



## BOSTON COLLEGE

### **Report of the A&S Academic Affairs Sub-committee on the Evaluation of Credit-hours in A&S for Undergraduate Courses.**

May 2011

Proposed Process:

#### Section 1. Standard Scheduled Classroom Courses.

In order to simplify the process of reviewing the credit valuation of the more than 1,500 courses taught in the college each academic year, the EPC does not propose to itself review all courses and syllabi. Instead the EPC will ask the chairperson of each department or program to send to the EPC a list of those classroom courses which they certify will directly, without dispute or discussion, fill the DOE regulations of a “standard” 3-credit course (as per paragraph 1a<sup>1</sup> of the federal guideline cited in the draft report). Likewise, chairpersons may certify 1-, 2- or 4- etc. credit courses that meet at least 1, 2 or 4 etc. hours per week, respectively, and have an appropriate amount of out-of-class work. Full syllabi for the most recent offering of each of these courses should be posted on eSyllabus in the Portal. The syllabi should indicate the outside class work expected from students.

Typical examples of such “standard” courses would be:

- (i) 3-credit courses which meet for 150 class minutes per week for the full semester (*e.g.* MWF 10-10:50 or TuTh 9-10:15) and which have an appropriate amount of out of class work<sup>2</sup>.
- (ii) 4-credit courses which meet for 150 lecture minutes per week plus a required 50 minute discussion section per week with an appropriate amount of additional out of class work associated specifically with the discussion section\*\*.

It is anticipated that the large majority of A&S courses will fall into this “standard” category.

As a check on the compliance and cross-departmental consistency of the certifications, the EPC will sample and review several certified courses from each department.

<sup>1</sup> DOE Paragraph 1:

(1a) One hour [aka 50 minutes] of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester of credit, or (1b) the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time.

<sup>2</sup> The EPC notes that the DOE specifies a MINIMUM of 2-hours of outside class work for each credit. We interpret this to mean that just because a course requires more outside work per credit, this does not by itself form a basis for increasing the credit value of the course.

We also recognize that great variation will exist in the number of hours each student will need to devote to each course to do well and the impossibility of enforcing an exact 2-our per credit standard.

## Section 2. Standard Scheduled Laboratory Courses

The EPC will ask the chairperson of each department to send to the EPC a list of any instructional (mostly science) laboratories which they certify unambiguously meet the minimum standard for credit valuation under DOE definition (2)<sup>3</sup> specifically by a combination of scheduled clock hours of instruction and outside work uniquely associated with the laboratory. This section will generally apply specifically to science laboratories where typically a one-credit laboratory meets for 2-3 scheduled hours per week with an instructor present and which has a minimum average of 1 hour per week of outside work. Full syllabi for each of these courses should be posted on eSyllabus in the Portal. These should indicate the outside class work expected from students.

While the criteria in this section may also apply to some studio art, music, theater arts and other practicums, unless these courses have at least 2 hours per week per credit of scheduled classes with an instructor, they should not be certified and they should be submitted to the EPC for review as detailed below.

<sup>3</sup>DOE Paragraph 2:

At least an equivalent amount of work [interpreted by the EPC to mean in terms of both direct instruction and outside work] as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution, including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours." [Section 600.2, effective October 29, 2010]

## Section 3. Non-standard scheduled courses and laboratory courses

With the exception of courses that satisfy DOE paragraph 2 by a clear equivalency of both clock hours of instruction and of outside work (like the science laboratories described above) the sub-committee recognizes that the interpretation of what constitutes "equivalent work" under DOE paragraph 2 is a complicated issue.

The EPC is purposely asking the chairs to avoid trying to interpret definition #2 each in their own way. Instead, the EPC asks chairpersons to send to the EPC a list of all "non-standard" scheduled courses which do not clearly meet DOE definition in paragraph (1a) or (2) as described in Sections 1 and 2 above. Submission should include full syllabi, the current credit valuation of the course and either a justification for continuing the current credit value<sup>4</sup> or a request for the EPC to review the course and recommend a credit value given the new DOE guidelines.

### Subsection 3A. Honors, Perspectives & Pulse

Three particularly important sets of courses will need to be carefully reviewed with input from their directors: A & S Honors (Mark O'Connor), Perspectives (Brian Braman) and Pulse (Dave McMEnamin). Working documents of the EPC should be shared with these directors with requests for feedback and perhaps meeting with the EPC.

### Subsection 3B – Undergraduate Seminar Courses

Undergraduate seminar courses constitute another special category of classes. Many now meet for less than 150 minutes per week and would have difficulty finding classroom space if forced to increase class hours. We urge all departments to move to a minimum standard of 145-minutes of meeting time each week for three-credit seminars.

### Section 4 – Individually arranged courses

The EPC will ask chairpersons to review copies of the Course Contract for all individually arranged courses; for example, Reading and Research, Thesis, Undergraduate Research, Independent Study, etc. and certify each semester to the EPC that they reasonably meet the “equivalent work” ethic of DOE paragraph (2) given the special nature of these courses. The EPC recognizes that one hour of individual instruction is of special value and can support many more than 2 hours of outside work. Nevertheless, reasonable regular and appropriate supervision of students is expected in individually arranged courses and amounts of research work and direct instruction combined should be roughly equivalent to 40 hours per semester per credit. This means that ordinarily a 6-credit Scholar of the College course should involve about 240 hours of student effort per semester.

Copies of Course Contracts should be retained by the department for at least five years. The EPC may assist chairpersons in evaluating Course contracts and as appropriate perform reviews.

### Section 5. Working subcommittees

Subcommittees of the EPC should be established for each division (Humanities, Social Sciences and Natural Sciences) and these committees should review the submissions and report back to the EPC their recommendations for credit valuation of courses. Meetings of the relevant sub-committee with department chairpersons and/or directors of undergraduate studies and other department representatives and program directors should be set up whenever desirable.

### Section 6. Establishing consistent standards and policies

As a result of the reviews, the EPC sub-committees should meet together with the Dean to make consistent across the college and refine and further codify the policies and procedures that will be followed in assigning credit-hours values to current and future courses and so inform departments.

### Section 7. Process for reconciling discrepancies

Where EPC credit valuations and departmental valuations differ, a process should be developed for resolving the discrepancy in a way consistent with the new DOE guidelines.

This process could include the following steps:

- (i) The EPC will report any discrepancies or need for more information or further clarification to the department chairperson along with any initial EPC recommendations.

- (ii) The department chairperson will respond to the EPC report. This response can include a meeting with the chairperson.
- (iii) If discrepancies remain, the departmental and Subcom bases for the controversial course credit valuation will be reviewed by the whole EPC and a recommendation made to the Dean.
- (iv) Final decisions would rest with the Dean of the College.

#### Section 8. Final credit valuation and implementation

The EPC will create a final list of courses with EPC certified credit valuations and publish a process for future courses to obtain approval for their proposed credit values. Any changes in credit values of current courses would be implemented in AY12-1

#### **Timetable**

- (1) With respect to courses offered in AY 2011-12 and any others anticipated to be offered in AY12-13, departments will be asked to respond to EPC requests as specified above in October 2011. The credit value of AY11-12 courses would not be affected.
- (2) Sub-committees will complete reviews of their departments by Nov 2011 and present a written report to the EPC.
- (3) The EPC & Dean will codify a final version of Policies and Procedures by Jan 2012 and the process for new courses to be certified should be announced.
- (4) By March 2012 all current courses should have their credit valuations certified by the EPC in time for publication in the AY12-13 bulletin and any changes in credit values would be implemented in AY12-13.

#### **Open questions/work**

- A. Should service learning be credited similar to an academic lab or practicum ?
- B. Are there activities for which academic credit is not appropriate?

## Appendix

### **Background**

With respect to complying with the new Federal Regulations on the credit-hour definitions, the office of the provost has asked the Educational Policy Committee in each college to:

(a) to clarify the credit-hour values that the School will apply to each form of direct instruction or its equivalent in its graduate and undergraduate academic programs, including courses, laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, thesis supervision, etc.;

(b) to review all existing and all future proposed credit-granting activity for conformity to these credit-hour values, and will maintain record of its policies and review proceedings appropriate for reporting to the university's accrediting agency;

(c) to convey to the Dean and to the Provost — no later than June 2011 — the policies and procedures it will follow in assigning credit-hour values, and will provide a reasonable process and timetable for its review of all existing credit-granting activity for conformity to these credit-hour values within its School.

The U.S. Department of Education's new credit-hour definition with respect to semester system schools includes the following. For ease of later discussion, I have broken paragraph one into part (1a) and (1b).

*Credit Hour*: “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:

DOE Paragraph 1:

(1a) One hour [aka 50 minutes] of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester of credit, or (1b) the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or

DOE Paragraph 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, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.” [Section 600.2, effective October 29, 2010]

Departments	Delivery Mode	Credits	Contact Time	Student Extra-Classroom Workload	Comments
<b>Biology</b>	Core	2 credits	120 minutes per week		
	Electives	3 credits	180 minutes per week	6 hours per week	
	Seminars	3 credits	120 minutes per week	7 hours per week	
	Doctoral Contin.	1 credit			
<b>Chemistry</b>	Courses	3 credits	150 minutes per week		
	Monthly Cumulative Exams	0 credit	2-3 days per year non-classroom time, spent with examiner		
	Weekly research meetings	0 credit	3-4 hours		
	Doctoral Contin. /Laboratories	1 credit	40-60 hours per week		
<b>Earth &amp; Env. Sci.</b>	Courses	3 credits	150 minutes per week		
	Grad. Seminar	3 credits	150 minutes per week		
	Thesis Seminars	3-6 credits	150 minutes+ per week		
	Readings and Research	3 credits	negotiated		
	Interim Study				
<b>Math</b>	Courses	3 credits	150 minutes per week		
	Teaching and Research Seminar	1 credit			
	Readings and Research	3 credits	120 minutes per week	8-10 hours	
	Doctoral Continuation	1 credit			
<b>Physics</b>	Courses	3 credits	150 minutes per week		

Departments	Delivery Mode	Credits	Contact Time	Student Extra-Classroom Workload	Comments
	Readings and Research	3 credits	negotiated		
	Doctoral Contin. /Laboratories	1 credit			
<b>Psychology</b>	Courses	3 credits	150 minutes per week		
	Advanced Topics	3 credits	150 minutes per week		
	Special Topics	3 credits	150 minutes per week		
	Research Workshops	3 credits	variable		
	Neuro Science Journal	0 credits	630 minutes per semester		
	Professional Development Workshop	0 credits	240 minutes per semester		
	Interim Study	0 credits			
	Doctoral Continuation	1 credit			
<b>Economics</b>	Courses	3 credits/4 credits	150/240 minutes per week	9 1/2 hours per week	
	Readings and Research	3 credits	60 minutes per week	11 hours per week	
	Dissertation Workshop		170 minutes per week	5 hours per week	
	Doctoral Continuation	1 credit			
<b>Pol. Sci.</b>	Seminars	3 credits	120-150 minutes per week	6-6 1/2 hours	gradually moving to all 150 minute offerings
	Readings and Research	3 credits	120 minutes per week	6-7 hours	
	Masters Thesis Seminar	6 credits	120 minutes per week	6-7 hours	
	Dissertation Seminar	1 credit	60 minutes	2 hours	

Departments	Delivery Mode	Credits	Contact Time	Student Extra-Classroom Workload	Comments
	Doctoral Comprehensive	1 credit			
	Doctoral Continuation	1 credit			
<b>Sociology</b>	Seminars	3 credits	140/150 minutes per week	6-10 hours	
	Readings and Research	3 credits	15-60 minutes per week	6-10 hours	
	Internship		15 minutes a week	10 hours per week	
	Interim Study	0 credits			
	Doctoral COnTInuation	1 credit			
<b>Classical Studies</b>	Seminars	3 credits	150-220 minutes per week		
	Readings and Research	3 credits	-150 minutes per week		
	Interim Study	0 credits			
<b>English</b>	Courses	3 credits	145 minutes per week		
	Advanced Research Colloquium	1 credit	145 minutes per week		
	Interim Study	0 credits			
	Doctoral Continuation	1 credit			
<b>History</b>	Colloquia	3 credits	120 minutes per week		
	Seminar	3 credits	120 minutes per week		
	Readings and Research	3 credits	negotiated		
	Interim Study	0 credits			
	Doctoral Continuation	1credit			



Departments	Delivery Mode	Credits	Contact Time	Student Extra-Classroom Workload	Comments
<b>Philosophy</b>	Lectures	3 credits	120-150 minutes per week		
	Seminars	3 credits	120-150 minutes per week		
	Readings and Research	3 credits	90 minutes every other week		
	MA Thesis	6 credits			
	Doctoral Comprehensive Exams	1 credit	16-24 hours per semester		
	Teaching Seminar	0 credit	480 minutes per semester/4 semesters		
	Writing Seminar	0 credit	840 minutes per semester/2 semesters		
<b>Rom. Lang.&amp; Lit.</b>	Seminars	3 credits	110-120+ minutes per week		
	Readings and Research	3 credits	60 minutes per week		
	Interim Study	0 credits			
	Doctoral Continuation	1 credit			
<b>Slav. &amp; E. Lang.</b>	Courses	3 credits	150 minutes		
	Russian and Japanese Courses	4 credits	240 minutes per week		
	Chinese and Arabic Courses	5 credits	300 minutes per week		
	Graduate Seminar	3 credits	140 minutes per week		
	Interim Study	0 credits			
<b>Theology</b>	Courses	3 credits	120-150 minutes per week		
	Seminars	3 credits	120-150 minutes per week		

Departments	Delivery Mode	Credits	Contact Time	Student Extra-Classroom Workload	Comments	
	Doctoral Comprehensives	0 credits	60 minutes per week			
	Doctoral Proposal	0 credits	60 minutes per week			
	Doctoral Continuation	1 credit				