



Arizona State University
University Senate

Senate Motion #2023-49

Motion Introduced by: University Senate Student-Faculty Policy Committee

Date of Motion: February 27, 2023

Title of Motion: Resolution

Action Requested: Revision of the [course load policy](#) to account for differences in time commitment between Sessions A and B and Session C courses.

Resolution

WHEREAS, the current maximum course load for which a student may register across all three sessions (A, B, or C) during the fall or spring semester is 18 credit hours, with a maximum of 9 credit hours in each A or B session;

WHEREAS, a student wishing to register for more than 18 credit hours must petition the standards committee of the college in which they are enrolled and must obtain approval for a course overload before registration;

WHEREAS, the Arizona Board of Regents requires “a minimum of 45 hours of work by each student is required for each unit of credit” (ABOR Policy 2-224, Academic Credit), resulting in 135 hours of work for a 3-credit course, or 9 hours/week in C session, 18 hours/week in A or B session;

WHEREAS, Arizona State University’s current maximum course load of 18 credit hours does not recognize that the time commitment required of students generally differs between sessions A and B and session C; and

WHEREAS, the forgoing can result in students overburdened with course time commitments while not registered for a course overload, which may render the policy ineffective in its goal of protecting students;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Arizona State University Senate, representing members of the Academic Assembly,

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1. supports the re-evaluation of the Arizona State University course load policy to take into account the differences in weekly time commitment that can be required of students between Sessions A and B and Session C;
2. supports the establishment of a system in which the maximum course load is consistent with the standard time commitment for Session C courses totaling 18 credit hours of 54 hours of time commitment/week; and
3. recommends that the course registration system display a “red flag” for students whose course registration would result in more than 54 hours of time commitment/week in any of Sessions A, B, and C, so that the students can be appropriately advised.

Background

The memo below, which led to the creation of RFC 241, was shared with Senate leadership and the SFPC by the Academic Standards and Grievances Committee for the College of Health Solutions.

MEMO

Date: November 7, 2022

To: Penny Ann Dolin, University Academic Senate President

Maureen McCoy, Academic Senate President Downtown Phoenix Campus

Maria Coca, Manager-Academic Senate

From: Select Members of the College of Health Solutions (CHS) Academic Standards and Grievances Committee and Pamela Swan, Academic Senator, CHS

Re: Request for Consultation to University Senate

Non-curricular policy

In recent discussions related to Course Overload requests, the CHS Academic Standards and Grievances Committee (ASGC) has identified a problem with the ASU Course Load policy related to its ability to regulate students’ course load throughout the semester. We are requesting that the University Senate reviews this policy and recommend that the ASU administration reevaluates the University course load policy. The rationale for our request follows.

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The current course load policy states that “the maximum course load for which a student may register in a semester is 18 credit hours, with a maximum of nine credit hours in each A or B session”. We understand this to mean 18 credit hours maximum over all three sessions of the semester. However, as it is written, the policy does not consider how students distribute the enrolled credit hours nor considers the actual time commitment of the course load across all 3 sessions in the semester. In other words, the policy does not recognize that the 7.5-week session (A and B sessions) courses require double the time commitment compared to Session C courses.

It is likely that this policy was written at a time when “on ground” students were restricted to registering for only Session C classes and “online students” could only register for the 7.5-week Sessions. Now, however, “on ground” students often register for both 7.5-week sessions, in addition to classes in the 15-week term. This has led to the inadvertent ability for some students to take a serious overload of courses without the system “flagging” them for an overload and allowing them to take a much higher course load beyond what is intended by the 18-credit hour requirement per semester policy.

The Arizona Board of Regents requires a minimum of 45 hours work for each credit hour for college-level courses, which translates to a minimum of 135 hours for a 3-credit course. Hence, a 3-credit course completed in a 7.5-week long session requires a minimum time commitment of 18 hours per week, while a 3-credit course completed in a 15-week session requires a time commitment of 9 hours per week.

Table 1 below provides various illustrations of possible ways for students to distribute and enroll in 18 credit hours in a semester. Note that there are many different combinations of session A, B and C courses that can be taken while all equal 18 credit hours (technically the requirement), but the actual course time commitment ranges from 54 h/wk to 81 h/wk in any given ½ term session. Only 4 out of 16 combinations (examples 1-4) require a time commitment equivalent to the standard 18 session C credit hours (highlighted in green).

In recent years, the CHS ASGC has recognized that because of the way students distribute their classes across the term, some students “slip” through the cracks in the policy, such that they are able to enroll and take a much higher workload than would be normally allowed without requiring a petition for a course overload.

Below, we present 3 different scenarios that demonstrate the inefficiency of the policy, and its inconsistency in the way it affects students. Note: Scenarios 2 & 3 are real-life examples taken from overload requests submitted to the CHS ASGC.

Scenario 1: a student enrolls in 9 credit hours in session A and 9 credit hours in session C. This is technically within the 18-credit hour per semester load and the student does not need to petition

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to request an overload. However, the enrolled credits require a time commitment of 81 h/wk or **13.5 hours/day** in a 6 working day week, during the 1st half-term. **In this scenario, despite the high time commitment required for this course load, which is equivalent to 27 (session C) credit hours, the student is not required to petition for a course overload.** This student's excessive workload would not be flagged and would slip through the cracks.

Scenario 2: a student wants to enroll in 22 credit hours in session C, which is above the 18-hour requirement and, thus, is required to submit a course overload petition. The time commitment for this course load is 66-h/wk or **11 hours/day** in a 6 working day week, during the 15-week term. **In this scenario, although the student would have a lower weekly workload than the student in Scenario 1, they must petition for a course overload.**

Scenario 3: a student enrolls in 9 credit hours in session A, 9 credit hours in session C and 3 credit hours in session B with an advisor's approval (a total of 21 credit hours), after successfully completing a similar load the previous term. The student wants to enroll in an additional 3 credit hours in session B for a total of 24 credit hours for the term, and submits a petition to the ASGC, at mid-term. The time commitment for this course load is 81 h/wk or **13.5 hours/day** during the 1st half-term and 66 h/wk or **11 hours/day** over the 2nd half-term. **In this scenario, the student had a 'course and credit load' of 81 hours/wk during the first half-term without having to seek an approval (similar to scenario 1), and then for the 2nd term is required to petition for a smaller course overload of 66 hours/wk.**

Given the discordance of the ASU Course Load policy with what's happening on the ground, we ask the University Senate to review this policy and recommend that the ASU University administration reevaluates the course load policy. We propose that the policy be revised, such that when a student enrolls, the course load /credit hour load from sessions A and B sessions (i.e., 7.5-week long courses) are considered in accordance with the time commitment they require, and that a system be established such that the maximum course load limit is consistent with the standardized session C credit hours. Changing this policy will help ensure consistency in credit load distribution and will protect students from inadvertently burdening themselves with more work than they can handle within the 135-hours per 3 credit hour course requirement.

Please see table 1 below.

Table 1. Time commitment corresponding to 18 credit hours distributed in different combinations of session A, B and C courses in a semester. Note all examples meet the 18-credit hour maximum. However, only examples 1-4 (highlighted in green) meet the time commitment that is consistent with the intent of the policy. Number bolded in red exceed the 54 hours/week workload that is intended by the 18 hour/semester policy.

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Example #	Course Distribution Courses/ Session			Total Credit Hours/ term	Total Time (Hours/ term)	1st half-term A + C Term (7.5 weeks)		2nd half-term B + C Term (7.5 weeks)	
	A	B	C			hrs/ wk	hr/day*	hr/wk	hr/day*
1	0	0	6	18	810	54	9.0	54	9.0
2	3	3	0	18	810	54	9.0	54	9.0
3	1	1	4	18	810	54	9.0	54	9.0
4	2	2	2	18	810	54	9.0	54	9.0
5	1	0	5	18	810	63	10.5	45	7.5
6	0	1	5	18	810	45	7.5	63	10.5
7	2	0	4	18	810	72	12.0	36	6.0
8	0	2	4	18	810	36	6.0	72	12.0
9	3	0	3	18	810	81	13.5	27	4.5
10	0	3	3	18	810	27	4.5	81	13.5
11	1	2	3	18	810	45	7.5	63	10.5
12	2	1	3	18	810	63	10.5	45	7.5
13	3	1	2	18	810	72	12.0	36	6.0
14	1	3	2	18	810	36	6.0	72	12.0
15	3	2	1	18	810	63	10.5	45	7.5
16	2	3	1	18	810	45	7.5	63	10.5

* based on 6-d working week

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