



**UNIVERSITY POLICY AC-19.02-11/24**

**TO:** The University of West Florida Community

**FROM:** Dr. Martha D. Saunders, President

**SUBJECT:** Credit Hour Defined

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** Office of the Provost

**I. Purpose:**

The United States Department of Education and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools-Commission on Colleges (“SACSCOC”), require institutions of higher education to define the credit they will award for student work. The University of West Florida (the “University”) hereby provides the following guidance.

**II. Policy:**

**A. Federal Regulations**

Federal regulation provides the following definition:

1. Credit Hour – 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 –
  - a. One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately 15 weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or 10 to 12 weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or
  - b. At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (a) 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; and

Permits an institution, in determining the amount of work associated with a credit hour, to take into account a variety of delivery methods, measurements of student work, academic calendars, disciplines, and degree levels. (34 CFR §600.2)

## B. SACSCOC Interpretation

The SACSCOC interpretation of the federal definition of a credit hour is as follows:

An institution is responsible for determining the credit hours awarded for coursework in its programs in accordance with the definition of a credit hour for Federal program purposes. The definition does provide some flexibility for institutions in determining the appropriate amount of credit hours for student coursework.

1. The institution determines the amount of credit for student work.
2. A credit hour is expected to be a reasonable approximation of a minimum amount of student work in a Carnegie unit in accordance with commonly accepted practice in higher education.
3. The credit hour definition is a minimum standard that does not restrict an institution from setting a higher standard that requires more student work per credit hour.
4. The definition does not dictate particular amounts of classroom time versus out-of-class student work.
5. In determining the amount of work the institution's learning outcomes will entail, the institution may take into consideration alternative delivery methods, measurements of student work, academic calendars, disciplines, and degree levels.
6. To the extent an institution believes that complying with the Federal definition of a credit hour would not be appropriate for academic and other institutional needs, it may adopt a separate measure for those purposes.
7. Credits may be awarded on the basis of documentation of the amount of work a typical student is expected to complete within a specified amount of academically engaged time, or on the basis of documented student learning calibrated to that amount of academically engaged time for a typical student.
8. The intent of the above flexibility as provided by Federal guidance is to recognize the differences across institutions, fields of study, types of coursework, and delivery methods, while providing a consistent measure of student work for purposes of Federal programs.

## C. Modes of Delivery

### 1. In Person

An in-person course is a course that meets regularly on the main campus or at an off-campus educational site and may be supplemented with educational technology, including Internet-based technology, to enhance student learning.

## 2. E-learning

An e-learning course is one that is fully online and completely delivered over the web with no in-class requirements. In this model, there is no physical classroom assigned although a professor may opt for students to meet for a proctored examination or course orientation, taking into account that some students are remote and unable to come to the University campus. Accommodations will be made for such students.

## 3. Hybrid/Blended

A hybrid/blended course is one in which a combination of strategies is used in a distance environment. A classroom will be assigned for hybrid students, but there will be reduced time spent in the classroom. Components of the course may include asynchronous online delivery, video or web conferencing or some other technological media for out-of-class time. Students will not only need to be able to get to class for in-class meetings, but also are required to have access to the Internet for web-based class meetings. This model works especially well if trying to utilize classroom space to the fullest. This is a very convenient approach for storing class materials, emailing students throughout the week between class meetings, storing URLs and other references, and for assigning interactive homework assignments such as participating in an online chat or threaded discussion.

## 4. Videoconferencing

A videoconferencing course provides delivery through the videoconferencing classrooms located on the main campus or other University instructional sites, and linking through video or web conferencing platforms out to the virtual video classroom for students who access via their computer.

### D. The University's Definition

1. The University adopts the federal definition of a credit hour as interpreted by SACSCOC policy (II)(B)(3).
2. For purposes of the application of this policy and in accord with federal regulations, 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:
  - a. For in-person courses, not less than one class hour (at least 50 minutes) 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.
  - b. For laboratory courses, internships, clinical practica, field work, studio work, and other academic work leading to academic credit, one (1) credit hour represents at

least an amount of student work equivalent to that outlined in subparagraph a. above.

- c. For independent studies, thesis, or dissertation research, one (1) credit hour represents at least an amount of student work equivalent to that outlined in subparagraph a. above.
  - d. For e-learning, hybrid/blended, and videoconferencing, one (1) credit hour represents at least the equivalent of the direct instructional time and additional student work as that outlined in subparagraph a. above.
  - e. For professional degree programs, the amount of direct instruction and additional out-of-class student work associated with one (1) credit is determined in accord with the standards of appropriate accrediting agencies and professional organizations but may not be less than the equivalent of that outlined in subparagraph a. above.
3. In determining the amount of coursework to achieve learning competencies and outcomes, the University will consider alternative delivery methods, measurements of student work, academic calendar, disciplines, and degree levels.
  4. The University allows for certain educational experiences to be recorded with zero credit hours assigned. Allowable examples of this include elective ensemble courses for music and music education degree programs, formal seminar attendance courses, certain laboratory courses for ROTC students, and courses designed for placement review in degree programs such as the Bachelor of Fine Arts. Any course with zero credit hours used as a requirement in a degree program should not place undue burden on students and include a strong rationale for inclusion in the program of study. As per BOG Regulation 7.003(4)(h) Registration of Zero Hours, such registration provides for examinations, graduations, use of facilities, etc., when deemed appropriate by the institution. The student is assessed tuition and associated fees for one credit hour. The Zero Credit Fee shall be budgeted in the Student and Other Fee Trust Fund.

E. Procedures

The Office of the Provost will develop all procedures necessary to carry out this policy. The Office of the Registrar will oversee the curriculum change request system and provide guidance on the development of courses and programs to support compliance with University policy as well as federal requirements and accreditation standards.

Signed by: Martha Saunders Date: 11/12/2024  
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**Approved by:** Dr. Martha D. Saunders

**Authority:** 34 CFR §600.2, Definitions  
34 CFR §668.8, Eligible Program

**Cross Ref.:** None

**History:** Approved as interim policy April 2014; approved May 2014; amended November 2024

**Last Review:** November 2024