

For a vote of support at the May 9, 2002 Ohio Chief Instructional Officers Meeting in Zanesville.

The Award of Academic Credit: When is a Short-Term Training Course “Credit Worthy”?

The following statement of current practice in the award of academic credit was developed jointly by Ohio Chief Instructional Officers. The need for such a statement came from an awareness of the desire of employers, labor unions, and learners to pursue new options to acquire academic credit for short-term courses or training programs not previously part of a degree program. Along with this growing interest came the need for greater understanding of the basis for awarding academic credit for short-term courses or training programs as well as the benefits gained by a student taking a course that has been approved for credit toward a college or university degree. This statement has been developed to respond to that need.

Ohio’s two-year campuses have a distinguished history of providing career and technical training that responds to the needs of their communities. They have developed strong working relationships with business and industry and demonstrated the ability to quickly design and deliver short-term training programs to meet specific skill needs. Historically, these rapidly designed and customized training programs have been offered as non-credit programs with their focus on meeting employer skill requirements rather than degree requirements.

There is growing awareness among employers, unions, and workers of the importance of lifelong learning and the value of obtaining a college or university degree. Those now sponsoring or participating as students in credit training programs are asking how such non-credit course work could be offered as credit and count toward a college or university degree program.

Current Practice: Basis for Awarding Credit in an Academic Degree Program

As organizations operating under the banner of institutions chartered to award college credit and as institutions of higher learning employing faculty with advanced degrees as well as those with appropriate experience in their disciplines, we examine content in short-course training programs to determine credit worthiness based on the following three tenets: (1) Rigor, (2) Use, and (3) Applicability. This same approach is used in the development of degree programs (note: degree programs are approved by the Ohio Board of Regents).

Rigor: Institutions of higher learning examine the rigor of the content and course materials. Rigor is defined as content that is more difficult and requiring greater precision or accuracy. Students are expected to achieve a greater richness of understanding. Thus the expectations are greater for college-level work and are far less forgiving.

Use: In terms of use, institutions of higher learning ask the basic question “...will those participating in the offered content be able to use the learned material for some sort of postsecondary credentialing and/or licensure?”

Applicability: Lastly, faculty look to see whether those participating in the content can apply the learned material to other postsecondary experiences and/or learning outcomes.

More specifically, courses are reviewed and sanctioned by faculty on behalf of institutions chartered by the State of Ohio to offer college credit. Generally, the review criteria include the following:

1. Courses must be applicable to a degree program as a requirement or as an elective.
2. Courses must be of rigor equal to that of college level courses.
3. Courses must be of appropriate breadth (scope/depth/extent).
4. Courses must be worthy of applying standard measures of student success such as the grades A, B, C, D, or F.
5. Student success must be based on measurable criteria or instruments such as tests, quizzes, portfolios, etc.
6. Each institution will use its customary processes for course approval.
7. The oversight of these courses is the responsibility of the divisions or programs from which they are offered.
8. Courses should adhere to standard practices and customary credit-hour conventions.

There are obvious advantages to learners who acquire needed knowledge through credit courses.

- A. Credit is earned toward completion of a college or university degree.
- B. Course credit is transferable between institutions of higher learning and is for the most part perpetual.
- C. Participating students have access to career advising services at the college.
- D. Libraries and other learning support resources of the college or university such as tutoring, placement, OhioLink, etc., are available to those participating in college course work.

In Closing, the sanctioning of short-course training programs by institutions of higher learning has been a common practice in the United States. Organizations such the American Council of Education, the National Skills Standards Board, and the Association for State Colleges and Universities have established processes and recommendations for converting non-credit content to college credit. In 1973, the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York established the National Program on Non-collegiate Sponsored Instruction to link programs at degree granting institutions with the efforts of business and industry. This organization evaluates non-credit content and makes recommendations to degree granting institutions.

We wish to give credit to the American Council on Education, who provided some of the inspiration for this statement.