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A HISTORY AND CONTEMPORARY ANALYSIS OF THE  
IMPLEMENTATION OF CREDIT BY EXAMINATION  
AT THE UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL AT  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

By

Ruth Alison Lezotte

A DISSERTATION

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## ABSTRACT

### A HISTORY AND CONTEMPORARY ANALYSIS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CREDIT BY EXAMINATION AT THE UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL AT MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

By

Ruth Alison Lezotte

This study attempted to analyze the implementation of credit by examination at the undergraduate level at Michigan State University from a historical and contemporary perspective. Examination revealed that credit by examination has been an existing option since 1910, but has seldom been extensively and systematically implemented. Current credit by examination policy acts to restrict this option solely to those courses specified by the departments and is characterized by variable implementation across departments.

Student opinionnaires revealed a relative substantial amount of interest in the option; interviews with administrators and department chairpersons revealed a general rejection of the concept.

Varying alternatives are presented for future credit by examination policy and procedures. It is the author's opinion that the responsibility and authority for implementing credit by examination should be located in a centrally located administrative office and that the concept of credit by examination be extended beyond isolated courses. Policy and procedures for credit by examination should be developed by this office in conjunction with an advisory committee representative of various academic units. Implications are drawn for other institutions of higher education in Michigan and nationally.

## DEDICATION

To: Larry,  
Andy and Eric

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I wish to express my appreciation to the members of my doctoral committee whose help, support, and encouragement were instrumental in the successful completion of this study and all it entails.

Were it not for my committee chairperson, Dr. L. E. Fitzgerald, I would never have engaged in the pursuit of a doctoral program. Her encouragement has been of a special and prevailing nature.

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## INTRODUCTION

The practice of fulfilling standard academic requirements by successful performance on an examination has long been available in institutions of higher education. Credit by examination in lieu of traditional course enrollment and/or attendance has grown from practices particular to the individual faculty member to institutionalized departmental practices and more recently to nationally recognized assessment programs, most notably the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), and the College Board Advance Placement (APP) examinations.

Although originally conceived as an option for the exceptionally talented student, credit by examination has enjoyed periods of great popularity, as well as long periods of neglect and disfavor. Currently credit by examination is gaining renewed attention as an option for a wide range of students. As many institutions are turning their attentions to "non-traditional," "continuing," or "Life-Long Education," credit by examination is viewed as one option for persons in need of something other than the traditional residential undergraduate program.

Historically, Michigan State University has been committed to maximizing educational opportunity for a diverse student body through an equally diverse range of educational options. A formalized array of credit by examination options has long been offered to undergraduates. At one time, the undergraduate catalog stated that a student could fulfill the requirements for any course by credit by examination. This

has since been modified to state that some course requirements may be fulfilled through credit by examination.

A new and compelling factor bringing attention to credit by examination was the 1974-1975 appropriations bill for higher education in Michigan. Enrolled Senate Bill No. 1132 stated that student credit hours generated through credit by examination are to be excluded from consideration for funding purposes. This proviso is obviously based on the assumption that such credit requires little or no expenditure of effort or resources by the institutions.

As this is the first time credit by examination has been specifically excluded for appropriations considerations, it was unknown what, if any, effect would be realized at the institutional level. A brief analysis of current policies and procedures in the fall of 1974 revealed little about the status of credit by examination from the student, administrative or faculty viewpoint. An analysis of past practices was also not readily available.

The purpose of this study, then, was to review and analyze the use of credit by examination at Michigan State University from an historical and contemporary perspective in order to understand current policies and procedures and their interface with internal and external forces.

The original focus of the study was to be an historical analysis of credit by examination policies and a corresponding analysis of the extent of implementation through the years. It was expected that a fairly accurate picture of implementation could be juxtaposed against known external pressures and counterpressures in such a way as to reveal

a fluctuating pattern of implementation of credit by examination as a function of those external pressures.

It was also intended that the institutional resources required to implement a credit by examination scheme could be analyzed according to the type of scheme used. This analysis could have been drawn according to varying practices among different academic units, extent of use by academic units, and even types of credit by examination schemes devised.

The major questions addressed by this study included, but were not limited to:

- 1) the interface between external and internal forces and past and current policies and procedures;
- 2) implications for the future use of credit by examination and Michigan State University; and,
- 3) implications for the future which are applicable to other colleges and universities.

The bulk of the data consists of Michigan State University statements of policies and procedures, as well as records, documents, and other materials chronicling the use of credit by examination. Current policies, procedures, and attitudes toward its use on the part of administrators, chairpersons, and students were ascertained through surveys, questionnaires, or opinionnaires, and by some in-depth interviews where appropriate.

For purposes of this study, credit by examination is defined as fulfilling academic course requirements by examination instead of institutionally-sponsored learning experiences. Varying experiential

education schemes, independent study, field study, and other educational options which are institutionally sponsored are not included in this definition of credit by examination.

The study is limited to policies and practices at the undergraduate level at Michigan State University, but relates these wherever appropriate to state and national developments.

## CHAPTER 1

### A BRIEF HISTORICAL LOOK AT EXAMINATIONS

Prior to an analysis of a system designed as an alternative to traditional examination schemes, it seems appropriate to briefly look at the development of traditional examination procedures.

The earliest form of higher education in America was based on the English model of the classical curriculum. The curriculum was entirely prescribed with each class progressing through the course of study together from the same tutor. It was not unusual for a graduating class to have studied for the entire four years with each other in the same courses at the same time from only two or three different tutors. Students were examined at the end of each course, i.e., the end of the academic year, to determine their "fitness" to continue their studies.

The pattern of instruction was what is now known as recitation: the tutor would cite the lesson; the student would recite. Each recitation was "marked" and the "marks" were averaged to determine the final mark. There were no variations from the prescribed course of study either in terms of subjects studied nor time spent in study.

The lecture, while used occasionally earlier, was not popular until the middle of the 19th century, and finally reached eminence by the end of that century with the influence of the German Universities. The greatest objection to the lecture system was the fear voiced by some scholars that the students could conceal lack of attention and diligence behind a mask of listening to, or receiving, the lecture.

Examinations during these early periods were largely determined by the mode of instruction. Public examinations were very popular during the colonial period. The entire class was examined by a board of examiners composed of the faculty, members of the governing board, and any other interested, learned men. Students would be questioned individually by examiners and marked according to their recitation and in relation to the performance of their classmates.

By the middle of the 19th century the written examination had gained eminence over the public orals. Its defenders argued that the written examination was more equitable in that all students answered the same questions. These examinations covered large segments of instruction and were given at the end of the year, or at most, twice a year. The proponents of recitation maintained that daily marks reflected more accurately a student's mastery of the subject. Proponents of the written examination replied that their examinations forced the student to demonstrate a broader understanding of the subject. President Eliot, of Harvard, was critical of the basic assumption of both daily grades and examinations and the tutor or instructor designing the examinations: "[it is] a mistake to join the teaching and examining function in the same person because, while such a practice might provide a measure of the learning done, it afforded no satisfactory measure of the teaching (Brubacher and Rudy, p. 91)."

Both styles of instruction used the year-end examination to determine if "credit," i.e., advancement or graduation, would be conferred on the student.

The American expansion of the University system from the classics to the elective system brought with it a uniquely American attitude

toward the essence of higher education. More than any other country, or system of education, the American faculty is firmly committed to a belief in the inherent value of what the professor can teach to students. American professors believe that it is their responsibility to pass on to their students information, attitudes, ways of perceiving, which those students do not, and for the most part cannot, gain without the active intervention of the faculty (Meyer, 1975). These behaviors and beliefs by American faculty brought about two related and major changes in the complexion of American higher education:

- 1) a gradual lessening of the singular examination process, based partly on a recognition of some of its disadvantages; and

- 2) an increasing reliance on in-course evaluations made by the individual instructor, with a gradual lessening in importance of the examination as part of a cumulate comprehensive education. Hence, there was increasing reliance on those issues stressed in that particular course. This gradual change resulted in further American reliance on in-class learning and laid the foundation for a profound distrust of creditable learning taking place outside the classroom. At face value, the suggestion that persons could successfully perform on college examination without ever having taken the course is soundly rejected by most American faculty (Houle, 1973).

The four-year baccalaureate degree was established during the colonial era of the classical curriculum. The introduction of the German-based research university and the establishment of the elective system gradually altered the internal structure of the undergraduate curriculum, but the four-year arrangement of lower- and upper-division



courses has remained essentially intact. President Charles W. Eliot of Harvard University led a controversial educational movement to reduce the baccalaureate to a three-year degree. By 1906, 41 percent of the graduating class were three-year students. Following his retirement in 1909, extra tuition fees were assessed the three-year candidates and the graduating class of 1926 saw only 5.7 percent of its graduates being three-year students (Bersi, 1973).

This signaled the end of serious consideration of shortening the four-year baccalaureate degree in a substantial sense. Since that time, the baccalaureate has been regarded as a four-year experience. Innovations focused on shortening the baccalaureate degree have been designed to formulate ways the student can complete the equivalent of the four-year requirements in less time (Meinert, 1974).

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## CHAPTER 2

### CREDIT BY EXAMINATION IN CONJUNCTION WITH NON-TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

One cannot consider the use of credit by examination on the national level without quickly becoming immersed in the literature pertaining to non-traditional education. It soon becomes apparent that some form of credit by examination is basic to any conception of a system of non-traditional educational options.

The oldest form of non-traditional education, and credit by examination, is the University of London's External Degree system. In 1849, the University of London's External degree program was inaugurated as an effort to offer a university education to persons who were otherwise denied admission due to restrictive, status-based entrance requirements (Logan, 1971; Dunsheath, 1958). As is so often the case with major educational policy changes, the impetus for the liberalization of examination requirements was based on political considerations. Acceptance to the major and prestigious British Universities was, and to some degree still is, contingent upon membership in the British upper-class. This worked to the disadvantage of the growing middle class of successful businessmen, shopkeepers, and other merchants. In addition, many of these nouveau-riche were Catholic. Thus, the political battle was staged on issues of access by those previously denied admission for reasons other than academic ability.

Although students who were not enrolled in the University of London system or other equally prestigious universities were permitted to sit for the examinations, it was a full twenty years before external students realized the status of convocation and not until after World War II was the experiment declared successful and given full governmental support (Logan, 1971; Dunsheath, 1958).

The major problem faced currently by the University of London's External Degree Program is its phenomenal success. As of 1973 there was a ratio of eight external students for each internal student. This lopsided ratio presents extreme administrative problems, as the examinations and examination procedures for both groups of students are identical. Although external students are required to pay fairly substantial fees for the examinations, they still pay less than the internal students. It is also an embarrassment to the University of London that large numbers of their external students are enrolled in non-university colleges but sit for University of London examinations in order to earn the more prestigious degree (Logan, 1971; Dunsheath, 1958).

The University of London's External Program illustrates the basic issues surrounding a definition of credit by examination; full credit is granted for successful performance on a given examination, or series of examinations. In the issuing of credit, anybody who successfully performs and has the funds to pay the fees required, is granted the identical credit to those who are traditional, residential students. The onus for success is on the student, not the university. This is an example of non-traditional delivery only; there is no effort to alter the curriculum.

One of the American experiments with a credit by examination system was the University of Chicago. During the nineteen-thirties and forties, Robert Hutchins, Ralph Tyler, and others were the intellectual leaders of one of America's most highly regarded education institutions. As the major proponents, if not founders, of educational measurement in America, it is not surprising that Tyler created a system in which degree requirements were identified by examination equivalencies (Bloom, 1954).

The system was not designed to expand educational opportunity to ever-increasing segments of society. Indeed, it was designed for the exceptional student. The basic rationale for this departure from tradition was Hutchins' premise that most students needed only fourteen years of secondary education rather than the traditional eighteen. Chicago's examination program, then, was designed for students who had finished two, or more, years of high school. Upon acceptance, students were tested extensively, six hours a day for five days. These tests were then used to determine how many more, and which, examinations must be successfully completed to receive a bachelor's degree. While many, if not the majority, of students were found to need the equivalent of four full years to meet requirements, it was not at all unusual for students to be diagnosed as needing two or less years work. Students who received this kind of advanced placement, no matter how little or how great, were not assessed fees for work other than that needed from entry to graduation. Also, for a smaller than regular fee, students could take examinations before the end of the year. Thus, many very bright students were saved one, two, or more full years of tuition (Bloom and Ward, 1952).

While the University of Chicago was recognized as one of the most prestigious centers of intellectual activity, their system of comprehensive examinations was extremely controversial. Graduates of the program were especially likely to encounter difficulties with graduate school requirements (Bloom and Ward, 1952). One over-riding regulation of most graduate schools was the requirement that students successfully complete four years of under-graduate education to be eligible for acceptance into graduate schools. The stipulated four years, rather than simply a bachelor's degree requirement was often an unalterable obstacle for admission to certain graduate schools for those students who obtained a University of Chicago Bachelor of Arts degree in less than four years. Many found it desirable, if not absolutely necessary, to complete the last two years of a standard baccalaureate at another university.

It is ironic that the very early nineteen-fifties saw simultaneously the end of the University of Chicago examination system and the four-year baccalaureate restriction by many graduate schools.

The years 1971 and 1972 marked the zenith of apparent interest in non-traditional education in America, and the opening of another external program in Great Britain.

The Open University of Great Britain is a massive commitment to extending educational opportunity to adults in Great Britain. The Open University differs from University of London's External Degree in that it is designed specifically for persons twenty-one years or older. Applicants are, basically, admitted on a first-come, first-served basis. It is a massive correspondence school, has a built in tutorial element, and uses educational technology; i.e., radio and television, as a major

aspect of the delivery system. Thus, while in the final analysis credit is still conferred through the examination system, the institution takes on the responsibility of facilitating the students' progress to mastery (Eurich and Schwenkmeyer, 1971).

Although the University of London's External Degree Program was designed to reach out to the successful middle-class youth, there were large numbers of adults who, for one reason or another, never participated in any higher education experience. One of the largest of those reasons, in addition to Britain's long tradition of class-consciousness, was World War II and the years of rebuilding following the war.

One major impetus for the Open University's creation was the desire to expand educational opportunity effectively, efficiently, and as inexpensively as possible.

In 1970, following a visit to the United States where he was deeply impressed by the sophisticated technology available, Prime Minister Wilson announced the formation of the British Open University. He envisioned a media-centered university where all of Great Britain could realize the benefits of higher education, at home with their own television and radios, at far less expense than possible through traditional campus-centered locations. Through economies of scale, Wilson and his supporters sought a way to offer higher education to the greatest number of people without a financial drain on an already strained economy (Eurich and Schwenkmeyer, 1971).

The Open University differs significantly from the University of London's External Degree Program in that the curriculum is designed specifically to better meet the needs of a non-traditional student body. Although in the final analysis credit is still generated through

successful performance on an examination, there is a great deal of interaction between the student and the institution before the examination (Eurich and Schwenkmeyer, 1971).

Two points concerning these British systems hold major implications for a conception of credit by examination as part of non-traditional education in America. First, over 30,000 students a year are willing to pay fees to sit for examinations at the University of London in order to earn one of the most prestigious degrees in Britain. These students have no relationship with the University other than the examinations. Secondly, over 50,000 are currently enrolled in the Open University; another 49,000 plus applied for 20,000 places for 1975 (Chronicle, May 5, 1975, p. 4). An explanation for this success of the Open University may, ironically, be its mix of "traditional" and "non-traditional" delivery systems. The component which has had the highest success and received the most pressure to expand has been the tutorial meetings where individual or groups of students meet with tutors. These students report they are looking for "intellectual stimulation and companionship" rather than simply an explanation from the tutor (Findings, 1974, p. 5).

From these findings, American educators can infer that students, including some non-traditional students, want a legitimate degree, and interaction with both faculty and peers for stimulation, verification, and companionship.

Just as Great Britain was wrestling with the problems of expanding educational opportunity and the rising educational costs during the very early 1970s, so too was America.



By the 1970-1971 academic year, American higher education was engrossed in expanding educational opportunity to as many strata of society as possible, while simultaneously realizing an ever-growing decline in levels of financial resources. Federal grant monies decreased significantly and quickly, while state revenues reflected the general trend away from ever-expanding allocations. While the student upheavals of the late sixties played an extremely important role in the decline of higher education's fortunes, complex social and economic factors acted together to impact on higher education demanding "more for less."

One of the major new directions in higher education which was beginning to receive national attention at this time was the development of assessment programs designed to be applicable to numerous institutions. New York State was and is the leader in this field through the development of College Proficiency Examination Program (CPEP) and later, in cooperation with Educational Testing Service (ETS), the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) tests.

The CPEP test was first offered to candidates in 1963. It is a series of examinations offered by the New York State Department of Education. Faculty members of New York State institutions work as consultants in the development of the examinations, which are designed to assess the equivalency of college-level college courses. The examinations are given twice yearly by the New York Board of Regents; the receiving institution decides whether to grant credit; the New York Board of Regents does not grant the credit (The New York College Proficiency Examination Program, n.d.). The CPEP credits are acceptable toward the Regents External Degree Program, but the Board of Regents does not grant credit for CPEP tests which are to be used for other New York institutions.

The better-known CLEP program was started after CPEP, but has far exceeded it in scope. Begun in 1965, CLEP was developed by the College Entrance Examination Board, with support from the Carnegie Corporation Foundation and Educational Testing Service. It was designed to be a nation-wide method of assessing college-level proficiencies of any persons, applicable to any institution (College Credit by Examination, 1970). There are two kinds of CLEP tests, the General Examinations and Subject Examinations. The General Examinations are equivalent to subjects generally contained in undergraduate curriculums. The Subject Examinations are designed to assess competency in specific course areas; new Subject Examinations are continually being devised. Both of the examinations have national norms based on college populations, although individual institutions may set varying criteria for granting credit. All of the requirements for the New York Regents External Degree Associate in Arts Program can be met through CLEP (Valley, 1972). The rate of acceptance of CLEP credits has expanded impressively. When first offered in 1967, only 55 institutions indicated they would accept CLEP credits; by 1969, nearly 400 reported they would accept such credits (College Credit by Examination, 1970).

The College Board News, April 1975, reported a growth in the use of CLEP as follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Students</u>	<u>Exams Taken</u>	<u>Participating Colleges</u>
1967	1,464	5,500	300
1970	3,031	9,100	1,200
1974	88,174	253,373	1,500

(College Board News, 1975)

In addition to other courses offered by the Armed Services, both CPEP and CLEP are universally accepted by all education centers

associated with the Armed Services (College Credit by Examination, 1970). Almost 150,000 military personnel use CLEP examinations; indeed, they constitute the major user group (Meinert, 1974).

Although most of the national efforts toward credit by examination, especially CLEP, are advertised and touted as being of particular value to the non-traditional and mature student, analysis of the examinees reveals that the traditional aged student is the major user of this option. Trivett reports that data indicate approximately 40 percent of the recent CLEP candidates were under nineteen years of age (Trivett, 1975, p. 23). It is possible that many young people are utilizing their military service opportunities to also earn a baccalaureate degree.

Although a great number of institutions report they accept CLEP credits, the numbers of credits accepted per student varies greatly between institutions. Many set highly restrictive criteria for receiving credit, even though the examinations are normed on college populations, and many set an equivalent of one term or one semester credit hours as the maximum number of hours accepted. In practice, many institutions prefer to grant advanced placement and ignore the credit.

At the same time such nationally recognized programs were being developed, numerous institutions and statewide educational systems were exploring the possibility of external degree programs, primarily as a means of extending educational opportunity at lower than normal costs. Connecticut, Massachusetts, Michigan, Florida, and Pennsylvania are among the states which conducted feasibility studies on the external degree (Valley, 1972). One element which was common to all studies was

the inclusion of CLEP and other recognized assessment programs as one means of awarding degree eligible credit.

Credit by examination schemes, either nationally or locally developed, were initially regarded as cost-savings devices. In College Credit by Examination, published in 1970 by College Entrance Examination Board, the issue of financial and institutional implications was addressed forthrightly, from their point of view. Recognizing that institutions would be quick to fear the possibility of losing revenues generated through this kind of credit by examination, they argued that revenues would be increased in the long run by attracting competent persons who might not have gone to college at all. The person who does not have to pay full fees for classes they have already mastered, particularly the mature, is more likely to enter a college where they are credited for what they already know, runs the argument.

One experiment with CLEP and finances was at San Francisco State. All entering freshmen were administered the CLEP test, with credit or waivers granted to those scoring appropriately. The program was to be a quasi-financial aid/advanced placement situation (Whitaker, 1972). David A. Trivett (1975) reports that "94 percent of all students who took the exam . . . qualified to receive some credit. Thirty-eight percent received scores high enough on all five General Examinations to receive 30 hours of credit and status as sophomores." By changing the qualifying scores from the 25th percentile to the 50th percentile, only seven percent would be eligible for sophomore standing and only 63 percent would receive some credit. Trivett reports that San Francisco State changed its cut-off score to the higher figure (Trivett, 1975, p. 28). The financial impacts of this experiment are left unreported.

In a 1960 study, J. A. Hedrick reported that of 301 colleges in the North Central Association questioned, 171 reported some kind of credit by examination scheme. He reported that 104 institutions reported charging fees ranging from 25 cents per examination to \$15.00 per semester hour of credit granted. He did not report any analysis, nor an attempt to analyze, the financial ramifications of credit by examination (Hedrick, 1960).

In 1972, Stallings, Aleamoni, and Heil reported on a placement and proficiency examination program at the University of Illinois. The thrust of this article was toward a cost analysis. While they did not report what, if any, fees were charged for credit granted after a student is enrolled, they did note that entering freshmen were granted advanced placement with credit for no extra charge. They concluded that economics of scale, i.e., massive testing of entering freshmen, still realizes cost savings to both the institution and the student. The institution saves resources, they declare, by not requiring classroom space for students who evidenced sufficient mastery of the subjects, and the students can, in fact, shorten the time/courses necessary to reach graduation (Stallings, Aleamoni, and Heil, 1972). If these credits are included in state funding formulas, these conclusions are warranted.

These articles address themselves to assessment procedures based on existing examinations developed for the purpose of large-scale, almost totally impersonal testing situations. In essence, the latter are examples of the implementation of locally developed assessment tests.

Institutions which were looking to assessment programs, or varying credit by examination schemes for the purpose of saving money too often made a quantum leap from credit by examination to an external

degree program. One of the best explanations of the fallacious rationale in this thinking is delineated by Howard Bowen. While pointing out the unwarranted leap from credit by examination to external degree programs, he also argues that there is little, if any, cost savings in the plan. Bowen's article, "Financing the External Degree" in Diversity by Design, encapsulates many of the educational issues inherent in crediting based on assessment. He delineates a hypothetical college which has 10,000 "internal" undergraduate students and 4,000 external students, granting 400 external degrees per year. If the institution accepts any responsibility for the students' performance on examinations, or tries to enrich or facilitate learning, or evaluates students' learning activities elsewhere for possible credit, there is no ultimate cost savings. Indeed, this scheme may be slightly more expensive than for traditional resident students. Institutional resources required in the form of support services and faculty efforts greatly exceed administrative procedures in processing standardized examinations (Houle, 1973).

Houle's chapters on "Institutional Issues" and "Problems of General Policy" speak directly to two major problems facing any institution or system wishing to expand services: the issues of product quality and faculty resistance. Significant questions must be squarely addressed when an institution contemplates an external degree program, or for that matter, a decision to grant credit by examination. The first and least often answered is "What is the meaning of the degree in question?". Exactly what does constitute a Bachelor of Arts or Sciences degree? What are the broad, general areas the student is expected to be familiar with? How familiar? How are those areas to be organized? Specifically,

what is the level of mathematical sophistication the student should have? Which American authors should the student have read? Which poets? What level of writing skills should be apparent? (Houle, 1973).

The answers to these and other questions should be answered before valid examinations can be designed to grant credit by examination, says Houle. They have always been asked, seldom answered to everyone's satisfaction, and continually resurface to muddy the waters of educational policy.

How to overcome faculty resistance to either an external degree program or a credit by examination scheme is equally troublesome, he points out. Faculty control over academic policy and their inherently skeptical attitude toward a program which, in effect, maintains that students can learn as well without their services as with them often combine to the detriment of either type of program, says Houle. Houle identifies the traditional faculty reward system as a major problem. Neither credit by examination nor an external degree program fit into the typical reward system for faculty. Surely, the faculty individual, or committee, who labors at length to design an examination suitable for an introductory level Political Science course may be highly regarded by the department. The person who publishes two articles and a book, however, is more likely to get the promotion (Houle, 1973).

Houle's only answer to these problems is to gain the active support of people, departments and divisions of the highest regard and status in the initiation of external degree or other non-traditional programs. He indicates the hurdles and conflicts will still be difficult, but not impossible (Houle, 1973).

Although most objections to non-traditional education are based on varying degrees of academic elitism and self-interest, there is a very real problem of diploma-mills and charlatanism in higher education. In 1959 the American Council on Education conducted a study of diploma mills. The major problem as identified by this study was the impact on foreign students and countries. Students were unwittingly buying meaningless degrees, American colleges were becoming widely regarded as fraudulent, and whole states and their faculty were unfairly identified as educational con men (Reid, 1959). After this study the United States Office of Education disseminated information to the effect that no reputable institution conferred degrees solely on the basis of correspondence work. While largely solving the problem of diploma mills, it caused a serious setback to external degree programs.

When identifying, examining and analyzing the kinds of institutions which are labeled "diploma mills" one major point emerges: In many instances, the students' activities take place off campus under minimal, if any, supervision. Some programs simply have absurdly low levels of academic expectation; some programs are patently fraudulent. While none of the concern for degree-mills was focused on recognized external degree programs, this is the kind of activity--certified activity outside the classroom--that raises the continuous suspicion of non-traditional learning (Porter, 1972). Both Porter's book and the American Council on Education study by Reid point out that diploma mills were, and still are, a source of difficult and vexing problems of great scope. Within a legally based definition of quality education, the line between non-traditional and diploma mills can be fine and tenuous.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See discussions of Nova University's external Ed.D. program for an example of the controversy at the graduate level.



JB Lon Hefferlin, in Planning Non-Traditional Programs, points out these challenges to non-traditional education and accrediting agencies. He speculates that accrediting standards of the eighties will be a result of the outmoded practices and pressures for change in effect now, in much the same way current standards reflect the forced changes of the 1930s. He points out that the very definition of non-traditional education runs counter to many regulations of varying accrediting associations, such as specified residency requirements, limits on total number of independent study credits, or full-time study stipulations. He challenges accrediting agencies to insure educational quality rather than processes, and procedures, and financial arrangements in order to protect the public from educational charlatanism masquerading as non-traditional education (Hefferlin, 1974).

Accreditation of non-traditional education, has indeed, been addressed by varying accrediting agencies. Both the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) indicate they are developing guidelines for dealing with issues related to non-traditional education (Meyer, 1975). The Federation of Regional Accrediting Commissions of Higher Education (FRACHE) has issued interim guidelines:

"(1) Accreditation will be considered only when a number of individuals have been granted or have qualified for a degree by various non-traditional patterns indicated. Consideration of students' completed programs and student reaction are deemed indispensable to accreditation.

"(2) Accreditation procedures should be comprehensive, flexible, and fair. Evaluation committees should include persons who have experience in non-traditional programs and/or are sufficiently conversant and understanding to review innovations competently (FRACHE, 1973, p. 1)."

In addition, Meyer points out a new activity by the American Council on Education.

"The American Council on Education's Office on Educational Credit plans as one of its three major new functions to recommend 'to colleges and universities policies and procedures for the measurement and awarding of educational credit for nonformal learning experiences' (American Council on Education, 1974, p. 22) (Meyer, 1975)."

The report by the Commission on Non-Traditional Education revealed extensive interest and activity across the United States in non-traditional education. The Commission was charged with the task of identifying the status of non-traditional education movements in higher education, the implications for traditional higher education, and to make recommendations.

Cross notes that non-traditional education was receiving significant attention and support from external agencies involved with higher education, with its significance identified in the Education Amendments of 1972 to the Higher Education Act of 1965. These amendments

"... clearly intend to improve postsecondary education, by providing assistance to educational institutions and agencies for the following purposes:

"(1) Encouraging the reform, innovations, and improvement of postsecondary education, and providing equal educational opportunity for all; (2) the creation of institutions and programs involving new paths to career and professional training, and new combinations of academic and experimental learning; (3) the establishment of institutions and programs based on the technology of communications; (4) the carrying out in postsecondary educational institutions of changes in internal structure and operations designed to clarify institutional priorities and purposes; (5) the design and introduction of cost-effective methods of instruction and operation; (6) the introduction of institutional reforms designed to expand individual opportunities for entering and re-entering institutions and pursuing programs of study tailored to individual needs; (7) the introduction of reforms in graduate education, in the structure of academic professions and in

the recruitment and retention of faculties; and (8) the creation of new institutions and programs for examining and awarding credentials to individuals, and the introduction of reforms in current educational practices related thereto. (Public Law 92-318, June 23, 1972). (Cross and Valley, 1974)."

The Commission found so much activity in the form of new programs and thrusts that they had to qualify their report by indicating they were dealing with what was reported as being in effect at the time of their study.

Agreement about the identifying criteria of non-traditional programs seems to have evolved among the major researchers so that one is able to have a common understanding when discussing non-traditional programs. Non-traditional programs can be identified by the following programmatic thrusts: (1) type of student targeted upon; (2) distinctive location of the program; (3) unconventional instructional method and (4) unorthodox content.

The Commission on Non-Traditional Education revealed that, based on the responses of their study, 21 percent of the programs were characterized by only one non-traditional characteristic, and 19 percent have all four features. The single largest programmatic thrust was directed at the non-traditional student (70 percent) and 67 percent are characterized by distinctive location (Gould, 1973). It is logical to infer that the "distinctive location" identified by so many respondents represent all combinations of off-campus study, including external degrees. Fifty-seven percent reported using "unconventional instructional methods (Gould, 1973)."

Another way of identifying these kinds of methods would be some scheme of "experiential learning." This phrase covers learning activities

as traditional as acceptance of College Proficiency Examination Program or United States Armed Forces Institute (USAFI) examinations, to a structured off-campus internship, to evaluation of four years of experience as a community organizer in Harlem.

Experiential learning is directed toward the awarding of college credit for competencies learned in non-campus settings (Baskin, 1974). It is also one of the most controversial elements of non-traditional education. Two examples illustrate the range of creditable activities, and the foundations of the controversy.

Shirley S. had two years of college in 1956 and recently re-enrolled to work toward a teaching degree. During the past five years she has worked as a teacher's aide. The school principal and teachers found her to be an excellent aide, truly effective in working with children, and for the past two years has spent the majority of her time working with students individually and in groups in reading and mathematics lessons. Although she presented letters of recommendation from her principal, and was willing to undergo further evaluative activities, she was unable to gain any credit for her experiences and was required to take all required education courses including the "methods" courses.

Paul T. is an extremely bright student who had trouble reaching accord between himself and the college he entered after high school graduation. Paul stopped out of school for two terms during which he "bummed around the country" as he puts it. When he decided to re-enter college he transferred to a Liberal Arts College experimenting with non-traditional

education and experiential learning. Paul was granted three hours of sociology based on his experiences of "observing many different people and life styles" during the two terms.

Both situations elicit varying responses from varying individuals in varying institutions. It's possible that Shirley S's "excellence" is nothing more than a popularity indicator and Paul T. is an insightful social observer. Much depends on one's orientation toward the educational process. The issues involved in the evaluation of experiential learning are reflective of those raised by Houle in his discussion of the external degree: What does an undergraduate degree signify? What are the steps to attaining that degree?

There is a dearth of information available which indicates the actual scope of experiential educational activities, and less information available which could be utilized as resource material. One recent publication, Awarding College Credit for Non-College Learning by Peter Meyer, presents an extensive overview of programs in operation as well as guidelines for the awarding of credit based on prior learning. He points out that

"The number of colleges and universities now involved in the process of crediting prior learning exceeds one hundred. They are found in every geographic region and in both the public and private sectors of higher education; among them are small as well as large institutions--traditional as well as experimental--special programs operating within larger institutions, and institutions totally dedicated to making the crediting of prior learning an integral part of every student's program.

"The literature, unfortunately, does not reflect this growth (Meyer, 1975, p. xviii)."

Meyer argues that crediting experiential, or prior, learning must be conducted through a faculty based model. That is, the process must be

legitimized by the institution, through the aegis of the university curriculum committee, and the faculty must be recognized and rewarded in accordance with traditional reward system.

Experiential education raises the issue of who or what is the arbiter of knowledge. Academics have long been trained to view the world and its problems, as well as existing knowledge, from certain perspectives, to attack problems in certain, similar ways, and much of the time reach highly similar conditions.

"Faculty members must be willing to admit that their curriculum is value-laden and should be willing to acknowledge that students can demonstrate competencies which are acceptable but reflect a different value system. This decision rests with the faculty-student body at each institution. Once made, the resistance to prior learning can at least be dealt with in an open, honest manner (Meyer, 1975, pp. 15-16)."

As education has been extended to larger and larger segments of the population, the tension between non-traditional students, especially women and minorities, and academe, has increased. Experiential education is one way of bridging that gap, and in doing so becomes double-laden in the conflict concerning the arbitration of knowledge.

An expanded definition of credit by examination then is that credit is granted by the examination and evaluation of varying kinds of experiences for the purpose of translating experience into college credit units.

#### Examples of Non-Traditional Programs by Type

Although varying researchers have identified non-traditional programs by as many as six types (Valley, 1972) and as few as three (Houle, 1973) this author feels that four typologies are appropriate to

this paper (Valley, 1972). In order of decreasing nontraditionalism, they can be classified as: (1) Administratively unconventional; (2) non-traditional delivery system; (3) credit for varying types of experiences, and (4) assessment degrees.

1. Administratively Unconventional. The University Without Walls is illustrative of this concept (Valley, 1972). Through inter-institutional administrative arrangements, students are free to move around between a number of colleges with full standing. A major component is the option of contracting, before or after, for off-campus learning experience for credit. At this point the program is still in the beginning experimental stage.

2. Non-Traditional Delivery System. Empire State College is illustrative of this program type. Their entire program is based on a learning-contract system with many acceptable routes to successfully meeting requirements. It is important to note that Empire State does not deliberately recruit the non-traditional student, but rather the bright and "turned off" traditional student.

As programs mature, it may be feasible to test Bowen's contention that unstructured and/or external degree programs are more appropriate for the well-prepared, bright, traditional student than the non-traditional student.

3. Credit for Varying Types of Experiences. Thomas A. Edison represents a compromise between the highly non-traditional programs illustrated in the first two instances and the New York Regents External Degree program discussed next. Thomas A. Edison initially followed the policies and procedures of the New York Regents system but broke away in 1970-1971 to form its own program. They targeted upon non-traditional

types of students, with particular emphasis on crediting for life experience. Nationally standardized tests such as CLEP, CPEP, USAFI are greatly utilized.

4. New York Regents External Degree Program. This is the oldest American external degree program and is basically an assessment degree. Use of standardized tests is extensive and routine and courses from all institutions in the SUNY system are accepted. The Regents External Degree Program offers no courses; progress is determined solely by examinations and credit accumulation.

Although these four program types indicate a wide range of educational activity, there are two major common elements to all four programs:

1) All four have liberal policies concerning the number of credits from nationally recognized tests which are accepted by the institutions.

2) All four have some local evaluation programs designed to evaluate the competencies of students in lieu of course attendance.

Thus, it is apparent that non-traditional education has as a basic assumption that students can earn college credit through means other than traditional course attendance. It further indicates that assessments of varying kinds can be conducted to award legitimate college credits through legitimate credit by examination schemes.



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## CHAPTER 3

### THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

An analysis of credit by examination at Michigan State University requires the defining of certain parameters around which that analysis will be conducted.

The major point of concern is the definition of credit by examination. The over-riding consideration for identifying a true credit by examination situation is that the student be evaluated solely by an assessment technique, generally, but not necessarily, paper-pencil, covering a certain body of information identified as being equivalent to a certain level of existing college level course work, or block of courses, or a performance level with no educational intervention on the part of the institution.

One form of credit by examination is nationally known and recognized assessment tests. While not the only assessment device, the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) is the best known and most widely used. Another form is locally developed assessment tests. These are examinations developed at the institution for the evaluation of specific institutional requirements. These tests could be used to evaluate either a general level of competence, or be applicable to only a single course. While the term does not enjoy official use at Michigan State University, "challenge examinations" is an apt and descriptive term for this mode of credit by examination.

Both kinds of credit by examination are utilized at Michigan State University, to varying degrees, at the undergraduate level.

For purposes of this discussion, these two forms of credit by examination are the only ones which will be considered. Independent study, individual readings, learning contracts, field experiences and experiential education programs will not be included. The major disqualifying element in these, and other similar programs is that they are situations in which the student and the institution, i.e., instructor, agree on the goals and means of reaching those goals of the experience before it occurs. That is, they are institutionally sponsored experiences.

The purpose of this paper is to trace the historical use of credit by examination at Michigan State University, as well as to identify areas of concern for the future use of credit by examination at Michigan State University.

### The Present Scene

Theoretically, a Michigan State University student may complete all University College course requirements and varying other courses in the area of major concentration through credit by examination. Residency requirements demand a student earn at least 40 credits on the East Lansing campus after reaching junior standing (Michigan State University Catalog, 1974). Although substantial, these 40 hours would not seem to be an insurmountable obstacle to the student who desires programmatic flexibility.

Credits (or waivers) by examination are earned through five possible options:

1. High school seniors who participate in the program, may, in May of their senior year, take the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) Advanced Placement Test. Credits earned in this manner are treated in the same way as transfer credits. The student pays CEEB, no Michigan State University fees are assessed.

2. Before enrollment in Michigan State University, students may elect to take CLEP examinations. The maximum allowable waiver and/or credit earned is a total of 15 credit hours for general education requirements. Students may earn up to 30 hours through the CLEP subject examinations. Fees are paid to CEEB; no Michigan State University fees are assessed.

3. Enrolled students may waive or receive credit for University College courses through "Independent Study and Acceleration" examination. Credits are assessed at the prevailing Michigan State University fee structure; no fees are assessed for waivers.

4. Students may acquire credit in departmental courses by enrolling in "999 credit by examination" sections as offered by the department. This option is treated as regular course enrollment, with standard fee assessment and recording in the students' academic record.

5. Credit by examination, upon demand and other than through special sections, is presumably still available, but no procedure for it is indicated in the catalog or schedule book.

Thus, on paper, Michigan State University's undergraduate program is extremely flexible and supportive for all students, both traditional and non-traditional. However, while these five options appear to offer a route to programmatic flexibility, careful scrutiny reveals certain restrictions inherent in them.

The first three options are overlapping in that they are all alternatives to the University College/General Education requirements of the lower division program.

The Advanced Placement Program (APP) is, in effect, limited to students who happen to have this option available in their high schools, and who enter college directly following high school graduation. Students who receive advanced placement through this program are, basically, receiving credit for college-level courses already taken; the Advanced Placement Program is thus acceleration in a traditional sense. Credit gained is usually for first year, general education courses.

The use of CLEP tests at Michigan State University will be discussed at length later; it is appropriate here to say that the use of CLEP at Michigan State University has been greatly restricted, is not generally encouraged by the institution, and is used infrequently. Most CLEP credits are applicable to the first or second year courses, with few credits granted through subject examination.

The University College Independent Study and accelerated examinations are designed specifically to assess mastery of University College courses. As with CLEP, these examinations will be discussed in more detail later.

The fourth option, credit by examination/999 (cbe/999) sections, is the 1974-1975 analogue to the early policy language addressing students who "wish to pass off any subject by examination." As noted, under "option five," there is no current language addressing the issue of "passing off subjects." Requesting permission for courses not offered as cbe/999 sections presumably is still an option, but this conclusion can only be reached by observing that there has been no official policy change removing that option.

A final confounding factor in the credit by examination situation is the language appearing in the higher educational appropriations bill for 1974-1975 which states specifically that credit hours generated by examination will not be accepted for appropriation purposes. Thus, even though credit by examination was never a frequently used option outside University College, data revealed later will show a further restriction in the availability of this option.

In recognition of the problems inherent in both the existing credit by examination policy, and the possible problems presented by the state legislature's stance concerning credit by examination, the Provost's office has requested the Educational Policies Committee to address the issue as soon as possible.

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## CHAPTER 4

### THE EARLY ERA: 1910-1944

Between 1910 and the formation of the Basic College in 1944, there always existed language in the Michigan State University catalog which, in effect, stated that students could take special examinations for the purpose of passing off a subject.

The language in the 1910-11 Michigan State University catalog read:

"Special Examinations. Special examinations for students who are delinquent in any subject or who wish to pass off a subject by examination, will be held as follows:

Monday, September 25, 1911  
Monday, January 2, 1912  
Monday, April 1, 1912

Special examinations will not be given at any other time. Students having conditions to make up must arrange to be present on these days at 8:00 a.m. (Michigan Agricultural College Catalog, 1910-11)."

This language remained in the catalog until 1914-15 when the following language appeared:

"Students receiving a condition (X) have the privilege of passing off the subject by a special examination, provided such examination is taken before the subject reoccurs in the course. Those receiving a failure (F) and those not removing their conditions by the above mentioned method must repeat the subject in class. The fee for such special examination is one dollar.

"The Monday immediately preceding registration day of each term is set apart for special examinations for students who are delinquent in any subject or who wish to pass off a subject by examination. These examinations will not be given

at any other time except by permission of the faculty. Appointments for special examinations will be made from 8 to 9 a.m. on the day stated above (Michigan Agricultural College Catalog, 1914-15)."

The intent of this latter language is less clear than either the language in 1910 or the new language in the 1926-27 catalog. One could interpret the 1914-15 language to allow "the passing off of a subject" only for those students in academic difficulty. On the other hand, the phrase ". . . or those who wish to pass off a subject by examination. . . ." could be interpreted as being applicable to all students.

The intent is clarified in the 1926-27 catalog. In 1926-27, the catalog specifically referred to special examinations for advanced credit. In 1926-27, also, the policy read that students who wished credit by examination need only request permission at least 48 hours prior to the examination, at a time satisfactory to both the student and the instructor.

"Subject to regulations stated above, special examinations, either for advanced credit or to remove deficiencies, may be given at any time satisfactory to both the instructor and the student, provided request for such examination be made at least forty-eight hours prior to the time the examination is desired (Michigan State College Catalog, 1926-27)."

Whether the ten-year period between 1914-15 and 1926-27 was the only period where some provision for credit by examination did not exist at Michigan State is open to conjecture. Perhaps the faculty interpreted the language to allow able students to pass off a subject and the language was not changed because everyone interpreted it in the positive. Perhaps that is the only time in Michigan State University's history that credit by examination was not a permissible option.

It is a fact, however, that from 1926 to the present, there has always been a stated policy specifically identifying credit by examination

as an option for students, subject to varying procedures for giving permission.

The procedure for securing permission for credit by examination has varied extensively over time. Initially, students secured permission directly from the appropriate member of the faculty and then paid a minimal fee to the registrar. This held until 1932-33. In 1932-33 a new administrative procedure appeared in the regulations. The stipulations held that the student was required to secure written permission from both the head of the department and from the Dean of the Division before applying to the registrar for a permit for a special examination.

The apparent explanation for this increasingly complex route of securing permission probably lies in the steady expansion of the college in both size and complexity. Both factors create an expansion of the administrative structure, and a relative decrease in the amount and intimacy of student-faculty interaction. Administrative protocol also calls for the proper channels through which a student may circumvent curricular requirements.

Although it would be ideal to be able to report some kind of data documenting the extent of credit by examination granted during these years, it would appear there exists no records. Indeed, there are almost no first-source data, records or memoranda concerning educational policies. Whether because of, or in spite of, extensive and thoughtful deliberation on the part of faculty and administration, educational policy is largely characterized by its evolutionary nature. There is far more accurate information and documentation concerning the development of the athletic program than educational policy.

In addition, there are extremely few persons who have been with the university that long, and not all of those persons were in a position to be concerned with a policy as limited in scope as credit by examination. Thus, the combination of highly personal and generalized memories in conjunction with an evolutionary policy situation makes accurate data gathering a very chancy situation.

The preceding rules, regulations, and procedures were in operation until the formation of the Basic College in 1944.

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## CHAPTER 5

### FORMATION OF THE BASIC COLLEGE

In 1944, Michigan State College addressed two issues of major importance to its future as an institution of growing stature. That year saw a great deal of activity on most campuses, ironically, centered in the institutional lull of an exceptionally small number of students.

One major issue being addressed at that time was the question of general education and its role in the undergraduate curriculum. Many educators felt curricula were leaning too far toward specialization and vocationalism and were advocating the merits of general education (Hamilton and Blackman, 1955).

Simultaneously, the federal government requested all national institutions, including colleges, to begin to prepare for the return of the veterans, as many were being discharged and the end of the war was in sight. The government and institutions worked jointly to prepare for the end of the war and the implementation of the G. I. Bill. Although neither correctly anticipated the actual number of veterans who would actually take advantage of the G. I. Bill, colleges, were, thus, not taken totally by surprise (Olson, 1974).

The preceding is not to indicate that there was any causal relationship between the formation of the Basic College and the efforts of the postwar planning committees. Indeed, in The Basic College of Michigan State Hamilton and Blackman barely mention the

issue of returning veterans, other than a passing note that their entry to the College greatly increased the enrollment of the Basic College. The point is simply to point out a fortuitous meeting of educational goals and social needs.

Formed simultaneously with the Basic College was the Board of Examiners, which was an independent examining unit (Hill, 1975). The charge to the Board was two-fold: First, it was charged with the responsibility for the examining and grading in the Basic College, and second, the Board was specifically charged with the responsibility of assessing, evaluating and negotiating appropriate college credits for learning experiences prior to enrollment in the University. The Board was the predecessor to the existing Office of Evaluation Services in the University College, and set the precedent for developing sets of examinations designed to evaluate a general level of college competency (Hill, 1975). From its inception, the Basic College allowed students who presented evidence of exceptional ability the opportunity to take the comprehensive examinations in lieu of all, or some of the course work, for credit. The first language concerning this option reads:

"Admission to a comprehensive examination is limited to students who have completed a core course (three full quarters) or are recommended by their counselor as otherwise having made appropriate preparation. Such recommendation must have the approval of the dean of the Basic College. Though the majority taking a comprehensive examination will be students who have regularly taken the course work, the way is thus opened for recognition of personal educational advancement made by individual students outside of courses for which they have been given credit at Michigan State College (Michigan State College Catalog, 1944-45)."

Those students who received credit were not charged additional fees to receive the credit. In 1946-47, the language became more specific:

"Comprehensive examinations also provide means whereby past experience, exceptional competence, or independent study may be recognized. Whenever a student passes a comprehensive examination with a grade of C or better, he receives full credit in that basic course even though he may have been enrolled in the course only two quarters, one quarter, or not at all. Special permission to take comprehensive examinations in basic courses is granted by Basic College departments to superior students who satisfy the department concerned that their superior work in a course, their program of independent study, or the nature of their experience is such as to warrant an early trial (Michigan State College Catalog, 1946-48)."

By 1952, the language specifically included special consideration for "mature" students while becoming more stringent for traditional students:

"Students who take an examination by special permission shall receive a grade of A, B, or N. In the case of more mature students considerably above the usual college student age, a high C grade may be acceptable for credit upon recommendation by the Dean of the Basic College (Michigan State College Catalog, 1952-53)."

In 1952, the "mature" student is not identified by age. In 1953-54, over 25 is equated to "mature"; in 1955-56, 28 is identified as "mature."

"One important reason for the establishment of the special permission feature was to allow students to speed up their academic careers. With the veteran population after World War II, this purpose was realized. Veterans, feeling the press of time and age more keenly than the usual undergraduate, earned about eleven quarter hours of Basic course credit by examination as compared with five credits for non-veterans. Many veterans saved a full term's work or more. Some students still see acceleration as a means of cutting down financial outlay by shortening a college course. . . (Dressel, 1958, p. 160)."



Thus, this particular form of credit by examination worked to the advantage of both traditional and non-traditional students in much the same way as the current goals of non-traditional education advocates.

The responsibility of negotiating credit by examination for mature students in departments outside the Basic College required far more individualized effort by the Board of Examiners. Under the prodding of then-President Hannah, Michigan State's admissions policies were highly flexible and designed to welcome veterans and other previously engaged personnel into the institution. These persons could present themselves and an account of their experiences to the Board for translation into college credits. The Board had the authority to not only recommend general education credits be given, but also negotiate with individual departments. Numerous credits were granted individuals for previous experiences, particularly those persons who attended various training, technical and officer training programs. Certain programs in the Armed Services were routinely accepted for credit; other experiences often necessitated hours of effort to design an appropriate and valid evaluation.

It is generally recognized that without the benefit of a centralized office, which had the authority to recommend credit be granted for previous learning experiences, most students would have been unable to gain these benefits. There were certain legendary incidences of students receiving exceptionally large number of credits, such as one student who earned 149 credit hours, and another 65 quarter hours through credit by examination. However, these were rare instances (Dressel, 1958).

At this point it is important to note that credit by examination took on two distinct characteristics at Michigan State. Credit by examination in the Basic College was a formalized option, encouraged by the institution, and easily accessible to students. On the other hand, the credit by examination option also was available, according to Michigan State College policy statements, in departments and colleges outside the Basic College. This option was listed as "Special" or "Acceleration Credit by Examination" in the catalogs, but its implementation was left entirely to the individual departments.

In contrast to the relatively extensive and steadily increasing use of credit by examination in the Basic College, credit by examination, or "challenge" examinations outside the Basic College were a rare occurrence. A study by J. Sheedy in 1949-50 showed less than 0.2 percent earning credit in this way (Dressel, 1958, p. 155).

With the exception of the Sheedy study on credit by examination in 1949-50, there are no data on the use of credit by examination in departments outside the Basic College. The only data that exist on credit by examination at all are those tabulations kept by Evaluation Services.

When first instituted, credits earned by examination in the Basic College were noted as such on the student's transcript. It was soon discovered that other colleges, both on campus and other institutions, would not accept credits identified as credit by examination units. In 1946, therefore, the identifying notation was removed from all official records. The chairman of the Board of Examiners, Dr. Paul L. Dressel, believed this to be the most educationally sound and equitable manner of handling this situation. Thus, in 1946,

precedent was set for recording all manner of credits granted without special notation. Therefore, other than the aggregate data collected by the Basic College, there are no data on individuals or on the numbers of credits by examination granted between 1946 and 1973.

In 1960-61, the University College option of credit by examination was identified in the catalog as an option for the superior student. Enrollments were doubling, educators were discussing ways of "processing" students, and the Sputnik mentality pervaded education. The new influx of students into higher education activated its seemingly concomitant controversy: institutional standards, inappropriate students, and a threatened reduction of educational quality. At this time, the more lenient criteria for gaining credit by the mature student is deleted from the University College regulations. It is hardly surprising, then, that the University College credit by examination option would be presented as an option for the superior student (Michigan State University Catalog, 1960-61).

The catalog of 1967 reveals significant new language concerning credit by examination. Following a re-assessment of the policy by a sub-committee of the Educational Policies Committee, the new language read

"Students may earn credit without formal enrollment in courses subject to availability of the option in specific departments. Departments may require course or laboratory projects, written reports, evidence of satisfactory skill performance, etc., in lieu of or in addition to examination performance (Michigan State University Catalog, 1967)."

A member of the Educational Policies Committee sub-committee which was responsible for this new language was queried as to the reasons for this change. Dr. Willard Warrington, Associate Dean, Academic Services of University College, reported that the sub-committee felt it

the most educationally honest procedure because, although the catalog had referred to an advanced credit by examination option, it seemed that very few departments outside University College actually granted permission for advanced credit examinations. It seemed, therefore, more feasible to indicate to students that this option may not be available in all departments.

The language retains an interesting option available since the inception of the Basic College. It indicates that students may take advanced credit examinations by outlining the fee assessment schedule.

"Procedure:

4. (c) former students not currently registered at the University will be charged the regular fees for the number of credits earned by Advanced Credit Examination but not more than the full time fees (Michigan State University Catalog, 1967)."

This statement raises an interesting point. The University College examinations were titled University College Waiver and Acceleration Examinations, departmental "challenge" examinations are described under Advanced credit by examination. As the proviso concerning students formerly enrolled specifically identifies Advanced credit by examination as being available, is it possible that ex-students could earn credit through challenge examinations and the fee payment without being actually enrolled in the institution? Why would a student desire this option? Could not these credits be routinely transferred to another institution? Given re-entry, these credits surely would have to have been accepted by Michigan State University; did there exist, even by accident, a possible external degree program? What kind of

conflict would have ensued if an ex-student challenged the residency requirement of 40 on-campus credits after reaching junior standing?

While interesting, these questions are purely academic because the Educational Policies Committee again addressed the issue of credit by examination in 1972 and re-wrote all policy concerning it. The availability of credit by examination for formerly enrolled students was deleted.

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## CHAPTER 6

### 1972 EDUCATIONAL POLICIES COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS

Since 1910, there has been on record a policy stating, in effect, that any student can request credit by examination in any course at Michigan State University. The conditions under which that request is granted has varied both with time, circumstance, and department. But to date that policy still stands at Michigan State University.

During the 1971-72 academic year, the Educational Policies Committee totally re-drafted all credit by examination policy and procedures. Although varying sections of credit by examination policy had been modified throughout the years, this is the first time credit by examination policy has been totally changed since 1910. This new policy was adopted by the Educational Policies Committee on October 3, 1972 (see Appendix A).

In the summer of 1973, Michigan State University implemented these changes. The major focus of the procedure was the implementation of a course section 999 listed in the Academic Handbook and Schedule of Courses, in which students enrolled according to regular procedures for a credit by examination course. The implementation of 999 sections has drastically altered the conditions and presuppositions of credit by examination outside the University College. All previous language was directed toward a situation in which the student initiated the credit by examination process. The policy until 1972 focused on the procedure

to be followed by both student and faculty to receive credit if the "challenge" was successful. Thus, in theory, any student could request credit by examination in any course. Although not all instructors or departments actually gave permission for credit by examination, the initiator of the action was the student.

The situation under the new policy is entirely the reverse. This policy states that

"Courses available for credit by examination are specially designated in the Schedule of Courses. Students who wish to avail themselves of this option must so indicate through the regular enrollment procedure. They are responsible for obtaining from the department and/or instructor a written statement on the materials and skills they will be required to demonstrate proficiency in, and on the means and standards by which proficiency will be assessed. Standards shall be comparable to those used to grant credit for regular enrollment.

"Units should except from this option only those courses in which class attendance and participation are an integral part of the instructional method (Credit by Examination Policy, 3 October 1972)."

Thus, students are told which courses are offered for credit by examination. The department is the initiator; not the student, and certainly no interpretation of the policy can be construed to apply to any student requesting credit by examination in any course. By the institution, through the department, identifying which courses will be available for credit by examination, the needs of the non-traditional student may be missed entirely. It is highly improbable that non-sponsored learning will be directly on-target with specific course requirements. This also raises the point that, under this policy, degree requirements are based solely on the accumulation of credits earned through regular courses. A further constriction of the policy lies in its procedure requirements. Under the new policy, students



must enroll for the course section 999, pay fees in accordance with regular courses, and the grades are registered and recorded according to regular procedure.

Ironically, the changes in credit by examination policy were initiated due to a desire to bring about more congruence between the stated policy and actual departmental implementation. According to Dr. Lester Manderscheid, then-Chairman of Educational Policies Committee, the issue was first raised by two students who requested credit by examination but were discouraged and denied permission to do so. Both students were members of the Honors College, and one in particular remained with Dr. Manderscheid's memory. This student had spent the summer employed as a forest ranger. As he spent his summer in a fire tower watching for fires, he also read profusely. According to the student, he also read what he believed to be many of the required texts for future classes. However, when he requested credit by examination according to stated policy, he was denied permission. The same response was experienced by the other student when requesting credit by examination. After being rebuffed, both students then raised the issue with Dr. Manderscheid who subsequently brought it before the Educational Policies Committee (Manderscheid, 1975).

As the Educational Policies Committee delved into the credit by examination issue, it soon became apparent that one factor which dampened departmental enthusiasm was the matter of credit hour generation. Credits generated by examination, at that time were not credited to specific departments, but rather to the all-University total. Thus, although faculty expended the extra effort to create an examination of some kind

for students requesting credit by examination, the department received no credit for having done so. The issue of crediting departments with credit by examination credits generated, then, became an extremely important consideration in policy deliberations. This concern was further exacerbated by the 1974-75 appropriations bill language declaring credits generated by examination ineligible for consideration in appropriations purposes. Many questions were directed to the Provost's Office through the Office of Institutional Research as to whether credit by examination activities could be included in reports of faculty and department activity analyses. In essence, departments wanted to know if credit by examination efforts expended by the faculty could be reported as legitimate faculty activity. In response to these concerns, the Office of the Provost issued a statement on February 3, 1975, directing academic units to proceed under interim guidelines until the broader topic of credit by examination can be studied by the Educational Policies Committee (see Appendix B). Thus, by placing institutional and administrative considerations before educational issues, educational options became constricted into credit by examination/999 courses in such a way as to negate its original intent.

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## CHAPTER 7

### EXISTING DATA AND ATTITUDES TOWARD CREDIT BY EXAMINATION

As noted earlier in this study, the data pertaining to the actual use of credit by examination at Michigan State University is either scanty or non-existent. Additionally, there is little indication as to the prior attitudes of the departmental faculty toward the credit by examination policy.

This chapter presents the available data concerning the credit by examination systems at Michigan State University.

The data pertaining to the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) and Advanced Placement Program (APP) examinations were provided by Mr. Charles Seeley of the Office of Admissions and Scholarships. The data concerning the University College Acceleration and Independent Study (UCAIS) were presented largely through the efforts of Dr. Walker Hill, Office of Evaluation Services. The data concerning the implementation of credit by examination/999 (cbe/999) sections was provided by the Office of Institutional Research.

Additionally, attitudes of students and faculty and administrators toward credit by examination is presented. An opinionnaire was sent to a small, stratified random sample of students. Department chairpersons and some administrators were interviewed, from which faculty attitudes as articulated by those departmental chairpersons could be presented.

Chairperson Attitudes Toward Credit by Examination

Seventeen chairpersons and seven other administrators were interviewed concerning the availability of credit by examination in their departments or colleges and their attitudes toward the concept in general. Administrators were chosen in reference to their responsibilities for credit by examination, their involvement with the Educational Policies Committee, and/or long years of service at Michigan State University. Departments were selected so as to represent a cross-section of departments extensively involved in undergraduate programs. Academic areas which offered professional or vocational degrees, but whose students could conceivably be employed in the field without a conferred degree were selected for interview. Also, those departments commonly thought of as the "liberal arts" were selected for interview. Examples of the latter are language departments, history, psychology, communication, and two departments in the College of Human Ecology. Examples of departments which are more professionally or vocationally oriented are journalism, theatre, television and radio, and business law, insurance, and office administration. The number of departments and chairpersons selected for interview was deliberately kept to a minimum. At the time of the interviews, the subject of credit by examination and the legislature's denial of these credits for inclusion in appropriations considerations was a public issue. The Office of the Provost, also, issued a clarifying policy statement directing the departments to continue to offer credit by examination and charging the Educational Policies Committee to draw up new guidelines for credit by examination.

A "questionnaire" was employed, mainly for the purpose of stimulating and directing discussion. See Appendix D for a copy of the questionnaire. Each chairperson was told that the questionnaire was not meant to elicit "hard data" nor represent a study of chairpersons' implementation of cbe/999 educational policy. Rather, the desire was to elicit as much discussion and information as possible from the interviewees. As the total sample was small, and those chairpersons available and willing to participate in an interview further decreased the sample, it was believed that an informal interview would yield more valuable information than an overly-detailed check list of departmental policy.

The crucial questions for discussion were

1. Did your department offer 999 sections last year? How many? How were these handled? Special examinations? Regular examinations? Regular examinations and papers?
2. Does your department administer its own waiver examinations? Are these widely used by your students?
3. Are requests for credit by examination fairly common?

There followed a series of questions concerning the practice of offering 999 sections and the interviewees' attitudes toward evaluation of educational competencies and granting credit without benefit of formal college training on the part of the student. These interviews revealed a certain disparity of implementation of credit by examination policy, but a great similarity of attitudes toward the issue.

The interviewees were insistent that it be recognized that the decisions to implement credit by examination were based on deliberations

of the departments as a whole, or through departmental advisory bodies. The decision to offer cbe/999 sections was not, then simply based on the chairperson's decision as an administrator.

Six of the seventeen chairpersons indicated that their departments offered 999 sections last year. Eleven chairpersons reported they do not offer credit by examination. Two indicated their departments are developing credit by examination procedures and two chairpersons said they and or their faculty negotiate individually with students for waiver of requirements but do not offer a formal cbe/999 section.

Five of the six departments offering credit by examination reported formalized administrative procedures designed to clarify the position of student and faculty responsibilities. All five sent letters to students stressing that 999 sections were for the exceptional student. In addition, students were advised of their responsibility to reach an agreement with the faculty as to what the examination would cover, any other requirements, and when the examination would be given. They also stressed to the student that the responsibility for successful completion of the requirements was totally with the student.

Of the six departments which offered 999 sections, two departments offered special examinations designed specifically for 999 sections, two offered regular examinations, and two offered a combination of special and regular examinations.

Seven of the seventeen chairpersons indicated they administered their own waiver examinations. Two indicated these examinations are more rightfully used as "placement examinations"; one department limited this option to one course, the rest were very comfortable with offering the option to waive some introductory courses.

All but two departments reported very little student interest in waiving courses or in enrolling in 999 sections. Of the two departments, one was mathematics, where testing students for proper placement is common practice. The other department is television and radio, where the chairperson reported fairly high numbers of students with actual work experience in the television and radio programs. He reported that one or more of the introductory courses are often waived for experienced students after interviews with faculty and him.

Three of the administrators interviewed were Associate Deans for Undergraduate Education, the administrative officers charged with the responsibility of facilitating cbe/999 sections according to official credit by examination policy. The attitudes of these persons revealed little faith or interest in this option. All three expressed frustration with the Educational Policies Committee and the Provost's office for not providing clarification of the policy, particularly a rationale for the request.

These administrators were similar to the chairpersons in their attitudes toward cbe/999 sections. Although six of the seventeen offered 999 sections, only two departments reported noticeable student interest in the option.

The overriding attitude of all but two chairpersons was an almost total rejection of the need for this kind of option. The eleven who did not offer 999 sections, three Associate Deans, and two of the offering chairpersons reported absolutely no interest in credit by examination exhibited by either their faculty or their students. Many interviewees were overtly hostile in their remarks concerning this option.



There were substantial differences in the perceptions of the reasons for offering 999 sections even among offering departments. Some indicated that it was an administrative dictum, and therefore the department offered the option even though they had grave doubts about its use. Others, particularly in the science and mathematics areas, recognized great differences in the high school programs and ranges in student abilities. These departments made extensive use of examinations for placement purposes and relied heavily on waiver and, to a lesser degree, credit examinations to properly sort out their students.

All agreed that credit by examination students performed noticeably poorer than students in regular classes. There may possibly be an inter-relationship between this and the relative lack of confidence concerning passing final examinations without course attendance reported in the student questionnaire. These two factors seem to point to a recognition by both the student and faculty that normal examination procedures are idiosyncratic to the classroom. Many chairpersons pointed out that a far more beneficial arrangement for the student is to simply attend class as frequently, or infrequently, as the student desires.

Letters to students outlining qualifications and responsibilities usually resulted in a fair number of students dropping the 999 section and enrolling in a regular course session. One problem which surfaced was the number of students who accidentally enrolled in a 999 section. This happened fairly frequently in those courses which required enrollment in a lecture and discussion session. As 999 sections were listed first in the schedule of courses, some students thought they were signing up for the first section of the lecture session.

When asked how credit by examination was handled before 999 sections were developed, the chairpersons responded mainly that there had never been requests, and/or that students were strongly discouraged from such requests. Those who did not flatly reject the existence of the concept reported that students would be evaluated, either by an examination, which was written, or through some indication of past performance, and would then sign up for the course when it was regularly offered. The chairperson would intercede with other faculty members for the student to make sure the student got the credit and the correct grade. Two chairpersons expressed a fair amount of confidence in this procedure. They pointed out that the faculty had an opportunity to counsel and advise the student on an individual basis, thus increasing the "hands-on" relationship between student and faculty. Also, by registering only after successful performance the student is saved the double threat of paying tuition and failure. These persons pointed out that credit by examination should not punish the student for confidence, as is possible in 999 sections, and can be used as an educational tool to enhance the student's performance in the program.

None of the chairpersons felt that their positions allowed them to actually determine and declare that a student should be granted credit for previous learning outside their department. When pressed, some stated that they believed they could initiate the process through their respective Assistant Deans. None of them had ever heard of a chairperson actually giving credit without tying it to an existing course; none exhibited more than an abstract interest in doing so. They reported that granting credit for previous work was the purview of the Admissions

Office and they assumed that any necessary credits granted for work done outside the university were taken care of by the Registrar's Office.

Most chairpersons stressed that they have almost unlimited ability to waive courses and course requirements. All chairpersons indicated that waivers are granted extensively and almost routinely as their contribution to program flexibility. Some departments indicated that by waiving certain courses, more students can be accommodated by making more laboratory stations available. Other departments have large numbers of courses which require "approval of the department or instructor" before enrollment; student-faculty conferences often result in persons being allowed to enroll in more advanced courses, thus a modified waiver system. Still other chairpersons feel that students with facility in one area are better served by taking courses less familiar to them, thus enhancing the overall learning of the student.

All but two chairpersons maintained that there was little or no interest on the part of students in credit by examination. More than one interviewee flatly stated, for example, that there were "no more than two requests in ten years." Some declared never having experience with a student requesting credit by examination. Some related incidents of very bright freshmen with inflated visions of their academic acumen, most of whom were "brought back to reality" by a trial run at a sample final examination.

All but two interviewees, however, denied the existence of more than a miniscule number of "non-traditional" students at Michigan State University. Both were women chairpersons. One reported that her college had academic advisors to assist in meeting the needs of returning students, i.e., persons finishing degrees after many years out of school,

or persons desiring a second bachelor's degree. Her department, however, did not offer credit by examination. The other chairperson who did not reject the notion of non-traditional students is a person deeply involved with the Mildred B. Erickson Scholarship Fund for Mature Women. While recognizing the needs of non-traditional students is most definitely not being presented as a sex-linked characteristic, it is surely no accident that the level of awareness by those persons who are involved with non-traditional students is higher than those who are not officially involved with non-traditional students.

It is apparent that while a number of departments do offer cbe/999 sections due to the existence of university policy encouraging this option, the overwhelming attitude toward this option is one of dislike and discomfort. Some chairpersons revealed an extensive and insightful understanding of the broad educational issues at the heart of the credit by examination issue. However, most of these chairpersons also rejected the cbe/999 sections. This was due to the procedural contradiction in terms, they said.

#### Student Attitudes Toward Credit by Examination

Fifty opinionnaires were sent to each of three distinct student populations; mature students 26 years or older who were advised by Mildred Erickson, Assistant Dean for Continuing Education and Counselor for Adults in University College; members of the Honors College, and students-at-large whose names were taken from the top right hand columns of random pages of the student directory. All groups consisted of twenty-five males and twenty-five females. Both the Honors College and Dr. Erickson simply compiled a listing of names and addresses to

remove any question of any improprieties of our access to student files. Names were then checked when pulling from the student directory to make sure there were no duplications. Duplicate names were handled by going to the next name on the list.

The opinionnaires were numbered according to the group from which the names belonged as follows: 100-150 for University College mature students; 200-250 for Honors College students, and 300-350 for students at large. See Appendix E for a copy of the cover letter and opinionnaire.

Neither the opinionnaire nor the small and select sample was designed to represent an exhaustive nor sophisticated study of student views of credit by examination. Rather, it was an attempt to get some feeling for the perceptions and attitudes of the clientele. Both the mature student group and Honors College students represent the two most logical groups to use credit by examination. Both represent the student population most often referred to in considerations of educational options. Additionally, they both represent student groups with the most extensive advisement system in the sense of having a staff of professionally trained academic advisors, sympathetic towards their particular place in the University, and knowledgeable in ways to facilitate and maximize their experiences at the University.

There were 103 responses representing a return rate of 71 percent. The Honors College students composed the largest return group with 45 or 90 percent responding. Five of the responses from students-at-large were unused because the respondents indicated they were graduate students. There were 28 usable responses from this group, or a return rate of 62 percent. Thirty mature students responded, for a return rate of 60

percent. Not all students responded to every question; therefore not all responses reported will total 100 percent.

The level of awareness across all respondents of the University College Acceleration and Independent Study (UCAIS) examinations was relatively high, 86 percent. The lowest level of awareness was among the mature student respondents, 73 percent as compared to 93 percent of the Honors College and 89 percent of the students-at-large. However, almost three-fourths of the mature students were aware of the availability of the examinations.

Only 19, or 18 percent of all students had ever actually taken a University College examination. The Honors College group reported the highest number, 13. Four of the students-at-large, and only two mature students reported having taken a UCAIS examination. One of the Honors students reported gaining three hours of credit and waiving an additional 24 credits through the examinations. One of the students-at-large, who, incidentally, is a 54-year old senior, reported waiving 12 credit hours of University College Social Science many years ago.

The awareness of credit by examination being available in non-University College cbe/999 courses was far lower for all groups. Forty percent of all respondents were aware of their availability. The most knowledgeable were the Honors College students (60 percent) followed by students-at-large (39 percent). Only four of the mature students responded that they knew of that option. Only one of the responding students had ever taken credit by examination outside the University College. He was an Honors College respondent.

While the awareness of the options available were low, the responses concerning the desirability of those options revealed a mixed but substantial level of interest.

Only 61 percent of all respondents said all courses should be available for credit by examination. However, 77 percent felt they could pass the final examination in some courses without attendance, while 71 percent believed they could demonstrate proficiency in some of their courses by credit by examination. But only one had ever done so.

Table 1

Attitudes Toward Credit by Examination

5. Do you think all courses should be available for credit by examination?

	Yes		No	
At-Large	18 (300) 64%		10 (300) 35%	
Honors	26 (200) 57%		19 (200) 42%	
Mature	19 (100) 63%		10 (100) 33%	
	T = 63	=61%	T = 39	=37%

6. Have you ever felt that you could demonstrate proficiency in some of your courses without taking the course?

	Yes		No	
At-Large	17 (300) 60%		11 (300) 39%	
Honors	41 (200) 91%		4 (200) 9%	
Mature	22 (100) 73%		9 (100) 30%	
	T = 80	=77%	T = 24	=23%

7. Have you ever felt you could pass the final examination in some courses without having taken the course?

	Yes		No	
At-Large	18 (300) 64%		9 (300) 32%	
Honors	34 (200) 75%		10 (200) 22%	
Mature	17 (100) 56%		12 (100) 40%	
	T = 69	=66%	T = 31	=29%

The fluctuations in the responses to Questions 5, 6 and 7 may lie largely in the responses of the Honors College students and the mature students. The Honors College students respond most conservatively to Question 5, with only 57 percent indicating they felt all courses should be available for credit by examination. At the same time, 91 percent of these respondents indicated they felt they could demonstrate proficiency in some of their courses, and 75 percent indicated they

felt they could pass the final examination in some courses without having taken the course.

On the other hand, 63 percent of the mature students reacted affirmatively to Question 5, 73 percent indicated confidence in some of their courses, but only 54 percent reported feeling they could pass the final examination in some courses without having taken the course. The difference between the mature students' responses to Questions 6 and 7 may indicate a difference in the perceptions of mature students in terms of their abilities in general and course requirements in particular.

Although the number of persons reporting they had ever taken CLEP or APP tests is small, nine percent of all respondents, it is interesting to note that the CLEP distribution is fairly even, three respondents each in students-at-large and Honors College; four mature students. The APP tests were taken by more Honors College students, than the other groups; nine, Honors College Students, five students-at-large, three mature students. However, 80 percent, or the vast majority had not utilized these other two education options.

Contrary to educational folklore, the response to the idea of speeding up the undergraduate program by passing proficiency examinations was extremely positive; well over half of all respondents (67 percent) indicated interest. The mature students indicated the most interest (73 percent), while 66 percent of the Honors College and 64 percent of the students-at-large indicated they would be seriously interested in such an option.

Some indication of student reaction to a non-traditional evaluation of college level competency was elicited directly in the last question.



Table 2Attitudes toward Faculty Evaluation Panel

13. Some colleges have experimented with programs in which a panel of faculty members works with an individual to evaluate his progress and determine a general level of college competency. Would this kind of plan appeal to you?

	Yes		No	
At-Large	24 (300)	85%	4 (300)	14%
Honors	33 (200)	73%	11 (200)	24%
Mature	22 (100)	73%	8 (100)	26%
	T = 79	=76%	T = 23	=22%

At the initial college entry point?

	Yes		No	
At-Large	13 (300)	46%	11 (300)	39%
Honors	24 (200)	53%	16 (200)	35%
Mature	10 (100)	33%	14 (100)	46%
	T = 47	=45%	T = 41	=39%

At a later date, such as end of first year?

	Yes		No	
At-Large	21 (300)	75%	4 (300)	14%
Honors	30 (200)	66%	9 (200)	20%
Mature	21 (100)	70%	6 (100)	20%
	T = 72	=69%	T = 19	=18%

(Note: Responses do not total 100% because some respondents indicated more than one response).

Again, the difference in the three student groups are readily apparent. All three groups responded favorably to such a plan (76 percent) with the students-at-large being the most favorable (85 percent). When identifying when such an evaluation would be most appealing, most favored a later date, perhaps the end of the first year (69 percent), but 54 percent of the Honors College students favored college entry. Both the students-at-large and mature student respondents overwhelmingly favored the later date (75 percent and 70 percent, respectively).

Throughout the questionnaire the responses of the students-at-large were most similar to the mature students, with the Honors College

respondents varying most from the other two groups. One question which may have bearing on these responses is Question 12. When asked if they had ever experienced serious difficulty in course progression due to restrictive prerequisite requirements, 46 percent of the students-at-large reported they had had difficulty. These respondents were composed of persons at all four levels of undergraduate school, i.e., freshmen through seniors. Only 23 percent of the mature students reported having difficulty; all were freshmen or sophomores. On the other hand, only 17 percent of the Honors College respondents indicated problems with prerequisite requirements, and they represent all four classifications. Both the mature and the Honors College student group have access to a student advisement system designed specifically to meet the needs of these groups of students. Perhaps these responses indicate an area of student needs and interests going largely unnoticed and met by the University.

#### Examples of Implementation of Credit by Examination

Credit by examination is implemented through four different procedures at Michigan State University. Two types of credit by examination are national assessment examinations, the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) and the Advanced Placement Program (APP) examinations. Additionally, two locally developed examination schemes are used, the University College Acceleration and Independent Study (UCAIS) and credit by examination/99 (cbe/999) course sections. This section examines the data addressing the implementation of these four credit by examination schemes.

#### College Level Examination Program Tests

Michigan State University agreed to accept examinations for credit in 1966, making it one of the first universities to participate in the

program. The initial adoption of this policy, however, was not without a certain amount of trepidation; the criteria for granting both waiver and credit was set at the 90th percentile. The maximum number of credit hours allowed for waiver, credit, or a combination of the two, was limited to 15 credit hours (CLEP Policy, 1966). In conjunction with these highly restrictive requirements, the Director of the Michigan State University Testing Center rejected the option to operate a CLEP test site here (Norrell, 1975).

In March, 1974, the credit and/or waiver criteria for both the general and subject examinations were altered. A ranking in the 50th to 64th percentile was determined acceptable for waiver in both general and subject examinations. Criteria for credit was dropped from the 90th percentile to the 65th percentile for both general and subject examinations (Provost's Memorandum, 20 March 1974, Appendix C). The policy went on to stipulate that "In keeping with current University policy, a maximum of 45 credit hours will be accepted toward the baccalaureate degree from any combination of acceptable correspondence work and the College Level Examination Program." These stipulations are further restricted to 15 credit hours of waiver and/or credit in General Education and up to 30 credit hours of waiver and/or credit, in subject areas. The CLEP option is limited to students not yet enrolled, with credits registered administratively by the Office of Admissions and Scholarships as "transfer" credits. However, the actual determination of waiver or credit is in the appropriate academic unit; it is not determined by the Admissions and Scholarships Office.

The Office of Admissions and Scholarships was directed to collect appropriate data for the purpose of an evaluation of the CLEP policy and procedures at the end of 1976 (Provost's Policy Statement, 20 March 1974).

According to the Assistant Director of the Counseling Service, Michigan State University will contract with College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) to open a CLEP testing site at Michigan State University in the fall of 1975. According to experiences of others, it is expected that it will take about five years for the site to reach its full potential (Norrell, 1975). In the fall of 1974, 24 students submitted CLEP examinations; twenty of those students received some credit (Seeley, 1975). It is expected that these numbers will increase with the advent of an on-campus testing site.

#### Advanced Placement Program

Michigan State University also participates in the College Entrance Examination Board Advanced Placement Examination Program (APP). The incidence of credits generated through this program greatly exceeds CLEP. These examinations are administered to participating students in early May of their senior year. Again, credit or waiver is determined by the academic department at Michigan State University. Some departments decide to grant credit or waiver according to the scores provided by CEEB; some departments read the examinations themselves. The Admissions and Scholarships Office completes an evaluation form indicating the amount of credit awarded and in what discipline, which is then forwarded to the department, the student, and the Registrar's Office.

According to data generated by the Admissions and Scholarships Office, the number of students participating in the APP program is growing, as well as the number of credits generated. In 1973, 360 students took the examination, of which 238 actually received credit. In 1974, 426 persons took the examinations, of which 271 received credit. In 1973, 2,579 credit hours were granted; 3,000 were granted in 1974 (Office of Admissions and Scholarships, 1974).

Table 3

Credits Granted Through APP

	<u>1973</u>	<u>1974</u>
Number of students who took examination	360	426
Number of students who received credit	238	271
Number of student credit hours granted	2,579	3,000

(Office of Admissions and Scholarships, 1974)

The actual gain in terms of credits earned by the students involved was most frequently more than six credit hours, but less than eleven.

Table 4

Breakdown of Credits Granted Through APP

<u>1973</u>		<u>1974</u>	
1 - 5 credits	28	1 - 5 credits	23
6 - 10	142	6 - 10	169
11 - 15	23	11 - 15	27
16 - 20	18	16 - 20	24
21 - 25	9	21 - 25	15
26 - 30	10	26 - 30	4
31 - 35	4	31 - 35	1
36 - 40	1	36 - 40	2
41 - 45	1	41 - 45	4
46 - 50	1	46 - 50	2
51 - 60	-	51 - 60	-
61 - 70	1	61 - 70	-

(Office of Admissions and Scholarships, 1974)

Although the numbers of both students and credits are infinitesimal in relation to the total student body of Michigan State University, for the individuals concerned the APP examinations provided a significant avenue of acceleration. This option, however, is available only to students who happen to attend participating high schools and who plan to enter college immediately after high school graduation.

#### Credit by Examination in University College

The earliest data available from Evaluation Services dates from 1964 but does not indicate actual numbers of credits granted. Table 5 indicates the number of students who scored high enough on the waiver examination to be permitted to take the term-end examination and the numbers who only received permission to waive the particular course. The data available here, labeled "waived with Special Permission" indicates the numbers of students who scored high enough on the waiver examination to be permitted to take the term-end examination. Students who received an A or B on the term-end examination were granted credit; students receiving a C or C+ were permitted to waive the course requirement. If the student scored below a C, he was required to take the course.

The data in Table 5 reveal certain patterns in the use of credit by examination in the Basic College between 1964 and 1966. The data for the terms including Winter 1964 through Spring 1965 show far lower numbers of waiver attempts than waiver applicants. There does appear, however, a steady increase in the actual numbers of waiver attempts. The number of applicants for the Fall terms of 1965 and 1966 were, unfortunately, unavailable. It would be expected, however, that the numbers of waiver attempts would increase.

Table 5University-College Waivers Permitted Winter 1964-Fall 1966

	<u>Total No. Applicants</u>	<u>Waiver Attempts</u>	<u>Waived With Sp. Permission</u>		<u>Waived</u>	
			<u>No.</u>	<u>Percent- age</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Percent- age</u>
Winter 1964	1,352	746	123	16	467	63
Spring 1964	1,219	943	152	16	608	64
Fall 1964	2,136	1,527	246	16	828	54
Winter 1965	1,713	1,341	214	16	760	57
Spring 1965	2,110	1,494	209	14	834	56
Fall 1965	---	2,269	280	12	1,115	49
Fall 1966	---	2,809	294	10	1,429	51

(Office of Evaluation Services, 1975)

A curious consistency is revealed in the percentage of applicants who were actually granted permission to take the course comprehensives: Sixteen percent were granted special permission between Winter 1964 and Winter 1965. The data then shows a perceptible drop in the percentage of special permissions granted with a corresponding increase in the number of students attempting waivers. It appears to be an inescapable conclusion that the "standards" were being adjusted to control the numbers of students to whom waivers and credit are granted.

Table 6Yearly Number of Examinations Eligible for Waiver or Credit

<u>Total</u>	<u>No. of Exams Attempted</u>	<u>Waivers Earned</u>		<u>No. Eligible for Credit</u>	
		<u>No.</u>	<u>Percent- age</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Percent- age</u>
1969-1970	6,110	3,185	52	639	10
1970-1971	5,042	2,370	47	390	8
1971-1972	4,021	2,114	53	506	13
1972-1973	2,972	1,433	48	433	15
1973-1974	2,863	1,419	50	448	16

(Office of Evaluation Services, 1975)

Again, the number of examinations eligible for credit does not necessarily indicate the numbers of actual credits granted due to the proviso that students must apply for credit; it is not automatically granted.

The data in Table 6 indicating yearly totals of waiver and students eligible for credit indicate a significant drop in the numbers of examination attempts between 1969 and 1973. Just under one-half the numbers of attempts were registered in 1973-1974 as compared to 1969-1970. The percentage of examinations which met the criteria to waive certain University College requirements held fairly steady around the 50 percent mark. The percentage of examinations eligible for credit shows an increase from eight percent and ten percent in the earlier years to 16 percent in 1973-1974.

The number of students affected by this program is extremely small in comparison to the total number eligible to participate and the relative accessibility of the examinations. As the data was compiled according only to number of examinations attempted, there is no way of ascertaining whether these numbers represent different individuals. It is possible that the actual number of students participating in this plan is lower due to individuals taking more than one examination. As a conservative estimate, if all 448 students who were eligible actually registered for three credit hours, only 1,344 credit hours would have been through this option during the 1973-1974 academic year.

#### Credit by Examination/999 (cbe/999 Course Sections

With the implementation of the 1972 Educational Policies Committee amendments to the departmental credit by examination procedure, data were



available for the first time in 63 years as to the credits generated through credit by examination in courses outside the Basic College.

The data were analyzed during the period from the date of initial implementation, summer 1973, through fall 1974. This time span covers six academic quarters, including two fall terms, and was determined to be representative of the actual implementation of credit by examination in the various academic departments. Of the 17 colleges at Michigan State University, four were deleted from consideration in this study. They were the Colleges of Osteopathic, Human and Veterinary Medicine, as well as the University College, which administers its own examinations, the UCAIS examinations.

Of the 13 colleges eligible to participate in the credit by examinations, only seven actually granted credits through that option. There were six colleges which had never granted credit by examination under the new procedures between summer of 1973 and fall of 1974. These were the Colleges of Communication Arts, Education, Urban Development, and the three residential colleges, James Madison, Justin Morrill and Lyman Briggs.

Of the seven colleges which did grant credit by examination through cbe/999 sections, the extent of cbe/999 offerings was apparently extremely narrow.

Five colleges generated less than 200 student credit hours each through cbe/999 sections. A single department was responsible for all student credit hours generated in three of these five colleges. Agriculture and Natural Resources generated only 166 student credit hours through four departments. The College of Natural Science granted the greatest number of credits, 1,966, through six departments. Arts and Letters granted the next highest number of credits, 1,836, through five departments.

Table 7

Number of Credits Generated 1973-1974  
by Credit by Examination

<u>College</u>	<u>Credits Granted</u>	<u>Number of Departments Involved</u>
Social Science	84	1
Business	118	1
Human Ecology	121	1
Agriculture and Natural Resources	166	4
Engineering	182	5
Arts and Letters	1,836	5
Natural Science	1,966	6

(Office of Institutional Research, 1975)

The large number of credits generated in the College of Natural Science is in accord with what would be expected of a credit by examination option. All but a very few credits, 186, are generated through the Departments of Chemistry, Mathematics, and Physics. These three departments receive students with a wide array of skills and background and have used placement tests for many years. The large number of credits generated in the College of Arts and Letters is less predictable. The department which generated the greatest number of credit hours was the History Department. In four quarters, 1,051 student credit hours were generated; the option was not offered in the summer session of either 1973 or 1974. History is one of the departments whose chairperson was interviewed and who indicated that they have a standardized procedure for students desiring this option.

In addition, contrary to the often-stated policy of there being no credit by examination nor advanced placement with credit available in any language department, credits were granted through cbe/999 sections in both Spanish and French. There were 499 student credit hours granted in

Spanish, and 270 in French. The language departments conduct extensive placement testing and academic advising programs for entering freshmen during summer orientation; however, their purpose is stated as a placement function, rather than without a crediting function. They do, however, offer the cbe/999 option because it is encouraged by official university policy. By whatever analysis, it is apparent that the credit by examination option is scantily used at Michigan State University.

For Michigan State University, which was one of the first institutions to accept CLEP credits, to receive examinations from only 24 students for a fall term enrollment is startling, to say the least. Discussions with Mr. Seeley revealed that this was an increase over preceding years. Perhaps the utilization of this option will increase even further as Michigan State opens its own testing site.

While the number of credits generated through the APP examinations is growing, the UCAIS examinations are decreasing. It is possible that the increasing use of APP examinations is directly contributing to the decrease of the UCAIS examinations. The very bright student from an enriched high school program is the person most likely to succeed on the UCAIS examinations. Perhaps those students are waiving University College requirements before they enter Michigan State University and the University College. This question should be analyzed further, as it holds ramifications for the UCAIS examinations as well as financial implications. Students receiving credit through APP examinations do not pay for the credits received, they pay fees to CEEB for the examinations. The ramifications of this should be studied more closely to determine what, if any, changes could be made to make the university cbe/999 programs more appealing.

Credit by examination at the department level seems to have isolated instances of success, almost in spite of the efforts of the persons charged with implementing the policy. The surprisingly large number of credits generated through credit by examination in Spanish and French are illustrative of this. The faculty and administrators of those departments actively discourage students from opting for credit by examination, yet they offer cbe/999 sections because they interpret the policy to require it. They have determined that next year, while the option will be available, cbe/999 sections will not be listed in the Schedule of Courses and Academic Handbook Bulletin. It would be very surprising if there were to be similar numbers of credit by examination credits generated.

#### REFERENCE

Norrell, Gwendolyn. Counseling Center, Michigan State University. Interview, June 4, 1975.

Seeley, Charles F. Office of Admissions and Scholarships, Michigan State University. Interview, January 13, 1975.

## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The original intent of this study was to present an historical and contemporary analysis of the implementation of credit by examination at Michigan State University. It was expected that the data would reveal a fluctuation in the use of credit by examination over the years. High degrees of implementation during the influx of large numbers of World War II veterans were expected, and possibly, again in the late 1950s and early 1960s when institutional enrollments were burgeoning and institutional resources were stretched to their limits. A general decrease in credit by examination was expected between these two eras, followed currently by the beginning of a resurgence of implementation, largely as a function of the increasing attention to "non-traditional," "continuing," or "Life-Long Education." Throughout the entire time span covered, it was expected that a general increase in the proportion of students utilizing varying credit by examination options would be shown.

As indicated earlier in the study, it was quickly discovered that there existed almost no data concerning the use of credit by examination over the years. There were available certain sketchy data from the Office of Evaluation Services, and data generated since the inception of the credit by examination/999 course sections instigated in 1973. This lack of data is traced to a long-standing policy at Michigan State

University of not differentially identifying credits earned through varying routes; i.e., off-campus courses, courses added after the regular registration period, or other exceptions to standard registration procedure. In the specific instance of credit by examination, it was this option which laid the foundation for not making differential notations of credits. As noted earlier, it was discovered that some institutions refused to accept credits identified as being earned through examination only. Therefore, institutional policy held that credits earned by examination would not receive special notation. While probably an example of a good institutional policy, the resulting lack of data presented formidable problems for this study.

These circumstances necessitated a slightly different focal point of the study than was originally intended. The major sources of information which do exist are the institutional policies pertaining to credit by examination over the years. From institutional policy, one can draw conclusions as to the official stance of an institution toward certain issues. Therefore, it was possible to analyze past and present institutional policies, and to further analyze current institutional policies in relation to practices and attitudes prevalent among those charged with implementing credit by examination policy. Thus, the focus of the study turned to one directed to an analysis of those policies that existed in the past, in conjunction with contemporary policy and attitudes.

Previous data have indicated that from at least 1910 until 1944, Michigan State University had on record a policy which provided an avenue for any student to request permission to "pass off" any subject during their academic program. This option could be requested at any

point during the student's program, rather than only at the point of enrollment; there was no limit to the number of times the student could request the option. The initiator of a credit by examination request was the student, with the request being subject to departmental approval.

With the initiation of the Basic College in 1944, the University instituted a centralized office which had, in addition to other responsibilities, authority to assess experiences gained outside the institution which were deemed acceptable for college credit applicable to either general education or specific course credit. The primary purpose of this particular institutional policy was to facilitate the progression in the institution of the World War II veteran. In addition, the office was charged with the responsibility of the development and administration of the Basic College comprehensive examinations. These examinations were always available to the student for credit by examination, subject to permission. This period undoubtedly represented the most systematic and extensive approach to granting credit by examination not only in the Basic College and also in the University, for many veterans had experiences interpretable as creditable in many fields. The former activity has long since been ended; evolution of the latter is still in process at Michigan State University, but appears to be declining in use.

Since 1973, credit by examination in departments outside University College has been restricted to such an extent that some students may earn credit by examination in some courses, as determined by the department, through the regular course enrollment procedure. The 1972 Educational Policies Committee amendments to the credit by examination policy acts effectively to restrain the long-standing policy of freedom-of-request and initiation by the student through two major provisos of the policy.



The first restriction is found in the requirement that the student must enroll according to regular university procedures in a cbe/999 course section. The department is directed to inform the enrolled student as to the material to be covered on the examination. Additionally, the student is to be informed that full responsibility for successful performance is entirely the student's, and that the faculty is not to be expected to render tutorial or other services. The second restriction on freedom of request is that the department, not the student, determines which courses will be offered for cbe/999 course section(s). Although the policy encourages departments to offer as many courses as possible through the cbe/999 course section, the policy also allows departments to determine which courses are to be offered for credit by examination. Thus, the student's options are limited entirely to those courses, and that specific material, as determined by the departments. There are no opportunities for the student to make any inputs into the decisions concerning the credit by examination courses or materials.

Departments are further instructed to register grades as usual, but with the caution that incompletes or credit/no credit, pass-fail are "inappropriate." This kind of restrictional policy has great ramifications for the future implementation of credit by examination. On the one hand are the simple economic concerns of both the institution and the student. One of the goals of the Educational Policies Committee when reformulating the credit by examination policy was to initiate a system by which those credits generated by examination are credited to the granting department. The enrollment procedure of cbe/999 course sections met this goal. However, students, too have real monetary concerns, as well as an understanding of grades and credits being the "coin of the realm"

in the institution. An extremely high level of confidence must be held by the student to pay for an option as laden with risk as a cbe/999 section. Another consideration falls to the student with limited financial resources. A student with limited funds may be faced with a decision between enrollment in a regular course with a good probability of a high grade, or risking that money on an isolated examination. It is truly unfortunate that educational opportunities can be dictated by financial concerns of such minimal impact to the institution, but substantial to the student.

Of even greater concern is the loss of freedom experienced by the student. There are no guarantees that those courses, and course materials, declared available for credit by examination by the department meet the students' needs or talents. The thrust of the credit by examination policy is that while credit by examination is "encouraged" in as many courses as possible, the responsibility and authority for implementation of this policy is located with the separate academic departments. Departments also have the authority to determine which courses are inappropriate for credit by examination. By locating the authorizing decision at the departmental level, there is no countervailing source of pressure acting to encourage extensive offering of credit by examination options.

As the policy now reads, there is no indication as to whether the old policy covering "any student in any course" is still in effect. That policy has never been formally rescinded, but it is open to interpretation as to whether the 1972 amendments totally replace all previous policies, or is applicable only to actual procedural implementation. However, the issue is minor in that the student has lost any input-avenue into the decisions concerning credit by examination. The

student has no recourse, other than natural powers of persuasion, as to which courses will be permissible for attempt by examination.

Most disturbing of all, an undergraduate degree has thereby been defined solely in terms of accumulation of established, institutionally sponsored courses and credits offered in the varying departments. By tying the credit by examination option to existing courses as determined by the varying departments, the institution is declaring a Michigan State University undergraduate degree is characterized solely by those courses the institution recognizes. Taken to its next logical step, this means that only those experiences, approaches to knowledge, and the subject matter itself recognized by the institution are legitimate. What seems on the surface, then, to be a fairly benign procedure for the administrative allocation of student credit hours generated in reality places unconscionable restrictions on what will be accepted as creditable, legitimate knowledge.

With these issues in mind, one of four alternatives would seem appropriate for future policy and implementation procedures of credit by examination. One alternative would be to remove credit by examination as an option after enrollment at Michigan State University. This policy would, however, be in conflict with Michigan State University's stated commitment to an educational philosophy of offering a diverse set of educational options to all of its students.

Another alternative would be to retain the current procedure whereby students enroll for cbe/999 course sections as offered by the departments. Authority for determining which courses would be available for credit by examination would remain with the individual departments. The extent of implementation would be expected to remain similar to that indicated earlier in this study.

A third alternative would be to create a coordinating committee charged with the responsibility of coordinating the credit by examination procedures in all academic units. This committee would be composed of persons responsible for implementing credit by examination policy and procedures in the varying units and would report to the appropriate administrator in the highest academic office in the institution. Individual academic units would retain final authority in determining credit by examination options.

A fourth alternative would be to create a centrally located administrative office charged with the responsibility and authority for university-wide credit by examination policies and procedures at the undergraduate level. This office would formulate these policies and procedures in conjunction and cooperation with an advisory committee composed of appropriate Deans and Directors. The Office would report to the highest academic officer. Exception to credit by examination policy by individual academic units would be based on substantiating to the committee and office that course enrollment and attendance are indispensable to mastery of the course content.

It is the opinion of this writer, based on the issues revealed, in this study, that the fourth alternative would be the most successful in terms of meeting the educational needs of both students and the institution. This office, should, at the minimum, encourage the wide availability of credit by examination in each academic unit, based on policies formulated cooperatively between the office and the academic units. Additionally there is a mediator between students and departments if serious disagreement should arise between a student requesting

credit by examination and the department in question. Fees generated through credit by examination can be processed according to either regular registration procedure, or through the "Late Add" process. If necessary, administrative procedures can be developed by which the granting department is credited with the student credit hours generated by credit by examination.

A far more fundamental issue than the processing of course credits administratively is the issue of credit by examination as stated and operationalized by institutional policy. A central administrative office should have the responsibility and authority to develop procedures to assess and evaluate individual students for the purpose of ascertaining and granting or negotiating credits for learning experiences gained outside traditional classroom settings. Although granting college credit for non-college experiences is a recognized practice in other institutions, there currently exists no systematic procedure for this kind of activity at Michigan State University. There needs to be an avenue for granting two kinds of credit to persons with prior learning experiences: (1) credits applicable to General Education requirements; (2) credits recognizing levels of competency in a specified area; and which may, or may not be directly equivalent to existing courses. These two procedures must exist to present a real alternative to the present system. At this time, students are required to demonstrate competency in both a specific course and the particular subject matter deemed most important by the instructor and/or the department. In an effort to manage potential

disjunction between the student's perceptions of materials to be covered and departmental focus, existing credit by examination guidelines require the department to distribute to the student a prospectus of the material(s) to be covered on the examination. While clarifying the examination material, this policy restricts the potential for demonstrating competency to simply those predetermined segments of information as declared on the prospectus. Seldom are the learning experiences of individuals directly equivalent to courses and their specific areas of focus; hence a need exists to broaden the scope of credit by examination applicability.

The traditional conception of the path to an undergraduate contains two years of "general education," "liberal arts," "the basics," or whatever term is used at that particular institution to indicate course-work designed to give a broad, generalized, non-specialized educational experience. Following two years of "the basics," tradition has it, students enter their "major" field or specialty in which they gain an in-depth expertise in one of the recognized disciplines. According to this same traditional folklore, each succeeding year indicated a quantitative and qualitative increase in the level of accomplishment attained by the student. If this increase in accomplishment holds true, then it should be relatively easy to identify those criteria by which students can be identified according to their level of competency or attainment with or without having enrolled in a certain sequence or number of college courses.

Looking at the same issue from a different perspective, if there are numerous institutions all purporting to offer identical undergraduate degrees titled Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science, composed of a

series of courses equivalent in intent but recognized a priori as being unique to each institution, and all institutions are able to identify its students by level, then whatever constitutes the criteria for attainment of the four levels of status should be interpretable in educational competencies more embracing than simply an accumulation of course credits. If, on the other hand, credit accumulation is the criteria for identifying levels of progression toward a degree, it should be possible to state this criteria in a manner which can be applied to those persons who have had educational experiences other than enrollment in certain courses.

The question which must be addressed is whether an undergraduate degree is composed of certain sequences of courses whose primary objective is to allow entry to other courses, or if it indicates a collection of skills, competencies, or areas of knowledge which may, or may not be equivalent to existing courses. If the latter is a better reflection of the educational goals and objectives of Michigan State University, then a procedure for assessing the attainment of a general level of capability from external learning experiences must be developed.

#### Levels of Attainment in the Disciplines

The disciplines are based upon a mode of addressing an issue for the purpose of reaching "the truth" rather than a process of passing on "the truth" to the non-initiated. Thus, in the disciplines the criteria for attainment is based on facility with the theoretical foundation and methodology of inquiry particular to that discipline. To determine the level of competency in a discipline, then would require the ability to assess the student's level of expertise with the methodology of inquiry, rather than the number of "facts" which can be iterated by the student. The disciplines represent the strongest lobby against crediting for

non-institutional learning experiences. It may be feasible, they argue, for a person to learn about many things, to be extremely wide read, to master sophisticated mathematical procedures, and do these things without institutional interference. However, they continue, the methodology of inquiry particular to the discipline can be attained only through the active intervention of those persons qualified to train students in that mode of inquiry. They maintain that facts and conclusions can be attained through self-directed learning, but those things that are known are of secondary importance to the mode of inquiry.

The evaluation procedure used for assessing an individual's level of attainment in either general or specific course areas must be flexible and not necessarily identical for every individual. In some instances national and/or locally developed examinations, written and/or oral could suffice. It is imperative, however, that the examinations reveal the individual's facility with facts, concepts, principles and the ability to analyze, synthesize and bring them together in a coherent manner. That is, more than the simple recitation of predetermined subject matter is necessary for a true evaluation of the individual's level of competency. In some areas the individual may present a product as an indication of proficiency. Books, experiments, musical compositions, electrical contraptions are only a few examples of this kind of product. Still another manner of evaluation may include the individual working with a team of faculty and evaluation experts for some period of time. This procedure would be designed to develop assessment procedures, and outcomes, specifically appropriate to that individual. This kind of flexibility is imperative if the institution is to overcome the restriction on legitimate knowledge currently existing, even inadvertently, in



credit by examination policy. There must exist a real and legitimate avenue through which an individual can receive recognition for talents and capabilities which are equivalent to, but not identical with, existing courses and course levels.

The evaluation procedures are feasible only if administrative authority to do so is located in a central administrative office. This requirement is founded in the nature of higher education. There must be a source of legitimate authority to encourage and facilitate a broader conception of creditable activity than only that at the department level. The interviews revealed an almost total rejection of the notion of credit by examination as a viable necessary, or even legitimate academic option. If there is no countervailing pressure to act in favor of credit by examination as an option it will surely be neglected and rejected, much as it is at this time.

As an institution historically and currently committed to providing an extensive array of educational opportunity to a large and diverse student body, the initiation of a centrally located administrative office would provide the maximal service to both the institution and the individual student. The office should be located administratively in the highest academic administrative office; here the Office of the Provost, so as to have maximal impact institution-wide.

One of the major functions of the office would be to provide information concerning credit by examination to students, faculty, and administrators. In this way, all parties would be privy to the same information in contrast to the previous and existing situation. Additionally, the evaluation and assessment of educational experiences would be based on consistent and widely-known criteria. As opposed to the current situation characterized by variable and capricious

decisions concerning credit by examination, this consistency would be to the advantage of the institution and, especially, the student.

The development of credit by examination policies and procedures should be developed in such a way as to formulate a sound and academically strong foundation for further efforts in the development of Life-Long Education programs. As was shown in Chapter 2 of this study, some form of a credit by examination scheme is basic to non-traditional education. Through the efforts of this office, and its advisory committee, a consistent and rational policy and procedures can be developed which is characterized by educational and procedural excellence. In accordance with this goal, the office should be staffed with persons who have demonstrated accomplishment and professional commitment to non-traditional education, evaluation, and research. The person identified as chief administrator of the office must possess an established professional status as a leader in the field of non-traditional education as well as the ability to give direction to the diverse individuals and sets of expertise needed to produce assessment and evaluation programs and procedures of the highest quality.

A fundamental problem revealed by the interviews was the interviewees' attitudes toward extending credit for learning outside the classroom, and their perceptions of the experiences of the student body. Almost all chairpersons interviewed maintained that the "non-traditional student" simply did not exist at Michigan State University, and thus there was no need for credit by examination assessment and evaluation procedures to be developed. The concept of granting credit for external experiences was soundly rejected by all but one of the persons interviewed. Given this attitude toward credit by examination and a firm belief that all students are young and largely lacking in meaningful

prior experience, the only feasible procedure for a viable credit by examination system is through a central administrative office.

It is recommended that the central administrative office develop a position paper and a credit by examination policy for discussion and approval by the Educational Policies Committee. In this way, a coherent, university-wide policy can be articulated and implemented.

### Summary

It has been shown that credit by examination policy as it currently stands, acts to restrict credit by examination options to courses specified by departments and is characterized by an undue consideration for the accounting of departmental credit hour generation.

It is recommended that existing policy be retracted and all responsibility and authority for credit by examination options be located in a central administrative office and its advisory committee. It is further recommended that this office have the authority and ability to develop procedures to evaluate and assess a student's talents and capabilities without being restricted to simply a course-bound conception of knowledge. These policies and procedures must be based on considerations of educational values rather than external and managerial considerations.

As an effort to further clarify the existing and potential desirability of credit by examination as one of a number of options inherent in an articulated institutional commitment to "non-traditional," "continuing," or "Life-Long Education," certain other studies and activities are recommended.

- 1) An extensive and detailed study of the Michigan State University student population should be conducted. Life-Long Education

efforts need not be restricted to off-campus activities. Formulated as a set of educational options, Life-Long Education can be most appropriate and effective as a coherent set of programs and policies directed toward a large and diverse on-campus population. The actual configuration of that population is a necessary component of the formulation of those programs. Some of the identifying characteristics to be revealed would be age, sex, marital status, residency, full- or part-time working status, amount of financial aid being received, number of terms continuously enrolled. The purpose of this study would be to gain a clearer understanding of the actual makeup of the student body. This information would provide one source of information pertinent to further development of the activities of the recommended office.

2) A thorough analysis of the financial implications of credit by examination is necessary. Some of the issues to be addressed by this study include, but are not limited to

- ° the institutional resources required to implement varying credit by examination schemes;

- ° the relationship between these expenditures and the long and short range educational participation of students;

- ° the feasibility of using credit by examination as a form of student financial aid;

- ° the feasibility of establishing a differential fee-for-service fee structure for students; and,

- ° utilizing various credit by examination schemes.

The over-riding goal of this analysis would be to provide a system of real educational options to the student without those options being unduly dictated by the costs involved.

Through the establishment of an office such as the one briefly described here, a foundation can be laid for the continuation of Michigan State University's stature as a leader in the Land-Grant University in the field of Life-Long Education.

#### Implications at the Local, State and National Levels

One of the ramifications of the current thrust directed toward increased accountability in higher education has been a great increase in external demands for data identifying educational outputs and a corresponding growth in managerial systems directed toward providing that data. The restriction of credit by examination options to existing courses, coupled with enrollment procedures identical to regular courses provided for the first time, a source of data able to keep an accounting of the incidence of that option's use. In terms of meeting the needs of those offices' and agencies' requests for data, the system was successful. Simultaneously, the system restricted the options of the student to an unreasonable degree.

In addition to a desire for more accurate data in the over-all scheme of institutional accountability, it is also possible to hypothesize that a more insidious demand for "accountability" was present. The uninitiated, credit by examination options could be perceived as requiring little or no faculty effort or institutional resources. Although this study was not able to analyze in depth the amount and configuration of faculty effort and institutional resources required by varying credit by examination schemes, it was apparent that all were required of some kind of expended effort. Even the processing of nationally-developed assessment tests--the situation most often

conceptualized by the skeptic--requires both administrative and faculty time and resources.

Yet another intended outcome of the credit by examination restrictions could be the restriction of external education activities on the part of Michigan's four-year institutions and universities. At this time the proper role of the varying kinds of institutions in off-campus activities is a controversial and unresolved political issue. By deleting credit by examination from appropriation purposes, the legislature is exercising its source of influence over the activities of the varying institutions, at least until the political issues are resolved. Again, issues which are external to actual educational issues impinge on the institution in such a way as to impact differentially on the students' educational interests.

This restrictive educational policy is but one example of the unintended side effects of educational policy based on political grounds rather than rational considerations of the issues at hand.

It is recommended that Michigan State University, other Michigan institutions, and institutions in states with similar credit by examination restrictions determine educational policy according to the best interests of their students and institutions rather than responding inappropriately to external pressures. It is further recommended that concerted efforts be employed to articulate the significance of credit by examination policy in the overall scheme of educational policy.

## APPENDICES

## MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

TO: The Academic Council  
FROM: Educational Policies Committee  
SUBJECT: Recommendation for Modification of Policy Regarding  
Credit-by-Examination  
DATE: October 3, 1972

Current University policy with respect to credit by examination is stated in the Academic Handbook. It provides a flexible procedure that permits a student to request credit by examination in any course at any time. The Department then decides whether or not to offer the credit by examination. Current procedures do not provide credit for the department with the student credit hours produced by this method. The procedure is not well understood by either students or faculty and is not widely used.

To remedy some of the deficiencies and to encourage increased use of credit by examination, a revised policy is proposed. The revision includes the following modifications:

- (1) It makes clear that all courses should be available regularly for credit by examination except those in which class attendance and participation are an integral part of the instructional method.
- (2) It clarifies the responsibility of the student and the faculty with respect to specification of the materials and skills in which the student will be required to demonstrate proficiency.
- (3) It specifies that standards shall be comparable to those used to grant credit for "regular" enrollment.
- (4) It provides for registration for credit by examination as part of the regular registration procedure. This clarifies the procedures as well as gives credit to the department for credit hours produced in this manner. An implication of this procedure is that failures in credit by examination will be reported on the same basis as in other courses.

Below is the policy recommended for Academic Council approval:

Part I

Proposed Wording to be Substituted for Present Academic Handbook Entry on "Advanced Credit by Examination":

In some courses, students may earn credit, without regular enrollment, through demonstration of proficiency by means determined by the appropriate departments. Examination may take the form of course or laboratory projects, written or oral reports, evidence of satisfactory skill performance, etc.



Recommendation for Modification of Policy Regarding  
Credit by Examination, continued -

Courses available for credit by examination are specially designated in the Schedule of Courses. Students who wish to avail themselves of this option must so indicate through the regular enrollment procedure. They are responsible for obtaining from the department and/or instructor a written statement on the materials and skills they will be required to demonstrate proficiency in, and on the means and standards by which proficiency will be assessed. Standards shall be comparable to those used to grant credit for regular enrollment.

All other procedures shall be the same as for regular enrollment.

Part II

Statement of Policy to be Approved Along with the Proposed Academic Handbook Entry Above:

1. The credit-by-examination option should be made widely available in the manner set forth in the Academic Handbook. The option should be offered at least as often as the corresponding course or once per year whichever is more frequent.
2. Units should except from this option only those courses in which class attendance and participation are an integral part of the instructional method.
3. At the beginning of the term, departments and/or designated instructors will provide students who elect this option with a written statement of the materials and skills the student must master, and the manner in which the student will demonstrate proficiency.
4. Implementation of this policy is the responsibility of Department Chairmen, Deans, and the Assistant Provost for Undergraduate Education.

LVM:ljr:btm  
10/3/72

Retyped on stencil 12/11/74  
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## MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

EAST LANSING • MICHIGAN • 48824

February 3, 1975

MEMORANDUM

To: Deans, Directors, Department Chairmen

From: John E. Cantlon

Re: Credit-by-Examination System

1. Considerable confusion exists within the academic community relative to procedures for implementing an existing policy entitled "Credit -by-Examination" (approved by the Academic Council 31 October 1972, copy attached).
2. A portion of the confusion stems from the fact that this policy is misnamed since it only provides an opportunity for students to earn credit in a specific course by enrolling in that course at the regular enrollment time and by developing proficiency during the term of enrollment. There are other models whereby students can acquire credit by examination without mandatory enrollment in the course, such as competency evaluation exams, CLEP, advance placement exams and the like.
3. The remaining confusion has been generated by the fact that the original policy statement of 31 October 1972 is ambiguous. In an effort to confront the immediate problems of lack of clarity in that policy, guidelines were developed in consultation with the Educational Policies Committee (copy attached).
4. The clarifying guidelines to the "Credit-by-Examination" policy should in no way be viewed as an abrogation of the responsibility of the Office of the Provost to address the broader policy question of other legitimate ways in which credit can be earned by examination in keeping with long-standing University statements to this effect. My staff is currently engaged in producing a position paper on the broad topic of credit by examination at MSU for discussion with EPC.
5. Until the broader policy can be clarified, I am distributing the enclosed interim guidelines attached to the original policy statement. Please circulate to appropriate individuals in your unit. Additional packets may be obtained from Dr. Arata's Office (3-5380).

JEC/rt  
Attachments

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MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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FROM: Educational Policies Committee  
SUBJECT: Recommendation for Modification of Policy Regarding  
Credit-by-Examination  
DATE: October 3, 1972

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GUIDELINES TO CREDIT-BY-EXAMINATION POLICY

Keyed to Credit-by-Examination Policy  
dated 3 October 1972

The policy (dated 3 October 1972) relative to credit-by-examination procedures, accepted by the Academic Council 31 October 1972, has generated confusion in the system. This document has been drafted as a codicil to the policy statement for the purpose of clarification:

1. The credit-by-examination procedure was not intended to be, and should not be construed as, a tutorial system, or as a system comparable to regular class enrollment.
  - 1.1 Students should not expect tutorial assistance from professors in credit-by-examination courses.
  - 1.2 Professors should not expect students to sit in class as a condition of earning credit-by-examination.
  - 1.3 "At the beginning of the term, departments and/or designated instructors will provide students who elect this option with a written statement of the materials and skills the student must master, and the manner in which the student will demonstrate proficiency." (Policy Statement)
  - 1.4 Upon enrollment in a credit-by-examination course, it is the student's responsibility to obtain "from the department and/or instructor a written statement on the materials and skills they will be required to demonstrate proficiency in, and on the means and standards by which proficiency will be assessed." (Policy Statement)
2. The policy clearly provides that "Standards shall be comparable to those used to grant credit for regular enrollment."
  - 2.1 Except under extraordinary circumstances, the I-incomplete or the N symbols are inappropriate for use in the credit-by-examination system.
  - 2.2 In the event of such extraordinary circumstances, the symbols for postponement of the grade may be used when appropriate documentation is placed in the record by the instructor and approved by the Assistant Dean.
  - 2.3 Failure to appear for the examination, or failure to demonstrate minimal expected competence in the subject should be reported to the Registrar as a failure in the course.
3. The Credit-by-examination system is designed to serve best students who have the capability and discipline for independent learning.

Students who are in academic difficulty, or who are marginal in the system, should be advised that the credit-by-examination system is contra-indicated because of the danger of exacerbating already existing academic difficulties.

- 3.1 It shall be the responsibility of the academic advisers, the department and the instructor to alert students to this risk factor.
- 3.2 If the student elects to enroll in a credit-by-examination section contrary to that advice, the student shall have the prerogative to do so, on the understanding that the responsibility shall then rest with the student.
4. The intent of the Council-approved policy is to open as many courses as possible to the credit-by-examination system.
  - 4.1 The burden of exempting courses from this system rests with the department and/or instructor.
  - 4.2 Only those courses for which "class attendance and participation are an integral part of the instructional method" should be exempted.
  - 4.3 Departments are urged to develop the necessary descriptive materials and evaluation devices for all courses appropriate to a credit-by-examination model as quickly as possible.

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12/11/74

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## MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

EAST LANSING • MICHIGAN • 48824

## Policy for Administration of College Level Examination

Approved: Office of the Provost  
20 March 1974

1. Michigan State University will accept a ranking in the 50th to 64th percentile for waiver and 65th and higher for course credit in general education exams.
2. Michigan State University will accept the same criteria for waiver (50th to 64th percentile) and for credit (65+ percentile) in subject examinations.
3. The evaluation of acceptability of any CLEP examination will follow the current practice and policy of the University wherein the decision is made within the appropriate academic unit.
  - 3.1 The evaluation of CLEP exams by academic units should address the following questions:
    - 3.1.1 appropriate for awarding credit specific course(s)? (designate)
    - 3.1.2 appropriate for waiving a specific course(s) or requirement? (designate)
    - 3.1.3 appropriate for general departmental credits?
    - 3.1.4 inappropriate for waiver or credit?
4. In the subject examinations, unless specific course credit is granted, the number of general credits will be equated as three credits per course.
5. In keeping with current University policy, a maximum of 45 quarter credits will be accepted toward the baccalaureate degree from any combination of acceptable correspondence work and the College Level Examination Program.
  - 5.1 A maximum of 15 quarter credits will be granted in General Education (3 credits in American Thought and Language and 4 credits each in Humanities, Natural Science, and Social Science.)

5.2 A maximum of 30 credits will be granted in subject areas.

6. CLEP is viewed as an external instrument used as an aid in advanced placement of students in the MSU curriculum at the point of the student's entry.

6.1 As an external instrument, no course fees or tuition shall be levied for the processing of waivers or credits via this route.

6.1.1 The Office of Transfer Admissions, Admissions and Scholarships Office, shall administer the University's policy concerning CLEP examinations.

6.1.2 The Office of Transfer Admissions shall collect and accumulate appropriate data pertaining to the use of CLEP exams at MSU and these data and the policy relating to CLEP shall be reviewed by the Assistant Deans Group at the end of a two-year period. Further, the Assitant Deans Group shall provide a written report to the Office of the Provost following that review.

6.2 While the student is in residence, credit and waivers shall be earned via the internal credit-by-examination system according to existing policies and practices (attachment 2). The Office of Evaluation Services is to be the administrative unit for the credit by examination system.

DA/rt

Attachments

cm



The purpose of this interview is to gain some insights about the policies, procedures and attitudes toward credit by examination at the department level.

Department \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years on faculty \_\_\_\_\_ Number of years as Chairperson \_\_\_\_\_

1. Did your department offer 999 sections last year? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

How many? \_\_\_\_\_

How were these handled? Special examinations? \_\_\_\_\_

Regular examinations? \_\_\_\_\_

Regular examinations and papers? \_\_\_\_\_

Major problems:

2. Does your department administer its own waiver examinations? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

Are these widely used by your students? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

3. Are you offering 999 sections this year? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

4. How were requests for credit by examination handled in your department before 999 sections were implemented?

5. Are requests for credit by examination fairly common? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

6. What is your impression of the attitude of the members in your department toward credit by examination? Favorable and cooperative? \_\_\_\_\_

Cooperative due to requirements? \_\_\_\_\_

Unfavorable? \_\_\_\_\_

7. What would you consider to be the primary considerations in the evaluation of the competencies of an individual who has had considerable experience in the field and decides to pursue a formal degree program?

What would be the considerations for granting credit?

What would be the considerations for granting permission to waive?

8. What do you see as the major factors to be considered if an evaluation were conducted for assessing levels of competence that are not course-bound?

What would be the considerations for granting credit?

What would be the considerations for granting permission to waive?

## MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH  
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

EAST LANSING • MICHIGAN • 48824

## COVER LETTER AND STUDENT OPINIONNAIRE

This attitude survey, or opinionnaire, is part of a larger study designed to examine the policies and practices of credit by examination at Michigan State University. One option available to Michigan State University students is a credit by examination plan in which the student may gain credit through examinations without course attendance. The purpose of this opinionnaire is to gain some insights as to how you, as a student, feel about this issue.

Your name was selected at random and your responses will be treated anonymously. It is important, however, that you tell me your age and classification when you respond to the opinionnaire. An addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed to save you the price of everything except your time expended responding to the opinionnaire.

As this is part of my doctoral dissertation, it is very important, to me, that you reply promptly. There will be no follow-up reminder. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

  
Ms. Ruth A. Lezotte

RAL/cm

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Veteran? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

Classification: Freshman \_\_\_\_\_ Soph. \_\_\_\_\_ Junior \_\_\_\_\_ Senior \_\_\_\_\_

1. Are you aware of the University College Independent Study and Waiver Examinations? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

2. Have you ever taken one or more of these examinations? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

How many? \_\_\_\_\_

Number for which waivers were received \_\_\_\_\_

Which one(s)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Number on which credit was received \_\_\_\_\_

Which one(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Are you aware that most non-University College courses are available for credit by examination? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

4. Have you ever attempted to gain credit by examination in any of your courses?

yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

How many course(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Which course(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Do you think all courses should be available for credit by examination?

yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

6. Have you ever felt that you could demonstrate proficiency in some of your courses without taking the course? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

7. Have you ever felt you could pass the final examination in some courses without having taken the course? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

8. Have you ever taken a College Level Examination Program (CLEP) test?  
yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_
9. Have you ever considered taking a CLEP test?    yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_
10. Did you take an Advanced Placement Test for college credit while in high school?    yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_
11. Would you be seriously interested in speeding up your undergraduate program by passing proficiency examinations without course attendance?    yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_
12. Have you ever encountered serious difficulty in course progression due to restrictive prerequisite requirements?    yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_
13. Some colleges have experimented with programs in which a panel of faculty members works with an individual to evaluate his progress and determine a general level of college competency. Would this kind of plan appeal to you?  
yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_
- At the initial college entry point?    yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_
- At a later date, such as end of first year?    yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

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