

Undergraduate Curriculum Committee
Policy on Determining the Appropriate
Level of Credit for Courses Using
Computers (November 1989)

It is not possible (or at least not practical) to devise simple, objective criteria that the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee can use to determine accurately the appropriate level for a course using computers. The decision depends in part on the sophistication of the computer tools used and their integration with the subject area of the department offering the course.

When the instructional focus in a course is a substantive problem, such as the analysis of sociological data, in which the solution is aided by the application of computer tools, such as statistical software, then the course level will be determined primarily by the nature of the problem and the instructional rigor. In such a case, a minor part of the course, approximately ten percent, could be spent on the mechanics and syntax of using the computer tool and this would not affect the committee's decision about the appropriate course level.

Examples in which course material on the mechanics of a computer tool could be included as a small component without affecting the course level include the following:

1. A course in design in which a CAD (computer-assisted design) software package is used to prepare student projects.
2. A course in research methodology and reporting in which an integrated software package (including word processing, spreadsheet, database, and graphics modules are included) is used for practice projects.
3. A course in accounting in which a spreadsheet package is used to do homework assignments.
4. A course in language skills in which students must master the specific commands needed to use a computerized drill and practice program.

At the other end of the spectrum, when an extended period, approximately 50 percent of a course, is devoted to the mechanics and syntax of one or more computer tools, such as commands of an operating system, a word processing program, or a spreadsheet program, then the course should not be acceptable toward a degree program. In general, course material that focuses for an extended period on which button to press (e.g., half or more of the instructional time) should not be offered for credit toward graduation.

Among courses in computer programming, a basic introduction to a first programming language should normally be offered at the

lower division level. Programming courses introducing one or more additional languages to students who have already learned a first language should be offered at a course level commensurate with the rigor of the proposed material; that is, such courses may be appropriate at the upper division or graduate level if the requirements are sufficiently rigorous.