

Title: Credit Hour Policy

Category: Academic Affairs

Responsible Cabinet Member: Provost

Purpose

The University establishes and enforces a consistent definition of the credit hour to ensure compliance with federal regulations and accreditation standards and to maintain academic integrity across all academic programs.

Scope

This policy defines the institutional standards for awarding academic credit, including the calculation of instructional time and student work, and provides guidance for the development, approval and oversight of zero-credit hour courses. These standards apply to all academic courses at all levels and across all modes of delivery and are intended to ensure transparency, consistency and appropriate academic rigor while supporting innovative curricular and co-curricular educational experiences.

Credit Hour

The University defines the semester credit hour to ensure compliance with Federal Regulations (34 CFR Part 600) and the Southern Association for Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) accreditation standards. This definition applies to all courses at all levels and all modes of delivery including, but not limited to, fully online, hybrid, lecture, seminar, laboratory, studio, independent study or education abroad.

A credit hour represents an amount of work defined by intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement. It is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates:

- Not less than one (1) hour (50 minutes) of classroom or direct faculty instruction and at least two (2) hours of out-of-class student work per week for approximately 15 weeks for one (1) semester, or the equivalent amount of work over a different timeframe; or
- At least an equivalent amount of work as outlined above for the academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practicum, studio work and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours. [see credit hour calculator].

A credit hour is equivalent to 2,250 total minutes of student work for the term, which includes both in-class (minimum of 750 minutes) and out-of-class activities (1,500 minutes). This equivalency, except in rare scenarios, is equivalent across all courses, schedules and course meeting types, ensuring uniformity in credit hour calculation across the institution.

Guidelines for Zero-Credit Hour Courses

Academic units may develop and offer zero (0)-credit hour courses to provide innovative, co-curricular experiences that enhance student engagement and development. Zero-credit hour courses may include activities such as internships, research, experiential learning, career preparation, international experiences, faculty mentoring, capstone exams or other major-specific experiences. These courses are typically used to track student progress or academic engagement at the institution related to program admission, progression or completion milestones.

All zero-credit hour courses must be submitted through the existing curriculum approval process and must meet the following requirements:

- The course must have a syllabus that includes clearly defined student learning outcome(s).

- The course uses Satisfactory(S)/Unsatisfactory (UN) grading at the graduate level; Pass (P)/Fail (F) at the undergraduate level and will be recorded on a student's transcript. For professional programs, please refer to the individual program requirements.
- Courses with variable credit that include zero (0) as an option may follow an approved alternate grading scale.
- The course taken for zero (0) credit hours cannot be offered as a for-credit course.
- The course section must have an assigned instructor of record to successfully monitor student completion.
- These courses do not contribute to degree credit hour requirements and may not substitute for required coursework.
- Any tuition or fees associated with a zero-credit hour course must be justified, approved and clearly communicated to students in advance.
- The course will not be included in a student's GPA calculation.
- Zero-credit hour courses cannot be used to replace 767 for continuous enrollment requirements for post-qualifying exam (QE) students (except internship courses with program approval). These conditions align with best practices and may apply depending on the course structure or academic unit's objectives.
- Students will primarily work independently to complete the course activities.
- The course does not meet regularly as a scheduled class session.
- The course requires minimum use of University resources (e.g., faculty time involvement, library resources, technology resources).
- The course may support a student's independent work on a thesis or dissertation.
- Evaluation of student work performance completion is accomplished with minimal assessment.

References and Related Information:

[34 CFR Part 600](#)

[SACSCOC Credit Hours Policy Statement](#)

University Credit Hour Calculator