Demystifying the Relationship Between Units and Hours

Craig Rutan, Santiago Canyon College
Erik Shearer, Napa Valley College

2015 ASCCC Curriculum Institute

Overview

- Regulations About Hours and Units
- Developing Effective Local Practices
- Sample Calculations
- Challenges for Curriculum Committees

I. Regulations

CCC Credit Hour

§55002.5 defines the "Credit Hour" for the California Community Colleges

a) Establishes minimum of 48 total student learning hours = 1 unit
b) Requires awarding 2 units of credit when twice 1 unit calculation is reached.
c) Requires awarding in .5 unit increments.
d) Allows increments smaller than .5

Federal Credit Hour

USDE 34 CFR 600.2

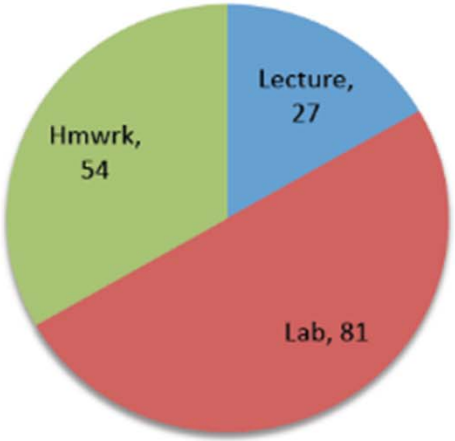
- *Credit hour:* Except as provided in 34 CFR 668.8(k) and (l), a credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates not less than—
  1) One hour of 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.

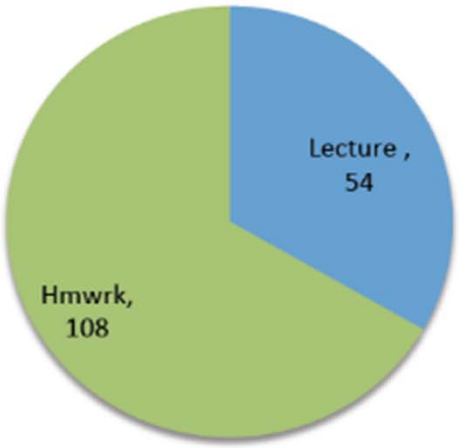
Program and Course Approval Handbook

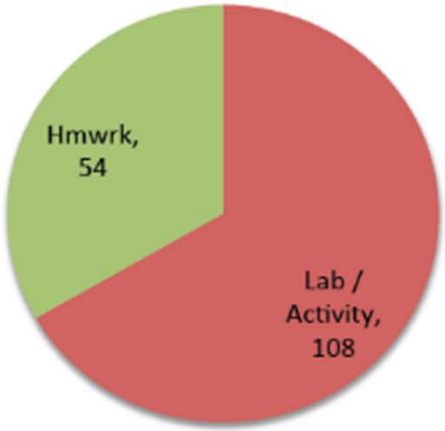
- Existing guidance in 5th Edition on pages 80-83
- New guidelines in forthcoming PCAH 6th Edition.
- 6th Edition guidance consistent with principles and examples in this presentation.

Important Concepts

- Regulations govern the relationship of total hours and units of credit.
- Regulations do not govern ratios of in-class to outside-of-class work for instructional categories, e.g. lecture, laboratory, activity, etc.
- Many compliant variations of ratios, subject to standards in articulation and accreditation.







162 Total Student Learning Hours = 3 units of Credit

Three Variations

Regulations govern the total hours, articulation and accreditation provide standards for ratios.

II. Practices

Local Policy

- Each College/District must develop a policy on how they assign units that is consistent with Title 5, the PCAH, and federal regulations
- **Note:** The suggestions and calculations given in this presentation are consistent with regulations, but they may not be consistent with your local policy. Make sure you review your local policy and modify the examples to fit your college.

Total Student Learning Hours

- 1 Unit of college credit is granted for 48 – 54 student learning hours (48 hours is based on 16 weeks at 3 hours per week, 54 hours is based on 18 weeks at 3 hours per week).

- Total student learning hours include both contact hours and outside-of-class hours (homework).

- **Colleges can only collect apportionment for work completed in the classroom (contact hours).**

Total Student Learning Hours vs. Contact Hours

Contact Hours:

- Term used to describe student hours spent under the direct supervision of an instructor in lecture, lab, activity, or other.
- Required on COR by Title 5
- Hours as listed in the college catalog.
- Basis for faculty load and scheduling calculations.

Student Learning Hours

- Total of all in-class and out-of-class time a student spends on learning. Includes lecture, lab, activity, other, and homework.
- Hours used for Unit calculations in Title 5

Basics for Curriculum Committees

- For Curriculum, calculations of units are based on total "student learning hours," which includes all in-class and out-of-class work.
- Hours recorded on the Course Outline of Record (COR) represent the *maximum* potential hours for a course. Actual hours for a given section vary based on calendars and scheduling.
- The CCCCO recommends that hour to unit calculations for CORs should be based on 18 week semesters, even when a local college uses a 15, 16, or 17-weeek calendar.
- Course Outlines of Record should record total hours for each instructional category and total student learning hours.

Lecture, Laboratory, Activity, etc.

- For lecture courses, it is assumed that students will complete a minimum of 2 hours of outside assignments for every hour they spend in class
- For laboratory courses, it is usually assumed that students will complete all of their work during in class hours
- For laboratory with homework, activity with homework, or other categories, it is assumed that students will complete some hours outside of class, but not as many as traditional lecture.

III. Standard Formula and Sample Calculations

Standard Formula for Calculating Units

To Calculate Units :

$$\frac{\text{Lecture Hours} + \text{Lab Hours} + \text{Homework Hours}}{54}$$

**54 is used for this example based on the recommendation from the Chancellor's Office that local districts use an 18 week semester as the basis for calculating hour to unit ratios on Course Outlines of Record. Likewise,*

Sample Calculation

Imagine that a course requires 72 hours of lecture, 54 hours of laboratory, and 144 hours of homework. Then the total number of units would be:

$$\frac{72+54+144}{54}=\frac{270}{54}=5\,\text{units}$$

Example 1

English 1A meets for 4 hours of lecture per week, over a 16 week semester.

- How many hours of outside-of-class work should be listed on the COR?
- How many total student learning hours?
- How many units of credit should be recorded on the course outline of record?

Solution 1

English 101 meets for 4 hours of lecture per week, over a 16 week semester.

- How many hours of outside-of-class work should be listed on the COR?
  - 2 hours of outside work for every hour in class. Therefore, 4*2*18 = 144 hours
- How many total student learning hours?
  - 72 hours of lecture + 144 hours outside = 216 hours
- How many units of credit should be recorded on the course outline of record?
  - 4 units

Example 2

Welding 130 meets for 3 hours of lab per week for 18 weeks.

- How many hours of outside-of-class work should be listed on the COR?
- How many total student learning hours?
- How many units of credit should be recorded on the course outline of record?

Solution 2

Welding 130 meets for 3 hours of lab per week for 18 weeks.

- How many hours of outside-of-class work should be listed on the COR?
  - 0 hours are required for this laboratory course
- How many total student learning hours?
  - 3 * 18 = 54 hours
- How many units of credit should be recorded on the course outline of record?
  - 1 unit

Example 3

ARTS 100 meets for 6 hours of lab or activity w/ homework per week, over 18 weeks with 3 hours of homework per week.

- How many contact hours should be listed on COR?
- How many total student learning hours?
- How many units of credit should be recorded on the course outline of record?

Solution 3

ARTS 100 meets for 6 hours of activity w/ homework per week, over 18 weeks with 3 hours of homework per week.

- How many contact hours should be listed on COR?
  - 108 (6 x 18 = 108)
- How many total student learning hours?
  - 162 (9 x 18 = 162)
- How many units of credit should be recorded on the course outline of record?
  - 3units (162 / 54 = 3)

Challenging Scenario

Carpentry 101 – Introduction to Framing

Students are required to complete 710 hours of classroom time over 20 weeks, but there are no specifics on how those hours are divided between lecture, lab, or other categories.

A. How would the faculty and the curriculum committee determine the appropriate breakdown of hours between lecture, lab, or other instructional formats?
B. What elements on the COR would be reviewed to determine if the hours had been assigned to the appropriate instructional formats?
C. How many units of credit?
D. How many hours per week in each category?
E. What potential conflicts and pressure could enter in to this course approval?
F. What is the role of local policy and practice in this case?

Scenario Answers

A. Local policy, process, and standards based on guidelines in T5 and PCAH. COR elements can provide direction.
B. Homework, evaluation, assignments, content, outcomes, objectives, content.
C. Depends! Pure Lab= 13 units, Pure Lecture=39 units, Lec/Lab = Variable
D. Faculty Load, Cost of Enrollment, External Acc.
E. To provide guidelines that answer this question from inception and delineate between prescriptive and permissive aspects of regulation re: unit calculation.

How would you handle this?

Your athletics faculty are proposing a new course for your college's men's golf team. Your faculty know that the student athletes can only have so many units in athletics, so they propose that this new course be 2 units of laboratory. Since Title 5 allows a maximum of 350 hours per sport, your faculty propose the course to have a total of 350 hours. How would you address this situation?

IV. Fractional Unit Awards and Other Calculations

Fractional Units

- Title 5 **§55002.5** *requires* colleges to award in .5 increments.
- Title 5 *allows* colleges to award in smaller increments

Hour Ranges and Unit Thresholds

Range of hours for each increment of credit (in 54 = 1 scenario):

- .5 unit = 1 – 53 total SLH
- 1 unit = 54 – 80 total SLH
- 1.5 units = 81 – 107 total SLH
- 2 units = 108 – 134 total SLH

This is similar to grading, where a B = 80 – 89%. Students earn the next unit of credit when they cross the next fractional unit threshold.

Other Calculation Standards

- Cooperative Work Experience
- Independent Study
- Open Entry / Open Exit
- Clock Hour Programs

Challenges for Curriculum Committees

- Differential pay for instructional categories.

- Transfer degrees have a 60 unit limit. There may be pressure to reduce the number of units in courses to facilitate the creation of new ADTs. Create a local process to evaluate the course based upon the content being covered and follow it. Cutting out hours to create a new ADT could have a negative impact on the articulation of your course.

- Faculty may propose increasing units for reasons involving instructor load or other factors rather than content and instruction. Again, make sure your process focuses on curricular considerations.

Tips

- Develop a local policy that is consistent with regulations and make sure that everyone knows what the policy is.
- Train your committee to calculate units and evaluate when a course is lecture, laboratory, lecture/lab, lab / activity with homework, etc.
- Issues like faculty workload are not issues for the curriculum committee. Leave them to your union.

Questions?

- Thank you for joining us!
  - Craig Rutan: rutan_craig@sccollege.edu
  - Erik Shearer: eshearer@napavalley.edu