

Course Credit Guidelines

The Provost Office and Graduate College offer helpful guidelines on determining the appropriate course credit to offer based on contact hours. This document provides both sets of guidelines.

Credit Hour Definition

Federal Credit Hour Definition

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 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 activities as established by an institution, including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours. 34CFR 600.2 (11/1/2010)

Assigning Credit Hours

An equivalent amount of work is required in courses and academic activities where direct instruction is not the primary mode of learning, such as online and hybrid courses, laboratory work, independent study, internships, practica, studio work, etc. Credits will be awarded on the basis of documented learning objectives, expected learning outcomes, and student workload expectations within a specified period of academically engaged time.

Credit hours assigned to a course delivered online must equal the number of credit hours for the same course delivered face-to-face. An online course credit hour requires 3 hours of student work for each week and this work can include reading, research, online discussion and instruction, assigned group activities and preparation of papers or presentations.

Student Code

Article 3, Part 7 – Transcripts

3-704: Description and Definition of Information Appearing on Transcripts

(b) Credit

(1) Undergraduate credit is recorded in semester hours. Each semester hour represents one fifty-minute period of class-room work each week for the duration of one semester of sixteen weeks (two periods of classroom work per week during an eight-week part of term), or the equivalent in laboratory, field work, or approved independent study.

(2) Graduate credit is recorded in semester hours.

Graduate College Guidelines – applies only to courses awarding graduate credit

Part II, Chapter 2

2.2 Graduate Course Credit and Contact Hour Expectations*

A. Credit

Course proposals should justify why the course warrants graduate credit in terms of level of content, previous knowledge required, relevance to current research, methodology, etc.

If credit for graduate students is different than credit for undergraduate students, the extra work required should be of a concrete nature, included in calculation of the final grade, and listed

explicitly. For example, in a class with 3 hours of undergraduate credit and 4 hours of graduate credit, it is necessary to state, “graduate students must lead one class discussion, write weekly summaries that will be graded, and turn in a 25-page paper instead of a 15-page paper,” than to simply say, “graduate students will be held to demonstrating graduate level depth in class discussions and assignments.” Demonstration of graduate-level depth in class discussions and assignments, however, should be expected of graduate students if credit for graduate and undergraduate students is equal.

If variable credit is to be offered to graduate students, e.g., 3 or 4 hours, the higher credit should be justified by describing the extra work required and how it will be factored into the final grade.

B. Contact hours

The Graduate College has not established rigid ratios between course credit hours and class contact hours. However, in recognition of desired variability associated with subject matter and modes of teaching, the following issues are relevant for consideration:

1. The number of class contact hours in organized instruction between instructor and student is one factor affecting the quality of instruction. It is customary for graduate courses that carry either 3 or 4 hours of credit to meet in organized instruction for 43 to 58 contact hours per term (3 to 4 contact hours per week in fall or spring) including examinations. These ratios should be observed for organized instruction, which excludes laboratory, independent study, special problems, and thesis research courses. An additional laboratory that meets for two to three hours per week can justify one additional hour of credit.
2. Substantial deviation from these ratios should be justified by the department proposing the course. Each case will be judged on its merits as detailed in the course proposal.

*** Contact Hours**

The distinction between a contact hour and a clock hour is as follows:

A class contact hour is defined as one 50-minute session, that is, the traditional meeting time within a clock hour, allowing for the mandatory 10-minute passing period beginning at X:50 of the hour.

If a class session extends past one clock hour, or meets “off-clock,” the total session minutes divided by 50 determines the contact hours for the session. Thus, three 50-minute or two 75-minute sessions per week constitute three contact hours per week.

8-Week Courses

When scheduling 8-week courses, please keep in mind that students’ schedules will be filled with 16-week courses, most of which are offered during the hours of 9:00 am – 3:00 pm. An 8-week course needs to abide by the same contact hours to credit hour ratio as explained above.

For example, a 3-credit hour course taught during the 2nd 8 weeks will need to meet for a total of 2400 total minutes. These minutes can be distributed in many ways:

Meet twice a week for 150 minutes each (T, TH 5:00-7:30pm)

OR

Meet 3 times a week for 1 hour 40 minutes each (M, W, Fri 3:00-4:40pm)