
Chapter V - Teaching Loads and Advising

A. Teaching Loads

The standard teaching load in most academic departments is five teaching units (a 3- or 4-credit course is one teaching unit, and a 2-credit course is one-half of a teaching unit) per year. Laboratory courses in the sciences count as one-half of a teaching unit. Other exceptions may occur (e.g., in departments which offer 1-2 credit courses or seminars). Faculty members in departments requiring senior theses/integrative essays/research projects for their majors may count this participation toward their teaching load; normally this participation will not count as more than the equivalent of one teaching unit per year. Unless on sabbatical leave or leave of absence, faculty members are normally expected to teach in each semester of an academic year. Faculty on sabbatical leave or leave of absence during one semester of an academic year will be expected to teach 3 teaching units during the other semester.

The five teaching units are also the basis by which faculty FTE reductions are calculated, as, for example, with the SCP and phased retirement policies (see Chapter VIII).

The faculty members of each department are expected to come to agreement on what constitutes their five-teaching unit responsibility consistent with fairness in the distribution of workloads, enhancement of the department's course of studies and continued excellence in the instruction of students. The information from these paragraphs is also in [Faculty Code](#), CH. 1, Art. V, Sec. 1.

If funds are available, students and, in rare cases, graduates may be hired by the College to assist instructors. However, instructors cannot relinquish any of their responsibilities to evaluate course work. The supervision of all scheduled class meetings and activities is the duty of the instructor.

Students will be allowed to teach activity classes in the SSRA Department if they receive approval from the Provost and Dean of the Faculty or their delegate.

Reductions of load due to high levels of administrative work are possible in the following circumstances:

1. The Faculty Chair and the Division Chairs may reduce their load by three courses per year.

2. Faculty given special assignments by the Provost and Dean of the Faculty or with unusual professional responsibilities may petition the Provost and Dean of the Faculty for load reduction.
3. Members of the Faculty Personnel Committee are entitled to a one-course reduction each year of their service on this body.

In all of the above cases, replacement is not automatic but must be approved by the Provost and Dean of the Faculty in consultation with the Committee of Division Chairs.

Faculty planning to miss class days for professional obligations should limit the total number of class sessions missed to no more than one instructional week per semester (e.g. two class sessions for a two-day-a-week class, three sessions for a three-day-a-week class, etc.). Applications for extensions of the one instructional week limit can be made to the Provost and Dean of the Faculty. Faculty should notify their department chair regarding the class sessions they will miss.

B. Whitman College Credit Hour Policy

The U.S. Department of Education guideline and the Northwest Commission on colleges and Universities mandate that all accredited institutions comply with the definition of credit hour as set forth in Section 600.2, which defines the credit hour as:

Except as provided in 34 CFR 668.8(k) and (l), a credit hour is 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:*

- (1) One hour 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 or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or*
- (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.*

(From: Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, Policy on Credit Hour, November 2012)

1. Credit Hour Guidelines for Standard Classroom Courses

Standard 3-credit course: meets 150 min/week for the entire semester and involves 300 minutes of out-of-class student work per week on average over the entire semester. (This is the equivalent of 3 x 50-minute class meetings per week and 5 clock hours of out-of-class student work per week.) Alternatively, credit hours may involve a combination of faculty contact time and student work time, such as a field experience, that approximates no less time than the time set forth above.

Standard 4-credit course: meets 200 min/week for the entire semester and involves 400 minutes of out-of-class student work per week on average over the entire semester. [This is the equivalent of 4 x 50-minute class meetings per week and 6.67 clock hours of out-of-class student work per week.] Alternatively, credit hours may involve a combination of faculty contact time and student work time, such as a field experience, that approximates no less time than the time set forth above.

2. Guidelines for Additional Types of Classes

a. Laboratory

Laboratory instruction is an instructional activity in which a faculty member is overseeing students developing technical skills in a laboratory or field setting by conducting experiments, doing field observation, collecting data, etc.

Generally, one credit hour is awarded for every 150 minutes of laboratory instructional time per week for the duration of a semester. If supplemented with formal out-of-class work, the number of credits awarded may be adjusted in accordance with the federal definition of the credit hour, pending approval through the usual channels of faculty governance.

b. Independent Study

Independent study courses are those for which extended and

concentrated practice and/or study is required of the student subsequent to sessions of individualized faculty instruction. Applied music courses and independent study arrangements would be examples.

Instructors have the obligation to assign and evaluate work in accord with the objectives and learning goals of the independent study and to personally provide the individualized instruction necessary to achieve those goals and objectives. In addition, instructors are responsible for assigning credit, based on the combined faculty contact time and expected student out-of-class work time, in accordance with the federal definition of credit hour.

c. Studio Experience

Generally, one hour of credit shall be awarded for every 150 minutes per week of instructional time for the duration of a semester. If supplemented with formal out-of-class work, the number of credits awarded may be adjusted in accordance with the federal definition of the credit hour, pending approval through the usual channels of faculty governance.

d. Thesis

Thesis instruction involves guided inquiry, research, data analysis, and writing at an advanced level in the field of major study. Extended and concentrated efforts in these areas are required of the student subsequent to individualized faculty instruction.

Instructors have the obligation to mentor and guide the student such that learning goals and objectives are met in this capstone experience. Instructors and/or departments are responsible for awarding credit for thesis work based on expectations for faculty and student involvement necessary to meet thesis goals and learning objectives, in accordance with the federal definition for credit hour.

3. Compliance

Individual instructors are encouraged to justify and explain course credit hours on their course syllabi by clearly stating class meeting times and outlining student assignments and responsibilities. Regardless of the

mode of instruction, course syllabi should reflect that faculty and student involvement are consistent with the credits awarded and that courses are sufficiently rigorous to achieve the expected student learning outcomes.

Course proposals should also reflect that faculty and student involvement are consistent with proposed credit hours. Oversight of proposals for new and revised courses will occur at all levels of course approval: department, division, curriculum committee and full faculty, though primary responsibility rests with the individual instructor(s) and the relevant department(s) or program(s). Examination of course credit hours will be added to the list of items to which outside reviewers attend when conducting department/program external reviews.

C. Academic Advising

Academic advising is an important element of excellent teaching at a liberal arts college. After their first year at Whitman, all faculty are expected to participate in the formal advising process. This includes tenure-track faculty and non-tenure-track faculty, specifically: Lecturers, Senior Lecturers, Senior Adjunct Assistant Professors, Senior Adjunct Instructors, Lecturers in SSRA, and Senior Lecturers in SSRA. Visiting Assistant Professors and Adjunct Assistant Professor/Adjunct Instructors are usually not expected to advise, but may do so, if there is an unmet need for pre-major or major advising. As noted, academic advising has two parts:

1. Pre-Major Advising

The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs assigns an advisor to each entering first-year student. Faculty are expected to advise pre-major students if they have under a specified number of current advisees. This number is set by the Provost and Dean of the Faculty.

2. Major Advising

When a student declares a major, they acquire an advisor from that major department. Some departments assign new majors to designated faculty; other departments allow the student to choose any member of the department.

D. Procedure for Recording & Tracking Informal Verbal Student Complaints

Whitman College encourages all its constituents, including students, who have academic or other complaints, to resolve them by speaking to the person directly involved with causing the complaint (or alternatively with the person who supervises that individual). In cases where that is not possible because of a perceived or actual power differential, fears of repercussion, by being given lower grades, inordinate discomfort, etc., students have the option of filling out the [Complaint Form](#) online, which is also linked on the Dean of Students [Right to Know](#) page, under Complaint Process.

Once submitted the form will be sent to the Office of the Provost and Dean of the Faculty. Any necessary and appropriate action will be taken by the Provost's office to resolve the issue, and the complaint will be filed.

It is likely that some student complains will be expressed verbally to someone in a position of authority, such as a department chair or an administrator. In cases where an administrator receives a verbal student complaint, either directly or through an indirect communication, the administrator will respond to the complainant (if known), work to resolve the issue with the person of concern, and file the complaint for record-keeping purposes on the student's behalf. Administrators most likely to receive verbal student academic or other complaints (either directly or funneled to them through others) include (but are not limited to) the Associate Dean of Students and Title IX Administrator; the Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students; the Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion; the Associate Dean for Faculty Development; the Associate Dean for Academic affairs; and the Provost and Dean of the Faculty.

Department Chairs often listen as advisors to students who simply want a sympathetic ear or who want advice on whether or not they want to approach somebody who can look into a complaint (this situation is often the case when students see the department chair as an advisor or a mentor, rather than as a person in charge who has the ability to do something about the complaint). Department Chairs may also look into the matter in an unofficial manner. If it is the case that a student wants something done about their complaint, the department chair looks into the issue and asks the student to fill out the student complaint form. At the end of the process of looking into the issue, the department chair sends an informational email to the Provost's office (to the Associate to the Provost and Dean of the Faculty) so that, if the student

has failed to fill out the form, someone in the Provost's office can do so. The information in the email will also allow the Assistant to add the resolution of the complaint to the form. The email will not be filed in any of the faculty personnel files.