Tufts University
Schools of Arts & Sciences & Engineering

Guidelines for Assigning Credit to Courses
{as approved by the Educational Policy Committee}

The primary standard for establishing course credit at Tufts is the Semester-Hour or Carnegie Unit, the standard commonly used by the Federal Government. **One semester-hour of credit is awarded for a lecture/seminar course meeting 50-minutes each week during a 14-15 week semester and requiring two hours of outside preparation each week by the student.** An hour of contact time in the rest of the document is based on this 50-minute session. SHU abbreviates "semester-hour unit," and CurrComm abbreviates "the Committee on Curricula of the School of Liberal Arts and Jackson College and/or the Curriculum Committee of the School of Engineering."

1 SHU  1 semester-hour (50 minutes instruction plus 2 hours homework, or equivalent)
2 SHUs  2 semester-hours (100 minutes instruction plus 4 hours homework, or equivalent)
3 SHUs  3 semester-hours (150 minutes instruction plus 6 hours homework, or equivalent)
4 SHUs  4 semester-hours (200 minutes instruction plus 8 hours homework, or equivalent)
5 SHUs  5 semester-hours (250 minutes instruction plus 10 hours homework, or equivalent)
6 SHUs  6 semester-hours (300 minutes instruction plus 12 hours homework, or equivalent)
And so on . . .

**A Note about Homework and Student Preparation for Class:**
The semester-hour assumes a set proportion of 2 hours of student preparation or homework for every hour spent in class. The EPC wishes to emphasize that the federal government has
established this as the MINIMUM amount of work expected, and assigning more work does not in itself justify an increase in the credit value of the course. We also wish to note that there is great variation in the amount of time each student will need to devote to each course or to a specific form of study (e.g., reading, writing, completing problem sets), and therefore it is not possible to enforce any exact accounting of student work outside of class.

**CREDIT ASSIGNMENT PROCESS:**

1. During the semester-hour conversion process from 2015-2017, the Registrar’s Office will review all regularly scheduled courses in each department and estimate the value in semester-hours based on the scheduled hours of instruction, using the formula described above. The default for any course in question is 3 semester-hours. The Registrar will send this list to the relevant department chair and ask the department to confirm the values as listed for each course.
2. If the department wishes to change the semester-hour value from the Registrar’s estimate, the department must petition its CurrComm.
3. Semester-hour values will be permanently assigned to the course as it is listed in the Course Catalogue and not to iterations of that course when taught by different instructors.
4. After the 2017-2018 academic year, once semester-hour values have been established for each course, the course will have the same value it has been granted, year after year, unless CurrComm approves a change and communicates this to the Registrar.

**The semester-hour value of a course will be determined by CurrComm.** Departments may provide input on whether additional credit for a course component (such as a lab) should be included as part of the course (for example, a 5 SHU course with one grade for both lecture and lab) or if the additional course component should be separate from the course (for example, a 4 SHU course with a 1 SHU lab component, to be graded separately). Most courses will be awarded credit according to the standard pattern outlined below. For those courses with unusual schedules or novel pedagogy that the department determines should be worth more than 3 semester-hours, the department may petition its CurrComm. Below are the guidelines to be used in determining the value of standard and non-standard courses. Note that most courses which previously carried one Tufts Credit will be worth either 3 or 4 semester-hours.

**A Note about Special Topics Courses**

All special topics courses will be 3 semester-hours, based on the standard course schedule. Because the courses have not been reviewed by CurrComm, no additional semester-hours beyond the Tufts standard may be given. These courses are designed to allow faculty to test courses which may become permanent courses, and when the courses are submitted for final approval, faculty may propose additional components for the final course with additional SHUs, or may propose that the course carry fewer SHUs. Similarly, ExCollege Visiting Lecturer courses will be 3 semester-hours.

**Standard Scheduled Courses**

The descriptions below apply to courses scheduled for the Fall and Spring semesters, and for Summer Term. An equivalent amount of time in class meetings and preparation is required for
shorter terms (such as Summer Session). Online, Hybrid, and Blended Courses that are identical in content and scope to an approved Tufts course will bear the same amount of credit (generally, 3 SHUs) as the traditional course, especially if the learning outcomes are the same.

3-Semester-Hour Courses
A standard lecture/seminar course that meets for 150 minutes per week with standard student preparation expectations of 6 hours per week is a three-semester-hour course.

4-Semester-Hour Courses
Courses that meet for 200 minutes (or meet for 150 minutes and have an additional required, scheduled component – typically, a 50-minute recitation) will be 4 semester-hours. The homework expectation for a 4-SHU course is 8 hours per week. Foreign language courses that are scheduled for 200 minutes per week (usually four 50-minute sessions per week) will be 4 semester-hours. At the discretion of the department, courses worth 4 semester-hours may be broken into components for purposes of scheduling and grading. For example, students may register for a 3-SHU lecture for a letter grade and also must register for a corresponding 1-SHU recitation to be graded Pass/Fail.

5-Semester-Hour Courses
Lecture/seminar courses that meet for 5 hours (or approximately 250 minutes) and require a minimum of 10 hours of student preparation each week will be 5 semester-hours. Typically, this would be a course with a lecture component that meets for at least 150 minutes per week with an additional required lab or required recitation of at least 100 minutes per week (or a combination of lecture and recitation that adds up to at least 250 minutes of instructional time per week). Examples of typical courses include some foreign language courses, computer science courses with a lab component, and several large introductory courses that reserve discussion and additional homework expectations for the recitation. Another example would be a STEM course with a significant lab component. (See below for more about credit for labs.) At the discretion of the department, courses worth 5 semester-hours may be broken into components for purposes of scheduling and grading. For example, students may register for a 3-SHU lecture for a letter grade and also must register for a corresponding 2-SHU lab for a letter grade or to be graded Pass/Fail.

“Partial Credit” Courses
Tufts courses that used to be awarded 0.5 Tufts Credits will be awarded semester-hours in the new system as follows:

1-Semester-Hour Courses
Courses that meet for no less than 50 minutes per week and require approximately 2 hours per week of student preparation will be awarded 1 semester-hour. Alternatively, there may be some courses that meet for 50 – 150 minutes per week but require little preparation or practice outside of class (such as some Physical Education courses); these will also carry 1 semester-hour. There are also the opportunity to create “mini-courses” that meet for a shorter period of time (over 8 weeks); the in-class and out-of-class expectations for these 1-semester-hour courses will add up to a minimum of 15 hours per semester of direct instruction, plus an expectation of 30 hours per semester of student preparation.
2-Semester-Hour Courses
Courses that meet for no less than 100 minutes per week and require approximately 4 hours per week of student preparation will be awarded 2 semester-hours. Alternatively, there may be some courses that meet for 100 – 300 minutes per week but require little preparation or practice outside of class (such as first-year Advising Seminars and some arts and performance courses). There are also some courses that meet for a shorter period of time (over 8 weeks), and the in-class and out-of-class expectations for these 2-semester-hour courses will add up to a minimum of 30 hours per semester of direct instruction, plus an expectation of 60 hours per semester of student preparation.

Non-Standard Courses or Courses with Unscheduled Components
Courses requiring more than 150 minutes per week of class may be awarded more than 3 semester-hours (in increments of 1 semester-hour) based on additional contact time or additional activities incorporated into the course. Some courses involve meetings or work other than traditional classroom meetings, including laboratories or discussion sections, directed/independent study courses, and experiential courses. Semester-hours for these courses are awarded based on work and contact time for these activities that is comparable to the time required for a standard class meeting. Departments and instructors may also incorporate additional instructional elements to a course to justify adding an additional semester-hour beyond the semester-hours related to scheduled activities.

Laboratories and Field Research
STEM courses with a lab component are generally worth 4, 5, or 6 semester-hours. In general, each additional semester-hour will reflect at least 50 additional minutes per week in the laboratory under direct supervision plus at least 2 hours per week of additional work outside the lab, such as writing lab reports or reading related materials. (Labs that do not meet every week may be granted an additional semester-hour for a total of approximately 15 hours per semester of supervised lab work, plus an expectation of 30 hours per semester of student preparation for the lab component). Laboratories that stand alone as independent courses will apply similar standards in setting the semester-hour value. Field research activities that are scheduled like a lab should be treated similarly.

Note: Although departments that offer lab science courses have discretion in determining how to award grade-bearing credits to various lab components, these departments should look to national standards (based on the semester-hour) and to each other to make sure that semester-hours are being granted to labs in similar ways.

Scheduled activities in addition to a lecture
Beyond labs and field research, some courses include a scheduled course component each week, in addition to a lecture, that justifies adding more semester-hours to a course. These activities are required of all students, and will generally take place at the same time every week, with the place, day, and time specified on the syllabus. To add 1 semester-hour to a 3-semester-hour course, instructors must require 150 minutes of additional student work per week, with at least 50 of those minutes involving some form of instructor contact.
These scheduled course activities might include, but are not limited to:

A. Event series (e.g., required attendance at film screenings, musical performances, speaker series, etc). In general, one additional semester-hour will reflect a total of 150 minutes per week of work by the student, combining preparation before the event, the event itself, and work subsequent to the event, such as responses to assigned questions.

B. On-line activities, such as debates or discussions, in which the members of the class are not physically assembled but are signed in with the instructor at a designated time every week. The activity will itself have pedagogical value and be relevant to the achievement of the goals of the course. In general, one additional semester-hour will reflect a total of 150 minutes per week of work by the student. (Discussion of asynchronous on-line activities is discussed under “Additional semester-hours”)

**Independent Study, Directed Study, and Individually-Arranged Courses**

Directed or independent study courses do not have scheduled class time, but rely on one-on-one arrangements between the instructor and student. The EPC recognizes that one hour of individual instruction is of special value and can support many more that 2 hours of outside work. Nonetheless, reasonable, regular and appropriate supervision of the students is expected in individually arranged courses. A 3-semester-hour directed study would involve approximately 9 hours of research/meetings per week, or approximately 130 hours per semester of research work and direct instruction combined.

1. There should be an initial meeting with the faculty advisor to design goals and outcomes of the study. Terms of evaluation should be reached and put in writing.
2. There should be periodic meetings between the student and faculty advisor throughout the semester.
3. There must be a final product that results (i.e. a paper, presentation, performance, etc.)

In general a directed-study course will be 3 SHUs and a senior honors thesis will be 4 SHUs each semester.

**Experiential Learning**

For learning that takes place in ways other than a formal lecture course (e.g. performance, research, internships, community based work and learning), credit will be granted based on the following rule: at least 3 hours of work per week, for the duration of a 14-15 week semester, is equivalent to 1 semester-hour. It is expected that these hours will include some organized contact with an instructor to discuss and enhance the experience. This contact need not occur in regular class times, and may involve individual or group meetings. The nature of the contact with the instructor should be outlined in the class syllabus.

Experiential classes may include a mix of the traditional lecture (with 3 associated preparatory hours) and added experiential work. To further clarify, we have provided some representative examples. These are not exclusive, but meant to illustrate how this formula might be appropriately applied.

**Undergraduate research**

A student is conducting research with a faculty member. They spend 9 hours per week in a lab, library or other research setting during a semester. This would correspond to 3 semester-hours.
The student would be expected to meet with the research advisor regularly to discuss project results, and plan future experiments or research. An additional requirement might include the student presenting the research in a poster session, or orally at a symposium (either internal – department, college -- or external). A student who committed 12 hours per week for the duration of the semester (15 weeks) would be eligible for 4 semester-hours.

**Internships**

Internship courses typically include a mixture of three components:

- Work as an intern
- Classroom meetings
- Research and writing assignments (either as directed study or a classroom assignment)

An internship course providing credit for the work experience and some assignments associated with that work would award credit primarily based on the work time. By default internships will be awarded 1 semester-hour for 45 hours of work. Credit for internships supervised by departments and programs (for example, PSY 99 or PJS 99) will be governed by the department's policies and approved by CurrComm. Certain graduate programs may have more extensive field work placements that may be granted additional credit as determined by CurrComm or the Graduate Policy and Programs Committee.

**Community-based learning**

Community service that is academically connected with a class or course of study would also be eligible for credit under the auspices of experiential learning. For example, if a student in a community-engagement course committed a total of 45 hours over spring break to volunteering for a community organization, the student could earn 1 additional semester-hour for the class. We note there is an expectation that the community work would be linked with the academic content of the course of study, and that there would be some organized instructor contact/report back. This mechanism for instructor contact/feedback should be outlined in the class syllabus. Again, credit can be earned in a concentrated block, or over the course of a semester (e.g. 3 hours per week, for 15 weeks, for 1 semester-hour).

**Performance**

Courses in the visual and performing arts that require rehearsal, practice, production or instruction in the arts should also apply similar criteria in determining semester-hours, as the following examples illustrate:

- Credit-bearing performance courses would include the performance, weekly sessions with the instructor, and a specified number of hours of rehearsal/practice a week. For example: Final performance, weekly 1 hour sessions with instructor, plus 8 independent hours of rehearsal per week = 3 semester-hours
- Private Music Lessons: Students meet privately with the instructor for 50 minutes per week and are expected to practice independently for at least 2 hours a week = 1 semester-hour
- Music Ensemble: Students meet in a group rehearsal for 6 hours/week, and are expected to practice independently as well = 2 semester-hours
- Studio Art: Students work under the instructor's direction for 6 hours/week, and are expected to practice, sketch, or study for 3 hours outside class = 3 semester-hours
Additional Semester-Hours Beyond Contact Hours
Departments and instructors may justify adding 1 semester-hour to a course when additional pedagogical components are added that take place outside of schedule meeting times. These additional components must be required of all students, be included in the syllabus, and require significant additional instructional time, equivalent to 150-180 minutes per week. Students should commit to participate in these required events at the beginning of the term. These additional components might include (but are not limited to) activities such as the following:

1. **Recitations, discussion sections, or tutorials.** Instructors may schedule additional class sessions for discussion, problem sets or other activities; these involve additional scheduled contact hours of at least 50 minutes per week (beyond the 150 minute standard course time), plus at least 2 hours of homework or preparation associated with the weekly recitation. Alternatively, instructors may set up weekly tutorials for individual or small group meetings. These would not be scheduled for the whole class, but would be scheduled for individual students or small groups, and may be associated with a major project, such as a project under development in the Digital Design Studio.

2. **Periodic events, field research, or field trips.** Students may be required to attend a series of events or field trips over the course of the semester. These events need not occur each week, but should involve at least 45 hours of preparation, additional assignments and meetings over the semester. These events should be related to and enhance students’ learning of the course topic. Students should be required to complete assignments related to these events, or to incorporate information from these events in existing assignments. These events or field trips can be planned jointly for several courses with related topics. Instructors will need to work with students and plan for students who are unable to attend all the outside events for the course.

3. **Required on-line discussions in a monitored format.** Instructors may require that students participate in on-line discussions either in a synchronous or asynchronous format; this may include an on-line language lab. The preparation for and participation in on-line discussions should involve approximately 150 minutes per week. Synchronous on-line discussions should be scheduled as a related component or additional class time.

4. **Small group meetings.** One additional SHU may be given for group assignments that involve substantial meeting time in those groups outside of class, group assignments that are in addition to individual work required for the course, assuming there is some oversight of or periodic meetings with the groups by the instructor.

5. **Community-based outreach programs or other Theory-practice-learning elements.** Students may be required to participate in community-based experiences that are linked to the subject matter of the course. These experiences should involve the equivalent of 150 minutes/week of preparation and experience in a regular semester for one additional semester-hour.

6. **Other.** Instructors or departments may propose other pedagogical activities that have not been imagined. In submitting those activities to justify an additional semester-hour, the nature of the activities, the oversight by the instructor and time required should be specified.