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HILO

University of Hawai'i at Hilo Administration  
Office of the Chancellor

June 10, 2013

**MEMO TO:** Michael Shintaku, Chair  
Faculty Congress

**FROM:** Donald Straney  
Chancellor

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Donald Straney".

**SUBJECT:** Motion to Accept UHH Credit Hour Policy

I am in receipt of the Motion passed by the UH Faculty Congress on March 15, 2013, to "adopt the UHH credit hour policy" described in its memo dated April 5, 2013.

By this memo, I approve this motion and direct Vice Chancellors Hong and Platz to so implement.

Attachment

**Cc:** Luoluo Hong, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs  
Matthew Platz, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs  
April Scazzola

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UNIVERSITY  
OF HAWAII  
HILO

April 5, 2013

**To:** Matthew Platz, UHH Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs

**From:** Michael Shintaku, Faculty Congress Chair

**Subject:** Motion to accept credit hour policy

At its March 15, 2013 meeting, the UH-Hilo Faculty Congress unanimously passed a motion requiring administrative action: to adopt the credit hour policy described below.

We appreciate your attention to this matter, and look forward to a response at one of our upcoming Faculty Congress Meetings.

**UHH Credit Hour Policy**

*Regardless of the type of academic activity, schedule, or method of delivery, one credit hour at UHH represents the expected amount of work a student must expend to achieve intended learning outcomes consistent with that of a traditional course (i.e. one that meets one hour per week, with a minimum of two hours additional work such as preparation, research, homework, investigation, etc. over the course of an approximate 15 week semester).*

This definition of credit hour implies:

1. One credit hour for courses with a non-traditional schedule (e.g. labs, directed studies, internships, etc.) or with alternative methods of delivery (e.g. online, hybrid, reverse lecture, etc.) represents an equivalent amount of work, as defined by intended student learning outcomes. Since there is no substitute for time spent in study or research, at least as much time must be spent "learning" regardless of the academic activity or method of delivery.
2. Courses with equivalent department course numbers should be consistent in terms of learning outcomes, regardless of the method of delivery.

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3. Each credit hour represents approximately 45 hours of work. Departments should particularly keep this in mind when assigning non-traditional credit for activities such as independent study, service learning, laboratory, practica, seminar, internships, and courses with variable units, etc.
4. Only students who are able to demonstrate they have achieved the minimum intended learning outcomes will be awarded the credit hour.

#### Review Process

The application of the credit hour policy will be reviewed within the Academic Program Review process, New Course Approval (Curriculum Review Committee(s) and Curriculum Central), and General Education Certification and re-Certification.

**UHH Faculty Congress vote: 19 Yeas, 0 Nays**

MS

**Attachments (1):** UHH Credit hour policy proposal, including notes on justification and implementation.

Recommended /  Not Recommended



Matthew Platz \_\_\_\_\_ Date  
Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

**Motion:** Move to recommend to the VCAA that UHH adopt the following Credit Hour Policy and Review Process.

### **UHH Credit Hour Policy**

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  2. Courses with equivalent department course numbers should be consistent in terms of learning outcomes, regardless of the method of delivery.
  3. Each credit hour represents approximately 45 hours of work. Departments should particularly keep this in mind when assigning non-traditional credit for activities such as independent study, service learning, laboratory, practica, seminar, internships, and courses with variable units, etc.
  4. Only students who are able to demonstrate they have achieved the minimum intended learning outcomes will be awarded the credit hour.
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### **Review Process**

The application of the credit hour policy will be reviewed within the Academic Program Review process, New Course Approval (Curriculum Review Committee(s) and Curriculum Central), and General Education Certification and re-Certification. Monitoring and reviewing courses in which the amount of face-to-face time is less than one-third the total work for the course will be referred to the Distance Learning Advisory Committee.

## **Justification for the recommended Credit Hour Policy and Review Process**

### **The APC followed these considerations in developing the UHH Credit Hour Policy**

1. Must be consistent with Federal, WASC, and UH system regulations and definitions.
2. Its application must be flexible in order to apply to different modes of instruction and course designs.
3. Must be verifiable/quantifiable.
4. Review process must be manageable.
5. Should be defined in terms of learning outcomes....according to the federal regulations

### **Why a credit hour policy?**

This is a Federal requirement (tied to awarding financial aid) and consequently a WASC accreditation requirement (part of the WASC checklist).

According to the WASC website, The WASC Commission has adopted a Credit Hour Policy that will apply to all WASC institutions, effective Sept. 2, 2011.

### **WASC Examples of Credit Hour Policy**

<http://www.wascsenior.org/files/SDSU%20credit%20hour.pdf>

<http://www.wascsenior.org/files/UC%20Berkeley%20credit%20hour%20policy.pdf>

The Commission has asked WASC staff to begin integrating evaluation of institutional credit hour policies into most visits being conducted this fall. Institutions will be asked to provide the following documents and information to be reviewed by the visiting team:

- Institution's policy on the credit hour
- An explanation of the institution's process for periodic review of the application of this policy, to assure that credit hour assignments are accurate and reliable (for example, program review, process for new course approval, periodic audits)
- A list of the kinds of courses that are offered that do not require the standard amount of in-class seat time designated in the WASC policy (for example, online and hybrid courses, laboratory courses, studio work, clinical work, independent study, and internship courses)
- A course schedule showing the weeks, hours and days that courses meet.
- Three sample course syllabi (or the equivalent) for each kind of course that does not meet for the standard amount of in-class seat time required in the policy.

Note: The APC feels that periodic audits would be unnecessary once the proposed Program Review changes are implemented, since credit hour policy is tied to assessment and learning outcomes, which play a significant role in the proposed PR process.

### **Federal Definition of a Unit of Credit**

Federal regulations regarding the definition and assignment of credit hours under Section 600.2 and 600.24(f) of the Higher Education Opportunity Act now state, in part, that a unit of credit 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 ... ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit or the equivalent amount of work over a different period 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."

From the UH System:

**E5. 228 – Credit Hour**

**I. Introduction**

This executive policy defines credit hour and directs units (UH Mānoa, UH Hilo, UH West O‘ahu, UH Maui College and UH Community Colleges) to develop a process to assure reliability and accuracy of assignment of credit hours across activities earning academic credit.

**II. A credit hour**

**A. Is associated with an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement**

**B. Reasonably approximates but is not less than**

- i. One hour of class or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week for approximately 15 weeks for one semester or the equivalent amount of work over a different period of time. OR**
- ii. At least an equivalent amount of work for other academic activities such as online instruction, laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work and other work that earns academic credit.**

**III. Units shall implement a process for assuring reliability and accuracy of assignment of credit hours across all activities earning academic credit.**

## **WASC's Responsibilities**

WASC is responsible under the new federal regulations to:

- Adopt policy and procedure for review of institutional responsibilities
- Demonstrate that a review of credit hours is reflected in institutional self-studies and comprehensive team reports
- Determine that credit hour assignments “conform to commonly accepted practice in higher education”
- Optionally use sampling of course credit hour assignments
- Require corrections of deficiencies
- Promptly notify the Secretary of Education if systemic noncompliance is found, or significant noncompliance with one or more programs

### **Other considerations**

Problems using the credit hour as a measure of education

Author Amy Laitinen, deputy director for Higher Education at the New America Foundation’s Education Policy Program, outlines many of the problems that an over-reliance on this time-unit has caused for today’s students. These include:

- Credit hours are not universally transferable. Colleges routinely reject credits earned at other colleges, a particular problem for the 59 percent of students who attend more than one institution.
- Credit hours are difficult to assign to online courses, which often allow students to proceed through courses at their own pace. The percentage of students taking at least one online course has increased from less than 10 percent to 32 percent between 2002 and 2010. For-profit universities, which often use online classes, are also seeing dramatic increases in their student enrollment.
- Credit hours do not readily translate into assessments of students’ prior learning. Yet students who earn credit through programs that assess and award credit for things they already know are more likely to stay in and complete college than those who don’t.

As the report notes, the credit hour “was never intended to be a measure of, or proxy for student learning.” Over time, however, the credit hour has taken on enormous importance in everything from setting faculty workloads to determining state and federal funding and an institution’s eligibility for federal student aid.

It is the federal student aid program’s reliance on credit hours that has stifled many kinds of innovation, the report argues. Even though the federal government has tried to indicate a willingness to move away from the credit hour, “many in the industry still believe that their safest bet, if they want to keep access to federal financial aid, is to do what they have always done: use time to determine credits.”

*Cracking the Credit Hour* recommends a number of different policy solutions. All, it argues, are available today. The federal government could:

- Innovate within the existing frame of the credit hour. Although the recent redefinition of the credit hour was designed for other purposes, “it also created opportunities for institutions to use non-time-based measures of learning to qualify for federal financial aid,” Laitinen writes. Specifically, the competency-based model already in use by Western Governors University should “be the norm,” rather than the exception, according to U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.
  - Innovate through experimentation. The current Higher Education Act offers the Department the opportunity to create what Laitinen calls a “small, controlled, voluntary virtual laboratory of ‘experimental sites’ on which it tests particular learning-based financial aid policies to see if they work, how they work, for whom they work, and under what conditions they work.” She suggests these innovations could include financial aid for credits earned using valid Prior Learning Assessments or outcome-based financial aid.
  - Innovate by moving away from a system that is free from the credit hour’s history. Direct assessment of student learning is already permitted under the Higher Education Act.
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**Assuming the motion passes, what should happen next?**

- All units should be informed of the change and the resulting necessity to include evidence within their program reviews demonstrating they are following the credit hour policy, in particular as it applies to non-traditional modes of delivery.
- All Curriculum Review Committees, Curriculum Central administrators, and the chair of Gen Ed should be notified to include the credit hour policy in their determinations for new curriculum and general education certification and re-certification.
- Develop a list of courses that do not satisfy the traditional one-hour lecture, two-hour homework model. Such a list should include courses such as:
  - Laboratory (e.g. one-credit Science labs that meet for three hours each week with little or no homework)
  - Practica (e.g. Nursing and Education courses where students are required to enter the classroom or hospital for hands-on experience).
  - Service Learning Academic Activities
  - Directed Reading/Independent Study
  - Study Abroad
  - Seminar
  - Internship
- Compile three sample Syllabi from each of the types of non-traditional courses listed above.