

# What is Academic Credit?

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*A Literature Review and a Survey of Practices  
in the BC Post-Secondary System*

*Prepared for BCCAT by Dr. Fiona A.E. McQuarrie*

*July 2016*



Research by  
**BCCAT**

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# What is Academic Credit?: A Literature Review and A Survey of Practices in the BC Post-Secondary System

## *Executive Summary*

Academic credit is the value assigned to a course or some other form of learning that counts toward program or credential completion. Most North American post-secondary institutions base their academic credit systems on the “Carnegie unit”, designed in the early 1900s. The “Carnegie unit” assumes a standard value of three academic credits to each undergraduate course, based on the assumption that successful completion of each course requires three hours of student learning per week per credit. However, with changes in educational technology and the development of different methods of measuring student learning, there have been questions about the continued relevance of the “Carnegie unit” in the modern post-secondary context.

This report investigates how “academic credit” is defined and assigned in British Columbia’s post-secondary institutions. Just over half of the 38 BC Transfer System (BCTS) member institutions have a definition of “academic credit” or “credit hour” in the institutional information available on their websites; not all of these definitions are explicit, and some institutions have more than one definition in different locations on their website. Only seven BCTS member institutions have policies explicitly describing how credit values are to be assigned to courses or programs.

The report recommends that:

- BC post-secondary institutions may consider the value of developing formal definitions of “academic credit” or “credit hour” if they have not done so;
- BC post-secondary institutions with existing definitions for those terms may consider reviewing them to ensure the terms reflect the institution’s practice and policy, and to ensure that the definitions are known by and accessible to academic and administrative staff;
- Some BC public post-secondary institutions have formally published the process by which credit values assigned to its courses are calculated; this would appear to be helpful for faculty developing curriculum, staff supporting course development, and for students; and
- Should BC post-secondary institutions be interested in pursuing further discussion around definitions and policies relating to the assigning of academic credit, the BC Council on Admissions & Transfer (BCCAT) and relevant provincial associations should explore ways to support that dialogue.

# Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Literature Review .....	1
The British Columbia Context.....	4
Review of Institutional Definitions and Practices .....	7
Definitions .....	7
Credit Value Calculation .....	10
Discussion.....	12
Recommendations.....	13
References.....	15
Appendix A: Credit Value Calculation Policy - Justice Institute of BC .....	16
Appendix B: Credit Value Calculation Policy - Kwantlen Polytechnic University.....	18
Appendix C: Credit Value Calculation Policy - Thompson Rivers University .....	19
Appendix D: Credit Value Calculation Policy - University of British Columbia .....	21
Appendix E: Credit Value Calculation Policy - University of the Fraser Valley .....	22
Appendix F: Credit Value Calculation Policy - Selkirk College .....	24

# Introduction

Academic credit is the value assigned to a course or some other form of learning that counts toward program or credential completion (RUCBC, 2011). Most North American post-secondary institutions base their academic credit systems on the “Carnegie unit”, designed in the early 1900s by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The “Carnegie unit” assigns a standard value of three academic credits to each undergraduate course offered in a 14- to 16-week-long semester (Silva & White, 2015). The credit value is based on the assumption that successful completion of a standard undergraduate course requires three hours of student learning per week: one classroom contact hour and two hours of homework or independent study (Prasuhn, 2014). Academic credit is also used in post-secondary institutions as the basis for many other processes and structures, such as designing program content, assessing transfer credit requests, and calculating enrolment data. However, with changes in educational technology and the development of different methods of measuring student learning, there have been questions about the continued relevance of a standardized academic credit measurement such as the “Carnegie unit” in the modern post-secondary context (Silva & White, 2015).

The purpose of this report is to investigate how “academic credit” is defined and assigned in British Columbia’s post-secondary institutions. The report will review the existing literature on the concept and use of academic credit; will review policies and practices in the BC

post-secondary system around assigning credit values to courses; and will make recommendations based on those findings.

# Literature Review

The published literature on definitions and uses of “academic credit” demonstrates a consensus that some unit of academic measurement is necessary for the efficient operation of post-secondary programs. The literature also indicates that a unit of academic measurement must be accepted as credible, and must be comparably structured at different post-secondary institutions, to make meaningful comparisons of programs, courses and data between and across institutions. However, there are divided opinions as to whether the “Carnegie unit” credit hour is the most appropriate unit of academic measurement for either of these purposes.

As described by Shedd (2003a), the “Carnegie unit” originated in the late 1800s as part of a standardization of United States (US) high school curricula, which “designated programs with certain ‘unit’ distributions as prerequisites to college acceptance” (p. 7). In 1906, when the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Education was established, \$10 million US of its funds were designated for retirement pensions for college instructors; however, the foundation’s administrators discovered that in order to structure a college pension plan, it needed standard criteria that could be applied across different types of post-secondary institutions to determine whether an institution’s instructors would qualify

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**The credit value of a standard undergraduate course is based on...  
three hours of student learning per week: one classroom contact hour and  
two hours of homework or independent study.**

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for the plan. The criteria that were developed included a requirement that the institution had to offer “a course of four full years in liberal arts and sciences” and had to accept “the unit plan for admission [from high school]” – a “unit” being “a course carried for five days a week during the secondary school year” (Shedd, 2003a, p. 7). “It was assumed that a satisfactory year’s work in any major subject cannot be accomplished in less than 120 sixty-minute hours or their equivalent” (Shedd, 2003a, p. 7). At the time of this initiative, few post-secondary institutions had their own pension plans; thus, the “unit” was widely adopted by US colleges and universities so that their instructors would be eligible for the Carnegie Foundation pension (Shedd, 2003a). The Carnegie Foundation also promoted the “unit” as part of its larger strategy to encourage standardized measurements of learning and student achievement (Shavelson, 2007) – but, notably, the Foundation explicitly stated that “the [unit]’s fundamental criterion was the amount of time spent on a subject, not the results attained” (Gerhard, 1955, quoted in Harris, 2002, p. 5).

Since its introduction, and due to subsequent pressures in US post-secondary education for standardized processes in efficiency measurement and equitable student loan allocation (Shedd, 2003a),

the Carnegie unit has become widely used as a standardized measure in post-secondary program and curriculum design. The structure of a standard undergraduate degree in both the US and Canada is now 120 credit hours across four years of study (Laitinen, 2012). Each semester of those four years is approximately 15 weeks long (including examination periods), and in each semester a full-time student is assumed to take five courses worth three credits each. The three credits are implicitly or explicitly based on a model of three hours per week of instructor-student contact in the classroom.

However, the use of the credit hour has expanded beyond the standardization of credential requirements into other functions within the post-secondary system. For example, credit hours are used to determine instructor workloads; to allocate resources such as scheduled classroom time; to calculate students’ tuition fees; as a criterion in assessing transfer credit requests; as a measure in the process of developing and administering institutional budgets; as a component of structuring new programs and courses, or redesigning existing ones; and as a criterion for eligibility for student financial assistance. Additionally, in the US, the federal government uses credit hours as a “regulatory tool” to enforce quality standards related to institutional accreditation and to institutional eligibility for federally-administered student financial aid programs (Wellman, 2003).

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The criticisms of the credit hour can be grouped into two general themes: problems with its underlying assumptions possibly being inaccurate or outdated, and problems with it being used for purposes for which it was not designed. For example, McDaniel (2011) and Watkins & Schlosser (2000) describe how post-secondary education has moved beyond “seat time” to encompass other forms of learning, such as online learning and experiential learning – and point out that many newer learning structures are not based on a model of three hours per week of classroom instruction within a 15-week semester. McDaniel (2011) argues that measures of student effort or knowledge acquisition would be more appropriate as a basis to determine student credits earned, rather than relying on what she characterizes as “an Industrial Age metric” (McDaniel, 2011, p. 249). Watkins and Schlosser (2000) propose an alternative measure of “capabilities-based education equivalency units”, based on the number and type of learning objectives of each course; 30 of these units would be equivalent to a single credit hour.

Shedd (2003b) surveyed 75 US institutions and found that only 42% had a specific definition of “credit hour” in their course catalogue or faculty handbook; only 38% had a written policy or guideline to determine how many credit hours should be assigned to a new or redesigned course. Despite this lack of definitional clarity, 95% of the surveyed institutions used credit hours to record student learning or course work, and 73% used credit hours as the basis for calculating faculty workloads. Additionally, Wellman (2005) notes that the US institutional accreditation process often uses a course’s assigned credit hours as a proxy for the course’s academic quality, rather than examining more meaningful quality indicators such as course content. She also identifies other questionable uses of the credit hour measure, suggesting that “the integrity [of the credit-hour] really begins to break down

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**The post-secondary education has moved beyond “seat time” to encompass other forms of learning, such as online learning and experiential learning.**

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when it is used to measure research, community service, administration, and student services” (Wellman, 2005, p. 23).

However, other researchers have stated that while the credit hour may not be a perfect measure of instructional quality or student learning, its widespread usage - and the implicit shared understanding that one credit is equivalent to one instructional hour per week plus students’ independent study- makes it valuable in the absence of any other comparable or equally accepted measure. A 2015 report from the Carnegie Foundation (Silva, White, & Toch, 2015), based on 18 months of research and interviews, concluded that “if the quality of teaching and learning already differs dramatically from class to class (and from online platform to online platform), the level of learning might vary even more substantially in the absence of the Carnegie unit” (Heitin, 2015). Ehrlich (2003), in examining the relevance of the credit-hour measure to newer forms of learning, surveyed 11 US institutions “believed to be national leaders in instructional innovation” (p. 31). The innovations at these institutions included outcomes-based learning, distance education, prior learning assessment, interdisciplinary-based programs, academic contracts, and cohort-based education. The findings of this study were echoed in recent trends discussed by Silva et al. (2015). The innovation mechanisms that are becoming more frequently used are related to:



- Enhancing flexibility of teaching and learning. This includes variations in how the school day and year are scheduled.
- Competency-based learning. Projects, portfolios and subject-area examinations are all used as direct measures of student learning.
- Applying non-traditional credit towards traditional credentials. Prior learning assessments, credit-by-exam, credit for independent study and other non-course learning (e.g., apprenticeships or internships) provide opportunities for students to be awarded credit for learning they have accomplished outside a formal class structure.

While these alternatives to the credit hour offer more equitable and effective learning for some groups of students, they still require a “minimum guarantee of instructional time, or opportunity to learn for... underserved students” (Silva et al., 2015, p. 22). None of the alternatives also completely eliminates the need for a credit hour measure: the innovations supplement it on transcripts. Ehrlich (2003) found that “institutions all found ways to equate the learning of their students to credit hours, at least to the extent necessary to overcome or circumvent the barriers that credit hours might otherwise have imposed” (p. 33).

## The British Columbia Context

To contextualize this research project, it is informative to contrast the generalized findings from the literature summarized above with what is generally known about the uses of “academic credit” or “credit hour” in the British Columbia (BC) post-secondary education system.

The BC Transfer System (BCTS) guidelines for assessing requests for transfer credit clearly state that evaluation should be based on “equivalence of content, structure, and format between or across courses” (BCCAT, 2013, p. 22). In other words, the amount of credit assigned to the course at the sending institution should not be the only information used by the receiving institution to determine whether the course should be awarded transfer credit. BCCAT also provides a template for a transfer-friendly course outline (BCCAT, 2005). The template is intended to assist post-secondary institutions in developing course outlines that include the information needed to facilitate the assessment of transfer credit requests. The BCCAT template includes a place for information on the amount of credit assigned to the course, but it also includes places for numerous other pieces of information about the course, such as its content, its delivery format, its methods of student evaluation, and the textbook and other educational resources used in the course.

There appear to be strong informal norms in the BC Transfer System, as represented by these documents, against using a course’s assigned credit hours as a proxy for course quality in assessing course equivalencies. It should be noted, however, that these documents represent recommended practice, not mandatory practice. The principles of the BC Transfer System state that “[a]ll members acknowledge and respect the primary jurisdic-

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**The presence of a well-respected agency in the BC post-secondary system encouraging broad-based assessments of transfer requests has likely done much to avoid the problem of a course’s credit value being used as the primary or only indicator of the course’s quality.**

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tion of each institution for transfer policy and academic integrity” (BCCAT, 2010). In other words, decisions on the transferability of courses are the responsibility of the post-secondary institutions involved; BCCAT does not mandate how those decisions are to be made. BCCAT also has no authority over decisions on course transferability made by post-secondary institutions that are not BC Transfer System members. Nevertheless, the presence of a well-respected agency in the BC post-secondary system encouraging broad-based assessments of transfer requests has likely done much to avoid the problem of a course’s credit value being used as the primary or only indicator of the course’s quality.

The BC Transfer System is also distinctive in having several innovative forms of transfer agreements. These include block transfer agreements, in which completion of a set amount of credit is guaranteed to transfer with the same credit value, and flexible pre-major (FPM) agreements, in which the completion of specific courses in first- and second-year studies in a discipline will facilitate student admission to the third year of a degree program in that discipline. Both block transfer agreements and FPM agreements are implicitly based on standard assumptions associated with the credit hour, such as 60 credits

equalling two years of academic study, but the transfer equivalencies in these agreements may be expressed in terms other than credit value. For example, transfer equivalencies may be expressed in program years, such as a transferring student being granted admission to the third year of a four-year program. Some credit agreements for individual courses within the BC Transfer Guide also involve transfer in forms other than the awarding of credit hours for an equivalent course, e.g. the completion of a course at the sending institution exempting the student from taking a specified course at the receiving institution.

Unlike many of the post-secondary systems described in the literature on “academic credit”, the BC Transfer System includes many different kinds of post-secondary institutions (colleges, universities, technical institutes, and both public and private institutions) that offer a broad variety of programs. Thus, the observation that credit value underlies many other post-secondary processes is both applicable and non-applicable in the BC context. It is true that credit value is used as a metric in many post-secondary functions in BC. For example, to be eligible for a student loan, post-secondary students must be enrolled in 60% of a full course load (StudentAid BC, 2015), and most BC post-secondary institutions use course credits to determine how many courses per semester constitute a full-time or part-time course load. Course credit values are used at some institutions to calculate

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## The BC post-secondary system also uses methods to assess student learning that do not rely on traditional course structures or academic contexts.

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faculty workloads; there may be a minimum or maximum amount of credits associated with the courses that a faculty member can be assigned to teach in a single semester. Course credits are also used to allocate institutional resources (e.g. a four-credit course may have more instructional time than a three-credit course, and thus require more room bookings), or to calculate program or institutional enrolments for reporting purposes. In fact, the BC Ministry of Advanced Education’s manual for institutions contributing to the province’s Central Data Warehouse explicitly states, “While institutions may have their own methods for determining credit assignments, a general guideline is that since 15 weeks of full-time study earns 15 credits for university-type programs, then 1 week of full-time study earns 1 credit” (p. 8).

However, the literature on “academic credit” focuses mostly on programs or institutions offering academic credentials. The BC post-secondary system includes many institutions that offer programs that result in credentials but are not based on academic credits. Examples of these programs include trades training programs, which generally use training hours or classroom contact hours as measures of student progress, and programs such as early childhood education, whose courses have credit that is counted toward credential completion but is not considered academic credit. The discrepancy between these different methods of credit measurement is problematic in terms of facilitating student mobility between different kinds of post-secondary programs (McQuar-

rie, 2012). But the presence of these different forms of academic measurement in the BC post-secondary system has perhaps also led to the credit hour not being the dominant measure of student achievement that it may be in other jurisdictions.

The BC post-secondary system also uses methods to assess student learning that do not rely on traditional course structures or academic contexts. The process of prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) evaluates student learning acquired in, for example, professional development courses, industry-based training, or volunteer activities to determine whether students should be granted academic credit for the knowledge or skills acquired through those experiences (Schinnerl, 2001). Documented evidence of learning can be evaluated in the PLAR process through portfolio assessment. Challenge examinations also provide an opportunity for students to prove competencies acquired through undocumented learning (BC Ministry of Education, 2004). Language programs often use benchmark measures of proficiency, rather than credit hours or course completion, to assess student learning or to determine appropriate placement in a program or in a sequence of courses. However, as in other jurisdictions, in BC the outcomes of PLAR or other non-credit-based learning assessments are often expressed in credit hours or converted to credit hours. The credit-hour format facilitates the transcription of the assessment outcomes and also facilitates the student’s progress in their chosen program of study.

Finally, it is also worth noting that the number of academic credits a student acquires is not the only measure of student progress at most BC post-secondary institutions. It is accurate to say, as some researchers have, that all students who satisfactorily complete a course receive the same number of credit hours assigned to that course, regardless of the student’s performance in the course. But there are other measures of academic

progress used in BC and elsewhere which take into account not only the number of credits acquired but also the ratings of a student's academic performance. For example, the grade point average (GPA) measure is calculated by totalling a student's grades for a given period, and dividing that total by the number of course credits the student acquired during that period. Many BC post-secondary institutions have minimum GPA requirements for program or institutional admittance, continuance, progression and/or graduation. These requirements ensure that course completion or credit acquisition are not the sole measures of student progress.

## Review of Institutional Definitions and Practices

To understand more specifically how "academic credit" is defined and assigned in BC's post-secondary system, a two-phase review was conducted of the institutional information available on the websites of all 38 BC Transfer System (BCTS) member institutions. (The list of member institutions can be found online at <http://www.bccat.ca/articulate/system>.) Information collected from this review was supplemented with information provided by members of the BC Registrars Association (BCRA) through an email request. Registrars from eight institutions provided information in response to the email.

### **Definitions**

The first phase of the review examined whether BCTS member institutions had formal definitions of "academic credit", and, if so, what those definitions were. The phrases "academic credit" and "credit hour" were used as search terms on each BCTS member institution's website to identify definitions of these terms; the

websites were also searched for glossaries or lists of terminology. The search was restricted to information related to undergraduate studies, since graduate courses are not included in the BC Transfer Guide. The search was also restricted to information related to academic courses, since course or program value in other types of BC post-secondary programs, such as Trades education, is not usually measured in units based on credit hours. Definitions related to "academic credit" or "credit hour" were located on the websites of 20 BC Transfer System member institutions (53% of BCTS members), with additional information supplied by one institution.

The 21 collected definitions were then sub-divided into three categories: those that most closely resembled the "Carnegie unit" model; those that used the "Carnegie unit" model with some additions; and those that stated a metric or definition with no further explanation. The definitions in each of these categories are presented in Tables 1(a), 1(b), and 1(c).

One other BCTS member institution uses a different method of credit calculation because of its different program structure. Quest University uses "blocks" as its measure of a course's value for the purposes of credential completion. According to Quest's academic calendar, "32 blocks are required for graduation with a Bachelor of Arts & Sciences degree. Each block contains 18 days of classroom instruction, and each day includes a minimum of three hours of formal meeting time".

As shown in Tables 1(a), 1(b), and 1(c), nine BCTS member institutions have definitions of "academic credit" or "credit hour" that approximate the "Carnegie unit" definition by equating assigned course credit with a given amount of classroom time. Six institutions have definitions that elaborate on the "Carnegie unit" model, usually by identifying the types of activities or the time-frame that a credit hour encompasses at the institution.

**Table 1(a): Definitions of “Academic Credit”, “Credit Hour” or Related Terms at BC Transfer System Member Institutions - “Carnegie Unit” Model**

Name of Institution	Definition and Source
<b>Art Institute of Vancouver<sup>1</sup></b>	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 10-12 weeks, 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, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours. [academic calendar]
<b>BC Institute of Technology</b>	Credit: A credit is defined as one classroom hour per week over a 12-15 week term. [policy 5012]
<b>Capilano University</b>	A credit hour is defined as one (1) hour of instruction per week over a 15 week period. [academic calendar]
<b>Fairleigh Dickenson University<sup>1</sup></b>	Student credit hour means 50 minutes of face to face class activity each week for 15 weeks (or the equivalent attained by scheduling more minutes of face to face class activity per week for fewer weeks in the semester) complemented by at least 100 minutes each week by laboratory or outside assignments (or the equivalent thereof for semesters of different length). [academic calendar, based on New Jersey Administrative Code Section 9A 1:1.2]
<b>Langara College</b>	A course at Langara normally consists of three or more hours of classwork, or equivalent per week in one subject area for a four-month period. [academic calendar]
<b>North Island College</b>	In general, one (1) course credit is the equivalent of one (1) hour a week of classroom instruction (labs, seminars, etc. not included). [academic calendar]
<b>University of the Fraser Valley</b>	Credit: the value placed on a course. Most courses are worth three or four credits, which means that you will spend three to seven hours in class per week for one semester. Other terms which mean generally the same thing are 'semester hours', 'hours of credit', 'semester hours of credit', and 'credit hours'. [glossary in academic calendar]
<b>University of Northern British Columbia</b>	One credit hour is defined as the equivalent of one hour of instruction per week for a semester (roughly three and one half months). Students are expected to spend time studying on their own in addition to formal instruction time. [glossary on “future students” webpage]
<b>Vancouver Island University</b>	In general, one credit is defined as the equivalent of one hour a week of classroom instruction (labs, seminars, etc., are not included). Most University courses carry three (3) semester hours of credit. [academic calendar]

<sup>1</sup> The Art Institute of Vancouver and Fairleigh Dickinson University are both Vancouver campuses of post-secondary institutions headquartered in the US; thus, some content in their academic calendars is based on the policies and terminology of their US parent institutions.

**Table 1(b): Definitions of “Academic Credit”, “Credit Hour” or Related Terms at BC Transfer System Member Institutions - “Carnegie Unit” Model with Additions**

Name of Institution	Definition and Source
<b>Alexander College</b>	One credit represents one class hour per course per week per term. Each course has a credit value of at least 3 (representing 3 class hours per week, per course, per term). Courses with a laboratory component require an additional class hour per week and have a value of 4 credits. [academic calendar]
<b>Athabasca University</b>	Credit: The value assigned to a course. Normally, AU courses are either three-credit (one semester) or six-credit (two semesters) which corresponds to conventional universities. Some courses in the Bachelor of Nursing degree carry a practicum component with a weight of four and nine credits. [academic calendar]
<b>Royal Roads University</b>	Each credit normally requires 33 full hours of student effort, based on the University’s estimate, and includes face-to-face instruction time, online learning time, and independent study time. [“Credit” in Academic Policies, Section 1: Credit and Registration]
<b>Trinity Western University<sup>2</sup></b>	Normally courses at TWU shall be designated as 3 semester hour ones. Such classes assume 37-39 hours in-class work (other than tutorials or labs) and 75-100 hours of work outside class hours. Courses with a lab or tutorial component deemed necessary by the department would be closer to 75 than 100 hours (with the lab/tutorial requiring extra hours). [Course Semester Hour Determination policy]
<b>University Canada West</b>	Credit courses normally have an academic value of three (3) credits. Each credit is equivalent to 45 hours of student contact encompassing class time, on-line study, exams, and self (directed) study. This time does not include individual study and preparation time.[academic calendar]
<b>University of Victoria</b>	A full-year course with three lecture hours per week through the full Winter Session from September to April normally has a value of 3 units. A half-year course with three lecture hours per week from September to December or from January to April normally has a value of 1.5 units. A 3-unit course (3 hours of lectures per week throughout the Winter Session) approximates a 6 semester-hour or a 9 quarter-hour course. A course of 1.5 units approximates a 3 semester-hour or a 4.5 quarter-hour course. [academic calendar]

<sup>2</sup> Information supplied by Grant McMillan, TWU Registrar; policy is intended as a guideline and its usage is not monitored.

**Table 1(c) : Definitions of “Academic Credit”, “Credit Hour” or Related Terms at BC Transfer System Member Institutions - Metric or Definition Only**

Name of Institution	Definition and Source
<b>Kwantlen Polytechnic University</b>	A credit is the point value attached to a course. [glossary in academic calendar]
<b>North Island College</b>	Credit: the value assigned to a course. [glossary on “records and registration” webpage]
<b>Okanagan College</b>	A credit is an assigned unit of value granted for successful completion of a course. [academic calendar]
<b>Selkirk College</b>	Credit: A numerical value assigned to a learning activity for which the student is evaluated; the value is based on the type of activity as well as the amount of time required to complete it. [policy 8100]
<b>Simon Fraser University</b>	Units, formerly known as credits, are assigned to each course; most have three units. [academic calendar]
<b>Thompson Rivers University</b>	Credit: A counting system used to determine the amount of class time that a student has completed, usually based on hours of instruction. [glossary for new student orientation]

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## Policies represent a range of approaches to calculating a course’s credit value.

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And six institutions have definitions of “academic credit” or “credit hour” that indicate only that credit is a value assigned to a course, without any further elaboration as to how that value is determined.

Overall, the information in these tables indicates that the “Carnegie unit” model is the basis for the majority of “academic credit” or “credit hour” definitions used by BC Transfer System member institutions. Despite the concerns expressed in the literature about the “Carnegie unit” potentially being an outdated measure, the unit appears to underlie the meaning or value of “credit” in some parts of the BC Transfer System. However, it is important to keep in mind that one-third of BC Transfer System member institutions define “academic credit” or “credit value” simply as an assigned value, and that just under half of BC Transfer System member institutions apparently have no explicit defini-

tion of either “academic credit” or “credit hour”. Thus, it is impossible to determine whether the “Carnegie unit”-based conceptualization of “credit” is prevalent throughout the entire BC Transfer System.

### ***Credit Value Calculation***

The second phase of the review examined how BCTS member institutions determined the credit values assigned to their academic courses. The search for this information initially used the same websites as the first phase of the review, but instead examined policies and procedures related to new course development, curriculum or program development, and changes to existing courses or programs. All of these processes would involve assigning credit to a course, assessing whether a course’s credit value was appropriate, and/or approving the credit value proposed for a course.





All BCTS member institutions require a course's proposed credit value to be included in a proposal for a new course, or in a revision of an existing course. The majority of institutions also require, either in the template for their official course outlines or in their course development or revision process, that the number of instructional contact hours for the course be specified. Usually this requirement includes a breakdown of types of instructional contact (e.g. lecture, laboratory, field work, seminar); however, there is usually no explicit connection between the type or number of contact hours in the course and the associated credit value for the course. Only six BCTS member institutions were identified as having policies or procedures that explicitly describe how a course's credit value is to be calculated. The texts of these policies and procedures are presented in Appendix A (Justice Institute of BC), Appendix B (Kwantlen Polytechnic University), Appendix C (Thompson Rivers University), Appendix D (University of British Columbia), Appendix E (University of the Fraser Valley), and Appendix F (Selkirk College).

The contents of these six policies represent a range of approaches to calculating a course's credit value. Some policies provide a set of generalized considerations

intended to guide departments or programs when assigning amounts of credit to courses, while others lay out specific mathematical calculations to be used in determining credit values. All of these approaches acknowledge that course contents, structures, and delivery methods will inevitably vary across programs and departments within the institution. But all of these six policies indicate that institution-wide policies- rather than individual policies at the faculty, departmental, or program level- are most appropriate for regulating the process of credit value assignment. Several BCTS member institutions have indicated that

developing a credit assignment policy applicable to all forms of programming and course delivery is a barrier to creating such a policy. However, the six policies presented in the appendices demonstrate that it is indeed possible to develop such a policy- either by sub-dividing the policy into separate sections addressing specific program structures or forms of course delivery, or by defining institutional or program-specific principles to be taken into consideration when proposing or approving course credit values. It appears that an institution-wide policy, even if it contains sub-procedures applicable to particular parts of the institution, can also be valuable in promoting greater comparability and equity of course credit values throughout the entire institution.

An alternative institution-wide approach to assigning course credit value, which may be of interest to institutions examining different models of course credit assignment, is Trinity Western University's "Course Semester Hour Determination" policy. Rather than outlining a process for calculating a credit value for each individual course, this policy instead standardizes a credit value of three semester hours for all courses, and specifies a procedure for making exceptions to that standard.



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**Without explicit definitions of these measures, it cannot be guaranteed that all users of the measures understand or operationalize the measures in the same way.**

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Instructors or departments introducing new courses that are not 3 semester hour ones shall present a reason for such a deviation. Such reasons could be the type of course it is (e.g. an activity or leadership preparation course in Physical Education), or the special amount of work required (e.g. 50 hours of in-class work with an expectation of 125 hours of out-of-class work might merit 4 semester hours). Instructors need to remember that courses that are not 3 semester hours in length are sometimes difficult to transfer to other Canadian post-secondary institutions (or are transferred as 3 semester hours even if weighted at 3 to 4 semester hours).

When the BCRA membership was polled to collect data for this report, they were also asked whether their institutions had different credit value calculation policies or practices for face-to-face courses and for online courses. Of the eight respondents to the email, one institution did not offer online courses; four institutions' policies and/or practices did not differentiate between the two types of courses when calculating credit value; one institution's policy specified different processes for calculating credit values for online and face-to-face courses (Selkirk College, Appendix F); and two institutions had no policies or practices on credit value calculation.

## Discussion

The results of the review of institutional definitions and practices indicate that nearly half of BCTS member institutions do not have a stated definition of "academic credit" or "credit hour". It is apparent that academic programs at BCTS member institutions generally follow

the recognized and accepted model of semesters lasting approximately 15 weeks, and 15 academic credits per semester equalling a full-time student course load. With the exception of Quest University, which uses a different program structure, students at BC post-secondary institutions generally must accumulate at least 120 academic credits to be awarded an undergraduate degree. The implicit assumption underlying all these practices is that a three-credit course is a course with three classroom hours per week for one full semester.

As the literature review indicates, a commonly accepted measure of academic credit is essential for the efficient and effective operation of a post-secondary system that has significant amounts of inter-institutional interaction. However, it may be problematic both at the institutional level and at the system level for such widely used measures as "academic credit" or "credit hour" to operate based on unstated assumptions. Without explicit definitions of these measures, it cannot be guaranteed that all users of the measures understand or operationalize the measures in the same way. It may also be problematic when a measure that is not clearly defined is used for an "unintended" purpose. The published literature on "academic credit" suggests that credit hours may not be appropriate as a proxy for academic quality or as a basis for resource allocation; the same challenges may be present in the BC post-secondary system when credit hours are used as the basis for such procedures as assigning faculty workloads.

Of the BCTS member institutions that do have definitions of "academic credit" or "credit hour", it is notable

that approximately one-third of those definitions simply reinforce that credit is equivalent to value. In other words, these definitions do not explain how credit values are calculated, or what those values are based on. Several institutions also have more than one definition of “credit”, with the different definitions located in different sections of their institutional website. While this is not necessarily a problem in that the definitions generally encompass similar concepts, it could be a concern if different units within the institution are independently developing their own definitions for the same terminology, or if there is no clear indication of which institutional unit has the primary responsibility for defining or coordinating institutional terminology.

Relatively few BCTS member institutions – six of 38 – were identified as having policies that explicitly state how credit value is to be calculated for a course or program. The reason for this low number is likely the difficulty, as expressed by several institutions, in developing a policy that is internally consistent but also relevant to many different program structures and/or course delivery methods. Nevertheless, these policies demonstrate the importance of an explicit institution-wide agreement on what “credit” represents and what a unit of credit is based on. This type of explicit statement, even at a theoretical or conceptual level, is especially important when an institution’s courses and programs are differently structured and/or focus on different types of skill acquisition. Relying on implicit understandings or vague definitions could, over time, result in unrecognized inconsistencies in credit value assignment across departments, programs, or faculties. The institutions with explicit framework of assigning credit value may be better equipped for discussing credit calculations and credit equivalency and transparency in the BCTS.

Finally, it must also be mentioned that it was challenging for this report’s author to locate definitions or uses of “academic credit” or “credit hour” on many of the institutional websites that were surveyed. This searching was

difficult even for a researcher experienced in finding such information. While definitions or calculations of credit values are not essential to the day-to-day institutional lives of most post-secondary students, staff, or faculty members, there are situations in which such information is important – for example, when curricula or courses are being revised, or when course credit values are being assessed or approved. Thus, the location and accessibility of this information for users should also be a consideration.

## Recommendations

Based on the data collected and the analysis of those data, the following recommendations are presented for institutions, or individuals within institutions, addressing issues related to definitions or uses of “academic credit” or “credit hour”.

1. Institutions without an explicit institutional definition of “academic credit” or “credit value” may consider developing such a definition. Defining these terms allows for consistency over time, and furthers transparency for academic and administrative staff, and for students. Institutions may also give thought to designating the unit or position in the institution with responsibility for maintaining and communicating the definition.
2. Institutions that have explicit definitions of “academic credit” or “credit hours” may wish to review their definition(s) to ensure that the definition accurately reflects how the institution understands or uses the term. Easy accessibility of the definition, on websites and in other publicly available information sources, helps to ensure that academic and administrative staff are aware of the definition and its relevant contexts. Institutions with multiple definitions of “academic credit” or “credit values” should con-

sider whether centralizing the responsibility for the definition in a single unit or position would increase consistency in its use and application over time.

3. Institutions may consider whether an explicit policy on the calculation of course or program credit value would benefit students, academic staff and administrative staff. Examples of such policies are included in the appendices to this report. These policies often feature clear statements regarding how credit values are calculated – either by using stated numerical formulas, or by listing the criteria to be taken into account in determining the credit value of a course or program. Such policies can also contain language specific to the process of credit value calculation in different types of programs or courses.

The content of an effective credit value calculation policy will depend on the structure of the individual institution, its programs, its course formats and delivery methods, and its internal approval or review processes. However, an important element in such a policy is a foundational statement outlining what a credit unit represents, and stating general considerations that should guide the assigning of a credit unit. Such statements should underlie credit value calculations for all types of programs and courses; credit value calculations for specific types of programming or course delivery should build upon the principles expressed in those foundational statements. Developing these foundational statements might be a starting point for institutions looking to develop a credit value calculation policy but unsure of how to address credit value calculations for multiple and distinct program and course formats.

Ideally, a policy on credit value calculation should also be integrated into processes that involve the assignment of course credit, e.g. new course or program development, course or program revision, or curriculum changes affecting multiple programs. Institutions may wish to consider mechanisms to reinforce awareness of these policies among individuals or units involved in these processes.

4. Should BC post-secondary institutions wish to share information and practices around the use of “academic credit” or “credit hours”, BCCAT and professional associations (including registrar associations) might consider how they can support their member institutions by facilitating discussions of credit value issues at specific institutions or throughout the relevant system. While the definition or calculation of credit value is clearly within the jurisdiction of each individual institution, compatibility across institutions – or at least an informed understanding of each institution’s specific practices – is an important component in the successful functioning of the BC Transfer System.

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# Appendix A:

## Credit Value Calculation Policy - Justice Institute of BC

JIBC courses assign credit hours based on hours of instructional contact; however, treating all forms of delivery the same resulted in inconsistency and a wide span of credits for some courses. Including large numbers of lab or practical hours has resulted in large credit values and thus exemplified a number of areas needing consideration:

**1. The difference in instructional hours for different delivery methods:** In order to equalize the difference between different instructional methods a weighting value was developed. The weighting value is as follows:

**2. Length of the term:** Not all courses are the same number of weeks so using the number of hours per week would not be equivalent, thus all courses need to be normed over a 14 week period. While some courses may be delivered over different time frames the approved total student contact hours and number of weeks are the basis from which to begin to apply the formula. To ensure that the calculation of credit hours under this model takes account of this variation of delivery timeframes instructional hours per week are ‘factored’ using the weighing value that is applicable and the number of weeks in a typical semester or the training period used by the course or program. The factored instructional hours are based on the number of hours per week normed over a 14 week semester. This allows for comparing ‘apples to apples’.

Instruction Method	Definition	Weighting Value
<b>Direct Instruction</b>	The purpose of this type of learning is on the acquisition of new knowledge, skills and attitudes in a structured learning environment. A variety of instructional techniques may be used in direct instruction (eg: lecture, seminars, group discussions, independent study, demonstrations, new skills instruction, role plays, etc.)	1 hour = 1 credit
<b>Supervised practice</b>	The purpose of this type of learning focuses on the practice of newly acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes in a structured environment with equipment, and with faculty oversight for guidance. Activities that would fit under this area are Gun Range sessions and simulations.	1 hour = .5 credit
<b>Practice Education, Field Placement, Internship or Co-op</b>	This type of learning focuses on the application of skills, knowledge and attitude in the field environment.	1 hour = .33 credit

*Please note: these three approaches may be combined to determine total factored course hours used in the composition of credits for a single course.*

**3. Rounding Values:** Using this model will result in calculations that include exact values of one-tenth or one-half. In order to apply the model consistently the value should always be rounded in the traditional way with no credit course receiving less than .5 credit. Values should be rounded in such a way as to allow for increments of 0.5 credits to be applied to a course, with the maximum course value being 10 credits.

**4. Credit Swings:** The impact of this change could be a dramatic swing in credits awarded for some programs, either up or down, which would be unintended and undesirable. For this reason, the banding scale (below) is recommended.

Instruction Method	Academic Credit
0.1 - 0.5 hours	0.5
0.6 - 1.0 hour	1
1.1 - 1.5 hours	1.5
1.6 - 2.0 hours	2
2.1 - 3.0 hours	3
3.1 - 4.0 hours	4
4.1 - 5.0 hours	5
5.1 - 6.0 hours	6
6.1 - 7.0 hours	7
7.1 - 8.0 hours	8
8.1 - 9.0 hours	9
9.1 - 10.0 or greater hours	10

### Proposed Calculation Worksheet

Instructional Method	Hours/Wk		Credit hour factor	Total factored hours		#wks/14 weeks	Factored instructional hours	Total academic credit as per the band*
Direct Instruction		X	1	=	X	/14		
Supervised practice		X	.5	=	X	/14		
Practice Education, Field Placement, Internship or Co-op		X	.33	=	X	/14		

Source: Justice Institute of BC policy 3110 (Establishing Credit Value for JIBC Courses) <http://www.jibc.ca/procedure/3110-002>

# Appendix B:

## Credit Value Calculation Policy - Kwantlen Polytechnic University

Credits are determined by the teaching modes employed, the weekly hours of instruction, and the length of the course. In exceptional cases, credit may not be assigned. Credits are calculated automatically in the course outline database. Credit calculation in specific departments may not follow the standard format, e.g., Music, and Computer Aided Design and Drafting (C.A.D.D.) Technologies.

Enrolment and Registrar Services calculates credits according to the following:

### **1. University Studies and Career-Technical Programs, and Academic and Career Preparatory (ACP) Programs**

One semester credit hour is assigned for each:

#### A. Classroom Related Instruction (Lecture)

- 1.33 hours of instruction per week over a semester (15 weeks) in a lecture, seminar, tutorial, or workshop instructional mode (20 hours = 1 credit; 60 hours = 3 credits)

#### B. Simulated Learning Environment (Lab) and

#### C. Individual Learning Environment (Lab)

- 2.00 hours of instruction per week over a semester (15 weeks) in a laboratory or studio/simulation instructional mode/ individual learning (30 hours = 1 credit; 90 hours = 3 credits)

#### D. Practicum Supervision/Field Experience

- 2.67 hours of instruction per week over a semester (15 weeks) in a field experience, clinical or field placement, or practicum instructional mode (40 hours = 1 credit; 120 hours = 3 credits)

#### E. Reality Learning Environment

- 1.66 hours of instruction per week over a semester (15 weeks) in a field experience, clinical or field placement, or practicum instructional mode, or reality learning (25 hours = 1 credit; 75 hours = 3 credits)

### **2. Vocational Programs**

For vocational/trades courses, credits for A. *Classroom-Related Instruction (Lecture)* are calculated using the same formula as for B. *Simulated Learning Environment (Lab)* and C. *Individual Learning Environment (Lab)*.

### **3. Music Programs**

For some Music courses, credits will be calculated individually with the Office of Enrolment and Registrar Services.

Source: Kwantlen Polytechnic University Course Outline Manual, <https://www.kpu.ca/sites/default/files/downloads/comannual11185.pdf>



# Appendix C:

## Credit Value Calculation Policy - Thompson Rivers University

### ASSIGNMENT OF COURSE CREDITS FOR ACADEMIC AND CAREER TECHNICAL PROGRAMS

#### a. Main principles:

- i. Multi-semester course credits are assigned as the sum of each semester's credits.
- ii. For courses of less than one semester duration, credits are assigned using the vectoring that would apply if the actual course contact hours were distributed in semesterized format.
- iii. All courses must either be vectored (on a per-week basis) or have the total contact hours indicated in the calendar. When the total contact hour method is chosen, a reasonable breakdown among lectures, seminars, labs, practica should be chosen.
- iv. A standard semester including the exam period is 15 weeks.
- v. Fifteen credits are considered to be a 100% course load per semester. Students need Chair or designate permission in order to take an overload.
- vi. The perceived difficulty of the course curriculum as compared to other course curricula at TRU will not be factored into the credit assignment standard.
- vii. Credit assignment is based solely on derived contact hours of instruction.

#### b. Definitions of instructional delivery methods:

- i. Lecture: instruction- standard format.
- ii. Seminar: subset of lecture instruction- participative format.
- iii. Lab: laboratory (hands on activity) instruction with laboratory equipment.

- iv. Practica: related work experience, such as: practicum, clinical, shop, fieldwork, or studio, or internship [or co-operative education].

#### c. Credit Calculations:

- i. Educational delivery method and instructional weighting factor for credit assignment purposes:  
Lectures and Seminars: 1 actual hour = 1 derived instructional hour  
Labs: 1 actual hour =  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a derived instructional hour  
Practica: 1 actual hour =  $\frac{1}{2}$  of a derived instructional hour

Note: Once the total program credits are derived using the formula, the credits are to be distributed in proportion to the contact hours of each course. Any partial credit should be rounded down to the nearest whole credit.

- ii. Calculation of derived hours:  
Hours of instruction per week x (Weeks of instruction + Assessment) x instructional weighting factor = total derived hours  
Total derived hours/15 = derived hours per week

Use (iii) below to equate course derived hours per week to credits.

- iii. Derived hours per week equate to the following credits:

< 1 hour = 0 credits  
1 hour = 1 credit  
2 hours = 2 credits

3-5 hours = 3 credits  
6- 9 hours = 4 credits  
10- 11 hours = 5 credits  
12 – 13 hours = 6 credits  
14 – 15 hours = 7 credits  
16 – 17 hours = 8 credits  
18 – 19 hours = 9 credits  
20 – 21 hours = 10 credits

iv. Distributed Learning: Refer to Section d. below

**d. For courses delivered with no or few direct contact hours (e.g. Distance), credits are assigned using one of the following methods:**

- i. Where the same TRU course is delivered in a vectored format, the credits assigned to the no-direct-contact-hours course must be the same.
- ii. Where there is no TRU equivalent, then the credits assigned should be based on a reasonable estimate of the equivalent contact hours of instruction that would be needed to deliver the curriculum under a vectored delivery model. Once the contact hour equivalent is determined, the contact hour/credit relationship defined in c) above should be applied.
- iii. Credit assignment for co-operative education courses is assigned a three credit value.

**ASSIGNMENT OF COURSE CREDITS FOR VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS**

- A. A vocational (non-semesterized) program has a maximum of 30 contact hours per week of instruction. The equivalent (to a semesterized delivery model) 100% (15 credit) load equals [30 per week] x [15 weeks] = 450 contact hours.
- B. Derived hours per week equate to the following credits:

< 1 hour = 0 credits  
1 hour = 1 credit  
2 hours = 2 credits  
3-5 hours = 3 credits  
6- 9 hours = 4 credits  
10- 11 hours = 5 credits  
12 – 13 hours = 6 credits  
14 – 15 hours = 7 credits  
16 – 17 hours = 8 credits  
18 – 19 hours = 9 credits  
20 – 21 hours = 10 credits  
22 – 23 hours = 11 credits  
24 – 25 hours = 12 credits  
26 – 27 hours = 13 credits  
28 – 29 hours = 14 credits  
30 – 31 hours = 15 credits  
32 – 33 hours = 16 credits  
34 – 35 hours = 17 credits  
36 – 37 hours = 18 credits  
38 – 39 hours = 19 credits  
40 – 41 hours = 20 credits  
42 – 43 hours = 21 credits  
44 – 45 hours = 22 credits  
46 – 47 hours = 23 credits  
48 – 49 hours = 24 credits  
50 – 51 hours = 25 credits  
52 – 53 hours = 26 credits  
54 – 55 hours = 27 credits  
56 – 57 hours = 28 credits  
58 – 59 hours = 29 credits  
60 – 61 hours = 30 credits

Note: Once the total program credits are derived using the formula, the credits are to be distributed in proportion to the contact hours of each course. Any partial credit should be rounded to the nearest whole credit.

Source: Thompson Rivers University policy ED 8-0 (Educational Standards in Credit Courses and Programs) [https://www.tru.ca/\\_\\_shared/assets/ed08-05660.pdf](https://www.tru.ca/__shared/assets/ed08-05660.pdf)

# Appendix D:

## Credit Value Calculation Policy - University of British Columbia

### Credit Value Determination

In course listings published in the Academic Calendar, the credit value of a course is shown in parentheses following the course number. In general, one credit represents one hour of instruction or two to three hours of laboratory work per week throughout one term of a Winter Session (September to December or January to May). In the summer terms, which represent half of a Winter session term, one credit would represent approximately two instruction hours per week.

For non-lecture, non-laboratory learning activities (e.g., problem-based learning, community service learning, graduating essays, seminars, student-directed research) the determinants of a course's credit value will vary with the department. For all new courses incorporating non-lecture, non-laboratory learning activities, a rationale for the proposed credit value should be included in the course proposal.

Credit value should be expressed as either a fixed value, or a variable value. For a variable credit value, a slash [/] indicates an option and a hyphen [-] indicates a range. For variable credit courses, please specify a "D" after the variable credit notation if the credit value is to be set by the unit, or a "C" if it can be selected by the student in consultation with the unit.

Assigning a course zero (0) credits is used for courses that relate to theses and dissertations, practica, and exchange terms. The use of the zero (0) credit option for other types of activities is not encouraged by the Senate Curriculum Committee.

### Vectors

Some Faculties describe the distribution of their contact hours across learning activities through the use of a vector. The number of hours assigned each week to lectures or primary activity (first digit), and to laboratories or secondary activity (second digit) are shown in square brackets at the end of a course description. Where a third digit appears it refers to periods where discussions, tutorials, or assigned problems are done (tertiary activity). An asterisk (\*) indicates alternate weeks. The first set of digits refers to the first term (September to December) and the second set following a semi-colon refers to the second term (January to May); when only one set is given it means either term. Graduate courses and courses in some Faculties are not designated with vectors.

E.g.: [3-0-1\*] would mean the course had a weekly total of 3 hours of lectures, no laboratories, and a 1 hour tutorial per two-week period.

[3-0-1; 3-0-1] would mean that the course continues over two terms with 3 hours of lecture and a 1 hour tutorial weekly.

Typically there is a 1:1 ratio between the primary activity and the credit value; a 2:1 or 3:1 ratio between the secondary activity and the credit value; and credit value is seldom assigned to the tertiary activity. In the example provided above, the course would likely have a credit value of 3.

Source: UBC Vancouver Senate Curriculum Guide – Guidelines for New Course Proposals <http://senate.ubc.ca/vancouver/curriculum-submission-guide/cat1-curriculum/guidelines-new-course-proposals>

# Appendix E:

## Credit Value Calculation Policy - University of the Fraser Valley

### PURPOSE

This policy establishes standards and principles for a consistent, credible approach to assigning course credits for courses at the University of the Fraser Valley.

### SCOPE

This policy applies to all courses offered for credit by the University of the Fraser Valley.

### DEFINITIONS

In this policy, the following definitions apply:

Credit:

A numeric value assigned to a course, based on both the hours of direct instruction and the coursework done outside of the classroom, which indicates the course's weight relative to courses across the university.

Course:

A set of lectures or lessons in a particular subject, with defined learning outcomes, offered under a designated subject code and course number.

Class time:

Time required of students to attend scheduled learning activities, including but not limited to lectures, laboratories, seminars, demonstrations, and practice of skills.

Outside-of-class time:

Time expected of students outside of class for course-related activities, such as reading, research, assignments, projects, studying, rehearsing, and any other learning activities typically required to master the course content.

### POLICY

Course credits are intended to be a reflection of the total learning time, including class time and outside-of-class time, regardless of the instructional method(s) used.

Courses that require similar amounts of learning time shall be assigned similar credit values, regardless of the instructional methods or delivery methods used.

### REGULATIONS

Standard for determination of credits

The traditional academic model for assigning course credit assumes that lecture or seminar-based courses require a 1:2 ratio of class time to outside-of-class time. In this model, a credit is based on one hour of in-class and two hours of outside-of-class study (total three hours per week of study time) for an average student over a 15-week semester, for a total of 45 study hours.

At UFV, many courses do not follow the above model. They may contain more than one instructional format or have quite different ratios of class time to outside-of-class time. Therefore, credits should not be determined solely by the number of class hours. Instead, credits are based on an equivalent total amount of student course work (including class time and outside-of-class time).

Mastery of learning outcomes is not strictly dependent on time. Graduate level courses often assign credit based on the work that a student must produce to meet a learning outcome.

### Approval of course credits

Credit values for courses are established during the course approval process and may be changed during course reviews, in accordance with the Undergraduate

and Graduate Course and Program Approval policies.

The Undergraduate Education committee and Graduate Studies committee will publish guidelines for determining course credit.

The head of the department or program, with approval of the appropriate curriculum committee, proposes the number of credits for each course. When proposing course credit values for new courses, or changes to credit values, departments will be required to explain how the credits were determined, based on:

- instructional contact hours required for students to achieve content mastery
- additional hours required of the student to achieve content mastery

For some courses a comparison with the standard credit value does not provide an appropriate credit value. Examples include but are not limited to practicum courses, field schools, or graduate-level extended essays, major papers, or theses. In such cases the department must provide a detailed rationale to explain why a variance is requested.

Source: University of the Fraser Valley policy 105 (Assignment of Course Credit) <http://www.ufv.ca/media/assets/secretariat/policies/Course-Credits-%28105%29.pdf>

# Appendix F:

## Credit Value Calculation Policy - Selkirk College

### *Guidelines for Assigning Credit Value to Learning Activities*

The following guidelines will be used to determine the number of credits to be assigned to courses and other learning experiences.

#### **9.1 Face-to-face, Instructor-led Courses**

Where the course is primarily instructor-led, (e.g. face-to-face lecture-based courses), and normally carries a requirement for after-class additional work (such as readings, assignments, etc.) a course will be assigned one credit for each 15-16 hours of instruction (includes evaluation activities). Most University Transfer courses will fall in this category. Note: a seminar or seminar-like activity (e.g. math lab) that is part of a course does not count as additional hours for the purpose of calculating credits.

#### **9.2 Lab-based Courses**

Where courses include a formal lab component (e.g. UT science courses, forestry field labs), the lab will be assigned one credit for each 45-48 hours of scheduled lab time.

#### **9.3 Distance Learning (DL) Courses**

(1) DL Courses that are also Offered Face-to-face

Where a course is available both face-to-face and through a distributed learning method (e.g. online or print-based distance), the credit value of the DL course will be the same as the credit value of the face-to-face one.

(2) Instructor-led DL Courses

Credit value will be determined using a best judgment method, where the instructor will assess the amount of face-to-face instruction (excluding normal expectations for homework assignments) that would likely be required if the course were offered in that mode.

(3) Self-paced DL Courses

Credit value may also be determined using the instructor's best judgment method or, where the data is available, using the amount of time an average student needs to complete the material on his or her own. As a general guideline, 2-3 hours of self-paced learning should be considered equivalent to one hour of classroom instruction, the difference being in the readings and assignments that a student would need to do to supplement the classroom instruction. Thus, if students report spending an average of 30-45 hours to complete the course, the course would be considered equivalent to 15 hours of face-to-face instruction and would rate 1 credit.

#### **9.4 Independent Workplace-based Learning**

Where learning is primarily work place-based (e.g. co-op, preceptorship), and where student supervision occurs through occasional phone or in-person contact from an instructor, and providing that a learning plan is in place for the student, credit will be granted on the basis of one-half-credit per full-time week (normally 35-40 hours).

#### **9.5 Supervised Workplace-based Learning**

Where learning is primarily work place-based, and where faculty are directly supervising the student (e.g. clinical, practicum), and providing that a learning plan is in place

for the student, credit will be granted on the basis of one credit per full-time week.

### **9.6 Learning in Shop or Studio Environments**

Where the majority of instruction in a course or program occurs in a simulated environment such as a shop or a studio, under the supervision of an instructor (e.g. trades program, studio arts), credit will be granted on the basis of one credit per full-time week.

### **9.7 Learning Enrichment Activities**

No credit will normally be granted for learning activities primarily designed for enrichment or student development (e.g. writing centre, learning assistance).

### **9.8 Other**

Activities that do not fit within any of the above definitions and for which the awarding of credits appear to be warranted will be submitted to the Curriculum Committee for evaluation and advice and to the Registrar for a decision.

Source: Selkirk College policy 8100 (Instructional Programs)  
<http://policies.selkirk.ca/media/about-web-section/governance/college-policies/Policy-8100-Instsructional-Programs-2014-06.pdf>



