

Chapter V - Teaching Loads and Advising

A. Teaching Loads

The standard teaching load in most academic departments is five courses per year. Laboratory courses in the sciences count as one-half of a course. Other exceptions may occur (e.g., in departments which offer large numbers of activity courses or 1-2 credit courses or seminars). Faculty members in departments requiring senior theses / integrative essays / research projects for their majors may count this participation toward their course load; normally this participation will not count as more than the equivalent of one course per year. Unless on sabbatical leave or leave of absence, faculty members are normally expected to teach in each semester of an academic year. Faculty on sabbatical leave or leave of absence during one semester of an academic year will be expected to teach not fewer than 3 courses during the other semester. (Faculty Code, CH 1, Art V, Sec 1.A)

The faculty members of each department are expected to come to agreement on what constitutes their five-course responsibility consistent with fairness in the distribution of workloads, enhancement of the department's course of studies and continued excellence in the instruction of students. (Faculty Code, CH 1, Art V, Sec 1.A)

If funds are available, students and, in rare cases, graduates may be hired by the College to assist instructors. However, instructors cannot relinquish any of their responsibilities to evaluate course work. The supervision of all scheduled class meetings and activities is the duty of the instructor.

Students will be allowed to teach certain activity classes in the SSRA Department (e.g., Rock Climbing and Kayaking) if they receive the training appropriate to the activity as determined by the Provost and Dean of the Faculty. Faculty approval is necessary before students teach a class not previously taught by students. (Faculty Code, CH 1, Art V, Sec 1.B)

Reductions of load are possible in the following circumstances:

1. The Faculty Chair and the Division Chairs may reduce their load by three courses per year.
2. Faculty given special assignments by the Provost and Dean of the Faculty or with unusual professional responsibilities may petition the Provost and Dean of the Faculty for load reduction.

3. Members of the Faculty Personnel Committee are entitled to a one-course reduction during the Fall semester each year of their service on this body.

In all of the above cases replacement is not automatic but must be approved by the Provost and Dean of the Faculty in consultation with the Committee of Division Chairs.

B. Whitman College Credit Hour Policy (05/14/2014)

This document addresses the assignment of credits to courses at Whitman College, in accord and in compliance with the U.S. Department of Education guidelines and the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities as follows:

Federal regulations mandate that all candidate and accredited institutions comply with the definition of the credit hour as set forth in Section 600.2, which defines the credit hour as:

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.
(From: Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, Policy on Credit Hour, November 2012)*

It is not the purpose of this document to address or propose any particular correlation between course credit and faculty course load.

1. Introduction

It is important to note that while this document provides guidelines for the assignment of credits to courses, it is not with the intent to stifle creativity in pedagogy or content. According to the U.S. Department of Education, there is

no implied requirement for “seat time” in defining a credit hour. Accordingly, on a question and answer web site regarding program integrity in relation to establishing a credit hour policy, the Department of Education states that

The credit-hour definition does not dictate particular amounts of classroom time versus out-of-class student work. Further note that the definition provides that a credit hour may be for an equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time. There is no requirement that a 3-semester hour course meet 3 hours per week during a semester or a 3-quarter-hour course meet 3 hours per week during a quarter. The requirement is that the institution determine that there is an amount of student work for a credit hour that reasonably approximates not less than one hour of class and two hours of out-of-class student work per week over a semester for a semester hour or a quarter for a quarter hour. (<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/reg/hearulemaking/2009/credit.html#credit>)

This document cannot foresee every possible permutation relating to mode of instruction, either currently or in the future. For example, it doesn't address online courses, hybrid courses, or credit for internships. Since these and/or other educational strategies may or may not be implemented at Whitman at some future date, this document should be viewed as a working policy for the assignment of credit hours to courses and thus be amenable to amendment.

2. Approval of Courses and Course Credit

All courses and the number of credits assigned to them will be approved by the respective department or interdisciplinary program, the appropriate Division of the College, the College Curriculum Committee, and the College faculty as a whole. Keeping in mind the following guidelines and general principles, the combination of faculty contact time and the amount of student work required for a four-credit course should be discernibly different than the faculty contact time and amount of student work required for a three-credit course, which in turn should be discernibly different than those same parameters for a two-credit course, which should be discernibly different than those required for a one-credit course.

3. Guidelines

Credit may be assigned differently depending on the type of instructional activity. Examples include:

a. Classroom

Classroom instruction is formalized instruction in which the instructor bears primary responsibility for presenting an educational experience to students. It is recognized that this can be accomplished using any combination of instructional modes.

Generally, one credit hour is awarded for every 50 minutes of direct faculty instruction per week for the duration of a semester, with the expectation that students will work outside of class for an average of twice the amount of formal contact time over the course of a semester.

Alternatively, one credit hour may involve a combination of faculty contact time and student work time that justifiably approximates not less than the above.

b. Laboratory

Laboratory instruction is instructional activity in which a faculty member is overseeing students perfecting technical skills in a laboratory or field setting by conducting experiments, doing field observation, collecting data, etc.

Generally, one credit hour is awarded for every 150 minutes of laboratory instructional time per week for the duration of a semester. If supplemented with formal out-of-class work, the number of credits awarded may be adjusted in accord with the federal definition of credit hour, pending approval through the usual channels of faculty governance.

c. Independent Study

Independent study courses are those for which extended and concentrated practice and/or study is required of the student subsequent to sessions of individualized faculty instruction. Applied music courses and independent study arrangements would be examples.

Instructors have the obligation to assign and evaluate work in accord with the objectives and learning goals of the independent study and to personally provide the individual instruction necessary to achieve those goals and objectives. In addition, instructors are responsible for assigning credit, based on the combined faculty contact time and expected student out-of-class work time, in accord with the federal definition of credit hour.

d. Studio Experience

Studio courses typically require little to no formal out-of-class study.

Generally, one hour of credit shall be awarded for every 150 minutes per week of instructional time for the duration of a semester. If supplemented with formal out-of-class work, the number of credits awarded may be adjusted in accord with the federal definition of credit hour, pending approval through the usual channels of faculty governance.

e. Seminar

A seminar is usually a less formalized education experience, guided by a faculty member but focused on student discussions, presentations, performances, projects, etc.

Generally, credit hours are awarded for seminar courses on the same basis as that for classroom instruction.

f. Thesis

Thesis instruction involves guided inquiry, research, data analysis, and writing at an advanced level in the field of major study. Extended and concentrated efforts in these areas are required of the student subsequent to individualized faculty instruction.

Instructors have the obligation to mentor and guide the student such that learning goals and objectives are met in this capstone experience. Instructors and/or departments are responsible for awarding credit for thesis work based on expectations for faculty and student involvement necessary to meet thesis goals and learning objectives, in accord with the federal definition for credit hour.

4. Compliance

Individual instructors are encouraged to justify and explain course credit hours on their course syllabi by clearly stating class meeting times and outlining student assignments and responsibilities. Regardless of mode of instruction, course syllabi should reflect that faculty and student involvement are consistent with the credits awarded and that courses are sufficiently rigorous to achieve the expected student learning outcomes.

Course proposals should also reflect that faculty and student involvement are consistent with proposed credit hours. Oversight of proposals for new and revised courses will occur at all levels of course approval: department, division, curriculum committee and full faculty, though primary responsibility rests with the individual instructor(s) and the relevant department(s) or program(s). Examination of course credit hours will be

added to the list of items to which outside reviewers attend when conducting department/program external reviews.

5. Periodic Review

The credit hour policy will be reviewed (and amended if needed) by the Curriculum Committee after the first year of implementation, and then as necessary, but at least every five years.

Acknowledgement and appreciation to: The Ohio Board of Regents, Directive 2010-016, March 18, 2010. Ted Strickland and Eric D. Fingerhut, for organization and language guidance; Willamette University draft credit hour policy, February 2013.

6. Credit Hour Policy Implementation Statement

a. Guidelines for standard classroom courses

- i. Standard 3-credit course: meets 150 min/week for the entire semester and involves 300 minutes of out-of-class student work per week on average over the entire semester. (This is the equivalent of 3 x 50-minute class meetings per week and 5 clock hours of out-of-class student work per week.)
- ii. Standard 4-credit course: meets 200 min/week for the entire semester and involves 400 minutes of out-of-class student work per week on average over the entire semester. [This is the equivalent of 4 x 50-minute class meetings per week and 6.67 clock hours of out-of-class student work per week.]
- iii. Note that a 4-credit course may: meet 150 min/week for the entire semester and involve ~550 minutes of out-of-class student work per week on average over the entire semester, OR some equivalent combination thereof, based on the federal definition of credit hour. [The example here indicates 3 x 50-minute class meetings per week and about 9 clock hours of out-of-class student work per week. Another example might be a class that meets 3 x 50 minutes per week for lecture and another 150 minutes per week for a lab or field experience.]

b. Notes and Example

- i. The credit hour policy is a document intended to provide guidance moving forward with respect to assigning credits to courses, with

particular attention paid to fairness in student work per credit.

- ii. Current courses in the College catalog should be honestly evaluated by individual instructors. If current direct instruction time and student work time are in line with the proposed guidelines, all is well.

Example: a course meets 3 x 50 min/week and is worth 4 credits. This means that all reading, writing, research, homework, studying, presentation preparation, etc. must add up to ~9 hours student work per week per semester, on average.

If current direct instruction time and/or student workload is/are grossly out of alignment with the proposed guidelines for credit assignment, consider the following options:

- a) Reduce credits to 3 (via usual course change process: department, division, curriculum committee, faculty)
 - b) Add out-of-class experience(s) to student work hours: additional reading/papers, field trips, projects, data analysis, blogs, community-based learning, etc.
 - c) Add some combination of additional out-of-class experiences with some amount of director instruction: recitation sections, tutorials, discussion sessions, etc.
- iii. The current syllabus for Whitman College's First Year Seminar course (General Studies 175/176) was examined and determined to merit 4 course credits.

C. Academic Advising

Academic advising is an important element of excellent teaching at a liberal arts college. After their first year at Whitman, all faculty are expected to participate in the formal advising process which has two parts:

1. Pre-Major Advising

The Senior Associate Dean of Students, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, and the Director of Institutional Research collaborate to assign an advisor to each entering first-year student.

2. Major Advising

When a student declares a major, they acquire an advisor from that major department. Some departments assign new majors to designated faculty; other departments allow the student to choose any member of the department.

D. Textbook Policy

This section is currently under development.