

Credit By Examination

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The transition from high school to college is a problem not only to the student but also the college that accepts him. Individual differences found in the elementary and secondary schools are still present and are augmented by differing educational backgrounds represented by the diversity of schools the students attended. In the past such differences have gone largely unheeded and all students regardless of their background have been conveniently placed in beginning college courses.

Some changes have been made in recent years in an attempt to provide challenging programs for superior students. Six hundred and eighty-three colleges and universities have taken a new look at credit by examination, advanced placement and advanced standing programs.¹ On the basis of college-level work completed during high school years, students are being given the opportunity to receive advanced placement, credit or both according to the policies of the institution they enter. The prime reason for this program of advanced standing, has been to give those students who can determine and demonstrate sufficient proficiency an opportunity to begin their college education at an advanced level. Thus repetition of similar work completed in high school is reduced.

The decade of the fifties may be characterized as an era of expanded efforts to provide challenging study patterns for superior students. It was no longer felt that all courses should be geared to the average student. Many colleges and universities were investigating credit by examination and advanced standing as a means of meeting the needs of superior students.

An example of overlapping instruction involves former students of vocational agriculture and 4-H members who attend colleges of agriculture. Much of the subject matter, in beginning college of agriculture courses, appears to be repetitious of the high school course content in vocational agriculture.

Students have realized for many years that much of the introductory work of the colleges was in fact just a repetition of work completed in high school. This has resulted in many courses being considered easy by those students familiar with the work. Upgrading of the courses has put additional strain on those students unfamiliar with the subject matter presented.

Charles C. Cole in *Flexibility in the Undergraduate Curriculum* states:

A freshman comes to college full of enthusiasm, expecting something new and different. Frequently, his enthusiasm is dulled by class attendance, his love of learning diminished by the slow routinized pace he is forced to follow.²

The freshman enrolls in college expecting a new and inspiring experience vastly different from the classes attended in high school. Often the only

and administration in order to achieve maximum potential in our society.

5. Attain a degree of emotional and social adjustment through the enjoyment of a wide range of social relationships and the experience of working cooperatively with others.
6. Develop an understanding about the meaning and value of life.
7. Learn to think through problems, to collect, evaluate and weigh evidence in order to arrive at reasonable solutions to problems.
8. To maintain health and share the responsibility for protecting the health of others.
9. To improve abilities to communicate through writing and speaking.

Even though the student has opportunities for improvement in any or all of the expressed objectives, several influencing factors that should be recognized at this point would be:

1. The attitude and prior preparation of the "very poor" student will usually not allow achievement to the same extent that the good student achieves.
2. The objectives of general and vocational-technical education cannot be achieved through college courses alone.
3. The objectives of general and vocational-technical education must be earned by the student and not be automatically granted by the professor.
4. Attitudes and habits of a student have been formed over a number of years and will not be readily changed by mere exposure to the college curriculum.
5. The "salvage" of marginal students, though an expressed function of the community college, may be accomplished by any segment of our educational system.

It is quite apparent that each marginal student will not receive the same inspirations or benefits from the one or two years of college. Evidence would lead one to believe that college experiences are quite valuable for all students; however, it is nearly impossible to measure these values. At present it appears that we will have to rely on the opinion of former students to evaluate the benefits received from the one or two years of college. If nothing else, this points out advantages of a continuing follow-up of all students in order to have an idea of what is being accomplished for students regardless of their attainment. Our present standards of measuring success are not irreproachable. The final grade or final degree does not always complete the picture. A very poor student may actually acquire more of the desirable characteristics adopted as objectives by a college or university and thus will show a greater achievement relative to that shown by an excellent student even though attending college for only one or two years.

Perhaps it would be well for us to ask ourselves What have I done to help all students attain their maximum potential even though they may attend college only one or two years?

difference encountered is one of not being forced to study, or even challenged to study because of indifferent teaching. As a result a more capable student may reduce his efforts and become one of the average.

Lanora G. Lewis in *The Credit System* writes:

While many colleges require subfreshmen or non-credit courses for students who do not meet desired levels of proficiency upon entering, some still do not provide advanced standing for students whose entering competence is high enough to make certain required courses so repetitious that they are a sheer waste of time. In any given institution, then, the credit system must be assessed in terms of its relative slavery to blocks of time versus its adequacy in indicating levels of competence.³

Land grant colleges of agriculture in some states are granting credit by examination in agriculture subjects. Primarily credit is awarded students able to pass an examination given by the department that offers the course.

Ohio State University offers credit by examination in courses that can be applied to a degree in agriculture.

A pamphlet, published by Ohio State University, describes the courses for which credit by examination is available. Course content, type of examination and recommended tests are described in detail.⁴ Students at The Ohio State University are urged to participate in such examination for credit. As stated in the pamphlet:

There is no "pass" vs. "fail" involved in proficiency examinations. If you do well enough, you earn EM credit. This credit is reported to your College and entered on your record as so many hours counted toward graduation. There is no letter grade given. If you do not do well enough to earn EM credit, nothing is reported and nothing is entered in the record. Thus, taking a proficiency examination can count for you, but never against you.⁵

Several other land grant institutions of the North Central Region grant credit by examination in agriculture courses. They include: The University of Wisconsin, Purdue University, Kansas State University, University of Minnesota, and the University of Nebraska. It would appear, that if this number of institutions with colleges of agriculture offer credit by examination in agriculture courses, others should investigate the possibility of such action.

Credit by examination appears to be one of the simpler methods by which institutions will permit able students to accelerate work and receive credit for competence that has been demonstrated by examination. Credit by examination causes recognition of proficient students without considering how or when the learning took place.

The large enrollment of veterans after World War II encouraged the expansion of credit by examination. The many and varied experiences of these veterans caused many institutions to give credit hours in some college level courses.

A comprehensive study on credit by examination was conducted at Harding College of Searcy,

Arkansas.⁶ Three hundred and fifteen questionnaires were mailed during the school term of 1959-60 to accredited four-year institutions primarily in the North Central Region. Three hundred returns gave good coverage of the schools contacted. Included were 114 state-supported, 41 private and 143 religiously affiliated schools.

Credit by examination was used by 60 per cent of the state-supported schools. Sixty per cent of the private and 54 per cent of the religiously affiliated schools also used some sort of credit by examination. Of the total group, 60 per cent indicated that they had commenced the program within the last 14 years. Only eight per cent had used the program more than 30 years. Seven schools indicated they had dropped the program once started.

The majority of the schools thought the major purpose of credit by examination was to enrich the programs of superior students. Credit was awarded in the normal manner by 82 per cent of the schools.

The type of test used varied greatly; 55 used objective type, 54 used essay, 71 indicated written and 21 used oral examinations. One hundred of the schools said the examination was as long as the final in the same course, although 70 per cent indicated that the test was more severe.

Most students appeared satisfied with the examinations but the faculty reaction was mixed with no clear indication of like or dislike.

Three main points were discussed in the conclusions.

1. Proper recognition and publicity need to be given the program if it is to succeed. However, care should be taken to insure that only qualified students take advantage of the program.
2. Adequate safeguards need to be used to insure a high degree of performance.
3. The enthusiasm of the faculty will determine the success or failure of the program.

Credit by examination in agriculture should not be looked on with disfavor without first thinking through the benefits as well as disadvantages.

First: In our schools the introductory classes are the largest. Losing a few students through credit by examination would not adversely affect the class in numbers, but may in fact increase enrollments in upper division courses where numbers are normally smaller. Students often will elect to remain in school the full four years, enriching their experiences, and graduating with more than the required hours.

Second: By eliminating students with prior knowledge, the remaining students in a class should produce more nearly on equal basis, allowing the instructor to teach the entire class on the same level of difficulty.

Third: Students will not develop "lazy study habits" which could lead to difficulty in courses beyond his present knowledge.

Fourth: The student if he desires may graduate in less time allowing earlier entrance into graduate school or occupations.

Fifth: Research has indicated that students who take credit by examination do as well in ad-

vanced courses as those who followed the normal pattern.⁷

Sixth: Credit by examination may well attract superior students to our institutions.

Difficulties do exist. The construction of a proper testing instrument is not to be taken lightly. Many examinations for credit are more difficult than the final for the course. While the instrument should thoroughly test a student's knowledge, there should be no penalty for making the attempt. An item analysis of a final for the course should be the first step in preparation of a suitable instrument. Oral examinations may well be an excellent method of evaluation. They are, however, time consuming and may not give a real objective analysis of the student's knowledge.

In conclusion, we need to do something in our system to account for individual differences. Credit by examination is only one way, but it is a step toward a flexible challenging program in agriculture.

¹College Entrance Examination Board, *A Guide to the Advanced Placement Program*, (New York: The Board, 1962-63), p. 9.

²Charles C. Cole, *Flexibility in the Undergraduate Curriculum*, (New York: The Carnegie Corporation, 1958), p. 31.

³Lanora G. Lewis, *The Credit System*, New Dimensions in Higher Education No. 9, United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare. (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1961), p. 3.

⁴The Ohio State University, undated and unmarked publication. (Columbus: The Ohio State University), p. 2.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁶James Hedrick, "An Analysis of Practices of Granting College Course Credit by Examination in North Central Colleges and Universities" (Searcy, Arkansas: Harding College, Undated).

⁷THE STUDENT AND HIS KNOWLEDGE, by William S. Learned and Ben D. Wood, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, New York, 1938, p. 406.

The Evaluation of Student Teaching

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People in all kinds of gainful work are evaluated, whether they are doctors, lawyers, teachers, public officials, ditch diggers, or custodians at the county court house. Their work is evaluated by the public, their co-workers, their employers, their clientele, and even their families.

Who evaluates the effectiveness and efficiency of the production of classroom teachers? This evaluation is made by various groups and individuals, some of whom are: the superintendent, the principal, the teachers, the board of education, the parents, the public, and yes, even by the students. Quite often the evaluation done by the students is almost as accurate as that done by any other group.

The superintendent or principal may not have a written check list that is used every time he visits Jane Doe's class. Perhaps in some instances, the school administration does not do enough evaluating of teachers during the year. However, when contract time comes, the superintendent is evaluating when he recommends that a teacher be dismissed or that a teacher be employed. This school official is evaluating when he recommends a salary increase for a teacher or a professional advancement for the teacher in a school system.

If the student teacher is to be evaluated next year when he has a regular teaching position, why not evaluate him during the student teaching period? The term evaluation means more than reporting a letter grade, even though this procedure is important.

Who does the official evaluating of the student teacher? At William Penn College, this important procedure is done by the supervising teacher, the college supervisor, the student teacher, and in some instances, the principal and/or the superintendent. When is the evaluation done? It is done during the entire period of student teaching (ten weeks at our college) and the evaluation sheets are given to the college supervisors the week following the closing of student teaching.

Some specific points to consider in evaluating student teaching might be placed in these six categories: personal qualities, professional qualities, teaching abilities, classroom management, outside-class activities, and general evaluation.

Personal qualities are usually the first to be observed by the students. Respect of pupils is indicated by sincerity of pupils' response, by pupils' attitude on the worth of the course, and by pupils' respect on the opinion of the instructor. Initiative is shown by active participation in departmental meetings and activities, willingness to contribute in conducting tests, and developing new instructional materials. The teacher's personality shows some animation, a sense of humor, self-confidence, patience, understanding and an interest in students as "people." The teacher, who has desirable personal qualities, dresses appropriately. He is poised and confident. His voice is clear with distinct articulation. Also, he should be friendly but not familiar with students.

A very much desired professional quality is academic scholarship, which is indicated by a command of the subject matter far beyond that being taught, and seeing its relationship to allied fields and its application to current situations. The professional teacher is interested in the problems encountered in a given subject and in keeping informed on new developments in teaching his subject. This teacher uses correct English, both oral and written, which is concise and understood by the class. Such a teacher uses the most up-to-date techniques of teaching that are available in his field and as such, he is open to suggestions and criticism. Another desirable professional quality is that of professional ethics. This characteristic is shown by his regard for the teaching profession; his attendance and participation in educational meetings; his reading of