University of Arkansas at Monticello  
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Policy for Determining Credit Hours Awarded for Courses

UAM requires this policy to be practiced by all faculty, full-time and part-time. All definitions and standards apply equally to courses offered both on and off campus.

I. Justification

New federal regulations (34 CFR parts 600 and 668) require that institutions submit their definitions and related policies regarding credit hours to their accrediting agencies and receive an official, recorded certification from that agency that the definitions meet the new federal definition of a credit hour.

II. Federal definition of a credit hour

...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:

1. Not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours 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 outlined in item 1 above 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. (§600.2)

A semester hour approximates one hour (or 50 minutes) of classroom time and two hours of out-of-class student work each week in a 15-week semester or its equivalent. (Report of the Meeting of the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity, December 2010, U.S. Department of Education, pp. 25-26).

III. UAM definition of a credit hour

UAM’s definitions of a credit hour constitute a formalization of policy in order to ensure compliance with federal and accreditation expectations, as well as to provide consistency throughout the University. Courses may be composed of any combination of elements described, such as a lecture course which also has required laboratory periods or a lecture course having an additional requirement for supervised independent study.

IV. Application of the Policy

The requirements which follow represent minimums for average students and that some deviation in excess of these requirements may occur, particularly at the graduate and professional levels. Please note that each category of academic activity is followed by the applicable policy section. In the interest of accurate academic measurement and cross-campus comparability, the following policies and practices apply in controlling the relationship between contact hours, work outside of class, and credit hours.

A. Lecture, traditional class [§ 600.2(1)]

A semester credit hour is earned for approximately fifteen 50-minute sessions of classroom instruction with a normal expectation of two hours of outside study (homework, reading assignments, preparation for class) for each class session (meeting time). Typically, a three semester credit hour course meets for three
50-minute sessions per week for fifteen weeks, for approximately 45 sessions and 90 hours of work outside of the classroom. (This usually yields 16 weeks when including the final exam.)

B. Supervised group activity [§ 600.2(2)] (laboratory, field trip, practicum, studio)
The equivalent of three 50-minute sessions per week over a traditional 15-week semester of a lab, rehearsal, or studio time would qualify for one semester credit hour. Where such activity involves substantial outside preparation by the student, the equivalent of two 50-minute sessions will earn one semester credit hour. Field laboratories are to be counted hour-for-hour as laboratory meetings (not including travel time). Courses developed as an extended field trip will be credited as one credit hour per week. Field trips imbedded within the requirements of a course are exempt from the above.

C. Supervised individual activity [§ 600.2(2)] (independent study, individual studio, dissertation)
One semester credit hour credit for independent study (defined as study given initial guidance, criticism, review and final evaluation of student performance by a faculty member) will be awarded for the equivalent of three one-hour sessions of student academic activity in a traditional 15-week semester.

D. Clinical placement, student teaching, practicum [§ 600.2(2)]
Clinical placement, student teaching, and practicum experiences are defined as “a part of the program that allows for observation, participation, studies of individual pupils or clients, individual field work, and practicums both on and off campus.” Credit for clinical experiences is determined in accordance with recommendations of a program’s specific best practices, accrediting body, or applicable state regulation.

E. Short Sessions [§ 600.2(1)]
Credit hours may be earned in short sessions (summer sessions, intersessions, etc.) proportionately to those earned for the same course during a traditional 15-week semester, normally at no more than one credit per week of fulltime study.

Courses offered over a period of time other than a traditional 15-week semester will require the same amount of classroom and out-of-class work per credit hour as is required of semester-long courses. The same amount of work will be distributed over a shorter period of time and may be allocated in various ways.

Forty-five hours of work are required to earn one credit hour. The allotment of face-to-face instruction and work outside of class may vary. Examples:

1. For one credit, a lecture typically would require 15 hours of contact time and expect 30 homework hours (total hours = 45).

2. For one credit, a studio/lab typically would require 30 hours of contact time and expect 15 homework hours (total = 45).

Since it would be virtually impossible for a student to satisfactorily complete approximately 45 hours of work in less than one week, the policy regarding the duration of courses maintains that a course must cover at least a one-week period for every unit of credit given. During the intensive summer session, however, seven units of credit might be given over a four-week period.

VIII. Credit by Examination [§ 600.2(2)]
At its discretion, an institution may award semester hour credits for mastery demonstrated through credit-by-examination. When such credit by examination is allowed, it may be used to satisfy degree requirements or to reduce the total number of remaining hours required for a degree.
IX. Distance Education, Internet and Hybrid (Blended) Courses [§ 600.2(1)]
UAM’s credit hour policy for distance education, Internet and hybrid courses is consistent with the standards for courses offered through face-to-face instruction, although some or all of course content and faculty-student interaction occurs through one or more forms of distance education.
Appendix A
Federal Definition of a Credit hour

The federally-approved regulation for a credit hour has been defined in two ways:

§ 600.2(1): The credit hour value of a standard or more traditional course must be calculated as follows: A clock hour of instructional time is the equivalent of (a) 50 minutes of class time or (b) 60 minutes of independent-study work or some measures of clinical time; and (2) a minimum of two hours of out-of-class work is expected for every hour (50 minutes) of instructional time.

§ 600.2(2): If the credit hour value for an academic activity (including but not limited to “laboratory work, internships, practica, and studio work”) cannot be calculated using the information cited in § 600.2(1) (above), that academic activity can be found to have met the federal definition by documenting that it involves “at least an equivalent amount of work” as the criteria cited in § 600.2(1).