

## **In Search of Guidelines for Determining/Establishing Required Levels of Academic Rigor**

Background: many of our faculty colleagues have reported that they find it difficult to get students to dedicate the time needed to master the material in their courses. While the expectations for work on courses appear on the catalog, few students read the catalog in such detail, if at all. Some of the messaging in the schedule of classes may contribute to the lack of roughly uniform standards for student work in courses.

There is wide variation in terms of the amount of work per unit in different courses. This variation is expected to some extent, but when does it become too much? It is clear that students achieve more when educational institutions have high standards for performance and provide the support needed to help students reach those standards.

The goal of this document is to encourage institutional reflection on what and how we teach our courses. It is also to encourage action through modifications of our instruction to help students expect more from themselves and feel they have the support to achieve at that level. The ultimate goal is to help student reach levels that allow them to succeed in their educational programs and their employment.

### **Possible guide for professional development**

Part I – Ed Code definition of units/credit hours (maximum one page – user friendly tone)

Part II – Relationship between time on task and student learning research (maximum one page)

Part III – Self assessment for instructors

1. Estimate the time it takes your students to do a particular assignment
2. Classroom Assessment technique for students – Have students complete the assignment for homework. In class, administer an anonymous survey:
  - a. How long did it take you to complete the homework for today?
  - b. Why did you stop? (e.g. “because I finished,” “because I ran out of time,” “because I didn’t understand what else I needed to do,” etc.
  - c. If you didn’t finish your assignment because you ran out of time, how much more time do you think you would have needed?
3. In the classroom, have students complete a very similar task to the one you assigned for homework and note the time it takes them. Check quality of student work and provide formative assessment.

Part IV – Five (or six-eight) brief suggested interventions for the classroom

1. Include time expectations for the course prominently on syllabi and assignment handouts
2. Draw students’ attention to how much time it takes them to complete a task in class. Make suggestions for adjustments to the time they spend on similar tasks at home
3. Remind students during the semester that deep learning requires engaged and sustained attention.

4. Give students estimates of the time they should be spending on take-home assignments (E.g.: “This assignment should take you about X hours/minutes for reading, Y time to do the experiment, and Z time to write the report.)
5. Do quick anonymous surveys like the one included in Part III. 2. and provide feedback.
6. Set the example in class by making efficient use of time.

This document will be shared widely and revised according to input received from faculty. I would like to encourage our colleagues to suggest other strategies and practices that could help set roughly similar standards for courses. I have visited the Professional Development Committee to introduce this and will follow up with them to see if faculty could receive professional development credit for implementing some of the suggestions in this document and writing a brief report of the results and what they learned. I will also visit the next Counseling Department meeting to vet this proposal and get input.

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