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UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY
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PROVOSTINST 1531.86
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PROVOST INSTRUCTION 1531.86

From: Provost, U.S. Naval Academy

Subj: ACADEMIC COURSE CREDIT GUIDANCE

Ref: (a) Code of Federal Regulations, Title 34 (Education), §600.2, §602.24 and §668.8
(b) ACDEANINST 5420.20G Curriculum Review Process
(c) PROVOSTINST 1531.59C Major Selection and Course Enrollment
(d) COMDTMIDNINST 5400.6X Midshipmen Regulations Manual
(e) USNAINST 1531.49B Graduation and Degree Requirements

1. Purpose. To define what constitutes academic credit at the United States Naval Academy in accordance with reference (a) and to establish guidelines by which credit weights should be assigned to courses. This instruction should be considered by all parties in the development and review of curriculum, following the procedures described in reference (b).

2. Background. The credit hour for institutions of higher education has been defined by reference (a) as equal to three hours of student work per week (e.g. 1 hour of lecture plus 2 hours of homework) for 15 weeks. Consistency in credit hour determination is important for demonstrating that all courses and programs within USNA are of sufficient academic rigor, content, and depth to meet accreditation requirements and to best serve our students and the USNA mission. It is also important for the transferability of credit between USNA and other institutions of higher education.

3. Academic Time. Midshipman time is a precious resource at USNA. The majors at USNA range from 138 to 145 credit hours, with a modal average of 140. Most students average 17-18 credits per semester, which requires 51-54 hours of student work per week to meet the standard in reference (a). This requires all scheduled class time (30 hours/week), all of the designated evening study hours as specified in reference (d) (15 hours/week), and 6-9 additional hours, which would need to take place on the fringes of the day or on weekends.

a. The credit unit standard is based on 75 class days, which matches the typical USNA semester. However, class days are sometimes lost to hazardous weather and other institutional priorities. Every effort should be made to make up for lost class days, and under no circumstances should the number of scheduled class days in a semester drop below 70, as this would endanger accreditation.

1) Summer courses are typically offered in 20-day blocks at USNA, although some courses are offered in 15-day or 25-day blocks. The amount of time spent each day on the course should be consistent with an expectation of 45 total hours of student effort per credit hour. So, for example, a 4-credit course should require 9 hours per day of student work (in-class and out-of-class combined) when taken over a 20-day block.

b. Due to the limits on midshipmen time, no matrix should require more than 145 credit hours total (or less than 137 credit hours, as per reference (e)), nor should it require more than 21 credit hours in a semester. Note that 21 credit hours should require 18 additional hours of student work per week beyond all class periods and designated study hours to meet the credit unit standard. This leaves little time for any other student activity, making more than 21 credit hours difficult, and beyond 23 credit hours implausible.

c. Given the limited time in the midshipmen day and the importance of preserving scheduled class time for academic activities to meet our credit standard requirements, a course must be academic in nature to warrant scheduling during a class day. This is characterized by:

1) The course must be generally aligned with a field of study or discipline commonly recognized by institutions of higher education; e.g., areas of study within engineering, humanities, mathematics, science, and social sciences.

2) The course must develop critical thinking skills and promote intellectual growth.

3) The course must have measurable learning objectives, follow a syllabus, and have a clearly articulated topic of study.

4) There should be a plan to utilize all scheduled class time for academic work. It should be extremely rare for individual classes to be cancelled, started late, or ended early.

4. Requirements for a Credit-Bearing Course and Credit Structures at USNA. In order to warrant academic credit, the following conditions must apply:

a. The course must be academic in nature, as described in 3.c above.

b. The course must have meaningful assessments that align with the learning outcomes of the course and that hold students accountable for the expected amount of work outside of class.

c. The amount of expected work outside of class should be consistent with the credit assignment.

d. A credit-bearing course can normally be taken only once (outside of repeating courses in which the student received less than a C as described in reference (c)).

e. The table below reflects the credit structures normally used at USNA, which reflects the expectation that a credit hour should represent three hours of student work including scheduled class hours and outside work ("homework"):

| Structure R-L-C | Weekly Scheduled Lecture Hours | Weekly Scheduled Laboratory Hours | Weekly Expected Additional Work Hours | Credit Hours |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|--|--|-----------------|
| 1-0-0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 0-2-0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 1-0-1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| 0-2-1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| 0-4-2 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| 0-6-2 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 2 |
| 0-6-3 | 0 | 6 | 3 | 3 |
| 2-2-3 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 3 |
| 3-0-3 | 3 | 0 | 6 | 3 |
| 2-4-4 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 4 |
| 3-2-4 | 3 | 2 | 7 | 4 |
| 4-0-4 | 4 | 0 | 8 | 4 |
| 4-1-4 | 4 | 1 | 7 | 4 |

5. Special Considerations for the Review of Credit-Bearing Non-Matrix Courses. Non-matrix courses are courses that don't count towards any requirement in any major's matrix other than a Free Elective. Given the scarcity of midshipmen time, non-matrix credit-bearing courses should be rare. The following additional criteria must be met for such a course to be approved.

- a. Such courses should be run as an experimental course for at least two semesters before being proposed as a permanent offering.
- b. The Curriculum Change Request (CCR) for either a permanent or experimental offering of a credit-bearing non-matrix course should be prepared in accordance with reference (b) with specific attention to documenting the plan for meaningful student assessment and the expectations for work outside of class in alignment with the credit structure proposed for the course.
- c. The CCR for a permanent offering of a credit-bearing non-matrix course should include graded student work and the distribution of grades awarded in the experimental offerings of the course. A course in which students are graded for their effort/participation (e.g., to build a gadget) rather than the product of that effort (e.g., how well the gadget works) is more suitable as a zero-credit course, particularly if it is a course that is not available to all students.

6. Zero-Credit Courses. Courses that are academic in nature, but where little outside work is expected, or where it would be difficult or undesirable to differentiate student performance with meaningful assessment, should not bear credit. However, such courses could be appropriate as zero-credit courses.

a. Examples of such courses include courses for planning student-run academic conferences, preparations for cultural exchange trips, reviews for professional exams, freshman seminar courses, study skills and supplementary courses, and courses intended to prepare students for scholarship applications.

b. Zero-credit courses still require learning objectives and a syllabus, and should still be academic in nature. They are the closest USNA equivalent to a Pass/Fail course that is possible with our current student information database system. They still require that grades be assigned, and these grades will appear on transcripts, but the grades (outside of Physical Education courses, see below) have no effect on grade average or overall order of merit (OOM), and therefore these courses don't have the same expectation for rigor as other academic courses at USNA.

c. Zero-credit courses are not appropriate as vehicles for non-academic activities, which should not take place during the class day. As described in Section 4, the accounting for academic credit standards at USNA relies on all class hours, including free periods, normally being utilized for credit-bearing academic activities that count towards graduation requirements.

7. Physical Education Courses. Physical Education (PE) is an important part of the USNA curriculum. Physical Education courses are normally zero-credit courses, but they are graded with meaningful assessment metrics that are accounted for in the calculation of OOM. Also, a midshipman will normally take only one PE course per semester.

8. Midshipmen Group Study Courses. For decades, USNA has awarded credit to students who serve their classmates as tutors in the Midshipmen Group Study Program. This is an important service to the institution and an opportunity for leadership development. The 1-credit MGSP course structure will continue only until another mechanism is developed to account for this important academic service activity within the OOM in a way that is comparable to other student leadership positions. Other emerging academic leadership roles will not be considered for one-credit courses in the meantime.

9. Records Management

a. Records created as a result of this instruction, regardless of format or media, must be maintained and dispositioned for the standard subject identification codes (SSIC) 1000 through 13000 series per the records disposition schedules located on the Department of the Navy/Assistant for Administration (DON/AA), Directives and Records Management Division (DRMD) portal page at <https://portal.secnav.navy.mil/orgs/DUSNM/DONAA/DRM/Records-and-Information-Management/Approved%20Record%20Schedules/Forms/AllItems.aspx>.

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b. For questions concerning the management of records related to this instruction or the records disposition schedules, please contact your local records manager or the DON/AA DRMD program office.

10. Review and Effective Date. Per OPNAVINST 5215.17A, the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs will review this instruction annually on the anniversary of its effective date to ensure applicability, currency, and consistency with Federal, DoD, SECNAV, and Navy policy and statutory authority using OPNAV 5215/40 Review of Instruction.



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Releasability and distribution:

This instruction is cleared for public release and is available electronically only via the USNA Issuance Website, <https://www.usna.edu/Academics/Provost/Rules-Regulations/Instructions.php>