

ASSIGNMENT OF CREDIT HOUR POLICY

July 2016 (revised 7-31-16)

In accordance with federal regulation 34 CFR 602.24(f), the regional accrediting agencies (i.e., Middle States Commission on Higher Education) have been charged with reviewing an institution's policies and procedures for determining the credit hours awarded as well as the application of the institution's policies and procedures to its programs and course work, and make a "reasonable determination of whether the institution's assignment of credit hours conforms to commonly accepted practice in higher education."

With the beginning of the Academic Year 2016-17, all faculty must ensure that the amount of contact time and independent work time expected of students meet the minimum requirements established by the federal government. Faculty must include the required hours of work on their syllabi beginning in the spring 2017 semester. Please note that this is a federal regulation; failure to comply with the policy may jeopardize GW's accreditation status with Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

CREDIT HOUR POLICY

What are the minimum time requirements for a one-semester credit hour?¹

A **minimum** of 37.5 hours of work per semester is required for one credit hour. These hours will consist of 50 minutes of direct or guided interaction plus 100 minutes of independent learning per week during the course of a normal 15-week semester, which includes one week for exams. Other combinations of time are possible, where appropriate (such as a higher proportion of instructional/interactional time for a

¹ The U.S. Department of Education defines "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 out-of-class student work for approximately 15 weeks for one semester, 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."

Federal regulations assume that a credit hour equals 50 minutes of real time. A committee representing associate deans in all schools met over the summer and agreed to the credit hour policy and implementation process below.

laboratory or a lower proportion of instructional/interactional time for independent research). Classes may exceed these minimums to ensure students meet course learning goals.

GUIDELINES

What constitutes direct instruction?

Direct instruction or guided interaction is the amount of time a student is expected to be engaged in direct or guided interaction with an instructor. Examples include, but are not limited to, in person or online lectures, seminars, discussions, art and design studios, supervised group work, and examinations.

What constitutes independent learning?

Independent, out of class, learning is the amount of time students spend outside of scheduled or direct instruction or contact hours with instructor to fulfill course objectives. Examples include, but are not limited to, reading assignments, working out problems, preparing for exams, online and face-to-face group work, writing papers, and working on a project.

How do faculty communicate that their courses meets the requisite number of hours for the credits assigned to their classes?

The amount of work required in a class is communicated by faculty members and listed on the syllabi. While there is no specific space where this statement might go, faculty might consider locating their statements near the beginning of their syllabi, where their learning goals are articulated. A sample template for a syllabus is available for faculty to consult. Possible models for statements on syllabi will vary by course but could include:

- Sample 1: Fall/Spring: 3-credit lecture-based course with discussion sections
Over 15 weeks, students will spend 2 hours (100 minutes) per week in lecture, and 1 hour (50 minutes) per week in discussion section (37.5 hours for the semester). Homework and other out-of-class work is estimated at around 300 minutes per week (75 hours for the semester) and includes a 3-hour final exam for which approximately 10 hours of review is assumed.
- Sample 2: Fall/Spring: 3-credit graduate seminar

Over 15 weeks, students will spend 2 hours (100 minutes) per week in class. Required reading for the seminar meetings and written response papers or projects are expected to take up, on average, 7 hours (350 minutes) per week. Over the course of the semester, students will spend 25 hours in instructional time and 87.5 hours preparing for class.

Sample 3: Summer 3-credit, 6-week lecture-based course

Summer courses are twice as intensive as those held during the academic year. Over 6 weeks, students will spend 7.5 hours (375 minutes) per week in class or 37.5 hours and 12.5 hours (625 minutes) per week, or 75 hours over the summer session engaged in out-of-class work. Instructional time includes a 3-hour final exam.

- Sample 4: 1-credit skills course
Over 6 weeks, students will spend 12.5 hours (750 minutes) in class and 25 hours (1500 minutes) outside of class developing skills. This amounts to a little over 2 hours of instructional time and 4+ hours developing skills per week.
- Sample 5: 3-credit independent study or independent research course
Over 15 weeks, the student will meet with the instructor for 7.5 hours (375 minutes) and will be expected to spend an average of 7 hours (350 minutes) per week or 105 hours per semester researching and producing a substantial paper or project, or engaged in an internship and writing a paper about their experience.
- Sample 6: Fall/Spring 3-credit art or design course
Art and design studio courses are expected to meet a minimum of 1.5 hours (75 minutes) of instructional time per credit hour and 1.5 hours (75 minutes) of out of class time for each credit earned (NASAD Standard). Over 15 weeks, a 3-credit studio course will meet for 4.5 hours (225 minutes) for studio instruction per week, and students will be expected to spend 4.5 hour (225 minutes) per week working on their artwork and preparing for class.

Table for Calculating Direct Instruction and Independent Learning per Credit Hour

Traditional, Online, or Hybrid Courses

Course format	Credit unit	Direct instruction	Independent learning	Total minutes/week	Total hours/week	Total semester hours (15 week semester)
Lecture/Seminar	1	50 minutes	100 minutes	150 minutes	2.5 hours	37.5 hours
	2	100 minutes	200 minutes	300 minutes	5 hours	75 hours
	3	150 minutes	300 minutes	450 minutes	7.5 hours	112.5 hours
	4	200 minutes	400 minutes	600 minutes	10 hours	150 hours
Laboratory/discussion	1	150 minutes of instructor/TA time	Limited/variable	Limited/variable	2.5 hours	37.5 hours
	2	300 minutes	Limited/variable	Limited/variable	2.5 hours	75 hours
Studio	1	75 minutes	75 minutes	150 minutes	2.5 hours	37.5 hours
	2	150 minutes	150 minutes	300 minutes	6 hours	90 hours
	3	225 minutes	225 minutes	450 minutes	7.5 hours	112.5 hours
	4	300 minutes	300 minutes	600 minutes	10 hours	150 hours
Internships, field /clinical experience	1	Variable	150 minutes	150 minutes	2.5 hours	37.5 hours
	2	Variable	300 minutes	300 minutes	5 hours	75 hours
	3	Variable	450 minutes	450 minutes	7.5 hours	112.5 hours
	4	Variable	600 minutes	600 minutes	10 hours	150 hours
Online or Hybrid	1	Variable	Variable	150 minutes	2.5 hours	37.5 hours
	2	Variable	Variable	300 minutes	6 hours	90 minutes
	3	Variable	Variable	450 minutes	7.5 hours	112.5 hours
	4	Variable	Variable	600 minutes	10 hours	150 hours

Summer and Accelerated Courses

Course format	Credit unit	Direct instruction	Independent learning	Total minutes/week	Total hours/week	Total semester hours (15 week semester)
4 weeks (2 days/week for 3 hours 50 minutes)	3	460 minutes (7.67 hours)	1260 minutes (20.46 hours)	1687.5 minutes	28.125 hours	112.5 hours
6 weeks (4 days/week for 1.5 hours/day)	3	360 minutes (6 hours)	765 minutes (12.75 hours)	1125 minutes	18.75 hours	112.5 hours
6 weeks (4 days/week for 2 hours/day)	3	480 minutes (8 hours)	645 minutes (10.75 hours)	1125 minutes	18.75 hours	112.5 hours
6 weeks (2 days/week for 2 hours/day)	3	240 minutes (4 hours)	885 minutes (14.75 hours)	1125 minutes	18.75 hours	112.5 hours
6 weeks (2 days/week for 2 hours 10 minutes/day)	3	260 minutes (4.3 hours)	865 minutes (14.4 hours)	1125 minutes	18.75 hours	112.5 hours
6 weeks (2 days/week for 2 hours 15 minutes/day)	3	270 minutes (4.5 hours)	855 minutes (14.25 hours)	1125 minutes	18.75 hours	
6 weeks (2 days/week for 2 hours 20 minutes/day)	3	280 minutes (4.67 hours)	845 minutes (14.1 hours)	1125 minutes	18.75 hours	112.5 hours
6 weeks (2 days/week for 3 hours/day)	3	360 minutes (6 hours)	765 minutes (12.75 hours)	1125 minutes	18.75 hours	112.5 hours
6 weeks (4 days/week for 2 hours/day)	4	480 minutes (8 hours)	1020 minutes (17 hours)	1500 minutes	25 hours	150 hours
8 weeks online or hybrid	3	Variable	Variable	1125 minutes	14 hours	112.5 hours
10 weeks online or hybrid	3	Variable	Variable	1125 minutes	18.75 hours	112.5 hours