

United Teacher
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Re: NA forms

I Want to Take This Great Class but it's not from a university . . . can I get salary point credit for it?

By Janet Davis
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Teachers like to learn. We like to search out information or learn skills that will help us be more effective teachers. However, we also have a life outside of teaching, so being in graduate school while working full-time is often not something that busy teachers can do.

The District offers salary point classes that usually require a shorter time commitment than most university classes, but they still take a minimum of 15 hours (plus 30 hours of outside preparation for the "lecture" class format or 30 hours of class for the alternative "lab" format with limited outside preparation). Another issue is that many specialized areas of study are not represented in the District's course offerings.

So are there other options? Can you take shorter classes or sessions that aren't already approved for salary points? The answer is yes to both questions, but there are procedures to follow to make sure the classes will eventually count for credit.

Getting pre-approval for classes: When taking classes that haven't already received salary point credit status, you should apply for pre-approval through the NA form on lausdsalary.net. (Click on "Need a salary form?" to download the NA form, "Application for Point Credit Pre-Approval for Proposed Study in Non-Accredited Schools Including Foreign Institutions.")

The description makes it sound like the NA form is mainly for foreign language schools, but it's not—it can be used for any "nonaccredited" institution, as long as the class follows the policies outlined on the second page of the NA form. These policies require that the class, among other things, be of a "quality and advanced nature comparable to that taken in an accredited institution" and be "directly related to the curriculum/subjects" commonly taught in the District.

Requests for points are reviewed by the UTLA/LAUSD Joint Salary Point Committee, and if you don't go through the pre-approval process, you risk being denied credit. Some members feel it's not practical to get every three-hour mini-class pre-approved, but you need to know that you may be turned down. (If the course is offered through a District office, you do not need pre-approval. These courses have already gone through the approval process with the Salary Point Committee.)

If you choose to take shorter classes, be sure to keep the documentation, because you won't be applying for credit until you reach the right instruction mark (either 15

instruction hours plus 30 hours of homework or 30 instruction hours). *There is no provision for partial credit*, which means you shouldn't send in documentation for 29 class hours, even though you feel that 29 hours of class time plus the 20 hours you spent on homework should be worth a salary point.

Be sure to get verification: The majority of the professional development hours that are submitted for salary point credit are from District offices, subject-specific professional organizations, and foreign language immersion programs outside of the country. These institutions will offer a certificate of completion, but sometimes that certificate does not verify the actual class hours and the hours of outside preparation/homework required for the class.

If this information isn't provided, you need to ask the organization to verify it in writing on the official letterhead of the organization. You should also submit a flyer or agenda from the organization offering the class, but that agenda or flyer is not enough to validate the hours.

It is important that you let the organization know that if you participated in a course that had extensive homework requirements, you will not get credit for it if they estimate that it required below 30 hours. *Letters stating that the course required 27 hours of homework will not count for anything.* The organization also cannot count the lunch break as class time (although a short break within a three- or four-hour class can be counted).

Mixing the two formulas: When looking at classes that are not already approved for salary point, remember to consider the two formulas for determining a salary point:

* A lecture class (called a "Preparation Type" on the NA form) must consist of 15 class hours plus 30 or more outside preparation or homework hours (two hours of homework for each hour of class).

* The alternative format (called "Non-preparation Type" on the NA form) must consist of 30 hours of instruction, with no requirement for homework hours.

If the class's combination of hours and homework is not an exact ratio of 15 hours of class to 30 hours of homework, you can mix the two formulas. For example, some teachers took a month-long course in China on Mandarin. The class had a lot of homework, but not enough to qualify if they tried to balance all the class hours with homework using the 15-30 ratio. They ended up applying for three salary points based on the 15 hours of class/30 hours of homework model and then were credited with one salary point for the remaining 30 class hours using the second formula.

Confused yet? This system can be complicated. If this process makes your head spin, you may want to play it safe and just take salary point classes or university courses. However, if you want to receive credit for professional development that meets specific professional needs that cannot be met through the District or the university, this is the way to do it.