

**John Nicols**

**Concerning four credits and three contact hours especially in lower  
division courses.**

**1. General agreement**

- a. The standard for four credit courses: one credit = hour in class and two hours outside class (=12 hours per week); the four credit class meets for three hours of class time, then each hour of class should assume there should have three hours of out of class work (=12 hours). Implications not so clear, but presumably the amount of out of class work should be 50% greater in a three contact hour course.
- b. There is general agreement that fourth credit may be earned by means other than class time, though it is not so clear what that additional “work” should be.
- c. There is also agreement that departments should monitor performance in this area; though we also recognize that departments may need some guidance in this area.

**2. Problem areas:**

- a. The original focus was on smaller classes (of about 40); increasingly the courses are in the hundreds.
- b. Departments requested the fourth credit on the basis of GTF/discussion hours, and then found their budgets could not support the sections.
- c. Most important, and I speak for myself on this point, it is not at all clear how the additional work is monitored/graded.
- d. The fault lies not just with departments; the various university and college committees have not given consistent advice or set clear standards for the additional work. In general there is not systematic standard for accounting for the additional work.

**3. Recommendations:**

- a. Departments should prepare and submit to the curricular committees their standards for monitoring the courses in this category.
- b. In particular, they should consider the following in respect to the additional contact time/work load:
  - i. The amount of additional work may be accounted for in a variety of ways.
  - ii. Faculty may address the problem by scheduling additional group meetings with students, by assigning additional papers, reports, projects that approach/meet the standard mentioned in 1.a
  - iii. Special concern should be devoted to the question of how the additional work will be reviewed and graded. Whether this is done by GTFs, graders, machine grading, etc., is a decision for the department, but some system to monitor needs to be established.

- iv. Departments should consider taking advantage of the new two-hour/twice per week scheduling blocks outlined in the scheduling protocols.

These notes are not meant to be all inclusive.

jn