

College Units and Time Management

College Units:

A unit is a value that indicates the amount of college credit given to a course. In general, one hour of lecture a week equals one unit of credit.

What Makes a Full-Time Student?

There is a range for the amount of units considered to be a full-time student. For many students on their parent's insurance, tax or other purposes, 12 units is usually considered full-time.

However, a new student working towards a two-year or Career Associate degree (90 units required) would need to complete 15 units a quarter for six quarters (3 quarters to an academic year). The same is true for a student planning to transfer on a two-year track to a CSU or UC in which 90 transferable units are required. Furthermore, for a student to accomplish this transfer track, the student would have to place in college level English and math. Keep in mind that it is possible to complete less than 15 units a quarter if the student is willing to make up the units during the summer quarter.

Deciding How Many Units to Take:

Rather than focus on how many units you should take to stay on a two-year track, you should focus on how many units to take a quarter to earn the GPA you aspire to attain. Therefore, in order to determine how many units to take you need to consider your lifestyle factors such as:

- If you work, how many hours a week do your work?
- How much time do you need to devote to your other responsibilities like family and relationships?
- How much time do you need for personal needs such as sleeping, eating, and traveling to and from school?
- How much time do you need for housekeeping chores, socializing, recreation and other interests?

Sit down and create a daily schedule to see how much time you have left for school. Once you have an idea how many hours a week you can realistically devote to school, figure out how many units you should take. The following is a recommended formula to determine the total time required for success in a class:

Formula = 2 hours of study time for each unit taken

This is just an approximation but a good reference point to start with. Your level of study skills, choice of classes and instructors will all be factors in how much time outside of class you will need.

Example 1: For a 4-unit class you could expect the following:

In-class
time = 4 hrs per week (1 hr. for each unit)

Homework = +8 hrs per week (2 hrs. for each
unit)

Total time = 12 hrs. per week for one 4-unit class

Example 2: A student enrolled in 12 units in a quarter would need to budget 36 hours per week for school work. This includes 12 hours in class and 24 hours of study time. A student enrolled in 15 units would need to budget 45 hours a week for school work.

Managing Work and School:

The following are recommended combinations:

- If you work 15 hours/week, then consider enrolling in no more than 12 - 15 units.
- If you work 25 hours/week, then consider enrolling in no more than 9 - 12 units.

If you work 40 hours/week, then consider enrolling in no more than 4 - 8 units.