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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Semester Conversion Instructions

Introduction

The University of Minnesota on all four campuses will change to a semester-based academic calendar effective for the 1999-2000 academic year. The first semester will be fall 1999. The decision to change to a semester-based academic calendar was approved by the Board of Regents in October, 1996.

This report provides specific instructions for the conversion of quarter-based degree programs and curricula to their semester-based equivalents. Additional information is provided in a number of appendices.

The conversion effort has been underway since early February, 1996, under direction from Provost W. Phillips Shively, who chairs both the Change to Semesters Coordinating Group ([CSC](#)) and the Change to Semesters Implementation Task Force ([CSI](#)). The promulgation of these specific instructions has been timed to follow closely the adoption of [Semester Standards](#) by the University Senate on April 18, 1996.

It should be emphasized that these instructions are general instructions for all four campuses. Each campus and college may add additional instructions and additional detail to the schedule. Also, the semester standards adopted by the University Senate for the Twin Cities, Morris, and Crookston campuses and by the UMD Campus Assembly for the Duluth campus establish minimal standards. With the approval of the appropriate chancellor or provost, colleges may add to these standards.

Campus/College Semester Coordinators

Each campus/college has designated a semester coordinator. A list of these individuals is attached as [Appendix 1](#). Departments and programs should work closely with their semester coordinator.

Base Information

Degree Inventory

Each campus and college has been supplied with an inventory of its current degree programs, current in the sense that a student could have begun a program in fall 1995. These inventories have been reviewed by each campus/college. The final inventory, incorporating all corrections and adding enrollment (Fall 1995) and degrees granted information (last 4 years), is included as [Appendix 2](#).

There are 647 current degree programs that must be converted to their semester-based equivalents, as summarized by campus and level in the table below.

Current University of Minnesota Degree Programs (Revised 5/8/96)					
Degree	UMTC	UMD	UMM	UMC	Total
Associate	0	0	0	16	16
Bachelor's	155	72	28	13	268
Master's	203	17	0	0	220
Doctorate	116	0	0	0	116
1st Prof.	5	1	0	0	6
Other	23	0	0	0	23
Total	502	90	28	29	649

Fall 1995 enrollment by degree status and campus is summarized in the following table.

University of Minnesota Enrollment: Fall 1995					
Degree	UMTC	UMD	UMM	UMC	Total
Enrollment in Degree Programs					
Associate	0	0	0	180	180
Bachelor's	11,684	4,068	1,559	539	17,850
Certificate	108	0	0	0	108
Master's	5,182	373	0	0	5,555
Post Mast.	26	0	0	0	26
1st Prof.	2,468	108	0	0	2,576
Doctorate	3,956	0	0	0	3,956
Subtotal	23,424	4,549	1,559	719	30,251
Undecided, Premajor, and Nondegree Enrollment					
Subtotal	13,584	2,853	393	1,010	17,840

Total	37,008	7,402	1,952	1,729	48,091
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Of the 48,091 day school students enrolled in course work in fall 1995, 30,251 were formally enrolled in specific degree programs. The other 17,840 were undergraduate students who were undecided or premajors or students enrolled in such post-degree classifications as medical fellow specialist and adult special.

Course Inventory

Each campus and college has also been supplied with an inventory of its authorized courses and has been asked to delete noncurrent courses from the inventory in order to establish the base curriculum that must be converted. The final, revised base curriculum and the degree inventory have been transmitted to all campuses and colleges in both DOS/Windows Lotus (WK1) and Macintosh Excel (XLS) spreadsheets. Departments can get electronic copies of the curriculum and degree inventory from their campus or college office.

There are 21,263 courses in the base curriculum that are offered by 195 academic areas (or departments) under 493 * different course designators. A course designator map is provided as [Appendix 3](#). This map details how many courses are currently offered by each campus, by each college, by each area (or department) within each college, and under each course designator controlled by an area (or department). Information is also included about how many courses were actually offered during 1994-95 and 1995-96 (fall, winter, and spring quarters). Over the past two years (1994-95 and 1995-96), 12,573 of the 21,263 were offered.

* revised 5/8/96

The course inventory is somewhat inflated by current cross-listing practices. Any course with a unique designator and number is counted as one course in the course inventory. Accordingly, a course that is cross-listed under four course designators is counted as four courses in the inventory. This probably inflates the number of courses in the course inventory by a thousand or so.

We have worked hard to make the degree inventory and course inventory information as accurate and current as possible, but there are bound to be some errors in it. Please report the errors and corrections to Peter Zetterberg.

Guidelines and Standards

The Change to Semesters Coordinating Group ([CSC](#)) was jointly appointed by the University Senate and the University administration to coordinate the semester conversion effort. The CSC has adopted the following statement of objectives regarding the conversion of academic programs to a semester-based academic calendar.

The conversion of academic programs to a semester-based academic calendar should meet seven broad objectives.

- *The conversion of a program from quarter courses to semester courses should preserve the intellectual content of the program, and the distribution of courses by credit module in the new curriculum should be justifiable, as judged by the impact on faculty workload and on student*

progress toward a degree.

- *The conversion should preserve a program's instructional hours; that is, the total amount of instruction offered by the program over the course of an academic year should be approximately the same on semesters as it is on quarters.*
- *The impact of the change to semesters on faculty and instructional staff workload should be neutral.*
- *The service provided by a program to other programs should be preserved.*
- *A semester-based program should not require greater financial resources than its quarter-based predecessor and should be justifiable in terms of its impact on classrooms and other University resources.*
- *At the undergraduate level, the redesign of programs and the conversion of courses on each campus should result in a campus-wide undergraduate curriculum that is coherent, as measured by the intellectual content of undergraduate degrees and student progress toward a degree.*
- *At the graduate and professional levels the conversion of programs should be carefully coordinated to preserve the integrity of programs involving the intellectual resources of more than one department.*

This statement of academic objectives, together with the Semester Standards adopted by the University Senate and the UMD Campus Assembly, provide the basic guidelines for the semester conversion. The Senate standards as adopted on April 18, 1996 are presented below. The UMD Campus Assembly standards will be distributed separately to the UMD community.

As was stated in the introduction, these are minimal standards that may be augmented by colleges with the approval of the appropriate chancellor or provost. The Graduate School Executive Committee has already adopted additional standards for graduate programs, which are set forth in [Appendix 4](#).

Semester Standards

1. There shall be two semesters, each of which shall include a minimum of 70 days of instruction and a maximum of 75 days of instruction, at least one study day, and approximately one week of final examinations (including Saturdays but not Sundays).

For the fall semester, classes shall begin after Labor Day and the exam period shall end not later than December 23.

For the spring semester, classes shall begin on the third Tuesday of January and provide 74 or 75 class days of instruction.

Departments may schedule a short three-week intersession following the end of the spring semester and before the first summer term, using Summer Session compensation and tuition practices. No department shall be obligated to offer courses or academic work during this three-week term.

There shall be at least two summer terms, which may not begin before K-12 public school classes are completed.

Colleges and campuses may authorize courses shorter than the term of enrollment, subject to the approval of appropriate curriculum review committees.

Final examinations normally shall be two (clock) hours long; instructors may schedule longer

examinations with the approval of their department.

The standard class period during fall and spring semester shall be 55 minutes. The standard class period during the summer term(s) shall be in proportion to the length of the summer term vis-a-vis the two semesters.

This standard shall apply to all campuses of the University.

All campuses of the University shall have the same calendar.

2. Departments are urged strongly to prefer courses of three credits, and especially to prefer three-credit courses which are taken by significant numbers of students from other fields. It is understood that some courses, such as laboratory courses and lower division mathematics courses, will be offered for more than three credits.
3. Baccalaureate degrees consist of a minimum of 120 semester credits. The liberal education requirements (including writing skills), as established by the appropriate body on each campus (the Council on Liberal Education on the Twin Cities campus), shall consist of at least 39 semester credits.

College approval is required for any baccalaureate degree programs that require more than 120 credits. Proposed baccalaureate degree requirements in excess of 132 credits must also be approved by the appropriate chancellor or provost.

This standard shall apply to all campuses.

4. The Senate affirms the standard (first adopted by the University Senate on February 16, 1922, and reaffirmed subsequently) that one semester credit is to represent, for the average University of Minnesota undergraduate student, three hours of academic work per week (including lectures, laboratories, recitations, discussion groups, field work, study, and so on), or approximately 45 hours of work over the course of an enrollment period. Expectations of faculty and students will be made clear. It is expected that the academic work required of graduate and professional students will exceed three hours per credit per week or 45 hours per semester.

All courses proposed for the semester calendar shall include a student workload statement demonstrating how the course conforms to this policy. College and campus curriculum committees and other approving bodies (e.g., the Council on Liberal Education) must consider the student workload statement in reaching a decision on whether to approve a proposed semester course, and should normally reject any course which does not meet, or significantly exceeds, the requirement of three hours of academic work per week for each course credit.

It is understood that professional norms and the nature of the activity may in some cases require more than three hours of work per week or 45 hours per semester per credit. Clinical experiences, some laboratory work, and some studio activities may be unable to adhere to this three-hour-per-credit standard; with college approval and with appropriate notification to the student of the amount of work expected for the course or educational experience (e.g., in class schedules, bulletins, or syllabi), demands on the student in excess of the 45 hours per semester credit are permissible.

This standard shall apply to all campuses.

5. The hours of contact time for a course shall equal at least the number of credits for the course times the number of weeks the course is offered. In the majority of cases, this would mean the number of contact hours per week would equal the number of credits for the course, but the contact hours need not be spread out evenly by week.

A contact hour is defined for these purposes as formal instruction by an individual appointed for that purpose by the department or faculty member, including faculty members, graduate teaching assistants, teaching specialists, or, in unusual instances, advanced undergraduates. This standard applies to all enrollment periods. The student workload statement (required in the preceding section) must justify fewer total contact hours than the number of credits for the course times the number of weeks the course is offered; contact hours of all types equal to or in excess of at least one hour per week per credit, on average, need not be justified. College and campus curriculum committees and other approving bodies (e.g., the Council on Liberal Education) must consider the contact hours in reaching a decision on whether to approve a proposed semester course; such bodies should normally reject course proposals which have fewer contact hours than the number of credits times the number of weeks the course is offered, barring significant evidence that reduced instructional contact hours are appropriate.

Explicitly exempted from this standard are research seminars, studio courses, clinical experiences, correspondence courses and independent study, directed study or readings or field work, directed research, internships and practicums, honors thesis credits, and other experiences faculty offer to students outside the normal laboratory or classroom setting (many of which include activities beyond the physical boundaries of the campuses). Included in the standard are interactive video classes (which in practice should be no different from in-class instruction) and one-way transmission of instruction from the instructor to the students (it is assumed that other avenues of two-way interaction are used in this instance, such as email and the telephone).

This standard applies to all campuses.

6. In general, with college review and approval, (1) all departments and programs should reduce the credit value of their undergraduate and graduate curricula by approximately one-third, and (2) the time required for a student to complete a program/degree may not be increased as a result of the change to semesters. Point (2) is not intended to preclude changes in the time required for program completion/degree based on curricular grounds unrelated to the conversion from quarters to semesters.
7. Exemptions from these standards may be granted by the President's Office. Any exemptions granted shall be reported to the Senate at its next meeting.

Additional information regarding the interpretation of standard 6, which requires an approximate one-third reduction in the curriculum of each department and program is provided below in the "Required Course Reduction" section.

A possible semester calendar for 1999-2000 is detailed on the following page.

Semester Liberal Education Curriculum

**Approved by the Council on Liberal Education June 5, 1996
(for Twin Cities Campus ONLY)**

Diversified Core

Physical and Biological Sciences - a minimum of two courses totaling at least 8 credits, including one course in physical science with a laboratory or field experience, and one course in biological science with a laboratory or field experience.

Social Science and Humanities - a minimum of 15 credits distributed as follows:

Social Science - at least 6 credits.

Humanities - at least 6 credits, including one course in literature and one course in "other humanities." (The new "other humanities" category includes all courses in the current categories of philosophy, visual or performing arts, and other humanities or arts.)

Historical Perspective - at least 3 credits. A course fulfilling the historical perspective requirement will also apply toward the social science core requirement or the humanities core requirement, but the course may not also fulfill a designated theme.

Mathematical Thinking - one course of at least 3 credits.

Designated Themes

One course of at least 3 credits in each of the following:

- Environment
- International perspectives
- Cultural diversity
- Citizenship and public ethics

Guidelines for courses that fulfill multiple requirements:

A course in the physical and biological sciences core or mathematical thinking core may fulfill at most one core requirement and one designated theme.

A course in the social sciences core or the humanities core that does not carry the historical perspective designation may fulfill at most one core requirement and one designated theme. A course that fulfills the historical perspective requirement may not fulfill a designated theme.

A course that does not fulfill any core requirement may fulfill no more than two designated themes simultaneously.

Approved Twin Cities/Duluth Calendar 1999-2000

Fall Semester 1999 (70 class days)

September 6	Monday	Labor Day
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September 7	Tuesday	Classes begin
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November 25-26	Thurs- Friday	Thanksgiving holiday
December 15	Wednesday	Last day of instruction
December 16	Thursday	Study day
December 17-23	Friday- Thurs	Final examinations

Spring Semester 2000 (74 class days)

January 17	Monday	Martin Luther King holiday
January 18	Tuesday	Classes begin
March 27- 31	Monday- Friday	Spring break
May 5	Friday	Last day of instruction
May 6-7	Saturday- Sun	Study days
May 8-13	Monday-Sat	Final examinations
May 17	Wednesday	Final grades due

Interession 2000 (14 class days)

May 22	Monday	3-week intersession begins
May 29	Monday	Memorial Day holiday
June 9	Friday	3-week intersession ends

Summer Session 2000 (49 class days)

June 12	Monday	8-week Summer Term begins
July 4	Tuesday	Independence Day holiday
August 4	Friday	8-week Summer Term ends
August 18	Friday	Summer Session ends

Degree Program and Course Conversion Schedule

The implementation schedule for the University's Semester Conversion Project ([Appendix 5](#)) designates the period February 15, 1996 to October 31, 1997 for the conversion of degree programs and courses to their semester-based equivalents. All departments and programs were instructed to begin the conversion of their programs in a memorandum of February 9, 1996 from Provost Shively, Chair of the Change to Semesters Coordinating Group.

By October 31, 1997 all campuses and colleges must submit complete descriptions of their revised, semester-based degree programs and their revised, semester-based curricula, including descriptions of all semester-based courses. A more detailed schedule for the program and course conversion effort is set forth below.

Degree Program and Course Conversion Schedule

02-09-96	Departments and programs instructed to begin
04-18-96	University Senate adopts semester standards
10-01-96	1st status report by departments and programs
11-01-96	2nd status report by departments and programs
12-01-96	3rd status report by departments and programs
01-01-97	4th status report by departments and programs
02-01-97	5th status report by departments and programs
03-01-97	6th status report by departments

	and programs
Begin Spr Qrt 97	Programs/curricula submitted for first campus/collegiate review
End Spr Qrt 97	First campus/collegiate review completed
Summer 1997	Corrections and refinements, as necessary
Begin Fall Qrt 97	Second campus/collegiate review, as necessary
10-31-97	Final submission of semester- based programs/curricula

A critical date in the schedule was April 18, 1996, when the University Senate adopted standards for the semester conversion. The promulgation of these instructions has been delayed until just after that date. The UMD Campus Assembly is also expected to approve its standards sometime in April.

The degree program and course conversion schedule allows a full academic year for each department and program to convert its curriculum and degree requirements to their semester-based equivalents (i.e., spring quarter 1996, fall quarter 1996, and winter quarter 1997). Departments and programs may also choose to use the summer of 1996 for some of this work.

This schedule allows a full quarter for campus/collegiate review. The Morris and Crookston campuses and each Twin Cities and Duluth college will determine its own detailed schedule for the first review period during spring quarter 1997 and may extend the submission date for certain departments and programs to sometime during the quarter rather than requiring submission by the beginning of the quarter for every unit.

The status reports beginning October 1, 1996 will be well-defined so that all departments and programs are using the same basic format. These reports will be posted electronically, probably via the World Wide Web, so that colleges, departments, and programs will be able to know what other colleges, departments, and programs are doing. The sharing of information is essential, because many programs at the University depend on courses from other programs. The conversion efforts of each program will affect and will be affected by choices made elsewhere.

Some departments and programs may have little to report by October 1, 1996. Over the following six months, however, these reports will become progressively more complete.

We are working to establish a process that is as electronic and paperless as possible. Details regarding the electronic status reports and electronic degree and course submittal forms will be provided at a later date when finalized.

Review Process

Each campus and college will determine its own review process for degree programs and curricula, based on its current practices. In addition to the review of programs and courses that is normally conducted by curriculum committees, each dean's office will review the submissions by each department

for resource and workload issues. All departments and programs will be asked to show how the new curriculum will actually be scheduled over a two-year period (i.e., 1999-2000 and 2000-2001) and to justify including in the curriculum any course that would not be offered at least once every two years.

The Graduate School will coordinate the conversion and review of graduate programs through its Policy and Review Councils.

Each campus and college should think very carefully about its review process, given the sheer quantity of material that will need to be reviewed. The ordinary review process for programs and courses will probably not work. Something extraordinary will be required.

Final Decision Regarding the Course Numbering System

April 22, 1997

TO: Semester Coordinators, Interested Parties

FROM: Peter Zetterberg, Director, Semester Conversion Project

RE: Final Decision Regarding the Course Numbering System

The final course numbering proposal was issued on September 13, 1996, with the understanding that additional detail would be provided regarding numbering conventions. The numbering convention detail was provided on December 16, 1997. On January 16, 1997 we announced the creation of a new course number for MFA Thesis/Project credits. On February 14, 1997 we issued notes of clarification regarding 4xxx and 6xxx/7xxx level courses. Accordingly, the complete semester course numbering system, with notes and clarifications, currently exists in four different documents, all of which have been sent out by e-mail with a request that they be forwarded on to departments and programs.

I have compiled a synthesis of the four course numbering documents so that reference can be made to just one document from this point forward. It is provided below.

The final 4 digit system is described in [Appendix 6](#).

Please mail comments on course numbering issues to Peter Zetterberg.

Required Course Reduction

A standard rule of thumb when changing from a quarter-based academic calendar to a semester-based academic calendar is that the number of courses in the curriculum should be reduced by one-third. This is for a very simple reason. On semesters there are only two opportunities during the regular academic year to offer a course rather than three. All other things being equal, if faculty members are currently teaching two courses per quarter or six per year, then on a semester system they should wind up teaching two courses per semester or four per year. And if each faculty member will be teaching one-third fewer courses on semesters, then it follows that there should be one-third fewer courses in the curriculum.

The semester standard for the course reduction requires that each department and program must reduce the credit value of its curriculum by approximately one-third. The standard is worded this way to allow departments and programs to change the current distribution of courses in the curriculum by credit

module. Units that choose to make 3-credit courses the most common credit module will not achieve a full one-third reduction in the number of courses. This is allowable under the [semester standard](#) approved by the University Senate.

Since each department and program has courses in its current curriculum that are offered for variable credit, the current credit value of a unit's curriculum is a range between a minimum value and a maximum value (see [Appendix 3](#)). In adhering to the required course reduction standard, departments and programs should proceed as follows.

1. First, units should eliminate from the curriculum all noncurrent courses, if this has not already been done.
2. Second, units should set aside from consideration all courses that are offered by other departments and cross-listed under the unit's course designator(s).
3. Third, units should set aside from consideration all "independent activity" courses, for example, thesis credits, independent study, directed reading, and directed research. The shift to semesters for these courses, which must remain a part of the curriculum, will be handled separately.
4. Fourth, both the minimum and maximum credit values of the remaining courses should be reduced by one-third.

Seldom-Offered Courses

There may be very good reasons for including courses in a department's curriculum that will be offered only once every 3 years or 4 years or 5 years. This is a matter for the department and the college to decide, based on the academic interests of the department's faculty and the programmatic needs of the department's students. The reasons for retaining such seldom-offered courses in the curriculum must be academic and programmatic, however, and not financial.

With the advent of Responsibility Centered Management (RCM) there are obvious concerns about enrollment, student credit hour (SCH) generation, and tuition revenue. Given such concerns, it must be emphasized that there is no relationship between the size of a department's curriculum and the student credit hours and associated tuition revenue generated by a department. Student credit hours and associated tuition revenue are instead functions of: 1) the number of courses that are **actually offered** each term, 2) the credit value of the courses, 3) the number of sections of each course, and 4) the enrollment in each section.

Workload, Classroom, and Resource Considerations

It is permissible to develop a semester-based curriculum that achieves a one-third reduction in the credit value of the curriculum, but not a full one-third reduction in the number of courses, by changing the distribution of courses by credit module--e.g., by having more 3-credit courses and fewer 4-credit and 5-credit courses. If a department or program chooses this route, however, it should be sure that it can actually offer the resulting new curriculum, given workload constraints, classroom constraints, and resource constraints.

Consider the following example. Suppose that in addition to changing to semesters, a department's curriculum is also changed from one of mostly 4-credit courses to one of mostly 3-credit courses. For example, three 4-credit quarter courses (12 credits total) may be converted either to two 3-credit and one 2-credit semester courses (8 credits total) or to two 4-credit semester courses (8 credits total). In one

case the department will still be staffing three courses; in the other case it will have to staff only two.

The consequences of converting to three courses rather than two include the following.

1. If the number of courses remains high, faculty will have to teach more courses in order to teach an equivalent number of credits.
2. In the case of year-long courses involving three 4-credit or 5-credit quarter courses (e.g., first year Spanish, calculus, physics, etc.), converting to three 3-credit semester courses rather than to two 4-credit or 5-credit semester courses would mean that "first year French" would become "first year and a half French."

There are certain subjects that should be taught over the course of one year, usually at the lower division level, because they are prerequisite for other course work. Although 3-credit courses may be the most common in the curricula of other institutions with semester-based academic calendars, 4 and 5-credit courses at the lower division level are common in the case of year-long introductory sequences.

3. Converting three quarter courses, one offered each quarter requiring one classroom per quarter, to three semester courses rather than to two means that for one of the semesters two of the new courses will have to be taught, requiring two classrooms rather than one. While it is true that the number of classroom hours required over the course of the academic year remains the same, there are classroom utilization implications that must be faced. Scheduling two courses is different than scheduling one. Does the University have enough classrooms? In order to utilize fully available classroom space, would departments be willing to schedule classes at less popular times (e.g., 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m.)?

Finally, it may be the case in some colleges that some departments have more courses in their current curriculum than they should, while others have only a minimal number of courses, as judged by the dean or the college's curriculum committee. Colleges may require a greater than one-third reduction in the size of the curriculum for some departments and a lesser reduction for others, and they are encouraged to exercise such discretion.

Assistance

Professor Leonard Kuhl, Astronomy, is a member of both the Change to Semesters Coordinating Group ([CSC](#)) and the Change to Semesters Implementation Task Force ([CSI](#)). As such he is very familiar with all aspects of the University's semester conversion effort. As a faculty member and dean at UC-Berkeley he also went through two calendar conversion (semesters to quarters and then quarters to semesters). Professor Kuhl has volunteered to consult with colleges and departments, sharing his experience and expertise, during the spring and summer about academic program conversion issues. Colleges and departments can contact him directly at 624-7053 (kuhl@ast1.spa.umn.edu).

Additional Information

Information about the Semester Conversion Project is routinely posted on the [Semester Web Page](#) (<http://www.opa.pres.umn.edu/convert/>). Other information will be distributed through the [campus/college coordinators group](#).

Semester Conversion Information Page
IRR Home Page

Page URL: http://www.irr.umn.edu/convert/semcnv_i.htm
This page was last updated on: Sunday November 13 2005

Find answers to general questions about the University of Minnesota, its courses, policies, or programs, on the [Have a Question?](#) page.

Send comments on this web page to Cynthia James Murdoch at: macal001@umn.edu.

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