

What's The Deal With Tech Squares PE Credit?

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1 Summary

- DAPER now requires PE classes to meet twice a week and jump through some other administrative hoops.
- We think it is worth trying to fit DAPER's requirements, because PE credit appears to be crucial for attracting MIT students to the class and to the club.
- Our experimental plan for the Spring class is to have an hour of mandated instruction on Tuesdays (with the rest of Tuesday "technically optional but highly recommended"), and an hour of walkthroughs and other supplements on Thursdays.
- Cally, our new Class Coordinator, will have to do a lot of work to make this happen, and she deserves our thanks and ready assistance.
- The purpose of today's officers' meeting is to hash out a concrete plan for how the class will be run in the new format.

2 Why did we lose PE credit?

About a month before the start of the Fall 2009 semester, we received an email from DAPER stating that Tech Squares could not offer our crash course for PE credit. Their stated reason was that they needed to reduce the number of PE classes due to economic pressure, and wished to keep only those that met twice a week and drew at least 35 undergrads per quarter.

Various other theories were bandied about, but after Cally and I had chances to meet with Carrie Moore (Director of PE), it became clear that all DAPER wanted was for us to meet twice a week (and probably spend more effort recruiting undergrad students). In other words, it's not because they're evil or think square dancing isn't 'real exercise'. They seem to have had some kind of change in management, combined with budget cuts, leading to this particular requirement.

3 Why didn't we get it back right away (i.e. for the fall semester)?

Because the time-frame was far too short. It took lots and lots of discussion among the officers, with general members, and with Ted, before we felt that we could *try* conducting the class in accordance with DAPER's wishes without breaking something. We are lucky to have reinstated PE credit for the spring. Although there was some delay and wasted time, Spring 2010 is the earliest we could have reinstated PE credit even if we had been a little more timely.

4 Do we really need PE credit at all, given that we didn't have it for years and years?

I have heard arguments on both sides of this question, from respected club members of long standing, and so I'm not going to render an opinion on what I consider basically a philosophical issue. This spring's PE class will be an experiment. If we find that the detrimental effect of stretching to meet DAPER's requirements outweighs the beneficial effect of having more MIT undergrads in the class, then we don't have to do this more than once. We want to have undergraduate members, at a minimum in order to retain our status as an MIT student group, and also of course because it's nice to have younger folks and 'new blood'. Given the total lack of undergrads in the Fall 2009 class, we think PE credit is very important.

However, PE credit is not *magic*. We also need to put plenty of effort into recruitment. This means postering, emailing, and nagging your friends!

(If we had reliable data about class enrollment/attendance and club membership for the last N years, we could draw some harder conclusions. I have not seen such data, but I have been told that the data we do have is buried in lots of clutter and would take lots of time to collate.)

5 What changes does DAPER require of us?

The most important change is that DAPER requires the class to meet twice a week. Our current plan is to have the class meet for an hour of 'required' dancing on Tuesdays (the rest of Tuesday will probably be 'technically optional but highly recommended'), plus an hour of walkthroughs and supplementary instruction on Thursdays.

We did consider various ways of meeting twice a week — for instance, we could do a full class on both Tuesday and Thursday, and teach the entire Squares program in a single quarter, reserving the following quarter for new graduates to review & get comfortable with

the club instead of bringing in a new class right away. However, we felt that this would be too big of a change to try to implement in haste, so we went with the one-hour-on-Thursday model instead.

DAPER also imposed some administrative requirements on the official PE instructor of record, which do not make much difference to the way the class is run, but do mean a great deal of work for someone. We decided that, rather than Ted being the instructor of record as he has been in the past, the Class Coordinator should be the instructor of record (in large part because we didn't want to force Ted to come down on Thursdays). The instructor of record must:

- be physically present at every class meeting
- be certified in First Aid and CPR
- be interviewed and officially hired by DAPER as an MIT employee (this process can be repeated when we elect a new Class Coordinator)
- take and report class attendance, or be responsible for delegating this

This makes the Class Coordinator's job significantly more onerous, and we all owe Cally a great debt of gratitude for agreeing to take on the job out of her sincere belief that PE credit is a great benefit to Squares.

Finally, we changed the class listing in the PE catalog to "Modern Squares I" and "Modern Squares II", instead of a single semester-long class. Students will still be required to take Squares I in the quarter immediately preceding Squares II, so it will still be effectively a semester-long class.

6 What's the concrete plan for the upcoming class?

This is largely what we want to decide at the officers' meeting.

The order of tips and rounds on Tuesdays will probably have to be swapped around in order to fit the 'actual teaching' into the nominal hour of required attendance.

Ted will not be present on Thursdays, but we will need angels (desired number TBD). The Thursday sessions will be in 5-233 in the evenings (at 8 or 8:15?). In addition to things like teaching flourishes or going over tricky calls, Cally is interested in bringing in amateur callers or other non-Ted callers, to liven things up.