Credit Hours

Carnegie Mellon has adopted the method of stating in “units” the quantity of work required of students in each course. In each subject of study, the college catalog tells how much time per week is expected of the average student for each kind of work (e.g., recitations, laboratory, studio, study). For the average student, one unit represents one work-hour of time per week throughout the semester. The number of units in each subject is fixed by the faculty of the college offering the subject. Three units are the equivalent of one traditional semester credit hour.

The School of Music follows this method in assigning credit for all of its class-type instructional activities. Academic music classes require a variety of work-hours, depending on the subject. For example, Harmony might require three hours in class and six hours of preparation per week, while Solfege, a lab-based class, might require three hours of actual laboratory (drill) in each class. Ensemble and studio courses are every bit as demanding as music academic subjects, but do not lend themselves to quantification in a manner as clear and consistent. Therefore, the School of Music assigns unit credit based on the relative emphasis that the student is expected to place on the importance of each ensemble or studio course. Accordingly, an ensemble or studio class is weighted in units equivalent to those of major academic/music classes.