

Letter of Understanding: Independent Study Courses

In most undergraduate and graduate programs there is the opportunity for ongoing academic staff to offer one-on-one independent study courses, such as reading or research or thesis supervision courses. In a number of cases, no credit is given for such courses as part of the workload of the academic staff member, yet they are clearly part of the academic program offered by the Faculty. It is recognized that these opportunities for course work with individual academic staff member are a valuable part of the university experience for students, and that academic staff members who are committed to the programs their Faculty offers want the opportunity to offer such courses, but that it is not possible for the University to recognize them as the equivalent of a half-course.

Optional Courses

In the following circumstances it is agreed that these courses are part of workload but are neither overload nor part of assigned duties under Article 12. In other words, academic staff would report these courses as part of their workload on their annual report and have them considered in the assessment process, but Department Heads/Deans would not have to take them into account when assigning teaching loads.

- a) The course is entirely voluntary, i.e. it is the academic staff member's choice whether or not they offer such a course and there are no negative consequences for the academic staff member if they do not offer the course.
- b) Normally, the course is one which is provided under an umbrella calendar course description with decimalized sections for each offering.
- c) The maximum number of students in the course is two.
- d) No formal classroom instruction is provided.
- e) The course is not a mandatory part of the curriculum for students.

In offering such courses, the academic staff member must follow University and faculty regulations; however, no instructor evaluations will be done.

Mandatory Courses

When the course is mandatory for any student, the participation of the academic staff member is not entirely voluntary. Therefore the above agreement does not apply and the provisions of Article 12 will apply.

When the course otherwise meets the requirements above (i.e. it meets all the requirements other than (e)), the Department Head/Dean must recognize the course in the assignment of

duties. However, the Department Head/Dean may weight the course as less than a full half course equivalent under the following circumstances:

1. The Dean/Department Head may weight the course as no less than 1/3 of a half course equivalent, as long as this is applied consistently, unless explicitly addressed in the Faculty Guidelines.
2. The Dean/Department Head may weight the course as less than 1/3 of a half course equivalent if a method for weighting as provided for in the Faculty Guidelines and approved by Faculty Council and the Provost and Vice-President (Academic) is followed.

In both of the above circumstances the Dean/Department Head shall account for these partial half- course equivalents by adding them up over one or more terms or years until they equal a half-course equivalent for which the academic staff member is given credit.