

# LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

## POLICY

### CREDIT POINTS

#### LEGISLATION

There is no external or La Trobe legislation which impinges on the credit point policy of the University.

#### POLICY

The University policy was largely determined in October 1995. Amendments were subsequently approved in:

March 1999  
June 1999  
November 2001

The policy provided that the credit point system will have the following attributes:

- 1 A total of 120 credit points per year in single-degree programs (360 points to qualify for a three-year degree or 480 points for a four-year degree). Any departure from this requirement is specifically to be approved by Academic Committee. Requests to increase the total credit points for first-year level subjects will be supported only when the corresponding reduction in credit points is from second year subjects, not third-year subjects.
- 2 A minimum number of credit points of 120 at final year level within the total number of points required to satisfy the course requirements (eg 360 for three-year degree) or as determined by the specific course regulation.
- 3 Each subject is to have a fixed credit point value approved by Academic Committee.
- 4 Subjects with integer values of credit points with allowable values of 5, 10, 15, 20 and 30.
- 5 A most prevalent subject size of 15 credit points at first year level, the numbers of which are to be increased over time. Subjects at second and higher level do not have to be predominantly of 15 credit points.
- 6 Documentation of standard workloads for courses to ensure these are equitable.
- 7 Double degrees usually having 135 credit points per year (540 points in a four-year accelerated program), and 75 percent of the number of credit points of the total of the two individual degrees at final-year level (usually 180 credit points).
- 8 Academic Committee be responsible for monitoring the above guidelines and their implementation.

The advantages proposed for the credit point system are that it will facilitate cross-faculty enrolment, transfers between courses and credit transfer.

#### PROCEDURE

- 1 In designing and amending courses, faculties should bear in mind that the 15 credit-point subject is intended to become the most prevalent size, but that other sizes will always be available.

- 2 While normal undergraduate degrees are expected to contain 120 credit points per year to ensure workloads are equitable, it is conceivable that some degrees (especially those with non school-leaver entry or meeting the requirements of professional associations) might require more than 120 credit points and these should be submitted to Academic Committee for consideration. In addition, degrees containing less than 120 credit points per year, or less than 120 credit points of final year subjects, need also be submitted to the Committee.
- 3 Where Academic Committee approves a year of a course to have more or less than 120 credit points per year, the student system must reflect this to ensure that students in those years pay fees or HECS based on 1.0 EFTSU.
- 4 The number of credit points per year of a course is determined by the minimum number of points which satisfy the degree structure. For example in 1999 the first year of the Bachelor of Behavioural Science could be satisfied with eight 15 credit point science subjects (120). Most students however took two or four Arts subjects (130 or 140 credit points) and paid correspondingly higher HECS or fees as the degree can be satisfied by 120 credit points in first year.
- 5 While the policy provides for double degrees involving two three-year degrees (eg BA/BSc) having 540 credit points and 135 credit points per year, this has been generalised in the University's credit policy. Any double degree must contain at least 75 percent of the credit points of the total of the two constituent degrees. Thus a double degree based on a four year degree and a three-year degree must have at least 630 credit points, usually over five years (approximately 125 credit points per year).
- 6 In general Academic Committee has indicated that a 15 credit point subject should have at least three hours of class contact if taught on-campus.
- 7 Academic Committee has not accepted argument that some subjects (eg electives) could have different credit point values in different courses. Further it has cautioned against the creation of different subject names to allow different credit point values for a different single subject.
- 8 Clinical, Thesis, and Honours subjects (eg Zoology 4) are not subject to the standard subject size values.

## **PRACTICE**

- 1 There are two double degrees in Science, Technology and Engineering which are long-standing and different to the newer model of double degrees. The BCompSc(Hons)/BElectronicEng and BSc(Hons)/BElectronicEng were both designed to teach six-years work in five years and students obtain two four-year degrees.
- 2 Academic Committee has not been too concerned to ensure that postgraduate courses comply completely with the policy. While courses generally have been approved with 120 credit points per year, no pressure has been applied for a predominance of 15 credit point subjects.
- 3 No student is to be disadvantaged in the introduction of the credit point system. All previous unit values will retain the proportion of the year involved when they were passed and faculties have given additional consideration to students who may have taken a 15 credit point subject from a limited choice at regional campuses and end up with 355 credit points after three years.
- 4 The Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering has introduced some zero credit point subjects to track course requirements, eg work experience, English language testing.
- 5 Academic Committee has agreed to allow departures from the 15 credit point norm for first-year subjects in very specialised courses (eg in Health Sciences).

## COMMENT

- 1 The policy was implemented in two phases largely between 1997 and 2000, although there has been no move to standardisation on 15 credit point subjects after first-year. Phase 1 consisted of a simple translation of current courses and subjects to the credit point system for 1997. This resulted in a number of years of courses having more or less than 120 credit points. Further some subjects were approved with non-standard credit point values. In Phase 2 faculties have moved to conform to other principles in the system, with standardisation of first-year subjects at 15 credit points implemented in 2000.
- 2 Semesterisation of subjects and standardisation of course offerings have supported the changes involved in the implementation of the credit point system.
- 3 The credit point system was chosen with 120 credit points per year to avoid subjects with non-whole numbers of credit points (eg 12.5) and to provide the easiest accounting system.
- 4 In developing the credit point system, one aim was to ensure workloads in the various courses were equitable. It was considered approximately 46 hours of formal classes and ancillary work an appropriate figure, although this may vary for different students and different times of the year. Further there should be a general relationship between credit points and workload.
- 5 Academic Committee has noted some indicative workloads for arts and science subjects and suggests these provide guidance on suitable weekly workloads with respect to credit points.

### **Arts – 20 points**

Minimum 3 hours contact plus 12 hours non-contact. Assessment: 5000 words or 3 hour examination plus 2000 words or equivalent combination.

### **Arts – 15 points**

Minimum 3 hours contact plus 8 hours non-contact. Assessment: 4000 words or 3 hours examination plus 1000 words or equivalent combination.

### **Science – 15 points**

Minimum equivalent to 3 hours lectures, 3 hours practical plus 5 hours non-contact. Assessment: 3 hours examination or equivalent plus practical work.

These examples are not meant to preclude alternative means of subject delivery (eg block, external).

- 6 One of the main aims of the credit-point system is to standardise the University's subject offerings. This is of primary importance at first year level where students may have difficulty understanding course structures and not infrequently transfer between courses. It is somewhat less clear that the standardisation of subjects at second and third-year level is as crucial. There is a wide range of subject sizes with 10, 15 and 20 credit point subjects being common in some areas. Small subjects are useful in that they allow more advanced students to specialise in areas of a discipline.

ADG

2.8.1999

Revised 3.12.2002