Background on University Credit Hour Regulation

Presentation to UNC Board of Governors 2017
Where Do We Stand?
Graduation Rates at Any UNC Institution

Source: UNC Data Dashboards
The “Traditional” Four-Year Degree

15 credits per semester is “full time.”
2 semesters per year (30 credits per year)
4 years or 8 semesters (120 credits in total)
Why Do Students Take Longer Than Four Years to Graduate?

FEDERAL POLICIES
Definition of “full time” (12 hours)

STUDENT BEHAVIOR
Taking courses outside of degree program
Changing majors
Additional minors/majors

INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES
Transfer policies
Acceptance policies for AP exams
Course offerings (how often and at what times)
Degree program credit requirements

Exam scores of “3” not accepted at some institutions

OTHER CAUSES
Work demands
Family commitments
Financial issues
Illness
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- Degree program credit requirements

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How many credits are required for an undergraduate degree by SACS COC?
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS COC)

Core Requirement 2.7.1 (Program Length)

2.7.1 The institution offers one or more degree programs based on at least 60 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the associate level; at least 120 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the baccalaureate level; or at least 30 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the post-baccalaureate, graduate, or professional level. If an institution uses a unit other than semester credit hours, it provides an explanation for the equivalency. The institution also provides a justification for all degrees that include fewer than the required number of semester credit hours or its equivalent unit. (Program length)
What are the credit-hour requirements across the UNC System?
Number of Four-Year Undergraduate Degree Programs by Credit Requirement (2017-18)

- 446 programs required 128 credits
- 320 programs required 127 credits
- 121 programs required 126 credits
- 3 programs required 121 credits

890 degree programs in total*

* Data were missing or unverified for 3 other degree programs, as of October 31, 2017.
Number of Four-Year Undergraduate Degrees Awarded (2015-16) by Credit Requirement (2017-18)

- 17,964 degrees awarded in 120 credit requirement
- 13,531 degrees awarded in 121 credit requirement
- 4,614 degrees awarded in 122 credit requirement
- 53 degrees awarded in 123 credit requirement

Total: 36,162 degrees
2,179 FTEs annually

the FTE equivalent for the total number of credits beyond 120 \((65,367)\) associated with the degrees awarded \((18,198)\) in 2015-16, in degree programs with requirements exceeding 120 credits.
Number of Four-Year Undergraduate Degree Programs by Institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Number of Degree Programs</th>
<th>Credits Required</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>134</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASU</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>133</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECU</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNC-CH</td>
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<td>132</td>
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<td>UNCC</td>
<td>130</td>
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<td>UNCA</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCCU</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>137</td>
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<tr>
<td>FSU</td>
<td>121</td>
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<td>139</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNCSA</td>
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Number of Degree Programs

English

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</table>

History

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<th>Number of Degree Programs</th>
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# BS in Athletic Training

<table>
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<tr>
<th>UNC University 1</th>
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<th>UNC University 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gen Ed Requirements</strong> <em>(including electives)</em></td>
<td>44 credits</td>
<td><strong>Gen Ed Requirements</strong></td>
<td>40 credits</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Major Requirements</strong></td>
<td>75 credits</td>
<td><strong>Major Requirements</strong></td>
<td>83 credits</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Freshman Seminar</strong></td>
<td>1 credit</td>
<td><strong>Electives</strong></td>
<td>3 credits</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>120 credits</strong></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>126 credits</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Credit Requirements for Undergraduate Degree Programs Across UNC

Consequences

• Undergraduate degree requirements in excess of 120 credits translate into...
  • additional costs to students/families.
  • additional costs to taxpayers.
  • opportunity costs for students.
  • additional time-to-degree and student debt.
Other fully accredited systems of higher education with 120 credit hour policies:

1. California State University System
2. Colorado
3. Florida
4. Georgia
5. Indiana
6. Louisiana
7. Montana
8. Minnesota
9. Nevada
10. Pennsylvania
11. Texas
ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND
Regulations Related to Fostering Undergraduate Student Success

I. Limiting Hours for Baccalaureate Degree Programs

Baccalaureate degree programs shall be limited to no more than 128 semester credit hours. Any requirement beyond 128 hours must be approved by the Board of Governors. Any program authorized by the Board of Governors to require 135 semester credit hours or more shall be officially designated as a five-year baccalaureate program.

A. Campuses shall observe these guidelines in all proposals for new degree programs.

B. Campuses must publicize the required number of semester credit hours and projected length of full-time enrollment required to obtain the baccalaureate degree in both printed and online catalogs, as applicable. During new student orientation sessions and in publications for students and parents, campuses must provide a description of factors that may extend the length of time to complete a degree.
# Identical Programs, Varying Credit Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology (BS)</td>
<td>120 credits - 125 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geology (BS)</td>
<td>120 credits - 126 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education, K-12 (BS)</td>
<td>121 credits - 128 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering (BS)</td>
<td>120 credits - 128 credits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Across UNC, courses at different institutions but with identical (6-digit) CIP codes and program/degree titles can vary greatly by credit requirement. The variation is often as great as 4 credits. Sometimes, the variation can be between 5 and 8 credits, as these examples demonstrate. . .
1. Do you have a formal centralized review process and re-review timelines for examining undergraduate degree program credit hour requirements? 7 Yes; 8 No
   a. If not, do colleges/departments handle this? 4 Yes; 4 No

2. For new program approval processes, do you use guidelines that include the total SCH as an issue? 13 Yes; 2 No

3. Has your office worked on this issue in the last 3 years? 7 Yes; 7 No

4. What other items do you think are important in consideration of total SCH/program? If deemed important, are these routinely assessed by the department to improve student throughput?
   a. Core Gen Ed total SCH Important (routine assessment?) 15 Yes; 0 No
   b. Sequencing of required courses (e.g., prerequisites) (routine assessment?) 11 Yes; 3 No
   c. Scheduling of courses (e.g., from day/hour offered to frequency in academic year) (routine assessment?) 12 Yes; 3 No

5. What percent of programs over 120 SCH do you estimate could be moved to 120?
   Answers varied from “none” to “100.”
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890 degree programs in total

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