

TO: Members of the Academic Senate Council
FROM: Gabriela Segade
RE: Background on the hours-to-units ratio
Date: Thursday, January 27 2022

Title V Language related to hours-to-units ratio:

55002.5.c

“The amount of credit awarded shall be adjusted in proportion to the number of lecture, study or laboratory work in half unit increments. Authority: Sections 66700 & 70901 Ed Code”

Title V, Division 6, Chapter 6, Subchapter 1, Article 1

The following is a section of the **PCAH (CCC Chancellor’s Office *Program and Course Approval Handbook*)**

Title 5, section 55002.5, establishes the minimum expected time on task (lecture, study, and/or lab work) that is necessary to award one unit of credit. A minimum of 48 hours on the semester system of lecture, study, or lab work is required for one unit of credit regardless of term length. In practice, the number of hours varies among institutions, but is generally within the range of 48-54 hours per unit for colleges on the semester system. For each hour of lecture required, it is assumed that students will be required to spend an additional two hours of study outside of class. The number of units awarded for laboratory courses is generally based on the number of hours of laboratory work, presuming that students complete most required work in class.

Because California finance laws assume that primary terms average 17 ½ weeks on the semester system...and because student attendance and related apportionment state compliance auditing is based on the units and student contact hours delineated in the official COR, the Chancellor's Office strongly recommends that colleges use the 18-week semester or 12-week quarter as the basis for the student contact hour calculation used in the COR, even if a college has been approved to use a compressed academic calendar.

In determining the number of units to be awarded for courses, colleges must consider total lecture, outside study, and/or laboratory hours. We refer to the combination of these hours as "student learning hours." For example, a course for which three units is awarded may meet four hours a week over a semester and still be in compliance with these regulations if it is assumed that the increased classroom time serves to decrease outside study time. Thus, a course that seemingly meets for more hours per week than the units awarded may be in compliance, as opposed to a course that simply requires an excess of total classroom hours for the units awarded.

For lab units, it has not traditionally been expected that the student will study outside the classroom. Therefore, the number of units granted is generally based entirely on the number of

hours performed on campus under the immediate supervision and control of a qualified academic employee. For example, 54 hours of chemistry laboratory (three hours per week over 18-weeks) would grant one semester unit of credit, whereas 54 hours of chemistry lecture would grant three units.

When the combination of lecture and out-of-class study plus laboratory work reaches 108 student learning hours on the semester system or 72 student learning hours on the quarter system, or twice the number of hours required for one unit, students must earn at least two units of credit. Note that a college may not offer two units of credit unless total hours of lecture and out-of-class study plus laboratory work reach a minimum of 96 student learning hours on the semester system or 66 student learning hours on the quarter system. This regulation may affect the number of units awarded in some disciplines that offer courses with a high number of contact hours, such as courses mandated by professional certification requirements in law enforcement and fire technology.

For credit courses, a district may choose to award units of credit in increments of one half or smaller. However, it is not permissible to approve a credit course with zero units of credit.

Given the variety in calculation of total student contact hours, colleges must make explicit in the COR not only the total units for the course, but the lecture/lab breakdown of the units, the term length being used for the total student contact hour calculation, and the total student contact hours."