

Semester / Credit Hour Policy and Compliance

Definition: To define the college's policy on the assignment of semester / credit hours and the method by which the college's compliance with credit hour assignment is assured.

New York State – Credit Hour Definition

All credit-bearing degree and certificate programs at SUNY Ulster are approved by the New York State Education Department (NYSED). Calculation of credit hours for these programs follows NYSED guidelines, which are consistent with the U.S. Department of Education's definition of a credit hour.

Codes, Rules and Regulations of the State of New York, Title 8 – Education Department, Chapter II – Regulations of the Commissioner, Subchapter A – Higher and Professional Regulations, Part 50 – General, Section 50.1 (o) stipulates the following: *“Semester hour means a credit, point, or other unit granted for the satisfactory completion of a course which requires at least 15 hours (of 50 minutes each) of instruction and at least 30 hours of supplementary assignments, except as otherwise provided pursuant to section 52.2(c)(4) of this Subchapter. This basic measure shall be adjusted proportionately to translate the value of other academic calendars and formats of study in relation to the credit granted for study during the two semesters that comprise an academic year.”*

Section 52.2(c)(4) stipulates: *“A semester hour of credit may be granted by an institution for fewer hours of instruction and study than those specified in subdivision (o) of section 50.1 of this Subchapter only: (i) when approved by the commissioner as part of a registered curriculum; (ii) when the commissioner has granted prior approval for the institution to maintain a statement of academic standards that defines the considerations which establish equivalency of instruction and study and such statement has been adopted by the institution; or (iii) in the event of a temporary closure of an institution by the State or local government as a result of a disaster, as defined in section 50.1(w) of this Title, when the commissioner has granted approval for the institution to maintain a statement of academic standards that defines the considerations which establish equivalency of instruction and study and such statement has been adopted by the institution.”*

U.S. Department of Education – Credit Hour Definition

Electronic Code of Federal Regulations, Title 34: Education, Part 600 – Institutional Eligibility under the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, Subpart A – General, Section 600.2 stipulates the following: *“Credit hour: Except as provided in 34 CFR 668.8(k) and (l), a credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates not less than - (1) One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or*

(2) At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.”

U.S. Department of Education guidance on Program Integrity regulations related to the credit hour (<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/reg/hearulemaking/2009/credit.html>) also stipulate: *The credit-hour definition does not dictate particular amounts of classroom time versus out-of-class student work. Further note that the definition provides that a credit hour may be for an equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time. There is no requirement that a 3-semester hour course meet 3 hours per week during a semester or a 3-quarter-hour course meet 3 hours per week during a quarter. The requirement is that the institution determine that there is an amount of student work for a credit hour that reasonably approximates not less than one hour of class and two hours of out-of-class student work per week over a semester for a semester hour or a quarter for a quarter hour. For example, an institution with a semester-based calendar has a graduate seminar for which it awards 3 semester hours. The class meets only one hour per week over a 15-week semester with the students expected to perform a substantial amount of outside research that is the equivalent of 8 or more hours of student work each week of the semester. For purposes of the Federal definition, the institution would be able to award up to 3 semester hours for the course.”*

SUNY Ulster Policy:

All semester / credit hours awarded by SUNY Ulster will conform to the federal and state definitions. These guidelines are also in compliance with policies set forth by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE).

SUNY Ulster generally follows a semester system with fall and spring semesters consisting of a minimum of 15 weeks, which includes one week for exams. Summer terms are typically less than 15 weeks but adhere to the policy in terms of meeting time and the amount of student work required. Terms for certain academic programs (for example, Express courses and WinterNet) have been adjusted but nonetheless adhere to the policy in terms of the amount of work required.

The faculty and program administrators are responsible for developing, maintaining and evaluating the curriculum within an academic program, although the Board of Trustees or their representative retain final control and approval of the curriculum. Assignment of credit hours for courses are determined within the program based on faculty expertise and course learning objectives and SUNY directives. Existing courses will be evaluated for adherence to the federal credit hour regulation during routine program evaluations. New courses will, upon review and approval at the program level, be reviewed by the Curriculum Committee and recommended to the President for approval or denial.

The Curriculum Committee is charged with following the policy on credit hours in their review and approval of all courses and curricula and for certifying that the expected student learning for the course meets the credit hour standard.

Approved courses are sent to the Registrar’s Office for inclusion in the College Catalog. The Registrar’s Office reviews the class schedules prior to the start of each semester to ensure that all classes are scheduled for the minimum number of minutes corresponding to the credits assigned,

or otherwise notes when course schedules do not match assigned credit hours. Any discrepancies are brought to the attention of the Vice President for Academic Affairs who will work with department chairs to provide correction or explanation.

The following provides general guidance on the how the credit hour translates to the particular instruction method. Note, however, that the credit-hour definition does not dictate particular amounts of classroom time versus out-of-class student work – the information below serves as general guidance only.

Lecture and Seminar: Courses with multiple students which meet to engage in various forms of group instruction under the direct supervision of a faculty member.

Lectures and Seminars: Classroom / Faculty Instruction and Outside Student Work					
Credits awarded	Minimum contact time per week	Minimum instructional time Total for 15 Weeks (Contact time X Weeks)	Minimum Out of Class Student Work per week	Minimum Out of Class Student Work Total for 15 Weeks (Outside Work X Weeks)	Total of instructional contact time and out of class student work
1	50 contact minutes	750 contact minutes	100 minutes	1500 minutes	2250 minutes (37.5 hours)
2	100 contact minutes	1500 contact minutes	200 minutes	3000 minutes	4500 minutes (75.0 hours)
3	150 contact minutes	2250 contact minutes	300 minutes	4500 minutes	6750 minutes (112.5 hours)
4	200 contact minutes	3000 contact minutes	400 minutes	6000 minutes	9000 minutes (150 hours)

Laboratory: Courses with a focus on experiential learning under the direct supervision of a faculty member wherein the student performs substantive work in a laboratory setting. The minimum contact time per credit is typically twice that of a lecture (2:1 ratio)

Laboratory: Classroom / Faculty Instruction and Outside Student Work					
Credits awarded	Minimum contact time per week	Minimum instructional time Total for 15 Weeks (Contact time X Weeks)	Minimum Out of Class Student Work per week	Minimum Out of Class Student Work Total for 15 Weeks (Outside Work X Weeks)	Total of instructional contact time and out of class student work
1	100 contact	1500 contact	50 minutes	750 minutes	2250 minutes

	minutes	minutes			(37.5 hours)
2	200 contact minutes	3000 contact minutes	100 minutes	1500 minutes	4500 minutes (75.0 hours)
3	300 contact minutes	4500 contact minutes	150 minutes	2250 minutes	6750 minutes (112.5 hours)
4	400 contact minutes	6000 contact minutes	200 minutes	3000 minutes	9000 minutes (150 hours)

Clinicals: Courses with a focus on experiential learning under the direct supervision of a faculty member wherein the student performs substantive work in a clinical setting. The minimum contact time per credit is typically three times that of a lecture (3:1 ratio), depending upon the amount of outside work assigned.

Clinicals: Classroom / Faculty Instruction and Outside Student Work					
Credits awarded	Minimum contact time per week	Minimum instructional time Total for 15 Weeks (Contact time X Weeks)	Minimum Out of Class Student Work per week	Minimum Out of Class Student Work Total for 15 Weeks (Outside Work X Weeks)	Total of instructional contact time and out of class student work
1	150 contact minutes	2250 contact minutes	0 minutes	0 minutes	2250 minutes (37.5 hours)
2	300 contact minutes	4500 contact minutes	0 minutes	0 minutes	4500 minutes (75.0 hours)
3	450 contact minutes	6750 contact minutes	0 minutes	0 minutes	6750 minutes (112.5 hours)
4	600 contact minutes	9000 contact minutes	0 minutes	0 minutes	9000 minutes (150 hours)

Underenrolled Courses: Courses of study designed in instances where enrollment has fallen below established standards but under conditions where the College agrees to offer the course to allow students to progress academically (such as the need for a particular course in order to graduate). The course will meet at the times and for the time periods specified in the relevant course schedule.

Individual Study: Courses in which a student(s) needs a particular course in order to progress academically or to graduate in a timely fashion, and the course is not scheduled to be offered during the term in question. In such cases, the most-recent syllabus/course outline will be followed by the instructor

and the student(s), with direct meetings occurring at least 50 percent of the contact hours expected in a regularly scheduled course. The remainder of the contact hours and the student work hours will be arranged by the faculty member and the student(s) to meet minimum required hours as specified by NYSED.

Independent Study: Courses of study in which a faculty member regularly interacts and directs student outcomes with periodic contact. Minimum credit hours are determined based on faculty instructional contact minutes and student outside work time. In all such instances, such courses must match the total amount of work using the examples listed above.

Internship/Practica/Field Experience: Courses of study in which a faculty member regularly interacts and directs student outcomes with periodic contact, but where the actual learning environment takes place off-campus at an approved site. The learning experience will typically involve a site supervisor or preceptor and directed activity/learning will occur outside of a lecture setting. Contact time and outside student work requirements must be established and documented, and must match the total amount of work using the example above. The faculty member or program director responsible for the experience is required to keep records of amount of supervised work and the amount of outside work assigned so that contact hours can be calculated.

Accelerated Courses: Courses offered outside of a standard 15 week semester in which the credit hours offered are the same as standard semester courses and the content and substantive learning outcomes are the same as those in the standard semester. These courses must meet the total amount of instructional and student work time as the examples above even if delivered within an accelerated time frame.

Online Courses: Courses offered entirely online without any on-site face-to-face meetings. These courses have the same learning outcomes and substantive components of a standard lecture / seminar course with an alternate delivery method. Contact time is satisfied by several means which can include, but is not limited to, the following: a.) regular instruction or interaction with a faculty member once a week for each week the course runs. b.) Academic engagement through interactive tutorials, group discussions moderated by faculty, virtual study/project groups, engaging with class peers and computer tutorials graded and reviewed by faculty. In all such instances, these courses must meet the total amount of instructional and student work time as the examples above even if delivered online or asynchronously.

Blended Courses: Courses offered in a blended format with 1 or more on-site face-to-face class sessions and at least one or more online sessions, both containing direct interaction with a faculty member. Contact time is assessed using both on-site definitions (for the on-site portion) and online definitions as above (for the online portion). In all such instances, these courses must meet the total amount of instructional and student work time as the examples above even if delivered online or asynchronously.

PROCEDURES:

1. On a regularly scheduled basis, all courses offered at the college will be reviewed by the program faculty and program director for evidence of compliance with the semester /credit hour definitions as set forth by New York State and the U.S. Department of Education. Information indicating such compliance will be provided to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Such results will be shared with the Registrar to ensure ongoing compliance of assignment of credit hours to courses.

2. Completed credit hour reviews will be made available to the college community and appropriate administrative offices (such as the Registrar) and to academic program administrators.
3. Courses which appear to be out of compliance will be evaluated and immediate measures taken to rectify the discrepancies. New courses or changes to existing courses and curriculum will normally be evaluated as part of the Curriculum Committee approval process.
4. The college catalog shall serve as the official college publication providing information on credits assigned to each college course.
5. Records of credits assigned for each course will be maintained in Banner, the college's administrative database.

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