

Four-Credit Transition Initiative Planning Guide

The goal of the Four-Credit Transition initiative is to move faculty from teaching three 3-credit courses a semester to two 4-credit courses, thus ultimately freeing up faculty time to focus on research. This planning guide, a living document we will edit and revise as the process develops, gives faculty tools to examine their curriculum holistically and determine which courses to transition from 3-credits to 4-credits. Additionally, the guide addresses practical concerns for changing courses/programs and frequently asked questions about the process.

Where do I start?

- The Four-Credit Transition Initiative is a curriculum change activity which should initially include a conversation about how learning outcomes are demonstrated or measured in your courses and majors. Adjusting credit hours can include shifts in content for other courses or program components, so please connect with your discipline's assessment coordinator if you have not done so yet. To find your [major's learning goals](#).
- When beginning the process of assessing one's courses and major, we recommend faculty start with their core major courses. As stated, faculty should consider every curriculum change through the lens of their major's learning outcomes or, put another way, what is being asked of students to learn or get out of their journey through your major's courses? With that said, we recommend faculty also ask the following questions about their core courses as an initial step in the evaluation process:
 - Are the core major courses part of the Dearborn Discovery Core (DDC) program or considered a required course in a major for another college (i.e., are they considered "service" courses)? Please see the DDC/service course section below for additional guidance.
 - If the core major courses are not part of the DDC program or have no cross-college impact (i.e., are not considered a service course for another college), then faculty should focus on the learning outcomes and determine the best course of action (i.e., increasing the credit hours and adding content, eliminating the course, or keeping it unchanged). Please refer to the curriculum change section below for recommendations on how one could change their course from 3 to 4 credits.
- As changes are considered, it is important to keep students' needs in mind. We recommend that you work with academic advisors in your unit to understand the projected impact on student retention and graduation.
- As always, the Provost Office and your Dean's Office are here to help and discuss with faculty all likely impacts of these proposed changes and ensure ways to make the conversion process work for every program.

What about the credit hour addition and the need to add extra time to my course?

- As part of the evaluation process, faculty should be mindful of the credit hour and [our campus's definition of it](#) which is guided by federal requirements. In short, we measure the student learning time in credit “blocks” that equal a defined amount of instructional time each week of a semester. As a result, a 1-credit course requires 50 minutes of classroom instruction OR direct faculty instruction in the form of discussion, lecture, recitation, or seminar. For the purpose of changing a typical 3-credit course to 4-credits, faculty need to add 25 minutes of instructional time (or 140 minutes total time per session) to their existing course that normally meets 2 times a week for 100 minutes. The standard time blocks for 4-credit courses, which are already in effect, can be found [here](#).
- Please note that these standard time blocks are meant to provide guidance on how a course schedule is structured. Therefore the 1:45 minutes of time for each “block” in schedule #4, for example, are intended to provide the time space for any length of course (e.g., 50, 100, 145 minutes) to be included in a particular time block. The 15 minutes of time in between each time block (e.g., 9:45am-10:00am) is intended to give students the ability to travel from one class session to another. As a result, a 4-credit course would meet for a maximum of 140 minutes per class session or, if assigned to the 8:00am time block, from 8:00am until 9:40am.
- The addition of a credit hour to an existing course (i.e., moving from 3 to 4 credits) does not necessarily mean that faculty must increase the in-class time. Faculty can satisfy the increase of a credit hour by providing their students with an “equivalent amount of work” outside of the 50 minutes of class time normally required for 1 credit hour. In order to ensure a course meets the “equivalent amount of work” requirement, faculty must provide guidance to students for the work required outside of the regular class time and be certain that the work is meeting the minimum standards outlined in our [campus's credit hour policy](#). Such guided work is often provided in the form of project-based learning; academic-service learning; or other types of student projects that require a substantial amount of time and effort to complete. Skidmore College has created a useful guide for understanding the “equivalent amount of work” requirement in its [“Course Conversion to Four Credit Hours” webpage](#) (see the “Flexible Credit Hours” section in particular); additionally the [Enhanced Course Workload Estimator Tool](#) may be useful.

What’s the process and timeline for getting these changes approved for this upcoming academic year?

- Not all faculty may choose to submit changes to their curriculum this academic year and instead think longer about what changes may be best for their program. When faculty do decide to change courses and/or programs, the changes still need to go through the regular curriculum process via the [Curriculum Inventory Management \(CIM\) system](#).
- For changing a course from 3 to 4 credits faculty may choose to submit a syllabus for the new 4 credit version with additional topics/content highlighted OR a shorter document which provides an explanation of the proposed changes/additions.

- Changes to be implemented in Fall 2022 must be at UCDC by Feb 24, 2022 (Feb 17, 2022 for Grad Subcommittee). Please do not take these dates to mean that program faculty must rush to get their courses converted. The Four-Credit Transition Initiative is envisioned to be a multi-year process with the goal of having the conversion occur over the next few years.

Do all courses in a major have to change from 3 to 4 credit hours?

- No. This initiative is not requiring program faculty to change all courses from 3 to 4 credit hours. However, if program faculty do want to move their courses from 3 to 4 credits, it is recommended that a majority of courses move in that direction in order to ensure all faculty who are switching their teaching load from a 3-3 to 2-2 are moving toward teaching most of their courses most semesters at a 4 credit level.

What about the change to the faculty teaching load? Will it be based on 2 courses per semester or on credit hours or some other combination?

- This initiative is designed to move faculty from a 3-3 to 2-2 teaching load by transitioning their courses from 3 to 4 credits. We understand that some programs may continue to offer 3-credit courses which will require faculty to continue teaching those courses in their teaching schedules. As a result, we expect that a faculty member moving towards a 2-2 teaching load will normally maintain a range from 16-18 credits per year. There will likely be some fluctuations to the credit range as the result of the inclusion of some 3-credit courses. However, the expectation is that faculty will in most academic years be on a 2-2 teaching load where they are teaching at least 16 credits. We expect program faculty and department chairs to monitor the teaching loads in order to rotate or alternate --- if possible --- to ensure equity. Please note that there are already tracking models on our campus in MATH, M&CL, and NSCI that do take into consideration the variable teaching schedules of faculty.

At the major level, is it okay to increase the credit hours students take?

- Ideally any curriculum/course changes would be credit-hour neutral for a major. Many majors --- when one combines the major courses; DDC program courses; and other required courses --- are at the 120 credit hour threshold so adding credit hours may very likely increase the overall credit load of a degree for students. However, that is not always the case, particularly for CASL majors, but faculty should be mindful of these curriculum changes and their impact on students and their pursuit of a degree.

Are there any academic policies or definitions of a major/degree that would be helpful to reference for this conversion process? (November 19, 2021)

Yes; the two best places to look for the policies on majors and degrees are:

- [University Undergraduate Degree Requirements](#)
- [Degree and Program Definitions](#)

What curriculum change suggestions do you have for faculty considering moving their courses from 3 to 4 credits?

- The answer to this question depends on the major in question. Faculty should first determine what learning outcomes students should get out of their program, and at what points do certain learning content need to occur. For example, some programs might find the right path for them by eliminating some required courses and moving the content of those courses into other courses which --- if the credit hour deletions and additions are balanced -- will keep the major at the same credit hour level. Another path forward might be to drop certain required courses (for example cognates) or consider making a required course an elective. Other suggestions include adding a PBL-credit hour; combining three 3-credit courses into two 4-credit courses by eliminating some content; or, adding writing or discussion assignments. The Hub has provided course redesign suggestions on a blog post, [Hub Support for 3-to-4 Credit Conversion](#). [Oakland University's program maps](#) may also serve as a point of reference for 4 credits programs.

What about the Dearborn Discovery Core and service courses impact on our discussions to convert from 3 credits to 4 credits? (November 9, 2021)

- Faculty should focus on the learning outcomes of their program when determining how to convert 3 credit courses to 4 credit courses. Program faculty should also consider if their courses are part of the Dearborn Discovery Core (DDC) program and/or are considered “service” courses (i.e., are core major courses included as **required** courses in a major for another college). “Service” courses are distinguished from DDC options provided by various programs that all students can take to satisfy DDC requirements. Note that some service courses are also DDC courses but their role as service courses should be considered as primary and DDC secondarily.
- How do faculty go about determining which of their courses are DDC and/or service courses?
 - Courses in the DDC can be found on the [DDC website](#).
 - To see which programs a specific course is listed in, visit the [Course Landing Page](#) of CIM and search for the course. Under the course title, there is a scroll box which lists “Programs referencing this course.” From there, you can view each program that course is included in. (Screenshot below for reference.) For CIM access or questions regarding this process, please contact McKenna Maurino (maurino@umich.edu).

Programs referencing this course	ECON_S_MINOR_UG: SCert Economics Teaching Minor SST_MAJOR_UG_EH: Social Studies Major BENG_MAJOR_UG: Bioengineering Major BSE_COEN_UG: Computer Engineering Major CIS_MAJOR_UG: Computer and Information Science Major
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- Once program faculty determine that their courses are part of the DDC and/or service courses, the following is recommended:
 - Disciplines may change a DDC course if it is not used as a service course for other programs without engaging in discussions outside of the discipline. We encourage faculty with more specific questions about how their curriculum changes may impact the DDC to contact the DDC Subcommittee chair.
 - If a course is a DDC/service or service-only course, the program faculty should consider keeping the credit hours for those courses unchanged or reach out to your Associate Dean in order to facilitate discussions with other colleges regarding possible implications of moving course(s) from 3 to 4 credits. It will also be useful and important to include academic advisors in those conversations.
 - Please note that the Provost Office and your Dean's Office are here to discuss any ramifications and likely impacts that these proposed changes will have on the curriculum and work with faculty to ensure that the 4-credit transition works for each program.

What about situations where there are undergraduate courses crosslisted with graduate courses and/or involve 4+1 programs? (November 18, 2021)

In cases where a discipline is considering converting 3 credit 400 level undergraduate/graduate crosslisted courses, keep in mind that the graduate course does not necessarily have to be converted to 4 credits.

Also, please note that the [current double counting policy](#) for undergraduate and graduate courses allows no more than 15 credits to be double-counted.

Keep in mind that whether it is additional content, a project, or other educational component that an instructor adds to transition a 3 credit to a 4 credit course at the UG level, is still independent of the graduate requirements for the course at the 3 credit 500 level.

If program faculty do change program courses from 3 to 4 credits will that not change the major which would put continuing major students under different major requirements and new major students under a new set of requirements as well?

- Program faculty make changes to courses all the time which do not impact the major. In general, if faculty are changing their courses from 3 to 4 credit hours and are NOT increasing the number of credits required of their major, then there is no major change.

- The most significant and direct impact on continuing students if some of their major courses increase from 3 to 4 credits is that they might take a 4-credit course which will put them over the maximum number of credits they need to complete their major requirements. However, it is important to remember that the additional credit will be applied to the student's overall degree credit count (at least 120 credit hours). These sorts of situations will happen and it is important for our campus to prepare students for these changes by taking into account the need to properly prepare them during the course schedule advising process. Academic advising will play a pivotal role, as it always does, in helping our students navigate these curricular changes.

What about transfer courses and UM-Dearborn course equivalencies?

- For course equivalencies, our campus maintains a transfer credit review process which includes a five-year review process for reevaluating the equivalency of a transfer credit. All existing transfer course equivalencies will continue to be accepted for UM-Dearborn credit so the credit hour changes will not negatively impact transfer students.