CURRICULUM AUDIT

Spring 2020

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SUMMARY

The J-School's curriculum covers six reporting platforms, numerous topical subjects, and ranges from seminars to lectures to production classes. The curriculum's technical components — course unit counts, course material fees, and course numbering — have not been systematically examined in recent memory. For some courses, unit counts no longer match student workload and material fees may no longer match material needs. Courses are numbered with little rhyme or reason.

The purpose of this audit is to reveal where these three areas can be updated and to provide the J-School and the University's Academic Senate with recommendations and justifications for making the needed updates. When all is said and done, students will have a more concrete idea of how much work to expect when registering for classes as well as ensuring that they're paying the appropriate fees for their education.

FEES

Only two of the 11 evaluated fees are recommended to change.

Course: ███████████████████

Fee: $███████ → $████████

Move the fee to ████████████████████████, *since this course's materials will likely be folded into the* ███████████████████████ *series*

Course: ███████████████████████

Fee: $████████ → $████████

NUMBERING

J200 through J299 are best organized by platform, with well-established 298 classes getting spun off into their own course numbers. Here are the groupings I propose:
- 200–209: Basic reporting
- 210–214: Photojournalism
- 215–218, 220–229: Multimedia
- 219: Minis
- 230–239, 250–259: Topicals

- 240–249: Narrative writing
- 260–269: Investigative
- 270–279: Audio journalism
- 280–293: Video journalism and Documentary
- 294–299, 601: Miscellaneous

219 and 298 *classes* that get spun off from those two *courses* will necessitate the creation of new courses. Old courses that have been removed from the campus catalog but not fully withdrawn—and which faculty don't expect to teach again—should be fully retired to make more room for new course proposals in the future.

UNITS

Of the 46 courses and classes that were evaluated, 21 are recommended for unit-count changes. If all recommendations are approved, School curriculum will see a net increase of 20 units, with the starkest increases in the ███████████████████████ and ███████████████████████ platforms. Red indicates courses most urgently needing adjustment, orange indicates courses with a moderately urgent need for adjustment, and green indicates courses with the least-urgent need for adjustment.

Course: ███████████████████████
Unit count: ███ → ███

Course: ███████████████████████
Unit count: ███ → ███

Course: ███████████████████████
Unit count: ███ → ███

Course: ███████████████████████
Unit count: ███ → ███

Course:
███████████████████████ Workshop
Unit count: ███ → ███

Course: ███████████████████████

Unit count: ███ → ███ — ███
To accommodate ███████████████████████████

Course: ███████████████████████
Unit count: ███ → ███

Course: ███████████████████████
Unit count: ███ → ███

Course: ███████████████████████
Unit count: ███ → ███

Course: ███████████████████████
Unit count: ███ → ███

Course: ███████████████████████
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Course: ████████████████████
Unit count: ██ → ██

Course: ████████████████████
Unit count: ██ → ██

Course: ████████████████████
Unit count: ██ → ██

I don't recommend increasing the total number of units required to earn the MJ, though I do recommend increasing from ██ units to ██ units the threshold at which students require advisor sign-off when registering for classes.

Additionally, the fact-find process turned up a number of tangentially related issues that deserve J-School decision-makers' consideration. Some of them are:

- Lecturers are seriously impacted by unit-count changes
- There's a discrepancy in how many units students earn for thesis-related work
- Earth Journalism shouldn't be classified as a travel class, per se
- The School should consider bringing back Reporting on India

In total, 32 proposals should be sent to the Academic Senate: 14 new courses should be proposed (where their course numbers and unit counts will be established for the first time), and 5 existing courses should be re-numbered. Of those 5, only 1 should also have its unit count changed. Another 13 existing courses, which shouldn't be re-numbered, should have unit-count changes.

NEXT STEPS AND TIMELINES

Before any of the audit's recommendations can be fed to the University's decision-making machine, the J-School's Curriculum Committee must take them up. Ideally, this will be done around the end of Spring 2020, so that these changes can be in place by the start of Fall 2020. That would require a special meeting of the committee. If these modifications are to be taken up for implementation for Fall 2021, however, the normal in-School curriculum process would follow these highlights:

- "By **Sept 10**, ██ ██. "

- **September**: "██ ██ . "

- **October**: "██ ██ . "

- **January**: "██ ██ . "

- **January**: "██ ██ . "

- **February**: "██ ██ . "

COCI process

After J-School decision makers give the thumbs up, someone on staff here enters the proposed changes into the Course Management System (CMS), where all changes to courses are tracked. Each course looking to be changed—unit count and/or number—must have its own separate proposal, with all changes for that course in the same proposal. A Curriculum Committee

representative approves them in CMS and then staff of the campus' Academic Senate check them out and request more information if need be. A Committee on Courses of Instruction (COCI) subcommittee then reviews it and refers it to the full COCI, a unit of the university's Academic Senate. (As of April 30, COCI's summer meeting schedule has not been set.) After COCI's approval, Academic Senate staff give the OK in CMS and the J-School is alerted. Minor changes, like a new number, will likely receive quicker approval from the staff without full COC review.

Proposals in CMS are due the Friday before the next COCI meeting, and missing information or COCI meetings that go long can delay the approval process. COCI recommends, however, that all proposals be submitted two months before the end of the semester before the term in which the changes will go into effect. **For Fall 2020, they should be submitted by July 1. COCI staff recommend submitting all changes in the same time frame**; ideally, that's submitting everything for review in a single COCI meeting, though getting everything approved over the course of a semester is OK, too. However, every COCI meeting for which changes are submitted for review should include one proposal with an attached cover letter laying out the changes and rationales for the changes. (See Appendix I for that cover letter.) For instance, if six proposals (for six courses) are submitted for COCI approval for its first summer meeting, one of those six proposals should include that cover letter. If six more are submitted for COCI's second summer meeting, one of those six should also include the cover letter.

COCI staff say CMS justifications for ███ and ███ classes that don't officially exist in the system, like ██████████ and ████████████, don't require the backstory of how we determined their unit counts since they don't exist as courses yet in the system (their syllabi will suffice for their proposed unit counts). However, existing courses that deserve a unit-count change, like J200, would benefit from a justification that outlines how we came to a different unit count than is already officially listed (see "Recommendations: course unit counts" section).

For more on developing proposals in CMS, check out the Academic Senate's Course Toolbox. For more on COCI's rules in general, check out its handbook.

Course-material-fee process

Course material fees are assigned not to a *course*, but to the course's *number*. Minor changes to course material fees, like moving one to a new number, are handled by the campus' Course Materials and Services Fees (CMSF) Committee. **A request is emailed to studentfees@berkeley.edu** with
- Course name and number

- Description of the requested modification
- Documentation to support the request

Our Divisional Finance Leader (currently, ██████████████████████) must approve of the request first and be CC'd on that email.

According to the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Finance, for this type of request,

> documentation to support the request would include a letter from your department chair indicating that the course # changes are part of a department-wide audit, and certifying that the fees will be spent in the same way as originally approved. You may submit one request for multiple CMSF changes. This request would then be reviewed by the CMSF Committee. If approved, we would issue you a new CF1 to track revenues and expenses on the CMSF. You would be required to transfer any deficits or surpluses from the old CF1 to the new CF1 for year-over-year tracking purposes.

It should be noted that any course with a material fee that is getting re-numbered **should receive approval for its new number before this process is initiated**. Needless to say, things could get messy if both processes aren't completed by the time students registering for these classes pay their material fees.

████████████ said, when fees are increased or decreased, UC wants to see the finances and how the fees are spent. Our documentation here should be at the ready should it be requested by campus.

Cancelling, say, ████████████'s fee and bringing it back as another ████████████ fee means eliminating one fee (see below) and increasing another. According to the Office of the Chief Financial Officer,

> Requests to increase a CMSF are reviewed and approved once per year. The call for CMSF proposals goes out to the Divisional Finance Leaders (DFLs) in the Fall. Departments that would like to increase a CMSF should work with their DFLs to complete the Course Materials and Services Fee Proposal Form and return it to studentfees@berkeley.edu. Submissions must also be reviewed and approved by a Department Chair or Director and a Dean or Vice Chancellor.

Check out the [Office of the Chief Financial Officer](#) for more on how to increase, decrease, eliminate, or otherwise change a course material fee.

After everything is approved

Making all these changes after students have registered for their Fall courses presents a couple significant issues:

Current first-year students have already registered for their Fall 2020 courses. After the re-numbering scheme is approved, the courses students registered for will change. For instance, ████████████ is ███, but I'm proposing it become ███. Someone who has just enrolled in ███: ████████████ will become enrolled in an empty course number. An analyst at the Office of the Registrar told me, "Enrollment is based on the class number. If the catalog number changes, the student will still remain in the same class number, so re-numbering the catalog number from ███ to ███ will not help students be enrolled in the appropriate class." **He recommended block enrollment as a solution**, where whole groups of students can be lifted out of one course and inserted into another.

A related issue is how this affects where students' course material fees go. Those fees—via a separate process the School should initiate immediately after the re-numbering is approved—have to get moved to their corresponding courses' new numbers. The correct fees should be officially tied to the correct courses before students are charged those fees in July or early August—or else, to continue the example, a student who has registered for ███: ████████████ (to become ███: ████████████) will end up paying their fee to an empty ███. The Registrar analyst said his office's **Academic Scheduling staff can help with these problems**.

Finally, the J-School website, the campus-wide class schedule, and any other system that generates students' transcripts and academic records have to be updated.

METHODS

Initial fact-finding

This audit began with researching COCI and the chancellor's requirements for changing course unit counts, course material fees, and course numbering, as well as those approval processes and timelines. Some of that has already been discussed in the "Next steps and timelines" section; the rest of those details are found in the following three recommendations sections. I

also spoke with ████████████████ of the university's Center for Teaching and Learning to help direct my fact-finding and broaden my list of topics to consider and research.

To get a better idea of when and why professional programs like ours choose to address unit counts, I met with folks from four other grad programs on campus:

Goldman School of Public Policy's ████████████████,
████████████████████████████████

School of Information's ████████████████,
████████████████████████████████

Berkeley Social Welfare's ████████████████,
████████████████████████████████

Department of Film and Media's ████████████████,
████████████████████████████████

Several of them were also going through curriculum reviews—either on their own or officially for UC Berkeley. Student feedback was frequently cited as an important catalyst for and component of curriculum reviews. Much of their feedback touched on broader curriculum changes than are tackled in this report but are nonetheless important to keep in mind when making significant changes to curriculum:

- To simplify a bit, programs closest in substance or profession to ours tend to be structured this way:
    - First year: core courses, generalist courses
    - Summer field work
    - Second year: specialist courses, capstone project
- There are two types of tension around these programs' curricula (that also exist with ours) that are driven by students:
    - How much to orient the curriculum around theory versus practice
    - How much to orient the curriculum around becoming a generalist versus becoming a specialist
- The fundamental questions for any curriculum review (and for guidance on the previous bullet points) are: Who are we as a program? What are we trying to do? What's our vision?

Information on courses' unit counts, material fees, and histories were drawn from the J-School website, old curriculum-planning spreadsheets, the University's Course Management System, fee-modification applications, ███████████████, and the Office of the Financial Officer's ███████████████. Information on degree requirements came from the J-School website and Graduate Division's [Graduate Policy](#).

Instructor input

The next step was to make a list of all J-School courses. For the re-numbering scheme, I included those going back through Fall 2017 (when I started at the School), with a few older ones that haven't been taught since but could possibly make a comeback someday. For unit counts, I looked for those that both have been taught at least once since Fall 2017 and were not one-off topical courses or classes. I noted the primary instructor for each of those and reached out asking for an interview for each course they teach. I entered their answers into a Google Form during the interview. Instructors who couldn't meet filled out the form via email. These were the questions (the first seven of which were required):

- Name
- Course name
- Course number
- Platform
- How would you characterize this class: seminar, workshop, production, mini, etc.?
- How many hours a week does your class formally meet?
- About how many hours a week of *outside* work does this class require or expect of students? (i.e., reporting, editing, readings, peer feedback, etc.)
- In practice, how much do students, on average, stick to the required or expected workload?
- Any other notes or observations relevant to class and student workload?
- Feel free to upload any syllabi or course descriptions that you think might be helpful in understanding any of the above. (They'll be kept confidential.)
- If your class includes a course materials fee, how much is it?
- What does the fee cover?
- Does the fee seem appropriate given the extra costs associated with the course?
- Feel free to elaborate on the course material fee:
- Do you have any thoughts on the sequence of courses in your platform? (i.e., it's too structured, not structured enough, too many requirements, not enough requirements, doesn't take into account how students differ in their proficiency)
- Any other thoughts on anything discussed above?

Several instructors who were contacted either missed or ignored several follow-up emails asking for interviews or to take the survey themselves, and while some courses have had only

one of several possible instructors give their input, ██████████████████ and ████████████████ have no instructor input at all. Because those two also received no student survey input, I'm not making any recommendations for them. (Past student evaluations of these courses and the familiarity I've gained with our curriculum don't give me reason to think either of them are in serious need of change.)

Below is a graph of how many hours of outside work per week (x axis) instructors expect for their courses. A few courses (like ████████████ and ████████████) had more than one instructor give different input on this question, meaning their courses would appear in multiple columns.

The unlabeled bars to the right of 10 hours are, respectively, 12, 14, 19, and 35 hours

Bearing in mind those same conditions, below is the breakdown of how much instructors thought students adhere to that workload:

The darker blue on the pie chart is "They tend to do much more work."
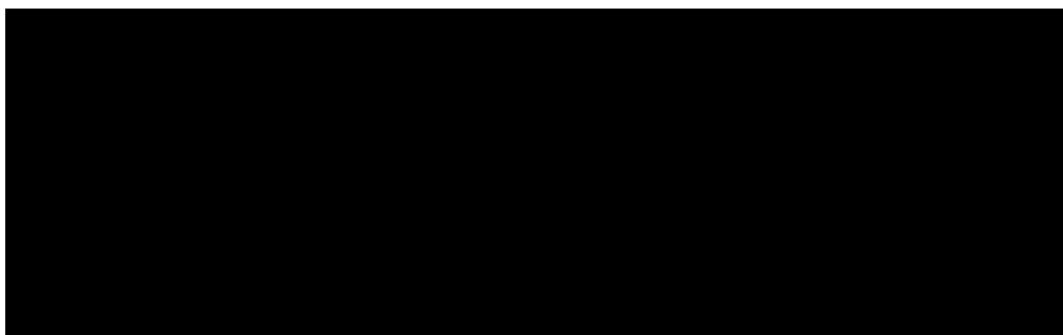
Student input

Instructors' feedback is key to understanding course-workload expectations, but since *student* work-hours are the key ingredient for calculating unit counts, current students and recent graduates' input was vital. (See the "Miscellaneous recommendations, ideas, and concerns" section for more on unit counts' impact on instructors.)
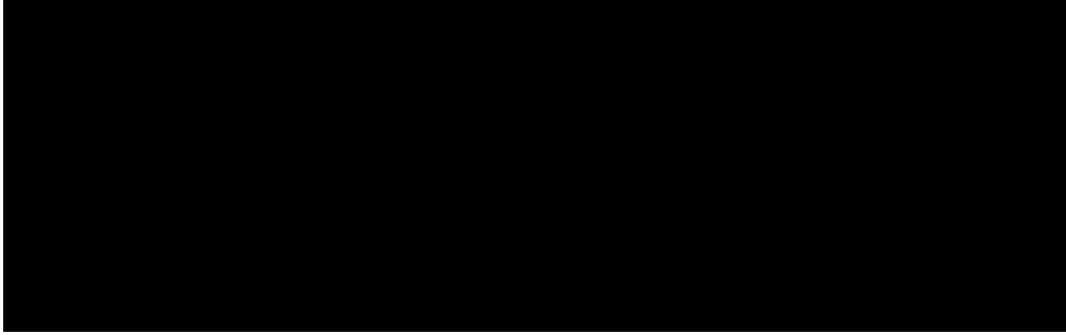
Another Google Form was emailed to the classes of 2018, 2019, and 2020. (It was emailed a second time a couple months later to gather more input.) Students were encouraged to fill out a new form for each class they evaluate, and 56 responses were recorded. (Not 56 different classes, but an indeterminable number of people anonymously filled out 56 evaluations. For instance, ███████████ received 10 of those 56 responses.) Thirty-six evaluations came from the class of 2020, 17 from the class of 2019, and three from the class of 2018. Below are the survey's questions:

- Graduation year
- Your platform
- Which class are you evaluating? (required)
  - There were 54 options + "Other"
- If the class isn't listed, write it out below
- What term did you take this class?
- Was this class a mini? (required)
- On average, how many hours of work a week did this course require OUTSIDE of the time you met in class? That's readings, viewings, editing, reporting, any of that good stuff. This isn't based on anything in a syllabus, but the amount of time you found you needed to put in. (Check any boxes that fall into your estimation range.) [required]
- How did that compare to what you expected at the beginning of the semester—before the class really got underway, but after you found out what the class expected?
- Feel free to elaborate on any of the above, as well as on the workload of your platform in general or on the sequence of courses in your platform.

Fall 2019 courses received the most input (20 responses), with the number of responses mostly decreasing going back in time. Bearing in mind that courses received differing numbers of submissions (and that each submission could include a *range* of out-of-class hours) and were taken in different semesters, here is the breakdown of average outside-of-class hours per week (y axis):

Bearing in mind most of those same conditions, below is how much the outside work compared to students' expectations at the semester's outset:

Some courses did not receive a single evaluation after two emails to students requesting their input, and so student workload feedback also came from past course evaluations, which included the statement, "The workload for this course was manageable." Students could rate their agreement with the statement on a scale of 0 ("Not at all") to 7 ("Very"), and had opportunities to provide written feedback on the course in general, which sometimes expanded on workload. (It should be noted that comments on workload likely came more from students who had strong opinions about it or felt the workload either did not match expectations or was problematic. Many workload comments also came from Spring 2017, when evals asked specifically about workload.) Among all courses and classes each semester, the average level of agreement to "The workload for this course was manageable" was as follows:

- Spring 2017: not given
- Fall 2017: ███████
- Spring 2018: ███████
- Fall 2018: ███████
- Spring 2019: ███████
- Fall 2019: ██████

This obviously doesn't measure the number of hours students put into their classes, but how much students thought a course's workload was manageable could be interpreted as a sort of referendum on both the unit count and the amount of work instructors expected of them. Students presumably are aware that taking a course with a higher unit count would entail more work and that they would adjust their overall schedules accordingly; disagreement with the statement that the workload was manageable likely implies that they thought the course demanded too much work compared to their expectations, thus implying that the unit count could be too low. (Courses with less work than expected presumably wouldn't lead to low scores because less work would only increase the manageability of the workload.)

This is clearly a very indirect measure, so it didn't factor super heavily in my analysis (a course's average score rarely dropped below a 5 anyway), and written feedback in course evaluations

factored in more strongly when multiple people for a class offered the same or similar workload feedback.

All these data points were divided by course and inputted into this document's final section, a course-by-course index where I could compare and weigh instructor and student feedback to come up with final recommendations. Course material fee recommendations are based on instructors' material needs (or lack thereof), ███████████'s knowledge of equipment needs and costs (which most fees are for), internal fee documents, and campus' database of fees. My course-renumbering scheme was a product of what structure made the most sense to me (while limiting how many courses had to change numbers).

Unit counts recommendations did not follow a set formula—the calculations are simply too inexact: Instructors can't monitor exactly how long it takes to do their assignments; workload varies week-to-week, term-to-term, and student-to-student (who may not remember precisely how many hours they put in). On top of that, with a three-hours-of-work–to–one-unit ratio, work-hours had to be rounded to the nearest multiple of three.

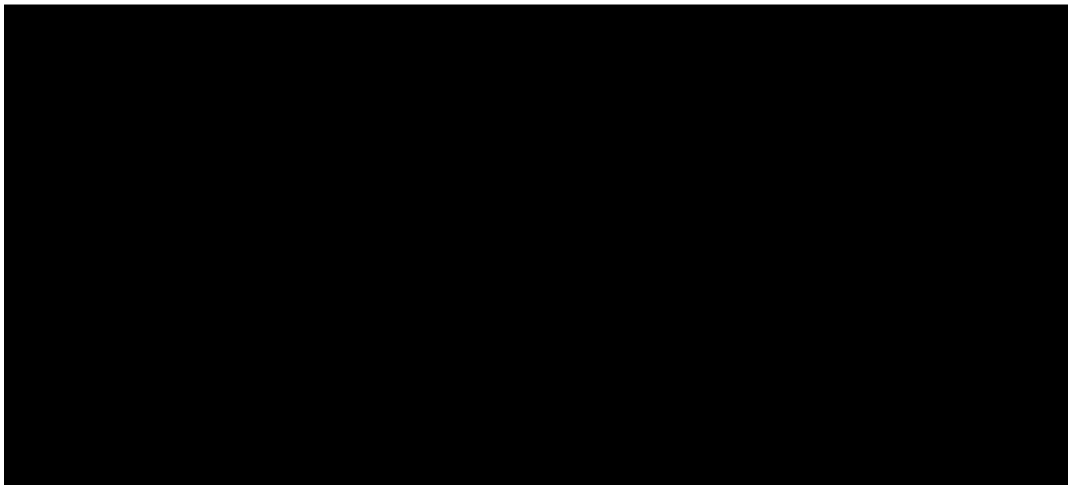Nonetheless, instructors' workload numbers were more heavily weighted when:
- Student feedback varied so wildly that an instructor's expectations became a sort of anchor that pointed to which end of the student spectrum was more accurate
- Instructors had tested (and thus knew) the amount of time needed to complete assignments, especially when they had adequate mechanisms to ensure students completed them
- There was minimal or no student feedback
  - Bullet 3 *without* bullet 2 usually led me to decline making any recommendation

Overall, however, students' input was most important because the amount of time *they* spend on coursework determines unit counts. When student responses to out-of-class workload varied widely, course evaluation comments can strongly imply which end of the spectrum is more accurate. In those cases, I also gave slightly more weight to the longer-hours side of a workload spectrum: Some students may get away with earning their units with less work (either due to being advanced or cutting corners), but those who do every assignment and/or may be less advanced (and thus take longer) shouldn't be deprived of the units they've worked for.

RECOMMENDATIONS: COURSE MATERIAL FEES

Class materials requirements and upkeep evolve over the years, and it's a good time to look at each course material fee and find out if they're still appropriate. These fees tend to go toward maintaining equipment (as with Video and Doc courses), producing books (as with advanced Photo courses), or graphic-design needs (as with Multimedia courses). Some fees are also supplemented by professors' grants or research funds.

Listed below is each course that currently has a course material fee, the current fee, the recommended fee, and justification for any change.

Through interviews and my survey, I found that most instructors for classes with these fees either don't know what their fees are for or have only a general sense of what they're used for. **These instructors should be contacted at some point in the near future and provided a quick rundown of what their fees are for.** This knowledge would obviously be useful to them, useful to students who ask them about the fees, and would give instructors the awareness to request fee adjustments when their courses' material needs change.

RECOMMENDATIONS: COURSE RE-NUMBERING

There is little organization to the way the J-School's courses have been numbered. Basic reporting courses tend to fall between 200 and 210, Photojournalism courses between 210 and 220, and many Video and Documentary courses are in the 280s. Mini classes all exist in 219, and a great number of classes live at 298, which is for newer courses still in a trial stage (219, 226, and 298 are three *courses*, the different offerings within them are the courses' *classes*).

The most intuitive way to re-number courses, while minimizing the amount of shuffling, is to do so by platform. Below is the recommended order. Most 298 classes and one 219 class have been slotted into their respective platform or specialization.

Completely re-numbering the School's courses is impractical: Say we want to group Audio courses in the 220s. Intro to Audio (275) cannot be moved to 220 because 220 houses Intro to Coding—even if we wanted to move Intro to Coding to a different number. A number that has housed a course can only be reused five years after the course that used to be there has been completely withdrawn and fully retired from the campus' curriculum system (not just removed from the campus catalog). For instance, 214: Photo Tutorial ended in Spring 2016, meaning 214 will be available for use starting Summer 2021.

Here's what COCI has to say about it:
> A course number may not be reused for a new course for a period of ... five years for graduate courses. This rule is designed to avoid confusion among faculty and students and to avoid the need for variances if students who have taken the old course wish to take the new course. (The time restriction is based on the latter consideration and represents the time in which most students enrolled at the time of the change will have left the University.) This rule applies whether a course has been withdrawn or simply has not been offered during the restricted time period.

Therefore, platform groupings below are roughly based on where courses already are: Video and Doc courses tend to cluster in the 280s, Narrative in the 240s, Multimedia in the 210s and 220s, etc. 298s were then distributed to empty numbers within the appropriate platform groupings, and then established courses that are not currently in the appropriate groupings filled in other empty slots.

Doing this decreases the number of numbers the School has left for new courses, given the five-year rule quoted above. As an alternative, COCI regulations say the "use of a suffix with a new course may avoid the above problems – course 101 is considered to be different from course 101A and similarly 101C from 101D."

The final thing to keep in mind before making any final decisions on a new number scheme relates to course material fees, which, again, are handled through a totally different process. These fees are attached to course numbers, not the course occupying that number. So, for example, the fee associated with ████████████████████ is actually attached to ███████, currently. A different campus committee with its own process handles moving a course's fee to its new number (see the "Next steps and timelines" section for more).
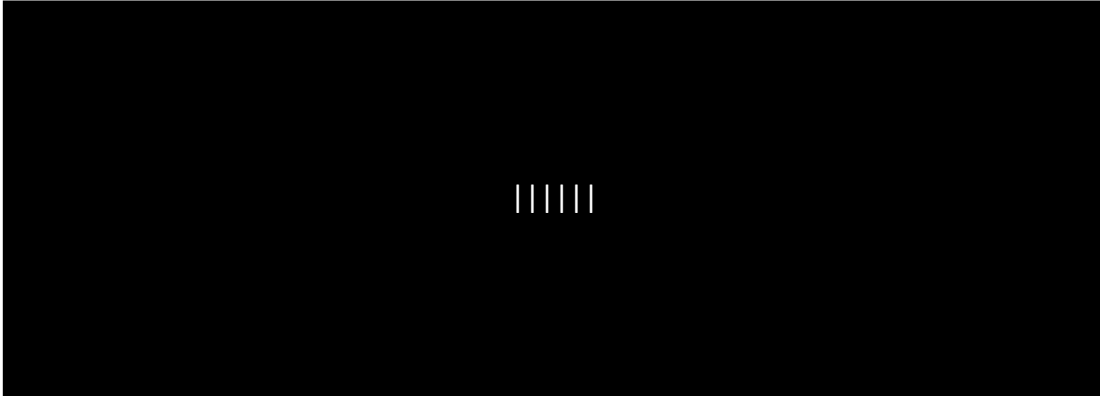
Each course receiving a new number requires its own proposal in CMS. Those that will also see a change in unit count can have both those changes requested in the same proposal. While a new number may receive expedited approval, re-numbering a 219 or 298 class would not because that technically requires creating a whole new course.

Here is the proposed re-numbering scheme, with courses removed from the catalog (but that are not fully *retired*) in gray:

Number	Title	Current fee	Old number	Primary platform	Notes
███					

The School should also consider fully withdrawing and retiring old courses that faculty no longer expect to teach. That could give the School much more room to propose new courses in

the long run (if it doesn't want to implement the suffix system). Under the above scheme, the following numbers remain free:
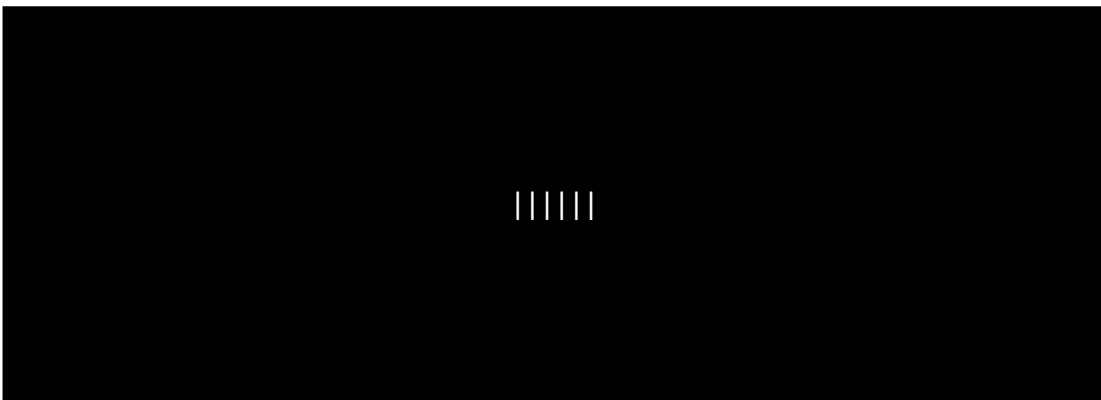
||||||

The following courses will become free after five years under the above scheme:

The following courses will become free after five years under the above scheme if all courses that have been removed from the catalog are withdrawn/retired:

||||||

RECOMMENDATIONS: COURSE UNIT COUNTS

From a student perspective, unit counts are important because they roughly indicate how many hours a week they should expect to commit to a course they want to register for. Revolving instructors, changes in technology and pedagogical practice, and years of student feedback have altered courses' workloads while their unit counts—often reflecting campus' inflexible notions of workload requirements—don't change.

Basically, for a 15-week class, one unit corresponds to three hours of student work per week, including in-class time. A three-unit course, then, should be three hours of class a week plus six hours of outside work a week. Though there's no strict requirement that every hour of in-class time has to be accompanied by two hours of out-of-class time, COCI's unit-count-evaluation model follows that. Here is more context from COCI's handbook:

> Unit value for course offerings is governed by Academic Senate Regulation (SR) 760, which states in part: "The value of a course in units shall be reckoned at the rate of one unit for three hours' work per week per term on the part of a student, or the equivalent." COCI defines "work" to include class contact time as well as time spent outside of class studying and doing research or homework. Thus, a three-unit course offered during fall or spring requires a minimum of nine hours of total work per week. (The work hours per week will be higher for six-, eight-, and ten-week term lengths.)
>
> SR 760 does not specify a relationship between unit value and class contact hours, but contact hours do often correlate to unit value. COCI utilizes the following general model to promote consistency across campus: one unit usually corresponds to 15 lecture or seminar contact hours per term. Thus, a three-unit course would generally have 45 contact hours over the course of the term. Such a course might have a format of three hours of lecture per week for 14 weeks, plus three hours of review during Reading, Review, and Recitation (RRR) Week. The course would have nine hours of total work per week, three of which would be in-class lecture. Students would be expected to do six hours of additional out-of-class work.
>
> Departments are responsible for submitting course proposals and syllabi that include a detailed description of how unit value is justified.

Unit-count changes for any course requires full COCI review. Submitting the proposed change in CMS requires, among other details, a syllabus, which must include certain information (see here for more). A unit-change proposal for a course that also needs a number change can have both

those changes requested in the same proposal. See the "Next steps and timelines" section for more on the approval process.

There are additional considerations for ██████████████████ (which has an unusual instruction format), classes getting moved out of the ████ and ████ courses, and courses that deserve high unit counts (typically above 4 or 5 units). According to COCI staff, if ████████████████████ "is not routinely holding seminar hours in a classroom setting, ... perhaps this is a class better categorized with field study or group study instruction." (See COCI's [Course Toolbox](#) for more on making this kind of modification.)

Additionally, "████████████████████ is the course number, "████████████████████████" is the course itself, and the various titles of the specifically offered syllabi [████████████████████, ████████████████████, etc.] are the classes that are offered underneath that course number." So giving ████s and ████s their own numbers means turning *classes* into *new courses*.

Another issue can arise if a ████ or ████ class deserves a unit-count modification but we want to keep it at ████ or ████. Currently, ████ classes must be 1 unit and ████s must be 2–4 units. ████████████████████, for instance, is recommended for 5 units, meaning either ████ and ████ must slim down its workload or "████████████████████████" must be changed (with justification) in CMS to be 2–5 units.

Finally, COCI gets antsy about high unit counts, which a number of our production classes deserve. My recommendation is to give COCI sufficient justification for why a class should have a high unit count, including explaining why it doesn't make sense for a professional school like ours to maintain a set ratio between in-class instruction and out-of-class work (these explanations are laid out below). As a back-up, heavy production courses can come with a required "lab" that students must concurrently enroll in. Here's what COCI staff had to say about the issue:

> There is no specific guidance from COCI to address what you are bringing up. Generally, a course should carry a maximum of 4 units. But there are some exceptional cases where they are worth more.
>
> Some departments, particularly in the biological sciences, will create "laboratory only" courses that complement the lecture course to give students the instructional space and credit for academic work. So, for example, COURSE A is the lecture course worth 4 units that is just lecture and any outside work (readings, writing papers, etc) and COURSE B is

the laboratory course for 4 units that allocates all 12 weekly hours for lab work. You can use the course prerequisites to express that COURSE B must be taken concurrently with COURSE A, so then students receive 8 units for doing the total 24 hours of work across two courses.

Because of limited space between 200 and 299, this is not recommended. A COCI analyst did not bring up any concerns after reviewing one of the below unit-count-change proposals that explained why high unit counts are necessary.

Below is a breakdown of how many courses have how many units and how that will change if all these recommendations are approved:

Currently

1-unit courses	2-unit courses	3-unit courses	4-unit courses	5-unit courses	6-unit courses	7-unit courses	8-unit courses	9-unit courses
███	███	███	███	███	███	███	███	███

* 219, 226, and 298 are counted as single courses (even though they have several classes each). For this chart, they're considered to have, respectively, 1, 3, and 3 units (officially, they're 1, 3–4, and 2–4 units, respectively). 200's lab and R&R are also combined into 200.

Proposed

1-unit courses	2-unit courses	3-unit courses	4-unit courses	5-unit courses	6-unit courses	7-unit courses	8-unit courses	9-unit courses
███	███	███	███	███	███	███	███	███

* The number of courses is higher because a 219 and several 298 classes recommended for their own numbers are here considered their own courses. 219 is still considered 1 unit here. 200's lab and R&R are still combined into 200.

Overall, 46 courses and classes were evaluated,* with 21 of them (46 percent) warranting unit-count changes:
- ● ███ should increase by ███ units.
- ● ███ should increase by ███ units.
- ● ███ should increase by ███ units.
- ● ███ should increase by ███ unit.
- ● ███ don't need to change.
- ● ███ should decrease by ███ unit.
- ● ███ should decrease by ███ units.

The net unit count of these 46 increased by ███ units.

J200's lab and Reading and Review companions were lumped together with 200.

Below is a breakdown of many of these courses by platform. Courses that serve two platforms are counted twice (once in each platform). Excluded from this table are 219s (except for the 15-week ███████████████), ███████████ , and those serving more than two platforms.

Platform	Narrative	Audio	Multimedia
Courses	10	3	7
Current average unit count	███	███	███
Proposed average unit count	███	███	███
Breakdown	████████ ▊	████████████	████████████

Platform	Photo	Video	Documentary
Courses	███	███	███
Current average unit count	███	███	███
Proposed average unit count	███	███	███
Breakdown	████████ ▊	████████████	████████████

Multi-platform courses (i.e., India, etc.) aside, ███████████ clearly has more courses than other platforms. ███████████ , however, skew toward platforms that require training in equipment, crewing, and computer programs. Overall, ███████████ and ███████████—projects of which necessarily demand more skills and hours than other platforms—need the biggest boost in units.

In general, production courses were typically found to deserve 4 or more units, while non-production courses were typically found to deserve 3 or fewer. **This is a good, if loose, rule of thumb to consider when proposing new, full-semester courses.**

Below is each course and class recommended for a change in unit count, along with justification to support the Course Management System proposals that will be taken up by COCI. **These proposals will also require submitting up-to-date syllabi** that reflect:

- The requirements for the course (what students will be expected to do to pass), and the relative weight of each requirement toward the final grade (usually expressed as percentages)
- A chronological schedule of topics, usually in a week-by-week format. Note, if the course proposal includes a request for non-standard term lengths (e.g., a three-week term) please include in the syllabus an explanation of how the schedule will be adjusted to accommodate such a schedule.
- A list of required readings, provided in citation format.
- An example of a fully developed syllabus can be [found on the website](#) of the Center for Teaching & Learning.

COCI also recommends that:

In the case of similar course modifications for multiple courses, consider attaching a cover letter from the department that explains the rational for the change (e.g., change in major requirements, comprehensive curriculum updates, etc). Remember, while your department may have been thinking about or discussing this new course or course modification for a long time, usually this proposal is new to COCI. Telling the "story" of how the modification came about very helpful.

See Appendix I for a potential cover letter. Additional links to supporting documentation include:

- The ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ on the J-School website for past course evaluations
- A spreadsheet of results from instructor surveys: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮
- A spreadsheet of results from student surveys: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Per ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮'s recommendation, the courses below are color-coded based on the urgency of their needing to change. This was determined based on how many units they need to change by: Red is most urgent (▮▮▮ or more units should be added), orange is moderate urgency (▮▮▮ unit needs to be added or ▮▮▮ subtracted), and green is least urgent (1▮▮▮ unit needs to be subtracted).

Please note that, while no privacy guarantees were made, instructor and student survey feedback should only be shared with folks who have a reason to see them. See the final section of this document for a more detailed breakdown of each course.

23

WHY HIGH UNIT COUNTS ARE NECESSARY TO COURSES IN JOURNALISM

Some UC Berkeley graduate courses demand an especially high number of hours of outside work—the equivalent of ▮▮ , ▮▮ , or even ▮▮ units. Such courses are often accompanied by a "laboratory" course in which students are required to concurrently enroll. These are extra instructional spaces that absorb some of the units, and we see this in the Graduate School of Journalism with J200.

Perhaps unlike most graduate disciplines, the Journalism School's professional-school curriculum does not benefit from basing the number of out-of-class work hours on the number of in-class work hours. It does not take, say, six hours of homework or research a week to digest or practice three hours a week of instructional material. The School's high-unit courses are production courses: In addition to traditional "homework" like readings, viewings, and listenings, students spend their out-of-class hours reporting, writing, editing, and doing other work that goes into the creation of legitimate pieces of publishable journalism. It takes time to learn how to report, write, shoot, interview, and edit well—but repeatedly applying those learned skills until a single assignment is complete takes significant time. Indeed, there have been students who have reported—for courses with three to four hours per week of in-class time—an average of over ▮▮ hours of outside work per week. Depending on the reporting challenges and needs of their projects, students spend much different amounts of outside-of-class time in their courses, anyway. That means unit counts for production courses are invariably rough averages that cannot reflect every student's work-hours.

Adding a "laboratory" component likely will not add any value to students' learning and practice; students have to be out in the field (or at least not cooped up in a classroom) to do this kind of work. (This is not to mention the fact that enough of these "laboratory" components would take up considerable space in our 200–299 numbering and would severely limit space for new courses.) While courses should generally max out at ██ units, there is no specific guidance from COCI on this topic. In light of this and the above justifications, we ask that this course's high unit count be approved as requested.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Many of the School's degree requirements are based on course units. These include the following:

- The Master of Journalism (M.J.) degree at Berkeley requires completion of at least 36 semester units of coursework and a satisfactory Master's project. A minimum of 24 of those units must be earned from coursework in the Graduate School of Journalism.
  - 3 units Journalism 200 Reporting the News
  - 3 units Journalism 211 Reporting the News Lab
  - 2 units Journalism 298 Reading and Review
  - 3 units Journalism 255 Law and Ethics
  - 2 units Journalism 297 Reporting Internship
  - 2 units Journalism 294 Master's Project Seminar
  - One advanced reporting course is required for each semester after the first semester
  - Twelve units per semester are the minimum required for all U.C. Berkeley graduate students. Maximum units per semester are 14.5. The student's adviser, head graduate adviser, or the Dean can approve unit loads beyond 14.5.

Additionally, four platforms have required courses, the overall unit counts of which will increase under my proposals.

I don't recommend increasing the total number of units required to earn the MJ, however. While students overall will take more units, most of them already easily clinch the 36-unit threshold. (As a Narrative student, I finished with ██ units.) The 12-unit-per-semester minimum adds up to 48 units, anyway. And while the platforms would be even more differentiated by unit count if these recommendations are approved, it is probably also best not to split up unit requirement by platform (i.e., Narrative folks require 38 units for their degree, Video folks 46 units, etc.). Students change platforms during their two years and such

differentiation will just cause unnecessary complexity for students and staff. Students want to learn as much as possible and tend to take as many courses as they can reasonably accommodate; requiring, say, the heavy-unit Video platform to meet the same low 36-unit bar as other platforms won't incentivize Video students to take fewer courses.

Because many courses are recommended for lower or higher unit counts, students should be notified, perhaps at the very outset of Fall 2020 and Spring 2021, that they should be cognizant of the total unit counts they register for each semester. Graduate Division policy requires them to be enrolled in at least 12 units per term, and School policy requires their advisor, the head graduate advisor, or the dean to approve course loads over 14.5 units. With the curriculum potentially gaining ██ net units, these faculty should be prepared to approve more requests for course loads over 14.5 units.

Alternately, the 14.5-unit threshold could be upped. The 46 assessed courses and classes currently total ██ units. Adding ██ net units is an increase of ██ percent. Therefore, **I recommend increasing that single-semester unit threshold by ██ percent to ██ units (rounded) before students require an advisor's sign-off.**

Finally, while many instructors offered input on the sequence of courses in their platforms (see their comments in the appendix), there was never enough consensus to make any recommendations on platform sequences.

MISCELLANEOUS RECOMMENDATIONS, IDEAS, AND CONCERNS

Lecturers are seriously impacted by unit-count changes

The number of units a lecturer teaches affects how much they're paid, and two instructors brought this up during interviews. They made very clear that this is an important consideration for decision makers when changing unit counts, and both said a decrease in the number of units they teach would have a significant impact on their pay. The two instructors, who declined to be named, said that despite their love of teaching, they put in as much and often more work into their classes as many of their students do, that a hefty dock in pay would no longer make that considerable time and effort feasible, and that they would have to reconsider teaching at

the School. One talked to other instructors and found others had the same concerns. The other expressed concern that low unit counts influence how students view those courses, leading them to put in less time than warranted, keeping them from getting the most out of the courses, and making teaching those students harder. Any decision to change a course's unit count—whether now or in the future—should take into careful consideration the impact it will have on its instructor and whether the instructor's departure would impoverish students' learning and experiences.

Student workload numbers can never be precise

Students' outside-of-class workload—the most important ingredient in calculating unit counts—is far from fixed. Students vary considerably in how much time and effort they need or want to put in, courses' workloads vary week-to-week, and instructors and students' memories of how much time they put in are not perfect. Thus, most courses' workloads are rough averages, if not a range of hours. The difficulty is further compounded when the weekly in-class hours are added to the weekly out-of-class-workload hours and the whole thing is divided by three.

Unit counts for thesis work

Currently, students get 2 units over their second year for their master's thesis projects via J294. Many tracks, however, have courses dedicated to working on theses that earn students extra thesis-specific credits: Multimedia has 6 units over the second year for the New Media Master's Project Seminar, Video has 8 units over the second year for Longform Video Reporting and Storytelling, Doc also has 8 over the second year for Documentary Production, and Narrative now has the (optional) Narrative Writing Capstone for 3 units. ██████████, before stepping down from leading the ██████ track, said she would like to see something similar for ██████. While the amount of work needed to complete a thesis tends to vary a bit by platform, the School may want to think about whether it's cool with awarding students widely varying units for thesis work via these thesis-focused production/workshopping classes. (My own recommendation is that discrepancies are fine as long as each platform has a class where students earn credit for producing or workshopping their theses.)

Honoraria for class speakers

One instructor brought up the fact that some professors pay differing amounts of honoraria to outside folks who come speak to their classes. ██████ says

██

██
████████████████████████████████. If the School has room in its budget—or can find a donor to specifically fund this—perhaps the allocation of School-funded honoraria can be based on equalizing payments across instructors: If a professor, say, backs up an allocation of $████ with $██████ from somewhere else, another professor without that extra $██████ can be allocated $██████. (This may necessitate setting a limit on the number of speakers per course per term.)

████████████████████ shouldn't be classified as a travel class, per se

████████████████, which does include a significant amount of travel on the part of most students, is typically advertised as a travel course, the way ██████████████████— which *requires* foreign travel—is. ██████████████████ said in our interview that ██████████████████████ is *not* a travel class, per se, and should not be billed that way. "██." He adds, "██."

Consider bringing back ████████████████████████

In our interview, ████████████████████████ said she had ██████████████ journalists in mind to take over the course, which is supposed to bring in a new professor every time it's taught. (██████████████ has too much on her plate to teach it again, anyway.) As long as a funder is still willing to pay for this incredible reporting opportunity, I recommend the School take a second look at its budget and see if it can once again accommodate a universally popular course that rates highly on effectiveness and developing students' skills (per course evaluations).

APPENDIX I: CMS COVER LETTER

The Graduate School of Journalism's curriculum covers six reporting platforms, numerous topical subjects, and ranges from seminars to lectures to production courses to four-week "mini"s. The curriculum's technical components, including course unit counts and course numbering, have not been systematically examined in recent memory. For some courses, instructor turnover, changes in the industry, new pedagogical practices, and student feedback have altered student workloads so that they no longer reflect unit counts. The logic behind how our courses are numbered is hardly visible. According to COCI staff, the last time the J-School went through any sort of review was ███████████.

The impetus for all new courses, unit-count changes, and course-number changes was an internal curriculum audit with the goal of giving students a fair idea of how much work to expect in their courses and to provide a logical structure for how courses are numbered. The fact-finding process began with a review of Academic Senate policy and interviews with representatives of other professional programs on campus. This was to find out what prompts them to conduct their own curriculum reviews. Unit-count changes were determined after either interviewing instructors or having them fill out student-workload surveys, reviewing past course evaluations for workload comments and ratings, sending workload surveys to current students and recent graduates, and reviewing course syllabi. Course re-numbering is based roughly on reporting platform (i.e., Basic reporting is JOURN 200–209, Photojournalism is JOURN 210–214, Multimedia is JOURN 215–218 and JOURN 220–229, etc.). A number of well-established classes that have existed under JOURN 298—intended to be a testing ground for new course ideas—are spun off into their own proper courses.

In total, the J-School is proposing 14 new courses be created, 14 existing courses' unit counts be adjusted, and five existing courses be re-numbered. For this particular COCI review, the School is proposing _____ new courses be created, _____ existing courses' unit counts adjusted, and _____ existing courses be re-numbered.

APPENDIX II: COURSE-BY-COURSE BREAKDOWN

Below is a comprehensive breakdown of every course analyzed for unit counts, plus a couple more recent classes that didn't merit any unit, fee, or re-numbering recommendation. Each entry includes information from interviews with instructors, surveys filled out by instructors, surveys filled out by current students and recent grads, and course evaluations going back to Spring 2017—specifically, students' feedback on whether the workload was manageable.

The "STUDENT FEEDBACK" sections don't bother with students' graduation year, platform, or year they took the class because too few people filled out the Google Form (aka "survey") for those variables to reveal reliable or meaningful patterns. Information in that section, like whether outside hours matched expectations, are averages. "General notes and comments" include both those from the survey and workload-related ones from course evaluations. The "manageability" rating came from evaluations; the number of outside hours and whether *that* matched expectations came from the survey. Though they lack quotation marks, bullets listed under the "STUDENT FEEDBACK" section's "General notes and comments" are word-for-word comments.

Instructor bullets under "Fee notes" and "General notes and comments" are my notes from interviews or, if the instructor filled out the survey him- or herself, the bullets are word-for-word what they wrote. (Some include more general comments on the instructor's platform and its sequence of courses.) Additionally, in- and out-of-class hours and total hours are *weekly* averages.