

University of Arizona

Academic Policies

Credit Definitions

University Credit

University credit is the term used to identify all credit offered by the University of Arizona with the exception of correspondence credit and [Special Examination for Credit](#). Only the [grades](#) of courses taken for University credit and by [Special Examination for Grade](#) are used in calculating the [grade-point-average \(GPA\)](#).

Unit of Credit, Definition

Utilizing the definition that an hour of work is the equivalent of 50 minutes of class time (often called a contact hour) or 60 minutes of independent-study work, university policy requires at least 45 hours of work by each student for each unit of credit. Contact hours required for specific types of courses are as follows:

- At least 15 contact hours of recitation, lecture, discussion, seminar, or colloquium, as well as a minimum of 30 hours of student homework are required for each unit of student credit.
- Workshops require at least 15 through 45 contact hours and the appropriate number of homework hours to comprise a total of at least 45 hours of work for each unit of credit.
- Studios require at least 30 contact hours and at least 15 hours of homework for each unit of credit.
- Laboratory courses must maintain a minimum of 45 contact hours per unit of credit.
- Field trips are to be counted hour-for-hour as laboratory meetings.
- Each unit of internship or practicum must require a minimum of 45 hours of work.

Since it would be virtually impossible for a student to complete satisfactorily 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 summer session, however, 6 units of credit might be given over a five-week period.

It is understood that, when the official university calendar deviates from these guidelines, that calendar shall prevail.

It is also understood that the hour requirements specified above represent minimums for average students and that considerable deviation in excess of these requirements may occur, particularly at the graduate level.

Also see the Arizona Board of Regents Policy Manual [Definition of a Unit of Credit \(pdf\)](#) format.

Related Topics

- [Class Standing/Classification](#)
 - [Continuous Enrollment for Undergraduates](#)
 - [Full-Time Status and Enrollment Maxima](#)
 - [Graduate Credit for Seniors](#)
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Arizona State University

2-206 Academic Credit

A. Definition of a Unit of Credit

An hour of work is the equivalent of fifty (50) minutes of classtime (often called a "contact hour") or sixty (60) minutes of independent study work. A minimum of forty-five (45) hours of work by each student is required for each unit of credit. Ordinarily, a course must cover a one-week (1) period for every unit of credit given. During summer sessions, however, six (6) units of credit may be given over a five-week (5) period.

1. At least fifteen (15) contact hours of recitation, lecture, discussion, testing or evaluation, seminar, or colloquium, as well as a minimum of thirty (30) hours of student homework is required for each unit of credit;
2. Workshops must involve a minimum of forty-five (45) hours for each unit of credit, including a minimum of fifteen (15) contact hours, with the balance of the requirement in homework;
3. Studios must involve at least thirty (30) contact hours and at least fifteen (15) hours of homework for each unit of credit;
4. Laboratory courses require a minimum of forty-five (45) contact hours per unit of credit;
5. Field trips will be counted hour-for-hour as laboratory meetings;
6. Each unit of internship or practicum must require a minimum of forty-five (45) clock hours of work; and
7. Music instruction and specialized types of music performance offerings must conform to the requirement for accreditation of the National Association of Schools of Music.
8. Off-campus courses, regardless of mode of delivery, may be assigned credit based on competencies or learning outcomes that are acquired through coursework and are equivalent to those of students in a traditional classroom setting. An equivalent of forty-five (45) hours of work by each student is required for each unit of credit.

B. Credit for Courses Developed Under Contract

Universities may contract with outside agencies for the development and/or delivery of training programs to agency employees. The normal contract provides reimbursement to the university for the cost incurred in the development and/or delivery of these courses to the employees of these contracting agencies. While many of the courses may be specifically tailored to the needs of the agency and delivered in a format different from that appropriate for credit course offerings, there may be circumstances under which courses developed in this way will be of such quality that students who

successfully complete them may be awarded academic credit by a university. The following are guidelines for the awarding of credit in courses developed under contract to outside agencies.

1. The decision to award academic credit for a course developed under contract and the securing of approvals to award such credit must follow the same procedures as those for any other course developed in the university. The same approvals by curriculum and other committees in the university and from the Arizona Board of Regents are required as those for any other course.
 2. A university cannot teach a course developed under contract with an outside agency using the title and number of a course which already exists in the university catalog.
 3. A course developed under contract may not be offered for credit under "house numbers," in more than two (2) semesters. Afterward, the course must be subjected to university curriculum procedures applicable to new courses.
 4. When a course is to be delivered under contract to an outside agency, the negotiations by the university for the delivery price should include the consideration of whether employees of the agency may receive credit for the course. If the university and the agency agree that agency employees may receive credit for the course, the cost of record keeping for these students, and any other costs specifically identified with the awarding of academic credit, must be included in the contract. Students who would not be charged for a university course because they are employees of an agency under contract with the university for delivery of the course cannot be charged extra for the course if they wish to receive credit for it.
 5. The awarding of credit and assignment of grades for courses developed and/or offered under contract will be conducted in precisely the same way as for any other course offered by the university. The integrity of the academic processes shall not be compromised by the contractual origin or the nature of the course delivery mechanism.
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SUNY

Credit/Contact Hour Policy

Summary

The State University of New York (University), like most American higher education, has adopted a variant of the traditional "Carnegie Unit" as a measure of academic credit. This unit is known in the University by the familiar term, "semester credit hour," and is the primary academic measure by which progress toward a degree is gauged. It is recognized that such a unit measures only a part, albeit a major part, of a composite learning experience, based upon formally structured and informal interactions among faculty and students.

Policy

Over the past several years, for academic purposes, some faculties have allowed modifications of the classical Carnegie definition of a semester credit hour, which has stipulated that one semester credit hour be awarded for fifteen sessions of 50-minutes duration in classroom lecture-recitation each requiring two hours of outside preparation by the student. Today there are many types of educational experiences with which credit hour assignment may properly be associated.

In the interest of accurate academic measurement and cross-campus comparability, the following definitions and practices apply in controlling the relationship between contact and credit hours. These definitions constitute a formalization of current and historic policy in order to ensure 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 or tutorial activity.

A semester credit hour is normally granted for satisfactory completion of one 50-minute session of classroom instruction per week for a semester of not less than fifteen weeks. This basic measure may be adjusted proportionately to reflect modified academic calendars and formats of study. Semester credit hours are granted for various types of instruction as follows:

I. Lecture, seminar, quiz, discussion, recitation

A semester credit hour is an academic unit earned for fifteen 50-minute sessions of classroom instruction with a normal expectation of two hours of outside study for each class session. Typically, a three-semester credit hour course meets three 50-minute sessions per week for fifteen weeks for a total of 45 sessions.

II. Activity supervised as a group (laboratory, field trip, practicum, workshop, group studio)

A semester credit hour is awarded for the equivalent of fifteen periods of such activity, where each activity period is 150 minutes or more in duration with little or no outside preparation

expected. Forty-five 50-minute sessions of such activity would also normally earn one semester credit hour. Where such activity involves substantial outside preparation by the student, the equivalent of fifteen periods of 100 minutes duration each will earn one semester credit hour.

III. Supervised individual activity (independent study, individual studio, tutorial)

One 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 forty-five 50-minute sessions of student academic activity.

Credit for tutorial study (defined as study which is given initial faculty guidance followed by repeated, regularly scheduled individual student conferences with a faculty member, and periodic as well as final evaluation of student performance) will be awarded on the basis of one semester hour credit for each equivalent of fifteen contact hours of regularly scheduled instructional sessions.

IV. Full-time Independent Study (student teaching, practicum)

If a student's academic activity is essentially full-time (as in student teaching), one semester credit hour may be awarded for each week of work.

V. Experiential Learning

At its discretion, an institution may award credit hours for learning acquired outside the institution which is an integral part of a program of study. When life or work experience is to be credited as a concurrent portion of an academic program design, as in an internship, one semester credit hour will be awarded for each 40-45 clock-hour week of supervised academic activity that provides the learning considered necessary to program study.

VI. Credit by Examination

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.

VII. Short Sessions

Credit hours may be earned in short sessions (summer sessions, intersessions, etc.) proportionately to those earned for the same activity during a regular term of the institution, normally at no more than one credit per week of full-time study.

VIII. Appeal and Review

Institutions may present educational justification for departures from these policy provisions to the office of the provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs, which will be responsible for

their interpretation. Credit hours to be earned in approved overseas academic programs will continue to be considered on an individual basis following established procedures. Other special arrangements suggested by campuses will be considered on an individual basis by this office.

Definitions

Semester credit hour – normally granted for satisfactory completion of one 50-minute session of classroom instruction per week for a semester of not less than fifteen weeks.

Other Related Information

[Credit-bearing Off-campus Instructional Activities, Administration of](#)

[Award of Academic Credit by Evaluation](#)

Procedures

There are no procedures relevant to this policy.

Forms

There are no forms relevant to this policy.

Authority

[8 NYCRR § 50.1 \(n\) \(o\)](#) (Definitions)

[8 NYCRR § 52.2 \(c\) \(4\)](#) (Granting of semester credit hours)

History

Memorandum to presidents from the office of the vice chancellor for academic programs, dated June 30, 1976.

Appendices

There are no appendices relevant to this policy.

4.1.19 Credit Hour Policy

A credit hour shall be the unit of University academic credit representing approximately three hours of work per week by a student throughout a 15 week (fall, spring) semester (exclusive of final examination period) or its equivalent in total work for short courses. Specifically, and consistent with Department of Education Program Integrity rules published October 29, 2010, Illinois State University defines a credit hour as:

“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.”

For traditional **lecture, recitation, seminar, topics, and temporary** courses, a 1 credit hour class meets 50 minutes per week over the course of the semester.

Laboratory classes, including rehearsals and musicianship classes, typically meet 100 minutes or more per week for 1 credit hour.

Clinical 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.” Required pre-service clinical hours (clock hours) in teacher education programs are generally associated with specific courses and do not receive academic credit independent of course credit. Credit for clinical experiences in other programs is determined in accordance with recommendations of their specific accrediting bodies or applicable state regulation.

Professional practice is defined as “one or more credit-generating, academic/career related, salaried or non-salaried work experiences. Professional Practice work sites are located on the Illinois State University campus and with business, industry, government and other agencies and organizations outside the University campus. Professional Practice courses are designated by the numbers 198, 298, 398, 498, and 598.” No more than 16 credit hours of professional practice may count toward an undergraduate degree. Use of credit hours from the course group 393, 397, 400, 493, 498 toward a graduate degree is limited to no more than 9 hours total. At least one full-time five-day week of professional practice or the equivalent over a longer period of time will be

required for one credit hour. Depending on specific curriculum, programs may require more than one week in order to award one credit hour.

Student Teaching: At least one full-time five day week of student teaching experience will be required for one credit hour. Depending on specific curriculum, programs may require more than one week in order to award one credit hour.

Short term courses: Half-semester courses, summer session courses, and other courses offered over a different period of time will require the same amount of classroom and out of class work per credit hour as required of semester-long courses with that work distributed over the shorter period of time.

Workshops and Contract Courses: Credit bearing courses offered for special populations by special arrangement will meet regular academic credit hour standards.

Thesis/Dissertation and Independent Study will represent a minimum of three hours of student work per week throughout the course of the semester or the equivalent work distributed over a different period of time. Deferred credit (DE) is always given in research and performance courses leading to a thesis, dissertation or exhibition. Credit will be allowed when the student satisfactorily completes all requirements for the program.

Distance Education, Internet and Hybrid (Blended) Courses: Credit hour policy is consistent with the standards of courses offered through face to face instruction, although some or all of content and faculty-student interaction occurs through one or more forms of distance education.

All definitions and standards apply equally to courses offered both on and off campus.

Chicago State University Credit Hour Policy

The United States Department of Education requires that each institution develop a written credit hour policy that conforms to the definition of a credit hour outlined in the Federal Register (75 FR 66832 p. 66946). In this document the credit hour has been defined as:

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.

At Chicago State University, the credit hour is the unit of instruction used to quantify student learning. One credit hour is constituted by a minimum of three class work hours; where a class hour is defined as 50 minutes.¹ Typically, this will include one class hour of direct instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week during the semester² for a one credit hour course. However, in courses and academic activities where direct instruction is not the primary mode of learning, such as online and hybrid courses, laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, etc., an equivalent amount of work (minimum of three hours per week for a semester) must be represented for a credit hour.

Due to the fact that the pace of reading, writing, and other activities varies widely, time spent in any of these areas will not be identical for all students, instructors and courses. Rather assigned activities should reflect a reasonable expectation by the instructor of the time it would take to meet the learning objectives of the course or assignment.

The following guidance indicates how this policy is applied to credit situations that are not taught in the standard 15-week format or are not classroom based learning experiences.

Meeting Fewer than 15 Weeks or Online

The credit hours awarded for a given course or academic experience must be reasonably equivalent to the standard of 3 hours combined direct instruction and student work per credit hour for a 15-week semester.

For example, a 3-credit course should require the equivalent of 9 hours of combined direct instruction and student work per week for the equivalent of a 15-week semester. Given that the “class hour” is 50 minutes, this would be a baseline of 112.5 total hours for the course. These hours may consist of course activities including, but not limited to, those listed below.

- Face-to-face course meetings
- Virtual course meetings or student-instructor and student-student interactions
- Time to read/view assigned texts or other assigned materials
- Experiential learning activities consistent with the learning objectives of the course

- Synthesis/processing/reflection time and activities (may be used for writing or production of creative work which may take many forms including but not limited to journals, formal papers, projects, blogs, art, music, etc.)

Clinical Experiences

Clinical 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.” Required pre-service clinical hours (clock hours) in teacher education programs are generally associated with specific courses and do not receive academic credit independent of course credit. Credit for clinical experiences in other programs is determined in accordance with recommendations of their specific accrediting bodies or applicable state regulation. If credit hours are provided for a clinical experience course the amount of time must be reasonably equivalent to the standard of 3 hours per week, per credit hour for a 15-week semester or 37.5 hours per credit hour.

Professional practice is defined as “one or more credit-generating, academic/career related, non-salaried experiences. Professional Practice sites may be located on the Chicago State University campus and with business, industry, government and other agencies and organizations outside the University campus. At least one full-time five-day week of professional practice or the equivalent over a longer period of time will be required for one credit hour. Depending on specific curriculum, programs may require more than one week in order to award one credit hour.

Thesis/Dissertation and Independent Study

Courses where students are working on independent projects, such as in thesis/dissertation hours and independent studies, will conform to the standard minimum of three hours of student work per credit hour per week throughout the course of the semester or the equivalent work distributed over a different period of time.

NOTES

¹ Federal guidance does not specify the number of minutes implied by “one hour” stating that “We believe it is unnecessary to define one hour as either 50 minutes or one clock hour because the primary purpose of...the definition is to provide institutions with a baseline, not an absolute value for determining reasonable equivalencies or approximations for the amount of academic activity defined” (Federal Register, Vol. 75, No. 209, p. 66486).

² Semester is defined as not less than 15 weeks. Courses offered in shorter timeframes must have an equivalent number of hours dedicated to instruction and student work as that spent in a semester-based class.