be carefully considered when assigning credits to new (or existing) courses. For example, one- or two-day workshops, field trips, etc., will not qualify for academic credit unless there are extensive pre- or post-workshop trips or assignments to provide the required 30 hours of work per credit. Also, the extensive outside work required of some laboratory or studio classes should be taken into account in assigning credits.

Approval & Revisions: Curriculum Council 3/13/95, 6/7/2013 Additional Information: OSU Catalog Definitions