

## UC San Diego Credit Hour Policy

Unit value for course offerings is described in general terms by Academic Senate Regulation (SR) 760:

*760. The value of a course in units shall be reckoned at the rate of one unit for three hours' work per week per term on the part of a student, or the equivalent.*

**Quarter system.** As UCSD uses the quarter system (ten weeks of instruction), the credit hour in this policy will be reckoned the “one quarter-based hour of credit”.

**Definition of one hour of instruction.** In this policy, one hour of instruction is reckoned to accrue from 50 minutes net of time spent in the classroom or in interaction with the instructor.

**Three-hour work unit.** In agreement with the WASC Senior College and University Commission’s (WSCUC) Credit Hour Policy, the three-hour work unit as a commonly accepted quantification of student academic learning shall be composed of

- (1) one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction or instructor-led discussion and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week of the ten week quarter; or
- (2) an equivalent amount of work 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.

**Justification of course units.** If the unit value proposed for a course deviates from this policy, the responsible department needs to submit to the Undergraduate or Graduate Council a course approval request with a detailed description of how unit value is justified.

**Compensation for variable duration.** A course offered in a quarter term of less than ten weeks shall contain the same contact hours, preparation time, content, and requirements as the same course offered over a ten-week quarter. For instance, one unit for a lecture-based course taught in the summer quarter over the duration of five weeks will consist of two hours of lecture and four hours of out-of-class student preparation per week.

**Additional units.** An additional unit of credit may be requested for courses that demand extensive reading, writing, or other academic work outside the classroom. All proposals for increased unit values beyond what are stipulated in Senate Regulations and EPC policy must be specifically justified for each course affected and approved by the Undergraduate Council for undergraduate courses and the Graduate Council for graduate courses. Specific justification for the additional unit implies that the student is expected to have to dedicate time above and beyond the normal amount of hours per unit. As a guide, instructors should keep in mind that an additional unit represents 30 additional hours of work expected of a student during the quarter. In justifying an additional unit, an instructor must explain how students will have to commit this additional time to the course (e.g., extra readings or extra assignments). This requirement is applied to all new courses and all new requests for changes in unit value or course format.

**Largest number of units.** In general, undergraduate courses should not be assigned more than four units. Exceptions should be limited to cases where intensive study is appropriate and practicable, such as introductory language courses. Special justification must be presented for courses with more than four units of credit.

**Remote courses.** A lecture or seminar course may be delivered by “remote” instruction as defined in the [Policy on Remote and Distance Instruction](#).

**Additional level of justification for remote courses.** For a remote course, justification of the format of the course must be submitted with the goal of ensuring equivalency of the amount of work performed by a student in the remote course to the three-hour work unit for a lecture/seminar course as quantified in (1) and (2).

*Approved by the Educational Policy Committee on March 20, 2017 and effective September 1, 2017.*

## **SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE UC SAN DIEGO CREDIT HOUR POLICY**

### **Effective Date**

The Credit Hour Policy is effective September 1, 2017. All requests for new courses and requests to change an existing course submitted by departments and programs on or after September 1, 2017 with a proposed effective date of Fall 2017 or after are required to follow the UC San Diego Credit Hour Policy's requirements.

### **About the Credit Hour Policy**

The Credit Hour Policy was developed by the Academic Senate's Educational Policy Committee (EPC) in response to a requirement from the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) that each institution it accredits provide a reasonable and transparent formula describing how course credits are awarded and is consistent with WSCUC's [Credit Hour Policy](#).

The San Diego Division of the Academic Senate follows systemwide Senate Regulation 760, which specifies that "The value of a course in units shall be reckoned at the rate of one unit for three hours work per week per term on the part of a student, or the equivalent." The WSCUC's Policy is more precise, specifying that a credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is established by the institution.

The UC San Diego Credit Hour Policy developed by EPC meets these more specific requirements.

### **Defining the Policy's three (3)-hour work unit**

In agreement with the WASCUC's Credit Hour Policy, the 3-hour work unit is a commonly accepted quantification of student academic learning.

- Total instructional hours must equal 3 times the number of units for fixed or variable unit courses.
- For classroom-based courses, 1 unit is equivalent to 1 hour of classroom time and 2 hours of outside preparation per week during the 10-week quarter.
  - Classroom time is the number of class contact hours required each week and may include an instructor-led lecture, discussion, or seminar.
  - As an example, a 4-unit course should have a minimum of 4 hours of classroom or direct faculty instruction or instructor-led discussion (e.g. 3 hours of lecture and a 1 hour discussion section) and 8 hours of outside preparation each week.
- Courses that offer credit for other academic activities, such as laboratory work, internships, practica or studio work, must include an equivalent amount of work to comprise 3 hours of work per unit.

### **Alternative Distribution of Hours**

The Undergraduate Council, for undergraduate courses, and Graduate Council, for graduate courses, will consider requests from departments and programs to assign a unit value for a course that deviates from the 3-hour work unit if the responsible department provides an appropriate justification. To do so, the department or program must include a 1-2 sentence description as a comment in eCourse explaining how students will have to commit their time in the course to justify the unit value.

- For example, if a department or program would like to propose a 4-unit course with 3 hours of classroom time and 9 hours of outside preparation each week during the quarter, the department or program must explain what work is expected of the students (e.g. extra reading, extra writing, or other academic work required outside of the classroom) to justify an additional unit of credit for the 3 additional hours of outside work per week. The Undergraduate Council and the Graduate Council will review the justification during its review of the course approval form.

### **Existing Courses**

It is expected that all courses approved or submitted in eCourse prior to September 1, 2017 with an alternative distribution of hours to the 3-hour work unit require additional work that justifies the assigned unit value.

- If a department or program submits a request in the future to change the course and plans to maintain an alternative distribution of hours, the department or program should include a 1-2 sentence description in as a comment in eCourse to document how students commit their time in the course to justify the unit value.
- No additional documentation in eCourse is required for existing courses that already meet the Policy's definition of a 3-hour work unit if the department or program is requesting to change the hours of an existing course to meet the 3-hour work unit.

### **Questions**

For questions about the Credit Hour Policy that are not addressed above or about how to complete the course approval forms, please contact Senate Analyst Linda Vong ([lkvong@ucsd.edu](mailto:lkvong@ucsd.edu)) for undergraduate courses and Senate Associate Director Lori Hullings ([lhullings@ucsd.edu](mailto:lhullings@ucsd.edu)) for graduate courses.