

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Approved by the:	University Senate April 18, 1996 (Amended December 5, 1996; February 20, 1997; April 17, 1997; February 18, 1999; and April 22, 1999; March 27, 2003)
Standards Accepted and Implemented by the:	Administration June 1996 (Amendments Accepted and Implemented June 16, 1997; April 15, 1999; and July 22, 1999; June 26, 2003)
Action by the:	Board of Regents - no action required
Interpretation approved by the Senate Committee on Educational Policy after reported for information to the University Senate	April 19, 2001

STANDARDS FOR THE SEMESTER CONVERSION

To view a particular section, please click on one of the following links.

[1A. Academic Calendar Rules, Length of Finals, Due Date for Grades, Standard Class Period](#)

[2A. Preferred Course Credit Module](#)

[3A. Credit Requirements for Degrees, Limits Thereon](#)

[4A. Student Work Required Per Credit, Statement of Workload for Each Course](#)

[5A. Contact Hours Required for Courses](#)

[6A. Program and Degree Requirements and the Change to Semesters](#)

[7. Exemptions from these Standards](#)

[A note on use of terms: For the purposes of this document, references to "class hour" or "contact hour" or "hour" are defined as a 50-minute period.]

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

For the fall semester, the exam period shall end not later than December 23.

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 a standard eight-week summer session, which may not begin before K-12 public school classes are completed. No department shall be obligated to offer courses or academic work during this eight week session. Departments and programs may also work with Summer Session to deliver courses over either shorter or longer periods of time and with different starting and ending dates.

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. Instructors and departments must decide in advance of scheduling a course if the examination is to exceed two hours. Any examinations which exceed two hours must be noted in the class schedule, in order that students are informed and can accommodate the longer examination in their schedule of final examinations.

Final grades shall be submitted to the Registrar no later than three business days following the date of the scheduled final examination (whether or not there is actually a final examination for the course). In the case of Fall Semester grades, the Registrar shall have the authority to extend the deadline if the due dates fall on or over the holidays.

The standard class period during fall and spring semester shall be 50 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.

SECTION 1B: Section 1A shall apply to all campuses of the University.

SECTION 2A: 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 many courses, such as laboratory or mathematics courses, will be offered for more than three credits.

SECTION 2B: Section 2A shall apply to all campuses.

SECTION 3A: 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.

SECTION 3B: Section 3A shall apply to all campuses.

SECTION 4A: 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), averaged over the term, in order to complete the work of the course. Enrollment for 15 credits in a semester would thus require approximately 45 hours of work per week, on average, over the course of the semester. All grades for academic work are based on the quality of the work submitted, not on hours of effort. 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.

Instructional units should periodically review course syllabi to determine whether the course credit is appropriate.

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.

SECTION 4B: Section 4A shall apply to all campuses.

SECTION 5A: The hours of contact time for a course normally 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).

SECTION 5B: Section 5A applies to all campuses.

SECTION 6A: 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.

SECTION 7: Exemptions from these standards may be granted by the President's Office following review and recommendation by the Senate Committee on Educational Policy. Any exemptions granted shall be reported to the Senate at its next meeting.

[Return to the Senate Policies Homepage](#)