

### **Guidelines for the Use of the Continuing Education Unit (CEU)**

The essential educational mission of the University is augmented through a broad range of activities generally categorized as "public service." These public services, which greatly extend the benefits which the higher education system provide to the people of the state, are integral to the basic instructional and research responsibilities of the University, but they also have an identity and integrity apart from instruction and research. An important component of the University's public service is the non-credit continuing education programs conducted by the constituent institutions.

The scope and importance of non-credit continuing education have increased in recent years, as individuals have availed themselves of opportunities to learn new skills, upgrade job performance, enhance their ability to perform as family members or citizens, or for personal enrichment. Numerous professional licensing and accrediting bodies require continuing education as a condition for maintenance of good standing. Accordingly, the number and variety of programs offered by higher education institutions have increased.

The Continuing Education Unit (CEU) was developed by a task force of the National University Extension Association and has been recognized by the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges and numerous professional organizations as a way to provide a consistent method to record and report the participation of individuals in non-credit continuing education or the activities of constituent institutions in this area. In 1973 a "Guide of the Implementation of the Continuing Education Unit in The University of North Carolina" was issued to assist institutions in the development and conduct of non-credit continuing education and extension programs. This guide was revised in 1980.

As non-credit continuing education activities become more important to individuals and a more significant portion of the activities of the constituent institutions, it is important that CEUs be awarded on the basis of nationally accepted program quality criteria and administrative procedures. The guide, developed with the advice and assistance of the University Council on Continuing Education and the University Council on Teacher Education, will provide assistance in this regard.

[This is a rewrite of Administrative Memorandum #135.]

**Guide for the Use of the Continuing Education Unit**  
**The University of North Carolina**  
January 1980

CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE	2
INTRODUCTION	3
GUIDE FOR THE USE OF THE CONTINUING EDUCATION UNIT	4
DEFINITION	4
PROGRAM CRITERIA	5
ACTIVITIES FOR WHICH THE CEU MAY NOT BE AWARDED	6
OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES	8
REPORTING REQUIREMENTS	12

PREFACE

This guide was developed with the assistance of the University Council on Continuing Education and the University Council on Teacher Education and supersedes the "Guide for Implementation of the Continuing Education Unit in The University of North Carolina" issued in 1973. Since 1973, fourteen of the sixteen constituent institutions have awarded Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for non-credit continuing education programs, generally following the provisions of the 1973 guide.

This guide is based upon the experience gained since 1973 in awarding CEUs by the constituent institutions and incorporates many of the provisions of the "Criteria and Guidelines for Use of the Continuing Education Unit" published in 1979 by the National Council on the Continuing Education Unit. Adoption by the University of wording from this Council's Criteria and Guidelines for the sections of this guide dealing with Definition, Program Criteria, and Operational Procedures will insure that North Carolina conforms to nationally accepted standards.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years the scope and impact of non-credit continuing education programs have increased greatly. Until the concept of the Continuing Education Unit (CEU) was developed, no uniform unit of measurement existed to facilitate the accumulation and exchange of standardized information about individual participation in non-credit continuing education.

In 1968, the National University Extension Association (NUEA) appointed a task force to study the need for a uniform recording and reporting system for non-credit activities and to formulate procedures for nationwide implementation. The subsequent report of this task force was adopted by the NUEA. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools also recognized the need for a uniform unit of measurement for non-credit activities in its revision of Standard Nine on Special Activities adopted in December, 1971. Since then the NUEA task force has evolved into the Council on the Continuing Education Unit, which performs a national monitoring, but not accrediting, role. Professional

organizations, institutions, and regional and professional accrediting associations have adopted the CEU, and hundreds of colleges and universities are using the CEU.

The University of North Carolina has long been committed to and involved in continuing education as an integral part of its threefold mission of teaching, research, and public service. The majority of the student body traditionally has consisted of full-time undergraduate and graduate students who have entered the University to pursue an uninterrupted sequence of education. But in recent years an increasing number of students may not be working toward a degree. These include those who return to school later in their careers, who pursue occupational or professionally- related continuing education throughout their careers, and who pursue continuing education for the purpose of improved citizenship, cultural enrichment, or personal growth.

As the need for continuing education among diverse population groups increases, it is essential that a uniform means be used to recognize individual participation outside of the degree credit mechanism. Currently, a variety of methods is used to recognize individual participation in continuing education, ranging from formal institutional certificates to informal letters from faculty to student. Such recognition is often highly significant to the individual involved and at the same time perplexing to organizations attempting to evaluate the quality of the education received or to assess the educational effort of the sponsoring institution.

The adoption of a standard unit of measurement concept will satisfy several needs.

1. The individual will have a method of providing his or her employer or prospective employer with a meaningful record of educational activities based on standardized criteria.
2. State and national associations, industry, government, and other organizations may use the standard unit of measurement as a criterion for evaluation of prior non-credit training of prospective employees.
3. Educational institutions may use a standard unit of measurement to determine the involvement of the institution in selected non-credit activities.

[The purpose of this guide is to establish policies and procedures for recognizing individual participation in selected non-credit continuing education programs of the University of North Carolina.]

## **GUIDE FOR THE USE OF THE CONTINUING EDUCATION UNIT**

### **THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA**

#### **DEFINITION**

One Continuing Education Unit is defined as:

**TEN CONTACT HOURS OF PARTICIPATION IN AN ORGANIZED CONTINUING EDUCATION EXPERIENCE UNDER RESPONSIBLE SPONSORSHIP, CAPABLE DIRECTION, AND QUALIFIED INSTRUCTION.**

Each element included in the definition of the Continuing Education Unit is an integral part of the larger concept of providing an educational experience of sufficient merit to be documented in permanent form on the record of the individual participant.

#### **Ten Contact Hours of Participation**

The contact hour is defined as a typical fifty-minute classroom instructional session or its equivalent. Ten instructional contact hours are required for one CEU. The number of instructional contact hours is readily determined in the formal classroom situation. In informal formats, the clock hour should be used. In more nontraditional formats, it may be necessary to exercise judgment in determining the instructional hours required to achieve the educational objectives.

#### **In An Organized Continuing Education Experience**

An organized educational experience presumes that there has been planning to meet a specific need. The essential elements of such planning include determination of the program's educational objectives in terms of:

1. the clientele to be served;
2. the new competencies to be achieved;
3. the content or subject matter to be covered; and
4. the program format and instructional methodology to be employed to develop the competencies.

Adequate and properly responsive program planning requires interaction between administrative personnel of the sponsoring organization, the instructor or educational leaders responsible for the learning experience, and representatives from the client group to be served.

#### **Under Responsible Sponsorship**

The sponsoring organization that awards CEUs must assume administrative responsibility for the program. This responsibility includes the assignment of direct supervision of the activity to a professionally capable program director or educational administrator and the maintenance of a permanent record system. The reputation and organizational integrity of the sponsor are reflected in the quality of the educational experience presented.

### Capable Direction

The elements of capable direction include:

1. professional educational leadership in program planning and development;
2. selection of the most effective educational format for the intended purpose and objectives;
3. assignment of qualified instructional staff;
4. adequate program management and administration; and
5. the design and implementation of evaluation techniques applicable to both individual participants and the total program.

### Qualified Instruction

Attainment of specified educational objectives requires the selection of an instructional staff that has the following qualifications:

1. competence in the subject matter;
2. ability to transmit the educational content to participants;
3. understanding of the program objectives; and
4. knowledge and skill in the instructional methodology and learning processes to be employed.

### PROGRAM CRITERIA

The CEU should be offered only for those non-credit activities which have been organized to provide systematic instruction, measurable in duration of time, subject to performance evaluation for the participant, and which meet the definitional requirements. The CEU is a flexible unit of measure for selected non-credit educational programs and may be used to record an individual's participation in these activities as well as to quantify an institution's sponsorship of non-credit continuing education activities. The following criteria are to be met for each non-credit continuing education activity before CEUs may be awarded to participants and recorded on individuals' records.

**Definition.** The educational activity fulfills each of the elements in the definition of the CEU: an organized continuing education experience, responsible sponsorship, capable direction, qualified instruction.

**Planning.** The program or activity is planned in response to the educational needs of a target population or client group. Such planning includes the opportunity for input from representatives of the immediate client group, as well as from other knowledgeable individuals having content expertise and an appreciation of the educational objectives to be met.

**Objectives.** A clear statement of rationale, purposes, and goals is prepared for each educational activity prior to its initiation.

**Instruction.** Qualified instructional personnel are directly involved in conducting the educational activity.

**Performance.** Specific performance requirements for the award of CEUs to participants are established prior to the offering of the program.

**Registration.** Participant registration must include sufficient detail to provide the necessary information for a permanent record of individual participation.

**Records.** Program administration will include a system for verification of satisfactory completion of the activity by each participant (see discussion of registration immediately above) and for providing an approved list of those awarded CEUs to the office responsible for preparing and maintaining permanent records for individual participants.

**Program Evaluation.** Evaluation procedures determined during the planning process are used to measure the effectiveness of the program design and operation. The qualitative aspects of CEU programs are to be constantly under review. The method of evaluation should be developed after specific program objectives have been stated and should apply to sponsors, programs, and participants.

#### ACTIVITIES FOR WHICH THE CEU MAY NOT BE AWARDED

**Credit Programs.** CEUs are not to be awarded to an individual for any program or course which awards academic credit, either secondary or collegiate.

**High School Equivalency.** Programs leading to high school equivalency certificates or diplomas do not qualify for the awarding of CEUs.

**Indoctrination Programs.** Programs which deal with the internal affairs of an organization do not qualify for the awarding of CEUs. Examples include topics such as: rights, benefits, and responsibilities of employees; structure of the organization; and on-the-job methods, processes, or procedures.

**Committee Meetings.** Committee activities do not qualify for the awarding of CEUs.

**Policy Assignments.** Board meetings, delegate assemblies, or similar meetings for policy-making-making purposes do not qualify for CEUs.

**Meetings and Conventions.** Meetings and conventions of societies and associations do not qualify, per se, as continuing education. However, planned educational activities programmed and associated with these meetings may meet the criteria for awarding CEUs if record keeping and all other criteria for program sponsorship are met.

**Mass Media Programs.** Participation in programs delivered through the media (e.g., television, radio, newspapers) does not merit the awarding of CEUs unless these presentations are an integral part of an educational program which qualifies under these criteria and guidelines.

**Entertainment and Recreation.** Attendance at lecture series, cultural performances, entertainment or recreational meetings or activities, and participation in travel groups do not qualify for CEUs unless such activities are an integral part of a larger educational program.

**Work Experience.** On-the-job training and other work experiences do not qualify for the award of CEUs unless structured as part of a planned educational experience which fulfills program criteria set forth herein.

**Individual Scholarship.** The independent writing of articles or research reports or the presentation of papers outside a planned and directly supervised educational program does not qualify for the awarding of CEUs.

**Self-Directed Studies.** Individual, self-directed studies or other forms of independent learning experiences which are not planned, supervised, and directed by sponsoring agencies do not qualify for the awarding of CEUs.

Association Membership and Certification Programs. Noneducational activities of associations and professional societies, which may otherwise be used to qualify for professional and occupational group membership or certification, are not eligible for the awarding of CEUs. Examples of such activities include:

1. membership or service in a professional , occupational, or other society or organization;
2. attendance at annual, periodic, or special meetings, conventions, conferences, rallies, and retreats;
3. writing or presentation of articles or research papers;
4. speaking, teaching, or other program assignments; and
5. self-directed reading or study.

### OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

A conservative approach is appropriate when an institution decides to award CEUs for its continuing education programs. Only those programs which clearly qualify should be considered.

#### Determining the Number of Units

One Continuing Education Unit (CEU) is to be awarded for each ten contact hours of instruction, or the equivalent, included in the educational activity. The number of contact hours and appropriate CEUs must be determined prior to the beginning of the program, but only after the objectives, content, format, methods of instruction, and program schedule have been established. The decision to award CEUs is not to be made after the offering of the program, nor advertised as available before the activity has been approved for the award of CEUs.

When unforeseen circumstances require a significant alteration in the program schedule, an appropriate adjustment in the number of CEUs may be recommended by the director or coordinator of the program.

Responsibility for the determination of the number of units to be assigned rests with the director of the educational office that administers the program. Assistance and recommendations from others more intimately concerned with the specific program are desirable in making this determination. The accuracy and consistency with which CEUs are assigned depend on the skill and professional commitment of the director in assessing each learning experience.

In the conventional classroom situation the contact hour relates to the instructional hour, which is normally a minimum of fifty minutes in length. In other more flexible formats clock hours may be a more appropriate measure. In either case, only the number of complete instructional hours should be considered in assigning CEUs. For example, for a program with 17 contact hours, 1.7 CEUs are assigned; likewise for 17.50 or 17.75 hours, 1.7 CEUs are assigned.

Programs involving less than ten contact hours of instruction (less than one CEU) should be evaluated very carefully before a decision is made to award CEUs to participants. Such shorter programs should be sufficiently planned and sequentially designed to meet all program criteria and extensive enough to build a measurable competency and provide a significant educational experience.

In calculating the contact hours involved in an educational activity, the following factors may be included:

1. Classroom or meeting session hours with direct participation between the learner and instructor or discussion leader are counted as contact hours.
2. Laboratory sessions, clinical experiences, field trips and activities using nontraditional methods of instruction (e.g., independent study, directed reading, or correspondence courses) may be awarded CEUs, but the contact hours must be based on the equivalent instructional class hours.
3. For correspondence or self-study courses, the number of CEUs to be applied should be based on the time that the sponsor estimates will be required by students to complete the course at a satisfactory level.

Time devoted to the following and similar activities may not be included when calculating contact hours for CEUs:

1. meeting time devoted to business or committee activities;
2. meeting time devoted to announcements, welcoming speeches, or organizational reports;
3. time for study, assigned reading, reports, written assignments, and other related activities outside of the class or meeting schedule; and
4. scheduled time allocated to social activities, coffee hours, luncheons, dinners, etc. (Luncheon or dinner presentations which are an integral part of the educational experience may be included.)

When the appropriate number of instructional or contact hours has been determined, CEUs are assigned on the basis of one unit for each ten contact hours and one-tenth unit for each additional full contact hour.

#### Satisfactory Completion

Once activities have been approved for the awarding of CEUs and the number of units for the activity has been determined, only those individuals who satisfactorily complete the activity will receive CEUs. Satisfactory completion will be determined by the program director or instructor on the basis of criteria for completion developed by the planning group for the program or activity.

Satisfactory completion in the case of some activities will require evaluation of the performance of the individual participant. Such evaluation may take the form of a demonstration or actual performance involving the skill or information acquired, involve a project or written report, be limited to an oral or written test or examination involving the material to be mastered, or require other evidence of satisfactory completion.

When participants are evaluated in any of these ways, their individual permanent records may carry the performance evaluation, either in terms of a traditional letter grade, a numerical grade, a pass/fail grade, or by other designations. A failing mark should not be entered on the record of an individual participant, however, since only those individuals successfully completing a program should receive CEUs. When individuals do not satisfactorily complete CEU activities, information relating to that activity should be maintained in the sponsor's activity files for future reference.

In the case of programs in which performance evaluation of the participants is not deemed necessary, attendance and participation as determined by the planning group or program director may be used as the requirement for satisfactory completion of the activity. If attendance is the only criterion for satisfactory completion, then high minimum attendance requirements should be established (e.g., attendance during not less than eighty percent of the instructional hours), and some method of verifying

the attendance of individual participants must be utilized. Information and records substantiating satisfactory attendance and participation provide essential backup in support of the CEUs awarded to individuals.

A designated official of the sponsoring institution or organization, usually the program director or the instructor, must verify and report that each individual has (or has not) met the specified completion requirements and is (or is not) to be awarded CEUs. Individual permanent records are to be established indicating the CEUs awarded to each participant.

#### Permanent Records

The sponsoring institution or organization is responsible for establishing and maintaining a record of all CEUs awarded to individual participants. Cumulative records for each individual participant are to be available on a permanent basis and issued as an official statement or transcript upon the request of the participant. A nominal transcript or transfer fee may be assessed for this service. Records of each continuing education activity should be available from the sponsoring institution or organization, describing as clearly as possible the audience, purposes, format, content, duration, teaching staff, course or experience prerequisites, and level of instruction, so that valid judgments concerning the educational experience can be made by the recipient of the record. The following information must be included on all transcripts or official statements:

1. name and address of the awarding organization or institution;
2. name of the individual participant;
3. social security number of the individual participant;
4. title of the program or activity (as descriptive as possible);
5. completion date of the program or activity; and
6. number of Continuing Education Units awarded.

Items of information which should be retained and may be recorded by the sponsoring organization include:

1. brief description of the program or activity with some indication of content, level, objectives, and format (to be retained permanently in the sponsor's files and made available upon request);
2. evaluation of individual performance, if available;
3. instructors utilized in the activity;
4. location of the program (city or facility);
5. cooperating organizations (company, agency, association, or institution);
6. additional personal information about the participant (address, date of birth, educational background, employment status, program status, etc.).

#### Program Quality

Since program criteria set forth for CEUs must be applied to each approved program or activity, the qualitative aspects of CEU programs are constantly under review. Representatives of the target audience participate in the program planning process to insure the suitability of the subject matter to the

level of application. The changing needs of audiences are thus readily transmitted to CEU program sponsors to facilitate program revision and updating. The inability of a program sponsor to adjust to the changing needs of client or user groups results in decreased accept ability for programs offered.

Sponsor integrity is therefore subject to constant review when CEU criteria are fully met. Planning, administration, presentation, and evaluation functions must be continuing concerns of both program sponsors and user groups. Increased responsibility for planning and evaluation must be assumed by user groups if CEU programs are to be fully relevant and useful.

Proper program planning provides opportunities for qualitative checks by user groups to assure that the level and scope of the instructional content is consistent with the qualifications of the user group (participants) and is properly designed to fulfill the educational needs and objectives of the participants.

### Evaluation

Methods of evaluation to determine the effectiveness of non-credit continuing education should be developed and applied as an integral part of each program. Without an initial statement of specific objectives for each program, it is difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain that desired goals have been attained. Program objectives developed during the planning process may include, but are not limited to:

1. changes in the attitude and approach of the learner to the solution of problems;
2. presentation of new knowledge or updating obsolete information in specific content areas;
3. introduction to and/or mastery of specific skills and techniques; and
4. improvement in the selective responses of the learner .

Both immediate and long-range analysis of each program and of student achievement by the program sponsor is essential for maintaining the effectiveness of future programs. Innovative approaches to evaluation are encouraged. Sponsors as well as students engaged in non-credit programs should be encouraged through appropriate orientation to accept evaluation as an essential element in non-credit programs.

Group indices will usually suffice to indicate the effectiveness of the educational effort, but provision should be made for recording evaluative indices for individual participants whenever appropriate.

### REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The General Administration of the University of North Carolina collects educational data from the sixteen constituent institutions on a regular basis. These data are used for long-range planning, legislative information, budget requests, and many other purposes. Data pertaining to the CEU are useful in documenting the substantial contribution of the University in the field of non-credit educational activities. The following information about activities awarding CEUs during the preceding fiscal year is therefore requested by the General Administration as a part of the regular annual reporting requirements submitted by October 15:

1. total number of CEUs awarded by the institution;
2. number of programs for which CEUs were awarded;
3. number of participants receiving CEUs.