

**Title: CSU DEFINITION OF CREDIT HOUR**

**Number: R-67**

**Date of Inception: February 14, 2018**

Charleston Southern University accepts and upholds the following Federal Definition of a Credit Hour, as related by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) in its policy statement titled "Credit Hours":

**Federal Definition of the Credit Hour**

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

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 required 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.

**Computation of Clinical and/or Lab Hours**

In accord with the above stated guidelines, the rules below will guide administrators in curricular development and assessment of the proper amount of credit hours awarded for clinical and/or lab work, and will serve as guidelines in development of studio hours and other kinds of coursework taking place outside the parameters of conventional and traditional classes.

Based on the standards offered in the Federal Definition of a Credit hour, a typical hour of class time would be matched by 2 hours out of class work, for a total of 3 hours each week of work. Over the course of a 15-week semester, this amount would equate to 45 "time-on-task" or "work" hours for the class. It is also true, however, that a given conventional class may have a number of weeks where the amount of work required is less than 2 out of class hours and some weeks where a good deal more is required.

Therefore, a given term (which includes standard semesters, as well as accelerated terms such as those offered during the various summer terms, or those offered by the Physician Assistant program, the Master of Nursing programs, or the College of Adult and Professional Studies,

among others) should require between 35-45 hours of work (including class time and clinical time and allowing for out of class completion of assignments) per 1 credit hour offered.

For example, a class may meet for one (1) hour weekly, and then require 4 hours clinical meetings weekly, with little or no extra completion requirements outside the meeting times. These five hours, multiplied by fifteen weeks, equals 75 total "work" hours; therefore the class would earn students 2 credit hours (since their total work time falls within the 70-90 hour window).

Similarly, lab classes where the preponderance of work is done in class and which requires little out of class preparation or completion, may award credit hours equivalent to the total amount of "work" hours. Therefore, a three hour lab, meeting weekly, with minimal out of class work, equates to 45 total work hours for the term, and therefore is awarded one (1) credit hour.

Note that these are **minimal** "work" requirements. Out of class preparation and completion times may require more extensive amounts of time over the course of a term, particularly in the case of graduate courses. However, excessive work requirements for credit hours should be justified during Curriculum Committee or Graduate Council approval of courses to explain why the extra work does not warrant additional credit hours.

### **Credit in Online Courses**

**Statement on Credit Hours:** Credit hours awarded must be determined by sound practice regardless of course delivery method. In accordance with federal law and SACSCOC standard 10.7, online courses should adhere to the following.

The number of contact hours for courses that meet face-to-face with an instructor is defined by the number of hours spent in classroom; typically, 15 hours (1 hour per meeting for 15 weeks) in the classroom is required for one college credit. As noted by the Federal Definition of a Credit Hour, 1 contact hour is typically matched by 2 or more out of class hours. Contact hours in synchronous online environments may be recorded in the same manner as for traditional classes.

However, contact hours in **asynchronous** learning environments are more difficult to monitor. Therefore, the definition of contact hours in asynchronous learning environments at CSU is based on the following guidelines:

- a. The course syllabus should clearly document that the course covers the same amount of material or course content that would normally be expected if the class were a traditional campus-based course. Clear documentation includes the course objectives, the course topics, and the stated expectations for readings, projects, and other assignments as well as the stated learning outcomes. It is the responsibility of departmental faculty teaching in an asynchronous environment to determine if the course content delivered in an asynchronous environment is of sufficient scope and rigor to ensure the amount of material delivered is comparable to the same campus-based course.
- b. During the planning and development of an asynchronous learning environment, faculty should estimate the time a typical student will take interacting with the course content.

This should be equivalent to the number of contact hours normally expected in a campus-based course, and should be documented in the course syllabus. Hours for completing homework assignments, working on projects, studying for examinations, etc., should be considered outside the contact hour requirements for the course. A rubric has been developed and should be used as a guideline for instructional design for asynchronous courses. This rubric is found on the Curriculum Committee website page at <https://www.charlestonsouthern.edu/academics/faculty/curriculum/>.

- c. Faculty are encouraged to determine class attendance by the evaluation of student participation in scheduled online discussions, required interaction with the faculty as well as other classmates, and the timely submission of class assignments rather than simply by the number of logins provided in the statistics measured by the course management system. Quality and quantity of work will demonstrate the rigor and time on task assignments necessary to equal those of the traditional course delivery.

**Statement on Equivalence:** Courses taught in the web-based format must be equivalent to the same courses taught in the traditional format.

- a. Courses developed specifically for online delivery must be approved through the Undergraduate or Graduate Curriculum process in the same way as new traditional courses.
- b. The processes and procedures for offering web-based courses are the same as all other CSU courses.
- c. Departments offering courses in web-based format should be prepared to document that the courses have student-learning outcomes that are equivalent to those for courses taught in the traditional format. The Curriculum Committee rubric will provide guidelines to assist in the documentation of those requirements. The rubric is found under Curriculum Forms on MyCSU.

By action of the Dean's Council, Feb. 14, 2018.