



Credit Hour Policy

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)

Introduction

The University of Charleston offers courses in 15-week and 7-week semesters during the regular academic year and 5-week semesters during the summer. The 15-week semester is standard for in-seat (face-to-face) classes during the fall and spring semesters. Classes offered in 7-week, or 5-week formats carry the same credit hours as comparable 15-week in-seat classes and have the same expectations for student work. Total clock hours for all semester lengths are comparable. However, “reasonable clock time” may vary depending on the ability of the student and the expectations of specific learning activities. All students, regardless of the length of the semester, are expected to meet the learning outcomes specific to the course or the assignment.

The University of Charleston operates under the above-stated Federal Credit Hour Definition. Traditional in-seat classes meet either in one 50-minute session per week per credit hour or one 75-minute session per week per 1.5 credit hours. Undergraduate students are expected to complete 2 hours of out-of-class work per week per credit hour. Graduate students are expected to complete 3 hours of out-of-class work per week per credit hour. Exceptions to this policy are discussed below.

Below are definitions of credit-bearing course modalities other than face-to-face courses.

Hybrid Courses

A hybrid course combines traditional, in-seat class time with online and out-of-class work. Hybrid courses replace a percentage of in-seat class time with online out-of-class work. The student must attend in-seat classes at the location designated on the course schedule.

Online Courses

An online course is one in which all activities occur through a computer or the Internet with no in-seat class time. It may be synchronous or asynchronous.

- **Synchronous:** At least one required session in which all students and instructors meet at the same time through web-conferencing software such as Zoom or Collaborate.
- **Asynchronous:** No sessions are required where students and instructors meet at the same time. Instructors and students may meet virtually for office hours or other non-required meetings.

Laboratory, Clinical and Part-time Professional Practice Experiences

Clinical and laboratory experiences are part-time experiences directly associated with didactic material of a course. The student receives one credit for every three hours of actual experience per week during a 15-week semester. The instructor is monitoring the student during the experience, whether it be in a laboratory on campus or in a clinical setting off campus. The instructor can be different from the instructor who delivers the didactic content for the experience.

Part-time professional practice experiences are also directly associated with the didactic material of a course. The student receives one credit for every 3 hours a week of actual experience during a 15-week semester.

Internships/ Full-time Professional Practice Experiences

It is expected that all full-time **professional practice learning experiences** and **internships** will require a minimum of 40 hours of work for every 1 credit hour given.

- **Internships** provide opportunities for a student to apply principles learned in didactic courses to a career-related work experience. The student, with the assistance of the supervising faculty member and the University's Center for Career Development, identifies an appropriate Internship placement site and work-site supervisor. The faculty member and student complete a Learning Contract outlining learning outcomes and competencies the student is expected to achieve, the method of assessing achievement, and the means of maintaining communication between all parties. The faculty member and the Director of the Center for Career Development communicate the terms of the Learning Contract to the work site supervisor. A copy of the Learning Contract is retained by the supervising faculty member, the student, the

work site supervisor, and by the Center for Career Development. No student may take more than 16 credits of Internship in the 120 credits required for graduation.

- **Professional practice** opportunities are full-time practical experiences in which students apply their knowledge and skills in a professional setting. Professional practice experiences are administered by the appropriate School and Program.
- Experiences in accredited programs such as fieldwork experiences in Occupational Therapy and internships and Residency in Education are also administered, monitored and assessed by the specific programs.

Independent Study

- **Independent Study** courses are offered on a tutorial basis. The content of the course may be suggested by the student to supplement work in his or her major field of study, or it might be suggested by a faculty member to give a student greater experience in the research in the major. However, the content is not the same as delivered in a didactic course. A full-time faculty member must determine if the student has a sufficient academic background to pursue an Independent Study course successfully. The student and faculty member work together to design the syllabus. The student then signs this syllabus to indicate agreement with course requirements. The student and the sponsoring faculty member should be in contact once every week or every other week for a total of 15 hours for the duration of the course to assess the progress of the study.
- **Dissertation** courses are similar to Independent Studies in that they are offered on a tutorial basis. Credit hours for thesis/dissertation work are calculated at approximately 3 hours per week for each credit hour. The work is independent and may be distributed differently across time depending on the nature of the project and the amount of supervision by faculty.

Directed Studies

Directed Studies are didactic courses which, under exceptional and limited circumstances, are taught on a basis arranged between the student and the instructor and approved by the Dean of the School. A course taken by Directed Study will only be recognized if a *Change to Schedule* form is completed and filed in the Student Solutions Center prior to the beginning of the course. It is expected that there be 3 hours of student-instructor contact time for each credit hour given.

Portfolio Classes

A collection of completed student work (papers, artwork, computer programs or media, etc.) used to demonstrate achievement of an outcome or outcomes is called a "Portfolio."

Credit-Bearing Portfolio Classes

Specific portfolios are credit-bearing:

- SPCH 103 (Communication-Speaking, Foundational) is also credit bearing (3 credit hours) and is embedded in UNIV 104 College Motivation and Success.

Responsibility

Responsibility for the oversight of appropriate credit hour allocation for courses lies with the Chief Academic Officer, the Deans of the Schools, the University Curriculum Committees (Graduate and Undergraduate) and the University Registrar.