

SECTION: 2.0 ACADEMIC AFFAIRS
SUBJECT: CREDIT HOUR DEFINITION

Title: Credit Hour Definition

Background: This policy provides a definition for the term “credit hour” as called for by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU).

Point of Contact: Provost

Other LCSC offices directly involved with implementation of this policy, or significantly affected by the policy: Division Chairs, Dean for Academic Programs, Dean for Career & Technical Programs, Registrar, Controller

Date of approval by LCSC authority: January 2013

Date of State Board Approval: N/A

Date of Most Recent Review: July, 2022

Summary of Major Changes incorporated in this revision to the policy: Updates further clarify credit hour definition and application to common course types, format changes

1. Policy

The purpose of this policy is to codify the term “credit hour.” The definitions herein are based on historic Carnegie definitions, as noted in federal regulation and the Northwest Commission on College and Universities Credit Hour Policy.

A credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that reasonably approximates not less than:

- A. One-hour (50-60 minutes) 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 (15 hours per lecture credit);
or
- B. At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other academic activities. See Guidelines for Establishing Credit for Common Course Types below.

2. Procedure

- A. To ensure compliance with this policy, division chairs, deans and the registrar will review new course proposals for alignment with credit hour requirements.
- B. Division chairs and the registrar will ensure schedules and scheduling policies are aligned with LC State credit definitions in this policy.
- C. Any exceptions to policy require dean and provost approval.

See “**Guidelines for Establishing Credit Hours for Common Course Types**” on next page.

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Guidelines for Establishing Credit Hours for Common Course Types*
1 contact/class hour = 50 – 60 minutes; Semester = 15 instructional weeks

COURSE TYPE	Contact hours per 1 credit hour	Student preparation hours (homework) per 1 credit hour	Minimum Total weekly class + prep hours per 1 credit	Minimum Total semester class + prep hours per 1 credit	Ratio (Total of contact + prep hours for 1 credit hour)
Lecture, Discussion, Seminar	1	2	3	45	3:1
Laboratory [self-contained = almost all work is completed during scheduled lab hours]	3	0	3	45	3:1
Laboratory [not self-contained = some work is expected outside scheduled lab hours]	2	1	3	45	3:1
Combined Lecture/Lab	Lecture & Lab: Combined contact hours and outside preparation will equal a minimum of 45 hours per semester per credit hour and will be differentiated and described (amount of lecture and amount of lab) in course syllabus			45	3:1
Physical Activity	2	0	2	30	2:1
Applied Music	.5	2.5	3	45	3:1
Clinical, Internship, Practicum	3 in clinical, internship, or practicum setting	variable	3	45	3:1
Fully Online Course	Credit is established based on equivalency of content and learning outcomes to course types described above.				
Hybrid (partially online, partially classroom-based)	Scheduled contact hours may vary (announced in advance to students). Credit is established based on equivalency of content and learning outcomes to courses types described above.				
Directed or Independent Study	Credit is established based on equivalency of content and learning outcomes to courses described above.				

*For courses that do not fit into one of the categories above, the Course Description and Syllabus will clearly describe how the general conditions for earning 1 credit will be met