

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Senate Committee on University Priorities
Memorandum

TO: Senate

FROM: John Waterhouse
Chair, SCUP
Vice President, Academic

RE: Additive Credit for Co-op Education
Semesters (SCUP 06-34)

DATE: August 29, 2006

At its July 12, 2006 meeting SCUP reviewed and approved the proposal dealing with the assignment of additive credit for the completion of Co-op Education work-term semesters.

Motion

“That Senate approve that each co-op semester completed by a student at SFU be granted three additive credits. These are in addition to the credits required for the degree. This is to be effective for the Spring 2007 (1071) semester, subject to the ability to implement by that date.”

Rationale

The proposed change to the assignment of credit value to co-op education work terms would recognize the skills acquired under academic supervision during Co-op experiences. Each Co-op semester completed by a student would be granted three additive credits. The additive credits would supplement, rather than replace, the academic course credits required by SFU for undergraduate degree completion. Co-op semesters would be graded on a Pass/Fail basis.

All other Canadian universities with Co-op education programs grant credit as recognition of academic activity and linkages to classroom based learning. Three credits per semester is the standard.

Currently, at SFU, students registered in Co-op work terms are not counted as part of our FTE, and as such, the academic activity related to both learning and evaluation of

Co-op work terms is unaccounted for. The proposed change to additive credit would not increase the fees students pay to participate in the Co-op program.

Further details are provided in the attached documentation.

encl.

c: N. Angerilli, M. Klemetski

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

MEMORANDUM

To: Senate Committee on University Priorities
From: Christine MacKenzie, Chair
Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies *MacKenzie*
Subject: Curriculum Revisions Additive Credit for Coop
Date: 28 June 2006

Action undertaken by the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies at its meeting of 26 June, 2006 gives rise to the following motion:

Motion:

"that SCUP approve and recommend to Senate that each coop semester completed by a student at SFU be granted three 'additive' credits. These are in addition to the credits required for the degree. This is to be effective for the Spring 2007 (1071) semester subject to the ability to implement it by that date."

The relevant documentation for review by SCUP is attached.

Additive Credit for Coop

The Proposal

It is proposed that each coop semester completed by a student at SFU be granted three additive credits. These are in addition to the credits required for the degree.

Rationale

Education comes from two roots. The traditional root is that of *apprenticeship*: the student acquires the know-how of his or her profession through working closely with an experienced practitioner. For many disciplines practiced at SFU, it is only relatively recently -- since the early years of the twentieth century -- that the demand for increased numbers of practitioners has led to the creation of a second root, the academic tradition. For all disciplines, there are important aspects of education best mastered in the traditional manner. This is most true of those skills that are hardest to formalise -- teamwork, craftsmanship, and professionalism. Conveying the importance of these skills to the student is a challenge, not least because our society in general, and academia in particular, values intellectual skills and discounts those abilities which cannot easily be formalised and tested.

To meet the challenge of putting a proper value on applied skills, we propose to recognise time spent in acquiring them by granting additive credit for Coop semesters. These credits would supplement, rather than replace, the academic credits required by SFU for graduation. Coop semesters would be graded as Pass/Fail.

The primary advantage of this proposal is that it would emphasise to students that we consider coop an important part of the educational experience. However, it has the secondary advantage that it would bring us into line with other major universities offering Coop in Canada, most of which allocate Coop credit in exactly this way.

Quality Control

What mechanisms are in place to ensure that students have actually learned something from their Coop experience?

Additive credit should only be granted to programs where effective mechanisms for ensuring this are in place. We believe that such mechanisms are already in place for most units, and can readily be implemented in the remainder. Quality is ensured, firstly, by SFU's Coop program, which is accredited by the Canadian Association for Cooperative Education, and which, to maintain its accreditation, must demonstrate that each Coop work term provides students with the opportunity to learn through the application of academic principles in a work context and through exposure to new ideas and processes experienced in the workplace.

In many academic units, faculty and staff members are also actively involved in the assessment of the Coop

students' experience. For example, each returning student may be required to give an oral presentation on his or her work experience to an audience of Coop staff member(s) and faculty volunteer(s), and submit a written work report that will be read by Coop staff and by a faculty member. It is recommended that similar practices be put in place, so that faculty or teaching assistants will evaluate each written work report. The Vice-President Academic has committed to providing funds to academic units to support the hiring of graduate students to perform these evaluations.

To further ensure the quality of the work experience, the Coop staff must endeavour to create employment opportunities which enhance the academic disciplines of the students. The acting Director of Coop has agreed that co-op staff will work with the departments to identify jobs that will closely align a work term with the student's discipline, and will then try to generate these types of jobs in the greater community.