

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, ACADEMIC SENATE

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Chair of the Assembly and the Academic Council
Faculty Representative to the Board of Regents
University of California
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October 7, 2009

SENATE DIVISION CHAIRS SYSTEMWIDE SENATE COMMITTEE CHAIRS UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Re: Proposed repeal of SR 764

Dear colleagues:

At its May 2009 meeting, the Academic Council unanimously approved sending for systemwide review UCEP's request to repeal [SR 764](#), which limits credit in special study courses to five units per term for undergraduates. UCEP contends that no definition of "special study" courses is provided, which leads to great variation in its application among campuses, and argues that SR 764 is too restrictive for current pedagogy and educational opportunities. It notes that five campuses have obtained variances to the regulation.

For your information, UCEP's request is enclosed. Although the request for review is being sent to all divisions and systemwide committees, any committee or division may decline to comment if they feel it is not in their purview. If you choose to review this, please send your comments to senatereview@ucop.edu by Monday, **December 7**, 2009.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Henry C. Powell".

Henry C. Powell, Chair
Academic Council

Copy: Martha Winnacker, Academic Senate Executive Director
Brenda Abrams, UCEP Analyst



UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY (UCEP)
Stephen R. McLean, Chair
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May 5, 2009

MARY CROUGHAN, CHAIR
ACADEMIC COUNCIL

Re: Proposal to rescind SR 764

Dear Mary,

The University Committee on Educational Policy hereby submits to the Academic Council a proposal to rescind SR 764:

764. Credit in special study courses for undergraduates is limited to five units per term.

Background

It is a serious drawback of this regulation that no definition of “special study” courses is provided. This leads to a great deal of confusion, because campuses vary in three respects: i) which courses take to be “special study” courses; ii) what names they use for these courses (some campuses don’t use the term “special study” at all); and iii) what course numbers they give to different kinds of potential special study courses. (For examples of all three, see the variances to SR 764 at <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/senate/manual/appendix3.html>.)

Putting this problem aside, and judging by its usage across UC campuses, “special study course” can be or has been interpreted to include at least the following:

Independent study courses
Group study courses
Independent field study courses
Supervised field study courses¹
Internships
Laboratory research courses
Senior thesis or project courses

What these course categories have in common is that they lack a curriculum that has been approved in advance by a Committee on Courses (or CEP). (The exception is the supervised field study, which therefore perhaps should not be considered a “special study course”.)

¹ All high-quality field study courses and internships involve supervision in the sense of having general faculty and staff oversight. By “supervised field study” we mean field study where a faculty member is on-site.

SR 764 dates from 1968, and it is arguably too restrictive for our current educational setting. First, experiential learning opportunities are today more numerous and more prevalent, considered by many to be a “best practice” of undergraduate education. There are experiential learning curricula at UC campuses and sites that routinely require or allow more than 5 credits of academic credit per term. Below we list some examples.

At UCSC, during the summer session 2008, 140 students took 10 credits (in one term) of special study courses. Of these, 117 were Community Studies internships, while the rest were divided among Economics, Biology, College 8, Philosophy, Chemistry, Latin American and Latino Studies, and Psychology.

Psychology students at UCSC can take a 5-credit field study course (193), and they can also work in faculty-sponsored research groups through a 5-credit advanced research course (194). These sometimes overlap, and either might also overlap with a senior thesis course. Since the field study requires a 2-quarter commitment and many faculty also require a 2-quarter commitment for their research groups, overlap can go on for more than one quarter.

UCLA has a variance to SR 764 allowing up to 8 credits of special study per quarter. However, UCLA interprets “special study” to include only courses number 195-9. For example, in the UCLA Nursing program, a course “Clinical Internship: Integration” (course 169) requires 36 hours of work per week and gives 12 credits.

In the year 2006-7 UC Davis recorded a total of 214 course enrollments of greater than 5 credits having the number 192, the number reserved for field studies.

At UC Santa Barbara, twenty four courses were counted in the 190-199 number series that have variable units exceeding 5 units. Some of these courses appear to be internships or field studies which are located off campus. Others appear to be similar to 198-199 courses (independent studies), though UCSB regulation prohibits more than 5 credits per term of such courses. Also at UCSB, in the College of Creative Studies, any special study course can give up to 6 credits depending on the work accomplished.

Currently UCLA, UC San Diego, and UC Santa Cruz have active variances to SR 764. UC Davis and UC Irvine have variances that have expired.

Second, and in a similar vein, the University of California is currently devoting serious attention to the importance for undergraduates of research opportunities. The best of these opportunities are typically available by means of special study courses such as independent studies. We see no compelling reason for a systemwide regulation limiting such experiences to 5 credits per term.

UCEP discussed possible ways of loosening SR 764 in response to these considerations. These might include either increasing the number of credits allowed per term or recasting the limit as one that applies over a student’s career. However, the committee came to the opinion that such decisions are probably best left to individual campuses. Many or perhaps all campuses already have divisional regulations addressing just this issue. Further, given the realities of general education requirements, major requirements, and a 4-year norm for degree completion, the chance that extravagant use of special study courses will undermine the content of a bachelor’s degree seems minimal.

UCEP therefore recommends to the Academic Council that SR 764 be rescinded.

Sincerely,



Stephen R. McLean, Chair
UCEP