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REPORT OF THE ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING
Thursday, November 10, 2022
3:45 – 5:00 p.m., Zoom Meeting

Committee members present: Siris Laursen (Chair), George Fields (GSS President), Rodica Frimu, Melissa Hines, Elizabeth MacTavish (proxy for Adam Love), Mohammed Mohsin, Katherine Montgomery, and Allyson Neal.

Other attendees: Amy Cathey (HCB) David Cihak (CEHHS), Carl Collins, Dixie Thompson, and Catherine Cox (Graduate Council Liaison).

Agenda Items:

- 1. Credit Hour definition – joint proposal for both the undergraduate and graduate Academic Policy Committees to update credit hour definition**
- 2. Discussion of policy related to submission of official transcripts from all previous institutions**

Siris Laursen called the meeting to order at 3:45 p.m.

D. Thompson explained why the Credit Hour definition is on today's agenda.

1. Changes to Credit Hour Definition

The following proposal for UG and Graduate Councils' Academic Policy Committees comes from a committee charged with examining UT's definition of credit hour. The rationale for making this change is that our current definition of the credit hour focuses on traditional, in-person, classroom-based instruction. Updating the definition will provide the following improvements:

- Explicit guidance will be provided for online learning environments.
- Courses, regardless of delivery mode, will be expected to adhere to the same learner outcomes. In other words, a student who takes an online course at UT will be held to the same learning outcomes as a student who takes that UT course face-to-face.
- Explicit language will be provided about students actively engaging with the instructor and the course content.
- The policy is explicit in stating that the awarding of credit (i.e., course grades) will come only after the instructor has assessed a student's achievement of the learning objectives.

The proposed definition was drafted by a task force consisting of the following individuals:

Jennifer Hardy, Deputy Registrar
Robin Harris, College of Nursing
Sally Harris, Dept. of English
Heather Hartman, Associate Vice Provost and SACSCOC Liaison
Robert Hinde, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Jason Johnston, Online Learning & Academic Programs
Lee Murphy, Dept. of Nutrition
Beth Schussler, Dept. of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology
Carrie Stephens, Dept. of Agricultural Leadership, Education, & Communication
Dixie Thompson, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

Please refer to the Appendix of this document for additional information.

The proposal is that effective with the Fall 2023 semester, UT will revise the definition of the credit hour **from the current Credit Hour Definition:**

The unit of credit is the semester credit hour. One semester credit hour represents an amount of instruction that reasonably approximates both 50 minutes per week of classroom-based direct instruction and a minimum of two hours per week of student work outside the classroom over a fall or spring semester. Normally, each semester credit hour represents an amount of instruction that is equivalent to 700 minutes of classroom-based direct instruction. The amount of time that is required to earn one semester credit hour in a laboratory, fieldwork, studio, or seminar-based course varies with the nature of the subject and the aims of the course; typically, a minimum of two or three hours of work in a laboratory, field, studio, or seminar-based setting is considered the equivalent of 50 minutes of classroom-based direct instruction. Semester credit hours earned in courses such as internships, research, theses, dissertation, etc. are based on outcome expectations established by the academic program.

To the following new Credit Hour Definition:

The unit of credit is the semester credit hour, or “credit” for the sake of brevity. The number of credits assigned to a course is determined by the faculty in the unit offering the course and is documented through the course approval process governed by the Undergraduate and/or Graduate Councils of the Faculty Senate. The awarding of credit indicates that through assessment of student learning, an instructor has determined that a student has demonstrated achievement of the learning objectives associated with a course.

For classes that are taught in-person in a traditional lecture-based format over the course of a semester with 14 weeks of instruction, one credit represents 50 minutes per week of direct faculty instruction in a face-to-face classroom setting and a minimum of 100 minutes per week, outside the classroom setting, during which a student engages actively with the course content. (This represents a minimum of 2.5 hours of student work per week, or 35 hours per semester.) This engagement may include reading course-related material, completing writing-based assignments, reviewing material presented in the classroom setting, completing projects and homework assignments, solving problems that support the learning objectives of the course, performing group work with other students enrolled in the course, reviewing and responding to instructor feedback, and/or similar activities.

For online, hybrid, and “flipped” classes, as well as other classes taught in modalities differing from traditional in-person lecture-based formats (whether synchronous, asynchronous, or a mix of the two), a credit represents a minimum of approximately 35 hours during which a student engages actively with the course instructor and the course content (which may include direct instruction, readings, assignments, projects, assessments, discussions, collaborative work with other students, and reviewing, responding to, and providing feedback). When a course is offered both in a traditional in-person lecture-based format and in another format or modality, the fundamental learning objectives for the course remain the same, independent of format or modality, and the different modalities represent substantially equivalent workloads and learning outcomes for students.

For in-person classes that include or consist of laboratory, studio, fieldwork, or similar components, two to three hours per week of these components, over the course of a semester with 14 weeks of instruction, typically equates to one credit. For courses that are primarily based on internships, practicum experiences, research, directed readings, independent study, or thesis or dissertation writing, the credits associated with the course are based on outcome expectations established by the faculty in the department, school, or college offering the course.

This definition of the credit hour provides the university with the flexibility to accommodate a variety of instructional formats and modalities.

This proposal is open for questions and discussion.

- With some questions and discussion, the committee was ready to vote.
 - A poll was launched to vote – vote yes, no, or abstain to approve the change of the Credit Hour definition.
- VOTE: unanimous vote of yes – to approve the change of the Credit Hour definition.**

2. Discussion of policy related to submission of official transcripts from all previous institutions

D. Thompson

This proposal came forward last month as a discussion item. As a reminder, in January 2021, the Academic Policy Committee voted to provide an opportunity for academic units to ask for exceptions for students who could not provide us all their original transcripts. Leading up to that vote, APC had a couple of discussion meetings where data was reviewed from other universities benchmarking what our SEC peers and others were doing concerning official transcripts. The compromise APC reached in 2021, was to keep the policy as it is. But, for those units that do not need to review every transcript, we inserted an exception clause for them.

The College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences asked that we review this policy again for possibly any modifications.

Proposal for Changing Submission of All Transcripts

Currently UT requires that students report all post-high school academic activity. At the time of admission, the university will accept unofficial transcripts. The admission of the student is conditional until official transcripts have been submitted. The student is only able to register for one semester of classes under the status of ‘conditional admission.’ Some academic units wish to change this policy so that student only have to report and provide transcripts for those institutions from which they earned a bachelor’s degree and all graduate courses that have been taken.

The current Graduate Catalog language (highlighted areas would need to be changed):

Application Steps for Admission

To apply for admission, the following materials must be submitted to Graduate Admissions through the online application submission process:

- The completed online [Graduate Application](#) for Admission.
- A non-refundable application fee paid by credit card or electronic check.
- One unofficial transcript from all colleges and universities attended submitted online at the time of application to the Graduate School. See [Graduate Admissions website](#) for more information.
- An applicant may be required to undergo English Certification for admission to the Graduate School by submitting results of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Official scores are required to be admitted to the Graduate School.
 - Minimum scores required for admission to the graduate School are
 - A total score of 80 on the internet-based TOEFL (iBT).
 - To register, contact Educational Testing Service ([ETS](#)). The ETS UT code is 1843.
 - A 6.5 overall band score on the IELTS.
 - To register contact [IELTS](#).
 - The score will be considered valid if submitted within two (2) years of the test date.
 - An applicant may be exempted from the English Certification requirement if:
 - English is an official language in the applicant's country of citizenship, according to [Countries With English as Official Language](#) as published by the Graduate School
 - OR
 - English is the primary language of instruction at the institution in which the applicant received an undergraduate, graduate, or professional degree.
 - Some graduate programs may have more rigorous requirements. Applicants are responsible for meeting the requirements of the graduate programs when the standards exceed those of the Graduate School.
- Additional departmental/program supplemental materials may include but are not limited to:
 - Departmental supplemental application materials.
 - Reference letters or rating forms.
 - Scores from the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), ([Educational Testing Service](#), the ETS UT code is 1843) or Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT), (register for the [GMAT](#) as required by some programs).

After admission is offered, the following must be provided:

- Official transcripts and degree certificates (if separate from the transcript). See [Graduate Admissions website](#) for more information.
 - The Graduate School will reserve the right to revoke admission to a student if any unofficial or official documents are found to be fraudulent following review and comparison.
 - **Registration is prohibited after the first semester of enrollment until students have submitted the official copy of transcripts, including any degree certificates or degree confirmations, from all institutions previously attended.**
 - Under extenuating circumstances, academic units may petition the Dean of the Graduate School to waive the requirement that a student has to submit official transcripts from all institutions previously attended. This petition must include a rationale for the request, along with information about attempts to secure the official transcripts. These requests for exceptions must be submitted prior to the end of the student's first semester of enrollment.
- For those who have the Eligibility Verification for Entitlement Act (EVEA) requirement, documentation that proves U.S. citizenship or lawful presence as required by state law. For information on EVEA, visit the [One Stop Student Services website](#).

All documents submitted become the property of the university and will not be returned.

Proposed Catalog language (see highlighted areas for changes):

Application Steps for Admission

To apply for admission, the following materials must be submitted to Graduate Admissions through the online application submission process:

- The completed online [Graduate Application](#) for Admission.
- A non-refundable application fee paid by credit card or electronic check.

- A transcript documenting that the applicant has been (or will be) awarded a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution. At the time of application, the transcript can be unofficial.
- A transcript from all accredited institutions where graduate (post-bachelor's) coursework has been taken. At the time of application, the transcript can be unofficial.
- An applicant may be required to undergo English Certification for admission to the Graduate School by submitting results of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Official scores are required to be admitted to the Graduate School.
 - Minimum scores required for admission to the graduate School are
 - A total score of 80 on the internet-based TOEFL (iBT).
 - To register, contact Educational Testing Service ([ETS](#)). The ETS UT code is 1843.
 - A 6.5 overall band score on the IELTS.
 - To register contact [IELTS](#).
 - The score will be considered valid if submitted within two (2) years of the test date.
 - An applicant may be exempted from the English Certification requirement if:
 - English is an official language in the applicant's country of citizenship, according to [Countries With English as Official Language](#) as published by the Graduate School
 - OR
 - English is the primary language of instruction at the institution in which the applicant received an undergraduate, graduate, or professional degree.
 - Some graduate programs may have more rigorous requirements. Applicants are responsible for meeting the requirements of the graduate programs when the standards exceed those of the Graduate School.
- Additional departmental/program supplemental materials may include but are not limited to:
 - Departmental supplemental application materials.
 - Reference letters or rating forms.
 - Scores from the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), ([Educational Testing Service](#), the ETS UT code is 1843) or Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT), (register for the [GMAT](#) as required by some programs).

After admission is offered, the following must be provided:

- Official transcripts and degree certificates (if separate from the transcript). See [Graduate Admissions website](#) for more information.
 - The Graduate School will reserve the right to revoke admission to a student if any unofficial or official documents are found to be fraudulent following review and comparison.
 - For conditionally admitted students who have submitted only unofficial transcripts, registration is prohibited after the first semester of enrollment unless students have submitted an official transcript from the institution where a bachelor's degree was earned and official transcripts from all institutions where graduate coursework was completed.
- For those who have the Eligibility Verification for Entitlement Act (EVEA) requirement, documentation that proves U.S. citizenship or lawful presence as required by state law. For information on EVEA, visit the [One Stop Student Services website](#).

All documents submitted become the property of the university and will not be returned.

This proposal is open for questions and discussion.

- With some questions and discussion and some slight edits; the committee was ready to vote.
- A poll was launched to vote – vote yes, no, or abstain to approve the change of submission of all transcripts.
VOTE: unanimous vote of yes – to approve the policy change of submission of all transcripts.

D. Thompson: I appreciate everyone's input today and the broad faculty input. At the next APC meeting we will discuss cleanup language in the catalog for admission of international students.

With a motion to adjourn, the meeting adjourned at 4:15.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Cox
 Graduate Council Liaison

APPENDIX to Agenda of November 2022 APC Meeting

Changes to the Credit Hour Definition

What does it all mean?

Why is it important to change the definition of the credit hour from what it current is?

- The credit hour is the “currency” universities use to award credit for learning. Our accreditors and governmental agencies require that we publish and adhere to standards for a credit hour. UT’s current definition of a credit hour is tied to in-person, classroom-based, synchronous learning which is delivered across a traditional semester. We need to update our credit hour definition to capture the various modalities of delivery (online, asynchronous, etc.) that reflect the evolution of the teaching/learning environment.

What will change with this new definition?

- Explicit guidance will be provided for online learning environments.
- Courses, regardless of delivery mode, will be expected to adhere to the same learner outcomes. In other words, a student who takes an online course at UT will be held to the same learning outcomes as a student who takes that UT course face-to-face.
- Explicit language will be provided about students actively engaging with the instructor and the course content.
- For one credit hour in traditional in-person classes delivered during a 14-week semester, expected time engaged in learning outside the classroom will be 100 minutes for every 50 minutes engaged in face-to-face time with an instructor.
- The policy is explicit in stating that the awarding of credit (i.e., course grades) will come only after the instructor has determined the student’s achievement of the learning objectives.

When will these changes become effective?

- Fall 2023 is the effective date for these changes.

Who suggested these changes?

- The group that recommends these changes includes several faculty who have expertise in traditional face-to-face courses, laboratory instruction, and internships as well as online delivery of courses. The faculty and staff members who worked to craft this proposal are:

Jennifer Hardy, Deputy Registrar

Robin Harris, College of Nursing

Sally Harris, Dept. of English

Heather Hartman, Associate Vice Provost and SACSCOC Liaison

Robert Hinde, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

Jason Johnston, Online Learning & Academic Programs

Lee Murphy, Dept. of Nutrition

Beth Schussler, Dept. of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology

Carrie Stephens, Dept. of Agricultural Leadership, Education, & Communication

Dixie Thompson, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

Where can I learn more about credit hour definitions?

- SACSCOC:
<https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/Credit-Hours.pdf>
- US Department of Education:
<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/subtitle-B/chapter-VI/part-600#600.2>