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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

REPORT OF THE REVIEW COMMITTEE ON AWARDING CREDIT FOR ADVANCED PLACEMENT AND INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

This committee was charged with recommending clear, uniform policies for the awarding of University credit for several standardized examinations. The members of the committee were:

Carol Cline, Assistant Director, Admissions
Linda Ellinger, Associate to the Vice President for Arts, Sciences, and Engineering
David Frank, Professor, Mathematics
Kenneth Heller, Professor, Physics
William Hanson, Professor, Philosophy

The review committee met several times during winter and spring quarters to review current practices on granting credit for Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) examinations. We also looked at data on the subsequent success of University students who have been granted such credit. Summaries of some of our findings are included in the discussions below.

Advanced Placement

Advanced Placement (or AP) tests are administered by the College Board to high school seniors who have been enrolled in special Advanced Placement classes. In the fall of 1990, 170 NHS students who were admitted to the Twin Cities campus were awarded credit for one or more AP exams taken in high school; 51 students at Morris and 16 at Duluth also received AP credit. Appendices A and B show the credits granted in 1990-91 for both NHS and NAS students for IB, AP, CLEP, and Credit-by-Exam at all campuses.

For the fall, 1990 Twin Cities group, credit was awarded for a total of 237 exams (some students were awarded credit for more than one examination). The mean number of University of Minnesota credits granted for AP exams on the Twin Cities campus in fall, 1990 was 10.13; the range was 0-55. The examination for which students most commonly received credit was Calculus AB (79 students), followed by Literature/Composition (43), American History (25) and Language/Composition (23). Fewer than 15 students were awarded credits for any of thirteen other examinations.

The present University policy on awarding credit varies by campus. (A complete listing of current credit awards is included as Appendix C.) In most cases, the Twin Cities campus has given credit only for scores of 4 or 5 on the exam; Morris and Duluth tend to give some credit for scores of 3 and above. In some cases, variable credit has been awarded for different scores; for example, on the Twin Cities Campus, a score of 3 on the Art History exam allows exemption from a distribution requirement; a score of 4 is granted four credits of art history, and a score of 5 is granted 8 credits of art history. That same examination, regardless of score (3, 4, or 5) would be granted 10 credits at Morris, while at Duluth a score of 3 would be awarded an exemption and a score of either 4 or 5 would receive eight credits. This situation, while it might be justifiable on each campus, renders the University incapable of giving a clear message to students about how we treat AP exams; it also prevents us from acting as a unified system in our discussions with other higher education systems. (For comparative purposes, a summary of practices at other Big Ten institutions is included as Appendix D.)

In reviewing data on the success of students on the Twin Cities campus who had been awarded AP credit, we discovered that the subsequent mean GPA of the 170 students admitted in fall, 1990 was 3.21. Only 24 of the 170 students had a cumulative GPA of less than 2.5, while 66 had a GPA of 3.5 or greater. Clearly, these students are quite successful at the University. In a more detailed follow-up, we looked at the subsequent success in math courses of students who had taken the Calculus AB exam. Of the 79 students who took the exam, 70 had taken a subsequent math course. The average "follow-up" math grade of students who had had a score of 4 on their Calculus AB exam was 3.22 on a 4.0 scale; the average grade of students who had had a 5 score was 3.45.

1. The University should set 3 as the standard minimum score for awards on all tests. Where a department has conducted studies that show that a score of 3 is too low to predict success in sequential courses, a higher score may be established. No department is obligated to offer credit for any AP exam, although departments may be asked to provide to SCEP an explanation of any decision not to award credit for AP.
2. Where a test covers material that is substantially similar to an existing University course, credit for that course should be awarded. Departments will determine which courses(s) are covered by the exam.
3. Where a test covers material that is deemed to be college level but that is not substantially similar to an existing course, the University should award four "blanket credits" in courses numbered 1999 or 3999 in appropriate departments. This practice would recognize the college level achievement of the student without placing that student in advanced courses for which he or she may not be fully prepared.
4. "Exemptions" or "partial exemptions" should not be granted. These are confusing to students and advisers alike. Either grant credit under 2 or 3 above, or do not grant credit.
5. In most cases, differential credit should not be awarded for different scores (e.g., 4 credits for a score of 3, 8 credits for a score of 4, and 12 credits for a score of 5). The only exceptions may be in cases where the exam covers material that is clearly sequential in nature (e.g., mathematics), where a higher score represents more coverage of material, rather than a better grade on the material. SCEP may ask departments to make a case for any decision to award differential credit for different scores.
6. With the guidance and approval of the appropriate campus committee (e.g., the Council on Liberal Education on the Twin Cities campus), allow students to use blanket credit awards to meet certain liberal education requirements.
7. Require periodic review of the tests (at least every five years) to determine if changes should be made in the award schedule. In addition, a system should be established that will provide the capability to review and track the academic performance of students granted credit with an AP score of 3 for the first three years. Responsibility for setting up a tracking system and organizing a schedule of periodic reviews should rest with the Director of Admissions.

Recommendations for International Baccalaureate Credit
at the University of Minnesota

The following recommendations are for the Twin Cities, Morris, and Crookston campuses of the University:

1. Students who complete an IB diploma with a score of 30 or higher and no examination scores lower than 4 should be offered 12 credits for each of three higher level examinations, plus 3 credits for each of the subsidiary exams, for a total of 45 credits. Credits should be transcribed according to the same rules as those suggested for the AP exams: where a test covers material that is substantially similar to an existing University course, credit for that course should be awarded; where a test covers material that is deemed to be college level but that is not substantially similar to an existing course, the University should award blanket credits in courses numbered 1999 or 3999 in appropriate departments.
2. No credit should be given for subsidiary level exams other than those included as part of the IB Diploma as described in #1 above, but students may receive credit as in #1 for any Higher Level exams with a score of 5 or higher.
3. With the guidance and approval of the appropriate campus committee (e.g., the Council of Liberal Education on the Twin Cities campus), allow students to use blanket credit awards to meet certain liberal education requirements.
4. Require periodic review of the tests (at least every five years) to determine if changes should be made in the award schedule. In addition, a system should be established that will provide the capability to review and track the academic performance of students granted credit for IB exams. Responsibility for setting up a tracking system and organizing a schedule of periodic reviews should rest with the Registrar and/or Director of Admissions.

International Baccalaureate

The IB exams differ from the AP exams in that students enrolled in IB programs are taking a comprehensive curriculum rather than a set of discrete advanced courses. The following description is taken from the General Regulations for all IB programs: "The examination for the Diploma requires candidates to offer six subjects, each normally studied over a period of two years. At least three and not more than four must be offered at the higher level, and the others at the subsidiary level." Students may come to the University either with a full IB diploma, or with a certificate which recognizes specific higher level or subsidiary level test scores.

Present University policy on IB scores is the same for all three campuses. For most examinations, credit is given for a score of 5 or higher on a 7-point scale; in some cases, credit is given for a score of 4. With three exceptions, credit is given only for higher level exams; credit for subsidiary exams is awarded in Art/Design, Biology, and Computer Science. Appendix E summarizes current University policy on credit awards.

The IB program is still relatively new in Minnesota; in the fall of 1990, only 7 students received credit at the Twin Cities campus for IB exams. According to information gathered by Matt Dion in CLA, Minnesota schools awarded 11 IB diplomas and 308 IB certificates in 1990. He indicated that there was no data available on how IB diploma or certificate students perform after enrollment in college. Appendix F provides comparative data on credit awards for IB at other Minnesota institutions and at Big Ten schools.

Our committee was also asked by Associate Vice President Kvavik to review a request by Tom Keith, International Baccalaureate Coordinator at the Minneapolis Public Schools, to consider a comprehensive and attractive credit award for students who complete the IB diploma. As part of our discussion of such an award, we reviewed data provided by the Admissions Office on policies used by other major institutions in awarding IB credit. It generally appears that some institutions, including Harvard and Stanford, are more generous in their credit awards than is the University of Minnesota.

Assumptions Guiding our Recommendations

In making the following recommendations, we have operated according to a set of assumptions about the University's goals and about the students who are seeking credit awards for AP and IB.

1. The University wishes to encourage high-ability students to enroll here. We want to encourage policies that, while maintaining high academic standards, make the University an attractive place for the best students.
2. High-ability students have many educational opportunities, and they make intelligent comparative judgments about the schools they are considering attending, including the advantages offered by variations in policies on issues such as advanced placement.
3. AP and IB classes are usually taken by high-ability students. In most schools, these classes have the reputation of being tough and time-consuming. Furthermore, the exams themselves are not taken by all students who take the class, and not passed by all students who take them. Therefore, a student with a "passing" score has already gone through a sorting process.

Given these assumptions, we have recommended a simplification of the granting of AP and IB credit, and have recommended offering credit to students with passing scores as determined by the nationally-normed exam results. Our recommendations have been drawn in large measure from draft recommendations prepared by Admissions Office staff (Newton Smith, Karen Lukas) and by CLA Admissions director Matt Dion.

Recommendations for Advanced Placement Credit at the University of Minnesota

The following recommendations are for the Twin Cities, Morris, and Crookston campuses of the University:¹

¹ These recommendations are also being forwarded to the administration at the University of Minnesota-Duluth for consideration and possible adoption.