

TO: Fort Wayne Senate

FROM: Educational Policy Committee  
James Toole, Chair

DATE: March 26, 2012

SUBJ: IPFW Credit Hour Policy

DISPOSITION: To the presiding officer for implementation

WHEREAS the United States Department of Education has adopted regulations implementing the Higher Education Opportunity Act, as amended, to provide a federal definition of a credit hour (34 CFR 600.20); and

WHEREAS these regulations (34 CFR 602.24(f)) also require regional and other accrediting organizations to evaluate institutional assignment of credit hours to courses; and

WHEREAS the Higher Learning Commission has adopted a conforming policy (Policy No. 3.10); and

WHEREAS the Higher Learning Commission has adopted a Protocol for Peer Reviewers Reviewing Credit Hours under the Higher Learning Commission's New Policies which gives additional guidance to institutions; and

WHEREAS this policy framework requires institutions to have and follow policies on the assignment of credit hours to courses and programs; and

WHEREAS the proposed policy also reflects the guidance provided by the USDoE, the Higher Learning Commission, and other institutions; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that the attached policy be adopted by the Senate.

## IPFW CREDIT HOUR POLICY

### Introduction

A credit hour is the unit by which an institution measures its course work. The number of credit hours assigned to a course quantitatively reflects the outcomes expected, the mode of instruction, the amount of time spent in class, and the amount of outside preparatory work expected for the class.

Considerable variation exists from institution to institution and within a given institution. A semester credit hour is the most commonly used system of measuring course work and is usually based on at least a 14-17 week calendar.<sup>1</sup> Further, a class hour varies from 45 to 60 minutes in various institutions. Many of the definitions refer to weekly student class hours (WSCH). Most faculties adopt a consistent measure within guidelines for their institution's course offerings. These consistencies have made it possible for accrediting groups to compare programs at multiple institutions. They make the acceptance of transfer credit from institution to institution reasonably systematic. They make it possible for institutions to issue transcripts that follow commonly understood practices and accurately reflect a student's academic experience. Further, prospective students can make meaningful comparisons between institutions and academic programs. Additionally, federal and state reporting requirements can be completed, analyzed, and compared.

Credit hours are awarded to students for successful completion of courses or for equivalent demonstrations of fulfillment of learning outcomes.

### Pre-existing IPFW Policies

IPFW has already established policies for credit hour assignment, including the following:

#### SD 85-18 Academic Regulations:

- 1.2 Credit: the semester hour. Any reference to credits, credit hours, etc., shall be understood as referring to semester hours.
- 1.2.1 Resident credit: credit earned at IPFW or at another campus of Indiana University or Purdue University, depending on which university the student is enrolled in at IPFW.
- 1.2.1.1 Course credit: resident credit awarded by IPFW on the basis of a student's enrollment in and satisfactory completion of courses.
- 1.2.1.2 Special credit: resident credit awarded by IPFW on bases other than a student's enrollment in and satisfactory completion of courses. Special credit may be established by any of the following methods:

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1 Ashford, Brenda (AACRAO). "2000-2001 Academic Calendars Study: Analytical Profiles of Calendar Use and Conversions".

- 1.2.1.2.1 Credit by examination: credit awarded to a student on the basis of achievement on a departmental/divisional proficiency examination. (See Section 7.1)
- 1.2.1.2.2 Departmental/divisional credit: credit for a course offered by a department/division and awarded on the basis of substantially equivalent experience; may be granted only by the chair/director or designee of the department/division offering the course.
- 1.2.1.2.3 Achievement credit: credit awarded on the basis of demonstrated achievement in a nationally administered college-level examination. (See Section 7.2)
- 1.2.2 Transfer credit: nonresident credit. Transfer credits for a student entering IPFW from outside the student's university system shall be evaluated by the admissions office and accepted as transfer credit if completed at a regionally accredited institution with a grade of C or better. Designations of plus and minus that accompany these grades shall be disregarded in the evaluation of this credit.

Credit accepted as transfer credit shall be equated to IPFW course numbers (or included as an undistributed entry) and posted to the student's academic record at the time of matriculation or re-entry to IPFW. The academic-record entry shall include the name of the transfer institution, the years of attendance, and the individual courses accepted for transfer. The course-equation process is subject to adjustment upon request by the student's department chair/dean/division director, and the department/school/division determines the applicability to a student's plan of study of credit earned at other institutions and accepted by IPFW.

- 1.7 Work not scheduled for a regular fall or spring semester: regular work offered in a summer session or off-calendar, equivalent in content, contact hours, and credit value to the work of a regular semester. As these regulations apply to academic work not scheduled for a regular fall or spring semester, all deadlines and time periods are to be prorated.

- 10.1: Degrees offered. For completion of undergraduate plans of study of at least 60 credits, associate degrees may be conferred. For completion of undergraduate plans of study of at least 120 credits, bachelor's degrees may be conferred.

#### SR 00-11 IPFW Academic Calendar Formula

The academic calendar shall consist of two 16-week regular semesters (including a one-week final examination period), and one 15-week summer semester.

During the Fall and Spring semesters, the standard length of a three-credit-hour course shall be 150 minutes per week for fifteen weeks. The final examination period for courses shall be two hours.

Note: The calendar formula can be found in Senate Document 11-18. It has been translated by the Registrar's office, in cooperation with the Calendar Subcommittee, into standard class meeting times for on-campus classes, with 50 minutes representing one hour of class meeting time. The Approved Class Scheduling Patterns list is available on the Registrar's office website ([http://new.ipfw.edu/offices/registrar/faculty/schedule\\_production.html](http://new.ipfw.edu/offices/registrar/faculty/schedule_production.html)) at <http://new.ipfw.edu/dotAsset/153415.pdf>.

## **General Guidelines for Assigning Credit to Courses**

1. The credit hour assignment for a course will generally follow the definition of the Carnegie Unit of Credit, which describes the total time commitment that an average student is expected to devote to learning per week of study, with one unit of credit representing a total of three hours per week of in-class and out-of-class work.
2. The credit hour assignment for a course will be established by the department/division responsible for the course, when the course is established, and approved through the regular course-approval process.
3. The credit hours assigned for a course will not be affected by the mode in which the course is offered, e.g. on-campus/in-person, distance education, or independent study.
4. The credit hours assigned for a course will be established without regard to the level of the course, including both (a) levels of undergraduate courses and (b) distinctions between undergraduate and graduate courses.

## **Specific Guidelines for Assigning Credit to Courses**

1. One semester credit hour is assigned to courses for each of the following kinds of academic activity:
  - A. One class meeting in a lecture or equivalent format for 50 minutes per week for a semester, with two hours per week of out-of-class preparation, study, and homework time also expected.
  - B. Two hours of laboratory activities per week, with one hour per week of out-of-class preparation, study, and homework time also expected.
  - C. Three hours of laboratory activities per week, and homework time may be expected.
  - D. Three hours of independent study or fieldwork activities per week, and additional out-of-class time may be expected.
  - E. 1.67 hours to 5.0 hours per week of clinical experience, studio work or experiential study.
2. These standards may be modified by the academic unit only when required to meet standards of an accrediting agency.