

**HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:**

**Retnowati, E. (2009) Students' studying load at international classes.  
Proceeding of International Seminar of World Class University, Yogyakarta  
State University, 17<sup>th</sup> July, pp. 207-214.**

## **STUDENTS' STUDYING LOAD AT INTERNATIONAL CLASSES**

Endah Retnowati  
Department of Mathematics Education  
State University of Yogyakarta

### **Abstract**

An international class should maintain a well systematically develop educational system, including in setting up students' responsibility for their study program. This paper proposes to describe student's load while taking a course at an international class, taking an example at the University of New South Wales, Australia, which is a very recognised international university. This university used unit of credit system, similar to "sistem kredit semester" at the State University of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. At the end of the paper, the author wishes to withdraw several remarks on organising students' studying load for the State University of Yogyakarta who has recently been on the move to world class university.

### **A. Introduction**

Most universities apply specific condition of studying load for students. In Indonesia, universities use a semester credit system, which is officially arranged by the Government. Nowadays, an issue of internationalisation has widely been spread out, including at State University of Yogyakarta. This university has teacher education programs and recently has launched two international classes. Because having international classes should maintain a well systematically develop educational system, including in setting up students' responsibility for their study program, the university then should take this issue into account. This paper proposes to describe student's load while doing a course at an international class. An example at the University of New South Wales, Australia is chosen because of its international recognition.

## **B. Studying Load at Universities in Indonesia**

The semester credit system followed by most universities in Indonesia has been grounded by Constitution Number 2 Year 1989 about National Education System, the Government regulation Number 60 Year 1999 and the Minister of National Education Letter of Decision Number 232/U/2000 about Guideline for Establishment of Higher Education Curriculum and Assessment of Student's Performance. The semester credit system may be defined as an educational system that applies unit of credit to measure student's studying load, lecturer's working load, learning experience and program load for each teaching semester. One teaching semester involves a 16 week teaching and learning activity, including the assessment.

For students, specifically, this credit system may provide them a defined schedule to organise their academic activities effectively and efficiently. Therefore, this should encourage students to study hard, motivated and well organised. Following the credit system offered by the university may also assist them to complete the study program in the given time because each taken course is measured particularly by units of credit. Beside the units of credits of each course must have been calculated by the program of study in such a way a package of courses has suitable amount of studying load.

The credit system also allowed students to adapt with the curriculum that may be changed during the study period because the dynamic movement of science and technology. Because each course measures quantitatively student's

credit, this system makes a possibility of transferring students to other related program wither under the same faculty or to different university.

The value of a unit of credit is determined based on activity's load in a week. For student, a unit of credit means as follows: a fifty minute classroom activity including lecture, tutorial and these are weekly scheduled; a fifty minute structured academic activity that can be study activities not scheduled on paper by the program but the lecturer should schedule this for the students, for examples by giving homework or take home discussion topics; and an hour of independent academic activity that must be used for deepen understanding of knowledge, preparing academic tasks, such as reading or searching references.

Accordingly, a unit of credit requires 170 minutes per week for sufficient academic activity. In a semester, a student may take a maximum of 24 units of credits depend on their achievement, but normally students take around 20 – 22 units of credits. This means that their studying load should up to 68 hours per week ( $24 \times 170 \text{ minutes} = 4080 \text{ minutes}$ ). This amount should have been a considerable load for study.

### **C. Studying Load at University of New South Wales, Australia**

The University of New South Wales (UNSW) has been acknowledged as an international university. Compared with worldwide universities, this university has been part of top rank and indeed this has multicultural across nation students. However, the author has sufficient experience of being a student in this university and to limit the topic of interest, therefore, this university is chosen as an example

of comparison in this article together the case of State University of Yogyakarta, where the author is now a lecturer in. But of course, broadens discussion to other international universities might be more appropriate and the following discussion might be preliminary.

As mentioned in the UNSW Handbook, the university's academic structure is based on units of credit (UOC) and so every course has a specified UOC value. However, the university does not mention exactly how much minutes are demanded for studying. It is stated, nevertheless, that the normal workload expectations of a student for each unit of credit taken are approximately 25 hours per teaching semester, including class contact hours, other learning activities, preparation and time spent on all assessable work. Started in 2008, this university adopted a 12 week teaching semester. A full-time student may enrol up to 24 units of credit in a semester. Accordingly, student should spend approximately 2,1 hours per week to study. Thus for full time enrolled student, the average study load over 12 weeks of teaching and study is approximately 50 hours per week (24 x 2.1 hours).

#### **D. Discussions and Suggestions**

In a simple comparison between the State University of Yogyakarta, Indonesia and the University of New South Wales, Australia, the study load for full time student arranged by the university in Yogyakarta is higher than that in New South Wales. More specifically, taking up to 24 units of credit in Yogyakarta is required

to spend about 68 hours per week but in New South Wales, it is required less which is approximately 50 hours per week. The eighteen hour different might be considered significantly. However, as it could be seen at the more global view, the graduates from State University of Yogyakarta might be less recognised than those from the University of New South Wales.

Theoretically, students in State University of Yogyakarta should have more time for study and so better performance. There should be other reasons underlying and actions to boost up the graduates' qualification must be done. It is now becoming urgent and should be part of the university's efforts to be a world class university.

As known, there are three key factors contributing to learning. These are student, teacher and environment. If we look from the student standpoint, the reasons why the students' performance at the Yogyakarta's university has not been better than the Australia's university could be (1) having awful schedule of learning, (2) lack self-regulated learning, (3) too much depend on classroom activities, (4) laziness or lack of motivation to study, (5) lack of academic skills, (6) less informed of campus facilities, (7) less creativity, (8) more out-campus irrelevant activities, or (10) taking behind assignments. The reason might also stem from the lecturer, for instance, the lecturer often use traditional methods of teaching, do not develop teaching material appropriately, give less assistance to students, or they are frequently absent in the classroom. One factor that could profoundly affect is the environment. If a good environment provides academic atmosphere that supports students learning, the studying load should be used

effectively for studying, searching for references or developing relevant skills, including computer skills and the use of technology for studying. By technology, the lecturer can improve teaching methods using e-learning or can also provide more learning resources to students.

At the University of New South Wales, all students are required to have a university based email, as well as the lecturer, they have email at the university website. Using this email facility, students and lecturers can correspond more closely and frequently, for example, to share information, references or to extend a discussion on a topic. Some lecturers in this university also provide WebCT, it is a kind of e-learning portal. By this portal, lecturer can conduct virtual classes, upload files for students, make announcement and more importantly, students' activities can be improved, in term of frequency, quality or feedback provided for submitted assignments. This is unlikely in the State University of Yogyakarta, yet.

It is argued that there are two actions might be needed to bring students be well informed of their studying load and be aware to their responsibility to study. There might be key events can be held to take this up, first, in the orientation's day for new students. Coming students need to be informed on how to study at university, since it is systematically different with previous school system. Second, orientation for returning students should also be done, because students might be less respectful to their responsibility of study for reasons, such as less motivated or take the course too easy. It is also possible students feel anxious, stress or less confident because they think too much on the demand of the course. Hence, guidance and counselling centre should take part in relieving students'

load but then bring them back on the track. A learning centre could place an action too, for example by organising some training to students, assisting students on making optimal studying load and certainly, helping students on making their study rewarding.

Finally, there should be part in the university who put more attention on students, specifically, on improving students' achievement. There might be many factors influencing and so students' workload might not stand alone. Action research on many points of view would possibly add benefit to the university on reaching a world class university.

Nevertheless, the number of unit of credit for each course should also be seen. There should be benchmarking activities to international recognised universities to review how much unit should be place for a course offered by the program, how many courses there should be and what are they in each course, the requirement, and whether the given load is already fit in. Taking the example from the UNSW, a course for undergraduate is normally 4 to 6 units of credit, however, from the State University of Yogyakarta, a course is mostly 2 to 3 units of credit. Thus, in this university students who enrol in 24 units of credit may take 8 to 10 courses in a semester, but at the UNSW, similar students may only have 4 to 5 courses in semester. It is too early to judge, of course, that the higher amount of study load the better the performance or the lesser the number of courses the better the performance. Nonetheless, on the move to world class university, attention to this issue should be improved.



**E. Sources of Study**

- [1] The UNSW Handbook 2009. <http://www.handbook.unsw.edu.au> (generated 2 June 2009).
- [2] Buku Peraturan Akademik Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta Tahun 2009.
- [3] Ketentuan Pelaksanaan Sistem Kredit Semester (SKS) Fakultas Matematika dan Ilmu Pengetahuan Alam Universitas Mulawarman Tahun 2008. <http://www.fmipa-unmul.web.id> (generated 7 July 2009).