

SM 1/8/66

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TO: SENATE

PAPER 31

FROM: ARTS FACULTY

July 22, 1966

SUBJECT: CREDIT ALLOTMENT FOR LANGUAGE COURSES 100 & 101

File: 7-A-35

The Arts Faculty recommends to Senate that the language courses 100 and 101 be changed from a credit allotment of 3 to 5. The Faculty further recommends that this change be retroactive to the Fall Semester 1965.

The statement (prepared by a special committee of the Faculty) approved by the Arts Faculty is as follows:

"We believe that the total time commitment that a course demands from its students must be taken into consideration in determining the credit hours allotted to that course.

"In view of what appears to be a considerable total time commitment for foreign language courses 100 and 101, and in view of the fact that the Department of Modern Languages considers it essential that these courses, by the nature of their subject matter, should be intensive in treatment, this committee accepts on the recommendation of the DML an increase to five hours in the credit allotment for these courses.

"This recommendation is not to be taken as a precedent either for other departments to intensify their courses and demand more credit hours or for changing the idea of a liberal arts education. (With regards to the latter it should be noted that this program would require 16 semester hours credit in the first two years.)"

The arguments for this recommendation are attached.

D. P. Robertson
Secretary
Arts Faculty

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Arguments for an increase in credit hours
for
language courses 100 and 101

1. FL 100 and 101 represent an anomaly in the class-credit hour ratio.

The number of credit hours given to foreign language courses 100 and 101 (which have 8 sessions per week) represents an anomaly in terms of the class-credit hour ratio used at SFU for other courses --no other courses at SFU having more than 5 meetings per week give only 3 hours' credit and the only other courses having 8 meetings, General Chemistry I and II (with their labs, usually taken concurrently), give a total of 5 credits [see the SFU Catalogue].

2. The total time commitment for FL 100 and 101 is considerably higher than for other Arts courses (including other DML courses).

The small number of credit hours given to FL 100 and 101 cannot be justified by claiming that these courses require less outside-of-class work than other courses, since they demand considerable outside memorization and grammatical drill study for classroom performances [see, for example, the course programme for Spanish 100]. Moreover, several hundred students in FL 100 and 101 claimed, through a poll conducted by Mr. Mynott last semester, that these courses require an outside-of-class time commitment from equal to double that demanded by other courses [see Student Brief of February 28 presented to the Faculty on March 10].

Now let's look at three different ways of comparing total time commitment

- a) If we accept the figures in the student poll, the total time commitment for a student in, for example, Spanish 100 or German 101 would compare as follows with the total time commitment in other courses:

$$\text{FL 100 or 101} : 8 + 12 = 20$$

$$\text{Other courses} : 3 + 6 = 9$$

- b) If we use the standard formula of two hours of outside-of-class study per hour of class, the total time commitment figures would be as follows (notice that 3 hours in FL 100 and 101 don't require outside work):

$$\begin{array}{rcl} \text{FL 100 or 101:} & 8 & + \quad (5 \times 2) & = & 18 \\ \text{Other courses:} & 3 & + \quad (3 \times 2) & = & 9 \end{array}$$

- c) If we have doubts about the reliability of the student poll and assume instead that students in FL 100 or 101 spend neither more nor less time in outside-of-class study than in other courses, the figures would be as follows:

$$\begin{array}{rcl} \text{FL 100 or 101:} & 8 & + \quad 6 & = & 14 \\ \text{Other courses:} & 3 & + \quad 6 & = & 9 \end{array}$$

3. Students are unhappy with the present credit allotment.

Last fall about 750 students in FL 100 or 101 signed a petition asking that credit hours for these courses be increased to five, while stating that their discontent was not with the courses themselves but with their low credits. The students' dissatisfaction with the low (and misleading) credit allotment for FL 100 and 101 can be seen also in the considerable attrition in some of these courses. The students' discontent has continued to be expressed through inquiries and complaints to the ombudsman and to members of the DML; stronger expressions of student dissatisfaction can be expected in the future if nothing is done.

4. The present credit allotment for FL 100 and 101 is out of line with the practices at the foreign language teaching profession in North America.

- a) Regardless of the method of language teaching used, most North American universities offer more intensive FL courses, usually carrying more credit hours than later courses, during the first year of FL study [see current university catalogues].
- b) At other universities where, as in SFU, an intensive audio-lingual method is used, first-year FL courses receive 5 or 6 credit hours, while other FL courses and courses in other departments get 3 (some even 2) credit hours [see catalogues from Cornell U (6 credit hours), San Francisco S.C. (5), U. of Oklahoma (5), U. of Colorado (5), American U. (6), Louisiana S.U. (5)]. (Among other things this means that a student transferring to or from SFU from or to such universities would lose several credit hours in the process.)

In view of these reasons, and in view of the fact that the Department of Modern Languages considers that these courses, by the nature of their subject matter, should remain intensive in treatment, the undersigned wish to urge the Faculty of Arts to vote an increase to five hours in the credit allotment for these courses. In urging such a vote, we wish also to draw the attention of the Faculty to the following:

a) Since language courses are optional at SFU, and since many students that have so far been assigned to 100 or 101 could be placed in the proposed new 200 course, this change in credit allotments would affect only about one third of the SFU students during one of their four years at SFU, i.e., just 1/12 of the total student time.

b) This change in credit allotments has as its only purpose the correction of an existing anomaly in the time commitment-credit hour ratio and should not be taken as a precedent for other departments to intensify their courses and demand more credits without justifying the need for an early intensive treatment of the subject matter; it should not be taken either as a precedent for changing the idea of a liberal arts education.

c) As a result of this change the DML will not be attracting students away from courses in other departments, for its requirements of 16 hours (5+5+3+3) during the first two years differs only slightly in quantity, and primarily in distribution, from the requirements of 15 hours (3x5) made by other departments.

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