

# Waves On A Rocky Shore: The Evolution of the Course Unit System in Bayero University Kano<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

This paper chronicles the process by which the academic programmes of Bayero University, Kano developed from the inception of the University College in 1977 to the implementation of a common federal core curriculum in 1988. The Bayero University College inherited a British program structure and saw no reason to change it, but there were elements within the university community that had wanted a more American, or at least a more liberal interpretation of the ways of structuring the acquisition of knowledge. The struggle that took place, which led eventually to the grudging acceptance of limited change, provides insights into the functioning of a contemporary African university,

## A Small Question Concerning Identity and Belonging

Bayero University Kano (BUK) was an affiliate of the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria (ABU) before it became a full university in 1977, and it remained faithful to the tenets of its parent in its founding philosophy and structural orientation. According to a submission of the University College to the NUC in 1977, the curriculum to be developed "must be inspired by the three constants of its environment: an Islamic culture; a time-tested commercial civilization; and a complex political community." The University developed a conservative persona, shaped by its adhesion to these constants and by a closely knit structure which at times more resembled that of a family unit than of a diverse community. But operating within a federal centralized and bureaucratized system of educational control, the new University could not really focus attention on ways of fulfilling its stated mission to its society.

When the university was fully established in 1977, one of the first issues it faced was the direction of its academic programmes. Initially it followed the British pattern of degrees, with undergraduate students studying three subjects in the first year, two in the second, and one in the final year, specializing in this as 'single honours' students; if two subjects were studied the degree was labelled 'combined honours.' Faculty of Education students of Bayero University automatically obtained a combined honours degree, studying

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is an abridged version of the core paper of a forthcoming book titled *The Turn of the Tide: Academic Revolution in a Nigerian University*, which deals with the development of academic programs in Bayero University, situating this within a contextual and theoretical framework. The longer paper was written during my stay as Resident Scholar, Rockefeller Foundation and Study Center, Bellagio, Italy, October 6 to November 8, 1993. I take this opportunity to express my thanks to the Rockefeller Foundation for the sponsorship. First published in Abba, I.A., Tsiga, I. A., and Adamu, A. U. (1994), ***Building The Citadel: Thirty Years of University Education in Kano, 1964-1994***. Kano, Nigeria: Bayero University Kano (The Vice-Chancellor's Office). First Published in 1994 by Bayero University Kano, Nigeria

Education, going to other faculties to study two other subjects, and then graduating in Education and one teaching subject.

At the 2nd Senate meeting, in February 1977, the Faculty of Arts and Islamic Studies (FAIS) argued that students studying two subjects in FAIS were their own, and should therefore be awarded a FAIS degree. The argument was contested by the Faculty of Education, all of whose B.A. (Education) students at that time went to FAIS for their two other subjects. The question of the number of students a Faculty had was of course a vital one, determining both funding and staffing priorities.

### **The Shotter Committee, 1977**

At the same meeting other Senate members argued that the faculties concerned should be moving towards making their courses inter-disciplinary, so that students would not be tied down to a particular faculty. To find a means of achieving this, the Senate set up an adhoc *Committee on the Degree Structure (Registration of Students in Different Faculties)*, under Professor Rodney A. Shotter, the Head of the Biology Department. It was explicitly requested to examine the implications of the argument advanced by FAIS.

The Committee concluded after debate that a faculty should be regarded as part of the whole university organism, which existed as a whole to serve the student and the community, and should not be considered in isolation from or in competition with other faculties. Therefore once a student was a member of the university, it mattered little in theory which faculty he belonged to. The Committee thus regarded every faculty as a 'service' faculty. The Committee also suggested that one way to solve the problem of which faculty awarded the degree would be to institute a College degree, if a student were taught courses in different faculties the finances could be divided up on a proportional basis, directly dependent on the proportion of studies the student pursued in each faculty.

However, the most significant observation of the Committee was the idea of introducing a *course unit system* (CUS). The Committee favoured it as a means of broadening the students' intellectual horizons, moving away from a highly specialized degree structure and eliminating the problem of competition for students among faculties. The Committee recommended that there should be consultation with persons and/or institutions that had experience of such a system as soon as possible. Copies of the draft report containing these views were circulated to all deans and heads of departments in the University, who were asked to submit reactions to the Registrar.

At the 3rd Senate meeting, held on March 24, 1977, the preliminary report of the Shotter Committee was discussed. On the issue of "belonging" to one faculty or another, the senate resolved as follows:

all students in Part I will remain in the Faculty and take the courses to which they are admitted and no change may be entertained except as a special case and by the mutual agreement Of the Deans concerned. Students registered for B.A. (Education) in the Faculty of Education would therefore be Education students.

A Part II student belonged to the Faculty of Education if he was registered for Education as main, for another main subject in another faculty and for a subsidiary in a third; Part III students who were registered for two main subjects in FAIS automatically belonged to that faculty.

The other main item on the agenda of the Shotter Committee, the CUS, turned out to be much less capable of swift resolution. Response to the idea turned out to be definitely unfavourable at Bayero University at the time. This was so much the case that the Chairman of the AdHoc Committee had to report to the Senate on three occasions that the Committee had failed even to meet to discuss the idea, and the Chairman of the Senate - the Provost of the College - had to plead with the Senate members to co-operate with the Committee and make its task a success. However, the Faculty of Social Sciences, which later metamorphosed into the Faculty of Social and Management Sciences (FSMS) was already in favour of the system, and had indeed started operating it on an experimental basis in the Department of Geography. At the 9th Senate meeting, held on July 7, 1977, the Dean of Social Sciences, Dr. Musa Abdullahi, reported to the Senate that the system was attractive to his faculty, and that they would be glad to see it adopted by the university as a whole. This signalled the beginning of a long-running battle between FSMS and the rest of the university concerning which variant of the CUS the university should adopt for the undergraduate degree.

In the meantime the Shotter AdHoc Committee continued its own investigations into the CUS, gathering information for example about its operation in other Nigerian universities. The Committee was able to make a final report to the Senate at the latter's 10th meeting held on October 20, 1977.

### **Responses to Fragmentation**

The Shotter Committee report, entitled *Problems Associated with the Course Unit System* was surprising in its conclusions since it was *against* the introduction of the CUS. This was in sharp contrast to the earlier interim recommendation of the same Committee, that the system should be adopted with the elevation of the University College to full university status, an event which came to pass in October 1977.

The report started with the pessimistic view that the CUS worked better in large institutions and departments. Where student numbers were low and staff few many optional courses would not be taught. Moreover, for a CUS to run effectively continuity of staff was necessary. The report also pointed out that students were already under tremendous pressure because of end-of-session examinations; a course unit system would amplify such pressure since examinations had to be taken at the end of courses. Also, the idea that students could "forget" a course once they had done their examinations in it was likely to impede the further integration of knowledge, since according to the report course unit systems "encourage the compartmentalization of knowledge."

The main conclusions and recommendations of the Committee were that Bayero University was at then too small for an effective CUS to be established; that a system should not be adopted without proper preparation just because other universities were adopting it; that individual faculties could nevertheless establish their instruction on such a basis if they wished (though this might create complications for students taking courses in different faculties); that

faculties should also discuss seriously "the non-linear system of assessment or some modification of it," with a view to incorporating it into their regulations in the near future.

The Senate's decision on the report was deferred pending reception of feedback from the various units of the University. When the reactions were received they were almost unanimous. The Interim Board of Preliminary Studies (later to become the School of General Studies), FAIS, the Faculty of Education, and the Faculty of Science all generally concurred with the findings of the Committee. The Faculty of Science in its response argued that the flexibility offered by the CUS was already available through the combined/single honours structure, together with options offered within faculties and an organized course of general/ interdisciplinary studies; it however suggested that, while the practice of sessional examinations should be retained, departments should be encouraged to weight their present and future courses in terms of a system of units, to be devised centrally.

The only Faculty that stood against the tide was FSMS; its response was more detailed than the Shotter report itself. It started by refuting the Shotter report's claim that BUK was too small to operate a CUS: 'the course unit system,' it argued, 'merely facilitates the flexibility of student programmes however wide or narrow the range of study available,' it acknowledged the possibility that shortage of staff might prevent the full implementation of such a system; yet 'the course unit system does not by necessity demand the introduction of a wide range of courses.' Nor was such a system necessarily tied to the idea of semesters and end-of-semester examinations; but whatever system was adopted, 'some pressure during a unit of study (through continuous assessment, and mid-sessional examinations) is more desirable and beneficial for the students than all evaluation being placed on a final paper.' The FSMS also opposed the view that the CUS encouraged the compartmentalization of knowledge: 'the same criticism could be levelled against the traditional honours system, since after the first year instruction was carried out almost entirely within the same department, and the subsequent degrees were highly specialized and awarded by only one faculty.'

FSMS finally outlined its own proposal for a CUS incorporating modifications of such systems operating elsewhere which might be suitable for a university like BUK. Its main features were as follows: (1) The organisational structure of faculties and departments would be retained unchanged, and a sessional rather than a semester programme of studies could be retained if so desired. (2) Each department would assign a credit hour value to each course unit (depending on the number of course lectures conducted per week), stipulate the minimum total of credits that must be obtained before a degree could be awarded, and indicate which courses were obligatory and which optional. (3) Course units would not be designated as belonging to any "part" or year, but some courses would be designated as being prerequisite to others. (4) The classification of degrees would be determined through computation by a central office, and would be a reflection of 'the total cumulative average of marks awarded for credit hours toward the degree awarded.' FSMS thus committed itself to the cumulative grade point average (CGPA) method of evaluation.

The Senate noted all these observations from various faculties, and at its 13th Meeting on February 28, 1978 approved the CUS *in principle*. It nevertheless

felt that implementation should be deferred until optimum conditions came to prevail. In the meantime, faculties should be encouraged to adopt such features of the system as could be incorporated within the existing framework of teaching and assessment; but no attempts were made to help those departments that wished to adopt the system to refine and harmonize it for them.

### **Genesis to Revelation: the Emergence of the Prototype Course Unit System in Bayero University, Kano**

The main proponents of change from a British degree pattern to an American type CUS at BUK were those trained either at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka or at one of the large American universities; and they were in the minority. The overwhelming majority of the members of the university Senate, who made the ultimate decisions about the pattern to adopt, were all British or British-trained. It is therefore not surprising that the nearest equivalent to a CUS which began to be widely canvassed at BUK was the British modular degree course structure, then in vogue in British universities. Acting on the permission given by the Senate for faculties to adopt such features of the CUS as they wished, the Faculty of Science, under its founding Dean, Professor Geoffrey G. Parfitt, a Briton, proposed to fuse the principle of this system with that of the British modular approach. They believed that such a compromise would satisfy both the "radical" few who wanted the American-style CUS and the "conservative" majority in the Senate who wanted to retain the existing honours degree system.

The existing degree programme of the Faculty of Science was based on this inherited structure. Special honours students dropped one of three first year subjects at the beginning of the second year and another at the beginning of the third and final year, while combined honours students retained two subjects in their final year. The Faculty of Science had nevertheless always intended to change the structure. After the Academic Development Committee (ADC) had met on February 25, 1977 to discuss the course structure of the degree programs of the new university, Parfitt submitted a memorandum to the Registrar in which he maintained that

....it has been my intention from the beginning...that we should adopt a modular or course unit system for our teaching. This implies that all courses will stand on an equal footing so far as significance is concerned, and that there would be no categorisation as "Main" or "Subsidiary" courses.

Later events indicated that what he essentially wanted was endorsement for the implementation of a modular system in his Faculty. The Faculty could realistically propose this at the time because their degree was internal, with no course being offered by any student outside the Faculty.

At the 17th meeting of the Senate, held in June 1978, some criticisms of the existing structure were expressed. It was felt to be too specialized, especially in a situation where one secondary-school science teacher was expected to teach virtually all science subjects. The Faculty of Science defended its programs in a submission to the 17th meeting of the ADC (June 16, 1979), arguing that it was difficult to give an adequate introduction to any one science subject in a three-year program. It claimed, moreover, that many students preferred specialized

degrees because they believed that by concentrating on their 'best' subject they would obtain a better result, and that combined honours training put them at a disadvantage in the job market and in competing for access to higher degree courses. Parfitt, who wrote the memorandum in question (*A memorandum on Policy for the structure of a Degree in Science*, dated January 4, 1979), also argued that all other universities offered single-honours programs, and that 'if we withhold such degrees, our students will "vote with their feet" against our policies.' The Faculty's existing arrangements for awarding degrees, based on the conventional honours system, were approved by the ADC and then by the Senate at its 22nd Meeting (January 25, 1979).

However, the Faculty of Science intended to incorporate into its system a new course structure which would, it argued, provide maximum flexibility. In a submission to the ADC for its 19th Meeting (May 4, 1972), the Faculty presented a scheme for the first detailed new course structure in the University. With the minimum disruption of the established patterns of assessment, the new structure would

provide the proportions of the two main Science subjects, plus some inter-departmental material, which are normally studied in the second and third degree years, to be varied over quite a wide range to suit the interests of individual students.

The detailed proposals provided definitions of key concepts associated with the CUS. A course was defined as a self-contained element of teaching, study, or other approved academic activity, finally assessed by a single mark which might consist entirely of lectures, or entirely of laboratory, seminar, field or project work, or a combination of these. Each course was allocated a certain number of credits, a credit being defined as 15 teaching units, and a unit in turn as one hour of lecturing plus associated tutorial work, or alternatively three hours of laboratory work. Courses were regarded as either subject courses, if they were in or closely related to one of the two main subjects studied after the first year, or as interdepartmental courses in other cases: the distinction was the precursor of that later to be made between *elective* and *core* courses. Instead of 'Part,' corresponding to each of three years of study, the term *Level* was now introduced. The four-year degree programme was however still an idea in the distance.

Introduced also for the first time was the concept of a 30-credit minimum course load for each student of the Faculty of Science in the first year, in addition to a 2-credit requirement in General Studies. A student passing in all three main subjects in the first year would register for a minimum of 26 and a maximum of 32 credits in Level 2 courses. In Level 3, students would register for the same number of credits as in Level 2, plus a further two credits in General Studies. Thus a student would qualify for the award of a degree on obtaining 84 credits in Science and 4 in General Studies. Within the Science total, however, a student would have to obtain from Level 2 and Level 3 courses taken together at least

- 54 credits in Science
- 44 credits in his two main subjects taken together
- 12 credits in each of his two main subjects (normally in the second year)
- 24 credits in Level 3.

If a student wished to be certified as “majoring” in a particular subject, he would have to obtain at least 20 credits from Level 3 courses in that subject.

The marks in each course would be determined by the Departmental Board of Examiners, using weights for the different components of the work involved. A mark would then be given an overall weight proportional to the credit value of the course before being combined with the weights assigned to other courses. Level I courses would not be included in the degree assessment. This would be determined by

1. the weighted average marks obtained from those Level 3 courses totalling 24 credits in which the highest marks had been obtained, combined with a weighting of 1.5 to 1 (i.e. 60 and 40), plus
2. the weighted average mark obtained in those courses totalling 30 credits and having the highest marks out of the Level 2 and the remaining Level 3 courses.

This introduced the notion of determining the degree classification on the basis of the best 30 credits obtained in each year; while assessment in courses at all levels would be made known to the students as grades, derived from the following system of equivalences:

70 - 100%	A	First Class Honours
60 - 69	B	Upper Second Class
50 - 59	C	Lower Second Class
45 - 44	D	Third Class
40 - 44	E	Pass
0 - 33	F	Fail

In this variant of the CUS the concept of cumulative grade point average (CGPA) did not feature at all; the weighted percentage system which it used was more characteristic of the British modular system.

One problem anticipated by the Faculty of Science in its proposals was the compatibility of its structure, if introduced, with schemes which other faculties might wish to adopt. Thus the number of contact hours, on which the allocation of credits was based, was in general liable to be rather higher in the Faculty of Science than in other faculties, owing to the extra laboratory work required in science subjects.

Despite these potential problems, the Faculty of Science proposals were approved by the ADC, and later by the Senate on June 13, 1979. The new Faculty of Science degree structure, in which the inherited honours degree system was modified by a CUS (along the lines of the modular degree system), accordingly came into operation in the Faculty of Science in October 1979.

Curriculum development is however a continuous process, and no sooner had the first students started under the new system than the Faculty found it necessary to propose amendments in the degree structure. These were presented to the ADC at its 22nd Meeting (April 17, 1980) in the form of a second, revised scheme. It was more comprehensive than the first and provided more details concerning the operation of the system in the Faculty. Among other things, it discussed the issues of examination timing and resitting. The concept of the semester had still not appeared at this stage, and the new regulations stated that 'each course will be separately examined, normally at the end of the session, though more than one course may be covered at a single examination sitting.' This continued provision for sessional examinations contrasts with the semester examination arrangements of a CUS proper. Also retained was the idea of resitting failed examinations in the September following the main May/June sessional examinations, again contrasting with a CUS proper, in which failed courses may be taken again later. The new scheme did however allow the option of repeating a failed course (after resitting) instead of repeating the whole year, as was the standard practice in other faculties.

The amended structure also laid down a revised procedure for determining the all-important question of the classification of degrees, it stipulated that this would be worked out on the basis of the percentage marks obtained in Levels 2 and 3 courses passed, as follows:

1. courses totalling 24 credits in which the highest marks had been obtained would be selected from the level 3 courses and the weighted average mark calculated, each course mark being given a weight proportional to the credit value of the course;
2. courses totalling 30 credits would then be selected from the Level 2 courses and the remaining Level 3 courses and the weighted average calculated in the same way;
3. the two average marks thus calculated would then be combined with a relative weighting of 60:40 respectively to obtain a percentage mark in Science;
4. this mark in Science would then be combined with the percentage mark in General Studies in the proportions laid down by the Senate to give a "final mark";
5. the mark thus arrived at (which might be varied by 2% by the examiners) would then be converted to a degree classification.

It took three years before this final programme of the Faculty of Science was approved by the Senate at its 78th Meeting (June 20, 1983). The new structure and examination regulations became operational in October 1983.

### **Beyond the Shore: the Course Unit System in BUK**

While the Faculty of Science was the first to get an officially approved CUS started in its degree programmes, elements of the system had already since 1976 been in operation in the Faculty of Social Sciences, especially in the Department of Geography. What the department offered, however, was what Professor E.A. Olofin has referred to as a "quasi course unit system," in which the subject was broken down into numbered courses and each was treated as an independent entity. This caused problems, in that other faculties whose degrees were based on subjects tended to regard all the Geography grades as



one, if they aggregated these with the marks a student had obtained for subjects in their faculties and arrived at a pass mark, the student would be informed that he had passed; but there were many cases in which a student would fail courses in Geography and would escape resitting them when the marks were aggregated with his other marks - a situation that Geography felt was unfair to their own students, who had to resit their failed courses.

With the Faculty of Science adopting a CUS in 1979 and the Faculty of Technology a modular approach in 1980, FSMS decided that it too should adopt a CUS on a faculty-wide basis. However, the system advocated by FSMS was the raw American version, with the CGPA as its central assessment procedure instead of the weighted percentage average procedure used in the Faculty of Science. FSMS made a submission to the ADC in 1983 seeking permission to adopt the GPA variant of the CUS for itself. Yet, at its 30th Meeting (May 13, 1983), the ADC rebuked FSMS by pointing out that the faculty could not introduce the system unilaterally, since students from other faculties registered for courses in FSMS. Ironically, the same considerations were surely applicable to the Faculty of Science when it introduced its own version of the CUS - there were, after all, Faculty of Education students studying Science Education in the Faculty of Science - yet Science was given permission to go ahead and implement it! It would seem that, since the argument that it was unacceptable for a faculty to introduce a new system unilaterally was rather weak, the real reason why the ADC now refused permission to FSMS was that it was hostile to the CGPA variant of the CUS. It should be pointed that, in any case, the decision of the ADC to recommend general establishment of the course unit system was more in response to government directives than anything else. This was because the National Policy on Education (NPE), published in 1977, had advocated the adoption of the 'credit system' of evaluating the Nigerian undergraduate degree by 1988.

It was therefore now clear that the adoption of the CUS on a university-wide basis was just a matter of time. The Senate at its 77th Meeting (May 26, 1983) recognised its inevitability, though also the problems that were likely to arise when different faculties adopted different variants of it. At the same meeting the Senate appointed a new Committee on the Course Unit System under the chairmanship of Professor M.S. Zaharaddeen to look into the possibility of the entire university converting to the system.

The new Committee held its inaugural meeting on November 10, 1983, and representatives of each faculty presented their faculty's views on the question of converting existing departmental programmes to the course unit format. It at once became clear that there was still considerable opposition to the very idea of a university-wide adoption of the system; various old arguments against the system were aired. The inaugural meeting nevertheless also discussed the logistics of conversion in preparation for the time when it should be effected, and raised the following issues:

1. whether the year system or a semester system should be followed;
2. the maximum and minimum length of the degree course and the credit requirements for the degree;
3. the scope of prerequisites for courses and the maximum and minimum number of courses for which students could register;
4. the problem of repeaters and below-average students;
5. the grading system and the method of course assessment;
6. the problems of registration, scheduling, and time-tabling;
7. the problem of resitting, though this would automatically be solved with the adoption of the CUS.

The Committee also decided that if the University were to change to the CUS a sufficient transitional period should be given. To this end, the Committee requested all faculties (including the School of General Studies) to submit papers giving guidelines as to the structure of courses, credits, assessment, grade points, degree and certificate classification, etc. The faculties responded to this request, each submitting guidelines expressing its own vision of the CUS.

FAIS presented what it called

a sort of mid-way between the U.S. course unit system and our inherited British-based system which may be more feasible for the university and our own unique societal situation.

Although FAIS thus gave a hint of what could have been one of the most innovative strategies of change in the university's history, the nature and the importance of its "mid-way" model was lost on the members of the Committee. The Faculty was moreover not decided on whether it should advocate a semester, quarterly, or termly system in the new degree structure. This subsequently made it difficult for the faculty to be precise about its graduating requirements. As further stated in its submission,

Course durations should depend on the choice of teaching time and credit hours assigned. For instance, where a semester system is chosen, a course may be designed to last for the whole semester or, where they carry only half the credit of other full-length courses, for only half a semester. If we stick to the present sessional system, no course should last for more than 2 terms.

The Faculty of Law — with a smaller number of students than most other faculties — approved a scheme drawn up by its lecturers for converting their teaching schedules into a course unit format based on the *semester* principle. However, it also requested the Zaharaddeen Committee to provide it with a detailed guideline concerning the number of examinations to be taken and the number of visits to be made by external examiners in one academic year, and also raised the issues of space and the number of teaching staff.

FSMS used this opportunity to provide a fully detailed outline of the system it envisaged, replete with the formula to be used to calculate the GPA it had favoured all along, plus the American distinction between Junior Division courses (which it called First Level courses, lasting for four semesters or two

years) and Higher Level courses (Senior Division, covering the last four semesters to graduation). It also proposed a mechanism for barring students from proceeding beyond the first semester if they failed to perform adequately. A candidate would only be able to proceed to the second semester if he achieved a CGPA of at least 1.0 at the end of the first semester. If not, he would be placed on probation during the second semester, and if by the end of that semester he still had not obtained a GPA of at least 1.0 he would have to withdraw from the University. A candidate who failed to pass Level I courses worth at least 30 credits by the end of the fourth semester would also be required to withdraw.

The Faculty of Science essentially dusted up the proposal which it had originally submitted to the Senate and which had become operational in 1983. But it also attacked the grade point system proposed by FSMS, and it did so on the following grounds:

1. any calculation possible with marks on a scale 0 to 4 or 0 to 5 could equally well be done with the existing scale of 0 to 100;
2. the change of scale would be unfamiliar and would invite probably unjustified comparison with the marks awarded in American universities.
3. the system changed marks arbitrarily when they were numerical in the first place;
4. the system further changed marks deliberately, according to a formula, which was a highly controversial process;
5. it introduced a needless extra complication, particularly troublesome when the external examiners were at work on the first assessment;
6. the FSMS proposal would necessitate the calculation of a CGPA in every semester for every student, and this would involve a mass of computation which would be impracticable and dangerously prone to error.

The proposals from all the other academic units more or less echoed that of the Faculty of Science, with its reliance on the percentage method instead of the CGPA method for evaluating the undergraduate degree. Finally, at the second meeting of the Zaharaddeen Committee (January 12, 1984) all the proposals were discussed, and the meeting decided to adopt the Faculty of Science formula. Thus the American system championed by FSMS was once again rejected by the University.

In adopting the Faculty of Science formula the Zaharaddeen Committee was adopting a system of course units and selection within the framework of the specialized honours degree; and according to the Chairman of the Committee in an interview (conducted for this paper), this was more familiar to the University and had been tried out in the Faculty of Science without any adverse effects. Indeed, so attractive was the Science model that the Committee also adopted almost verbatim the introductory comments to the proposal written by Professor Parfitt, the Dean of Science, which included the Faculty's objection to the use of the CGPA method of computing results. Again, so persuasive (or politically powerful) was the Science submission that the Committee also the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee noted the Committee's decision that

the draft minutes should be submitted to the Chairman, who after vetting them would pass them to Professor Parfitt for cross checking

The Zaharaddeen Committee submitted its interim report to the Senate at the latter's 85th Meeting (February 26, 1984). It explicitly recognised the advantages of the CUS while recognizing the increased administrative responsibility a university-wide system would entail. It noted that

there is nothing inherent in the Course Unit System which demands that a wide range of choice should be offered — though of course one at least of its benefits is lost if the range is small. A CUS in which there is little choice need not be very different in operation from the conventional degree programme containing some options. The deduction is that it should not be difficult to accommodate almost any kind of degree programme, from the closely channelled to the very diverse, under a common CUS umbrella.

The Committee went on to provide a list of common structural elements which it felt would be generally applicable, including the definition of a course, the coding system to be used, the role of external examiners, and so on. It also addressed such issues as the repetition of courses, and limitations in the choice of courses (for example when passing or at least taking one course was a pre-requisite to taking another). Finally, on the grounds that a CUS naturally lent itself to a pattern of biannual examinations, it advocated the division of the academic year into two semesters.

The Senate approved the submission of the Zaharaddeen Committee, but directed it to work out further details. It stipulated, for example, that the CUS should not necessarily be applied in all courses offered by the University; that the minimum and maximum number of credit hours for which a student was to register should now be specified; that it should be made clear that there was going to be no need for resit examinations; that a mid-semester break should be provided for. The Committee reconvened a number of times, but it was not until May 27, 1985 that it presented its second report to the Senate incorporating its response to all the Senate's directives. It is this second report which provided the definitive guidelines to the introduction and operation of the first university-wide CUS in Bayero University.

The report began by stating that it would be in the best interest of the University to have a uniform system, especially in the light of the impending introduction of the four-year degree programme outlined in the NPE. To discourage slackness on the part of students there would be no resit examinations in the new system; the minimum number of years of study would be four, and six the maximum; and every course would be repeatable in the following semester provided it was offered by the faculty and the student could schedule his or her timetable accordingly.

Definitions of key concepts associated with the system were provided. The credit was defined as "one weekly contact hour or equivalent per semester," and a full-time student would be required to register for a minimum of 12 credits and a maximum of 13, with 15 being considered "normal" per semester. To qualify for the award of the University's Bachelor's degree, a student must obtain 120 credits, and to graduate it would be necessary to have undergone the General Studies programme.

The academic year was formally divided into two semesters: the first was to operate from October to mid-February, with a mid-session break from mid-February to mid-March; the second semester was to run from mid-March to June; and the 'long vacation,' a fixed feature in the Nigerian educational calendar, was to run from July to September. A uniform coding system for the entire University was also worked out by the Committee, each code containing three letters and four digits, Thus GEO 3013 was a Part III Geography course. The faculties and individual departments were directed to provide the proper codes for their existing programmes under the new framework. The Committee did not however adopt the earlier Faculty of Science nomenclature of 'Levels' in place of the 'Parts' redolent of the old system.

This second and final report of the Zaharaddeen Committee was submitted to the 103rd Meeting of the Senate (June 27, 1985), and was approved. However, the timetabling implications of the new system, especially as they affected Education students, were not fully debated in 1985; and this became a stumbling-block to the cooperation of the various units in the University when the system became fully operational in 1988.

### **Faculties and the Course Unit System**

The approval of the Senate having been given, all faculties were asked to submit their converted programs to the ADC. The date for implementation was scheduled as the 1988-89 academic session, to tally with the introduction of the new four year degree structure outlined in the NPE.

FAIS was the first faculty to respond to this new directive, and it submitted a draft of its converted program to the Senate in April, 1986. Although terms like 'credit' appeared in the draft, on the whole the degree structure was couched in traditional language. Thus one section reads:

In the third and fourth years students are allowed to specialize in a single subject either as single honours or as combined honours. Students choosing the single honours option are required to take 30 credit hours in the single honours subject. Students choosing the single honours option with a subsidiary subject are required to register for 24 credits in the main subject and 6 credits in the subsidiary subject during the third and fourth years. Students choosing the combined honours option are required to take 12 credits each in two subjects and 6 credits in a subsidiary subject during the third and fourth years.

While all faculties provided a general structure of credit loads and distribution, in the Faculty of Education this was done individually by the three constituent departments (Education, Library Science, Adult Education). In the Department of Education the total of credits required for graduation was 120, as in FAIS, but the distribution differed from that of FAIS even though 80% of Education students were combined honours students of FAIS. In the draft of its own converted program, which was submitted to the ADC in June 1987, the credit distribution for a degree in Education was specified as 50 credits in Education, 50 in the main teaching subject, and 20 in the Subsidiary teaching subject. The format for the distribution across the years was:

<b>Main</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Subsidiary</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>C/Total</b>
Level 1	8	10	10	28
Level 2	10	10	12	32
Level 3	15	--	16	31
Level 4	15	--	14	29
Total	28	20	52	120

Up to this stage (1986), the decision as to which courses were 'core' and which 'elective' was very much one for the individual departments; there was no central curricular coordination to ensure harmonization of the core and the elective courses of the various faculties. There was therefore no general principle behind the allocation of *x credits* to courses. Moreover, many one-credit courses were created, either because decisions had not been taken with regard to their importance in the curriculum, or more often because no precise guidelines concerning the credit values of the various programs had been given by the Senate. It took a further two years - from 1986 to 1988 for the individual faculty and departmental programs to be developed and refined; but finally, during the 1988-89 graduation ceremony, the then Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dandatti Abdulkadir, announced the successful launching of the course unit and semester system at the beginning of that academic year. By this announcement a revolutionary concept in academic planning was formally ushered into Bayero University; and the University joined the ranks of institutions of higher learning which, globally distributed, participate in the most advanced experiment in the transfer of ideas that the world has yet seen.