Strategies for Aligning Credit Hours with Course Workloads

Sara Hill

Sr. Curriculum Designer
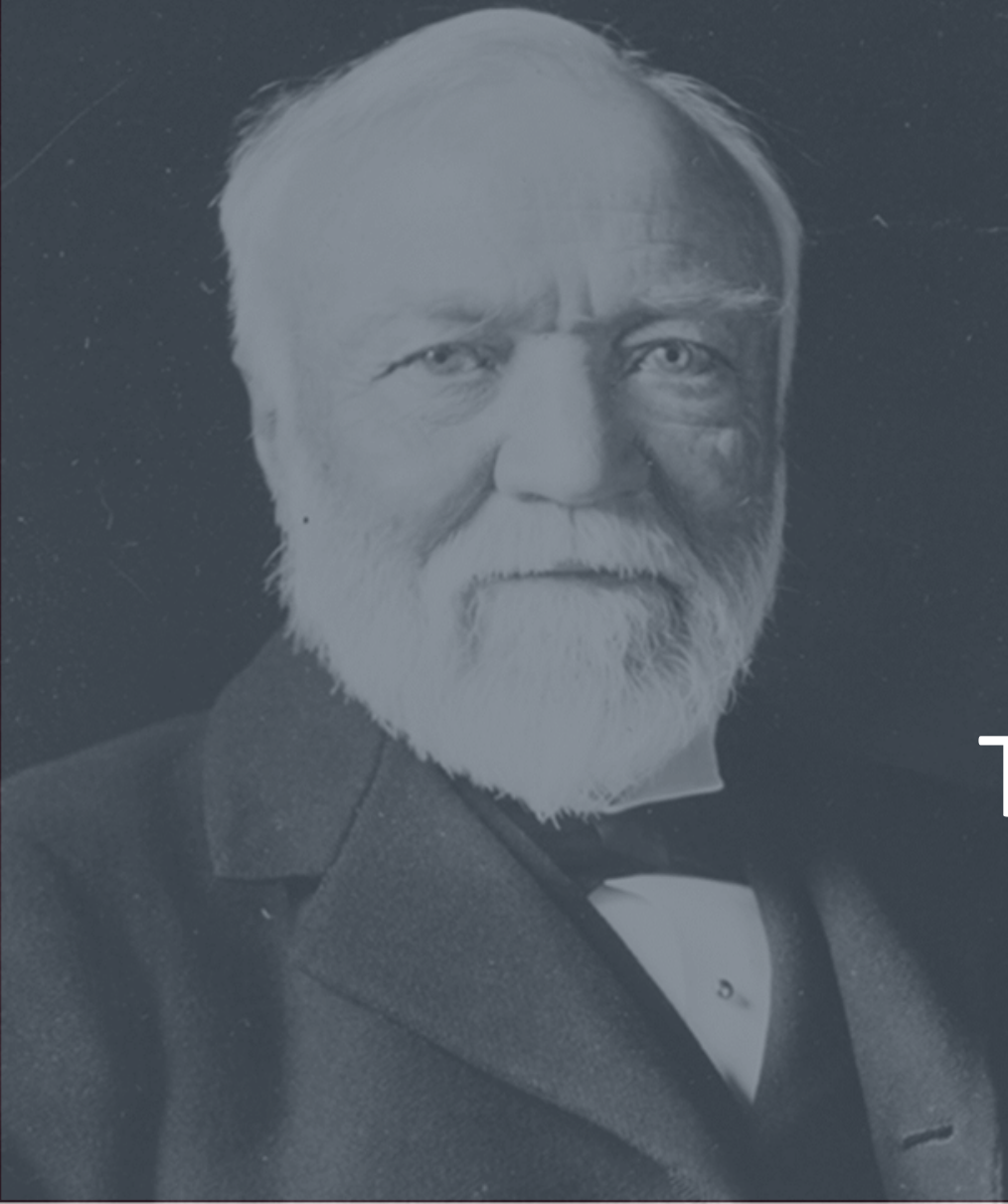
Office of Academic Affairs

Strategies for Aligning Credit Hours with Course Workloads

Topics

1. The Credit Hour—Context and Calculations

2. Teaching and Learning at JHSPH

3. Estimating Course Workloads

4. Strategies for Supporting Students

5. Resources

Background Image Source: Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health

Learning is the constant;
Time is the variable

Background Image Source: Pexels

The Carnegie Credit Unit

Calculating Credit Hours

Seat-time +
Homework-time

= Total Learning-time

Background Image Source: Life of Pix

Basic Formula

One credit:

8 hrs Seat-time +
16 hrs Homework-time

= 24 hrs Learning-time

Background Image Source: Life of Pix

JHSPH
Credit Hour Policy

Minimum Requirements

(for online courses, there's no distinction between seat- and homework-time)

# Credits	Seat-time	Homework-time	Total Learning-time
One	8 hours (1 hr per wk)	16+ hours (2+ hrs per wk)	24+ hours
Two	16 hours (2 hrs per wk)	32+ hours (4+ hrs per wk)	48+ hours
Three	24 hours (3 hrs per wk)	48+ hours (6+ hrs per wk)	72+ hours
Four	32 hours (4 hrs per wk)	64+ hours (8+ hrs per wk)	96+ hours
Five	40 hours (5 hrs per wk)	80+ hours (10+ hrs per wk)	120+ hours

Teaching and Learning at JHSPH

JHSPH Values & Culture

- ▶ What drives our curriculum?

- ▶ What do we want for our students?

- ▶ What do we expect of our students?

Background Image Source: Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health

The Science of Learning

- Students learn by doing (application)
- Collaboration and peer feedback
- Reflection
- Knowledge checks
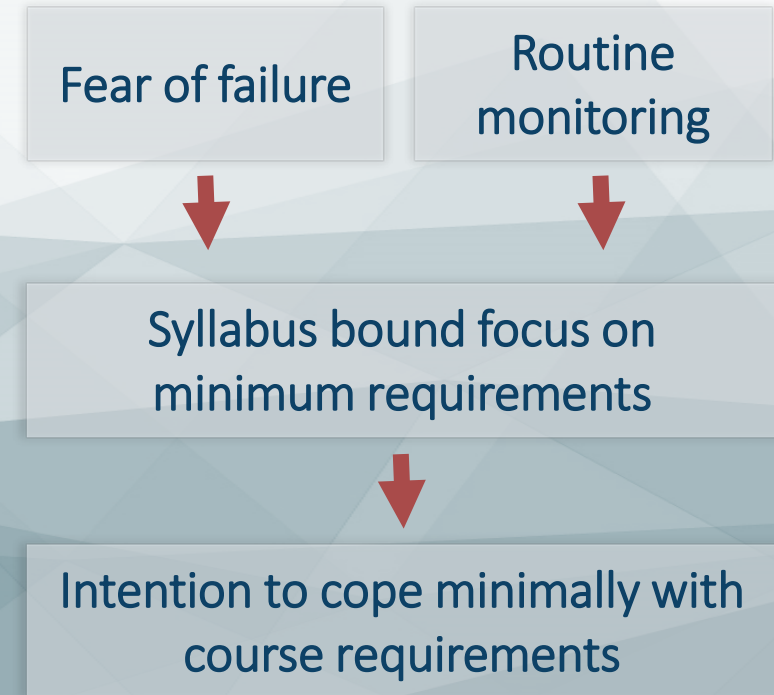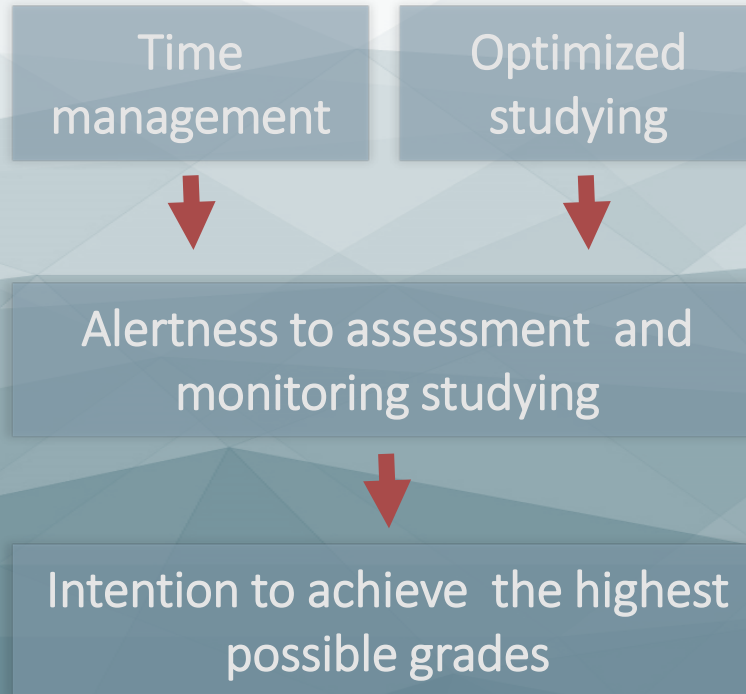- Interim assessments

SURFACE

STRATEGIC

11

DEEP

Takes more time

Background Image Source: Free Pik

DEEP

Relating ideas	Using evidence

↓ ↓

Interest in ideas and monitoring understanding

↓

Intention to seek meaning for yourself

STRATEGIC

Time management	Optimized studying

↓ ↓

Alertness to assessment and monitoring studying

↓

Intention to achieve the highest possible grades

SURFACE

Fear of failure	Routine monitoring

↓ ↓

Syllabus bound focus on minimum requirements

↓

Intention to cope minimally with course requirements

Background Image Source: Free Pik

Estimating Workloads: Challenges

▶ State of research

▶ Amount of time needed varies by student

▶ Amount of time needed varies by discipline

▶ Students' perceptions & expectations

Background Image Source: Mikitso Tateisi

Estimating Reading Time: Examples

▶ How much time will it take students to read a 17–page (excluding references) journal article?

▶ How much time will it take students to read a 10–page case study?

Average Adult Reading Speed

▶ Average speed is 300 wpm—may slow to 200 if reading is difficult.

▶ When calculating wpm, need to consider average words per page, e.g., journal articles are ~600 words.

Estimating Reading Times: Reading Purpose

▶ Reading for understanding (recall, key points, etc.).

▶ Reading critically (engaging with the material, making judgements).

Background Image Source: Lucia Novosel

Estimating Time: Additional Activities

▶ Substantive Discussion (in-class or online): 1 hr per wk

▶ Knowledge Checks and Self-Assessments

- 10-question multiple choice test: 20 min
- Brief written response (~250 words): 20 min
- Brief reflection paper (~250 words): 30 min

Background Image Source: Raw Pixels

Strategies for Alignment

▶ List all required homework. For online courses, list lectures, etc. as well as all non-lecture activities and calculate the workload based upon "total learning-time."

▶ Estimate the ballpark amount of time students will spend on homework each week (round to half- or quarter-hours). Begin your estimations with "known" times—e.g., timed assessments or recorded lectures.

Strategies for Alignment, Continued

▸ Review your estimations for each week to see if weekly workloads are balanced.

▸ Review the course's total learning time to see if it is significantly under or over the minimum requirements.

Background Image Source: Pexels

Using a Workload Worksheet

	Recorded Materials	Hrs	Discussion Board	Hrs	Readings	Hrs	Projects	Hrs	Papers	Hrs	Other Assignments or Activities	Hrs	WEEKLY TOTAL
Week 1	Lecs 1A, 2A, 2B,2C & 2D	1.75	Introductions, Peer Responses	0.50	Zacks, Negre, Kruse, Woodward, Gordon	3.50			Mini-Reflection 1	0.50	Synthesis, Key Points & Questions from Readings	2.00	8.25
Week 2	Case Video, VoiceThread	1.25			Woodward, Garcia, Taliercio, Baker, WHO	2.50	Project Topic Selection & Proposal Draft	4.00			Q&A Prep	0.50	9.30
Week 3	Lecs 3A, 3B, 3C, & 3D	1.25	Peer Responses	0.50	Lee, Stine, Eze, Mbanefo, Shree, Harper	2.00	Selection of Stakeholders and Project Resources	3.75	Mini-Reflection 2	0.50			9.00
Week 4	Case Video, VoiceThread	1.75			Bloomfeld, Payne, Dogar, Young, Oz	1.50	Project Work/Milestones	4.50			Q&A Prep	0.50	9.30
Week 5	Lecs 4A, 4B, & 4C	1.50	Peer Project Troubleshooting	1.00	Kowalski, Schenk, Jameson, Chin-Ho	1.50	Project Work/Milestones	4.00	Mini-Reflection	0.50			8.50
Week 6	Case Video, VoiceThread	1.00	Stakeholder Consensus Activity	1.00	Albom, Elisson, Tomokore, Porter	1.50	Project Work/Milestones	2.00					9.25
Week 7	Lecs 5A, 5B, & 5C	0.75			Webber, Fleurry, Frankel, Shirani	1.50					Problem Analysis	1.00	9.05
Week 8	VoiceThread & Course Wrap Up	1.00	Work Ahead Responses	1.00	Longwood, Wiggins, Orber, O'Hara	2.00			Mini-Reflection	0.50	Problem Analysis	3.50	9.50
TOTALS		10.25		4.00		16.00		18.25		2.00		7.50	

20

Supporting Students

▶ Communicate expectations in the syllabus, e.g., "You can expect to spend x time on homework each week." This is especially important if the workload might be perceived as heavier than average.

▶ Help students stay on track with knowledge checks, self-assessments, interim assessments, milestones, etc.

Background Image Source: Unsplash

Supporting Students, Continued

▸ Solicit feedback from students—--how much time they spent per week and their perceptions of the usefulness of homework.

▸ At the program level, consider the placement of courses with heavy workloads in the curriculum.

Background Image Source: Unsplash

Workload Issues at JHSPH

▶ A lack of homework in some seminars and Institute courses (problematic in terms of both learning and policy/accreditation compliance).

▶ Courses with workloads that significantly exceed the minimum requirements. In some instances, a credit increase will address the issue.

Best Practices

▶ Consider course readings carefully; distinguish between required and supplemental readings. In many courses, students don't complete required readings if they aren't incorporated into lectures or assessments.

▶ Map an existing course to get a sense of how your learning activities are distributed and compare your workload estimates with students' perceptions.

24

Best Practices, Continued

▶ In many instances it's not possible to distribute weekly workloads evenly across the term—communicate uneven distributions to students.

▶ If you are designing a new course or redesigning an existing course, map your homework to the course's learning objectives to identify what's essential.

Background Image Source: Unsplash

References and Resources

Course Resource Site on SharePoint My JHSPH: https://my.jhsph.edu/Resources/CourseResources

Brown, A. H., & Green, T. (2009). Time students spend reading threaded discussions in online graduate courses requiring asynchronous participation. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 10(6), 51-64.

Houston, N. (2016, August 8th). Estimating Student Workload for Your Courses. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

Kember, D., & Leung, D. Y. (1998). Influences upon students' perceptions of workload. *Educational Psychology*, 18(3), 293-307.

Kember, D. (2004). Interpreting student workload and the factors which shape students' perceptions of their workload. *Studies in Higher Education*, 29(2), 165-184.

Kovanović, V., Gašević, D., Dawson, S., Joksimović, S., Baker, R. S., & Hatala, M. (2015, March). Penetrating the black box of time-on-task estimation. In *Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Learning Analytics and Knowledge* (pp. 184-193). ACM.