Review & Update of OSU Credit Hour Policy

Curriculum Council, June 7, 2013

New federal regulations 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.


OSU’s longstanding credit hour policy is referred to in several places in the OSU document structure.

1. OSU General Catalog- Catalog Definitions
   http://catalog.oregonstate.edu/ChapterDetail.aspx?key=324
2. OSU General Catalog-Academic Glossary
   http://catalog.oregonstate.edu/ChapterDetail.aspx?key=385
3. APAA (Academic Programs, Assessment & Accreditation) Website-Curricular Policies & Procedures
   http://oregonstate.edu/admin/aa/apaa/academic-programs/curriculum/curricular-policies-and-procedures#79

On June 7, 2013, the Curriculum Council reviewed the policy and voted to incorporate a limited set of language updates. The Council clarified that the formal policy is that which appears in the OSU General Catalog under Catalog Definitions. Supporting explanations for faculty and implementation appear in the Curricular Policies & Procedures of the APAA website. The revised Catalog and APAA entries, as approved by the Council are as follows.
1. OSU General Catalog: Catalog Definitions
http://catalog.oregonstate.edu/ChapterDetail.aspx?key=324

Credit: One credit represents approximately three hours per week of learning outcome related work for the average student over the course of a full academic quarter; thus one quarter credit represents approximately 30 hours of work. For example, each hour of class lecture is generally expected to require two hours 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 quarter; i.e., 10 contact hours between faculty and students. 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
http://catalog.oregonstate.edu/ChapterDetail.aspx?key=385

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 represents approximately three hours per week of learning outcome related work for the average student over the course of a full academic quarter; thus one quarter credit represents approximately 30 hours of work.
Credits - Definition and Guidelines

The OSU Catalog Definitions (http://catalog.oregonstate.edu/ChapterDetail.aspx?key=324) state that “One credit represents approximately three hours per week of learning outcome related work for the average student over the course of a full academic quarter; thus one quarter credit represents approximately 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.

Credit levels are assigned as part of the approval process and are reviewed by the Curriculum Council at the time of approval. Academic units are responsible for ensuring that all courses within their course designators have appropriate credit levels.

Approval & Revisions: Curriculum Council 3/13/95, 6/7/2013