



Previous Credit System in the United States and European Countries

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Abstract:

When the world is increasingly defined as a 'Global Village', it is easy to understand the value of competition and compatibility of one nation with the leading nations of the world. When Universities are striving to achieve qualitative reforms, it is obvious that the Choice Based Credit System will get due priority. With most of the advanced nations of the world following the Credit System in Education, it is necessary to understand the importance of Credit System if one is to attain compatibility and uniformity; them. Thus not only is it desirable to bring uniformity within the nation, but also with other nations. Hence, it goes without saying that it is imperative to understand what is the credit system and how does it work in the United States and the various countries of Europe.

Keywords: Credit system (CBCS), Education, European countries, United States

1. Course Credit Defined

A course credit (often credit hour, or just credit or “unit”) is a unit that gives the weighting to the value, level or time requirements of an academic course taken at a school or other educational institution.

2. United States

In the United States, a student in a high school or university earns credits for the completion of each course for each academic term. The state or the institution gene minimum number of credits required to graduate. Various systems of credits exist course, one per hour/week in class, one per hour/week devoted to the course (. homework), etc.

In high schools, where all courses are usually the same number of hours, often meeting every day, students often get a half credit per course per semester. This is formally known as a Carnegie Unit. After a typical four-year run, the student needs 21 to 24 credits to graduate (an average of $5\frac{1}{4}$ to 6 courses per quarter). Some U.S. states have only three years, with. 18 credits required.

In college, students typically receive credit based on the number of "lecture hours" per week in class, for one term; formally, Student Hours. Note that one hour per day for one year yields 1 Carnegie Unit (high school credit), but (in a semester system = 2 term year), 10 Student Hours (college credits). Students are generally expected to spend another hour or two doing homework outside of class for each hour in class. For this reason, schools often fail to fully count laboratory hours, giving only one credit hour for each two or three done in the scheduled or supervised lab.

Because different academic terms have a different number of weeks, this makes transfer credits more difficult. This is also a problem at schools which the board of regents has forced from

quarters to semesters, such as the University System of Georgia and others. If a year of physics (for example) is required at two schools, and a student with one semester of it transfers to a quarter-based school, he will repeat the last five weeks of the Physics I semester during the first five weeks of the Physics II quarter. If a student with only the Physics I quarter transfers to a school with semesters, or is at a school which is forced to semesters, the semester system makes the transfer credit useless, and the student is forced to repeat (and pay for) the entire quarter to take the five weeks of class. Unless a school has other students that get five quarter credits for a class will only get $3\frac{1}{3}$ semester credits again forcing the student to take the entire class again if four semester credits are required.

In both secondary and post-secondary schools, an "hour" is usually considered 50 minutes rather than 60, with the other 10 minutes being considered a break. (However school students often have less than 10 minutes between most classes, and more than 10 once in the morning and once in the afternoon.) Colleges may "compress" this time out of the schedule, such that a single three-hour class would run for $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours.

To figure a grade-point average (GPA), the grade received in each course is subject to weighting, by multiplying it by the number of credit hours. Thus, a "B" (three grade points) in a four-credit class yields 12 "quality points". It is these which are added together, then divided by the total number of credits a student has taken, to get the GPA. Transfer Credits may not be counted in the GPA.

Some courses may require a grade higher than that which is considered passing. In this case, a grade of "D" will still add to the total number of credits earned (unlike an "F"), but the course will not be counted toward graduation requirements until it is retaken and completed with at least a "C".

Credit by examination is a way of receiving course credit without taking the course. This grade often shows as a "K" on a transcript; however it carries no credit hours, and therefore has no effect on the GPA. This also means that a student often must take other classes instead, to meet minimum hour requirements. (This still benefits the student, because he or she can learn something new and useful, instead of repeating what is already known.)

Various types of student aid require students to take and complete a minimum number of course credits each term. Schools often require a minimum number or percentage of credits be taken at the school to qualify for a diploma from that school -- this is known as a residency requirement.

Many schools set a flat rate for full-time students, such that a student taking over 12 credit hours will pay the same amount as a student taking exactly 12. A part-time student is usually one taking less than 12 hours, and he or she pays per credit hour, on top of matriculation and student fees which are fixed.

3. Europe

In Europe a common credit system has been introduced. The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is in some European countries used as the principal credit and grading system in universities, while other countries use the ECTS as a secondary credit system for exchange students. In ECTS, a full study-year normally consists of 60 credits. ECTS grades are given in the A-E range, where F is failing. Schools are also allowed to use a pass/fail evaluation in the ECTS system.

Similar systems are widely used elsewhere. Often the word "unit" is used for the same concept.

4. European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is a standard for comparing the study attainment and performance of students of higher education across the European Union and other collaborating European countries. For successfully completed studies, ECTS credits are awarded. One academic year corresponds to 60 ECTS-credits that are equivalent to 1500-1800 hours of study in all countries irrespective of standard or qualification type and is used to facilitate transfer and progression throughout the Union.

The ECTS will be complemented by the European credit transfer system for vocational education and training (ECVET) which the ministers responsible for vocational training in 32 European countries agreed to develop in the Maastricht Communiqué of 14 December 2004. ECTS also includes a standard ECTS grading scale, intended to be shown in addition to local (i.e. national) standard grades.

Country	CP per year	Hours per CP	Credit point name
European Union (EU)	60	20	ECTS-credits
EU Member States			
Austria	60	25	ECTS (also ECTS-Punkte, ECTS)
Belgium	60	30	ECTS (also studiepunten, ECTS)
Bulgaria	60		kpe,
Cyprus			
Czech Republic	60		kredit
Denmark	60	~28	ECTS-point
England, Wales and Northern Ireland	120	~10	credits (Open University - points)
Estonia	60	26	ainepunkt(EAP), currently because many students are still used with the older system the long name 'euroopa ainepunkt' is more than often used for clarity's sake
Finland	60	27	opintopiste (op)
France	60		credits
Germany	60	30	ECTS, Leistungspunkte, (LP), Kreditpunkte, (KP), Credit Points (CP) or Credits
Greece	60		ECTS, Credit Points (CP)
Hungary	60	30	kredit(pont)
Ireland	60		ECTS
Italy	60	25	crediti formativi universitari (CFU)
Latvia	40		kredltpunkts (KP)
Lithuania	60		kreditai

Luxembourg	60		ECTS
Malta	60		ECTS-credits
The Netherlands	60	28	studiepunten (ECTS)
Poland	60		punkty ECTS
Portugal	60	28	creditos
Romania	60	30	credite (SECTS)
Scotland	120		SCOTCA T credit points
Slovakia	60		kredit
Slovenia	60		kreditne to eke
Spain	60	25	creditos ECTS
Sweden	60	26.67	hogskolepoang (Used from July 2007)
<i>EFT A Member States</i>			
Iceland	60		eining(ar) (unit(s))
Liechtenstein			
Norway	60		studiepoeng
Switzerland	60	30	ECTS-credits
<i>Other European Countries</i>			
Bosnia and Herzegovina	60	25	ECTS bodovi
Croatia	60	25	ECTS bodovi
Georgia	60-65		(kredit)
Macedonia	60		kpe (ECTS)
Montenegro	60		ECTS-kredit
Serbia	60		ECDE

6. Obsolete Systems

List of credits previously given in one year in European countries

Country	CP/a	Abbreviation (unit)
Austria (old system)	-40	Semesterwochenstunden (SSt)
Denmark	1	Studentenlrsvcerk (STA ...) (slowly phased out in Danish legislation since 2000)
Estonia (old system)	40	ainepunkt (AP)
Finland (old system)	40	opintoviikko
Germany (old)	-40	Semesterwochenstunden (SWS)
The Netherlands	42	studiepunten
Norway	20	vektall
Sweden	40	poang (used until July 2007)
Sweden	2	betyg (used until late 1960s/early 1970s)

7. External links

- European Commission ECTS information [2]
- The Official Bologna Process Website 2010-2020 [3]
- Erasmus [4]
- European Commission ECVET information [5]
- ECTS/DS - Users' Guide and forms [6]

References

1. EUROPA - Education and Training-Socrates programme -ECTS -European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/socrates/ects/inde_en.html)
2. http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/socrates/ects/index_en.html
3. <http://www.ehea.info>
4. <http://www.eu-student.eu/>
5. http://ec.europa.eu/education/ecvt/index_en.html
6. http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc48_en.htm