

02-01-01 Assignment of a Credit Hour

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish institutional definitions and procedures for the assignment and calculation of credit hours.

POLICY/GUIDELINE

The Federal Definition of Credit hour (Federal Register (75 FR 66832 p. 66946):

1. Not less than 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 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.

While SACSCOC policy acknowledges that the federal definition provides some flexibility for institutions in determining the appropriate amount of credit hours for student coursework, it also notes that a credit hour is expected to be a reasonable approximation of a minimum amount of student work in a Carnegie unit in accordance with commonly accepted practice in higher education.

The Carnegie Unit-Definition and Calculation:

1. **Credit Hour.** The unit of measuring educational credit, usually based on the number of classroom hours per week throughout a term.
2. **Lecture Classes.** For a lecture class, one unit is considered to be one hour of lecture class time and two hours per week of homework. For the typical three-unit class, a student spends three hours per week in class and should do six hours per week of homework. The total semester hours are calculated by multiplying the weekly hours by 15.
3. **Laboratory Classes.** For a laboratory class, the hours per week are considered to be all in class with no outside assignments. Thus, one unit is three hours per week of laboratory time.

Nashville State Community College Definition of a Credit Hour:

One course credit hour is equivalent to one hour of instruction based on a 15-week semester. A course offered in fewer than 15 weeks shall contain the same total hours (contact hours, preparation time, content, and learning outcomes) as the same course offered in the standard 15-week semester. Per the "Rules of The Tennessee Higher Education Commission Chapter 1540-01-02 Authorization and Regulation of Regularly Authorized Postsecondary Educational Institutions," an academic contact hour contains at least fifty minutes of actual directed or supervised instructional time.

1. **Delivery.** All courses must be equivalent to the standard credit hour calculation (depending on the course type) and must be consistently delivered.
2. **Course Development.** All courses will be developed to be equivalent to a regular, 15-week semester even if the course is taught in an alternative or accelerated format. This procedure applies to all lecture, laboratory, applied lessons, and/or external learning experience (clinical) courses.
3. **Reasonable Equivalencies for Course Types and Methods of Delivery.** Course credit hours are granted for various types of instruction as follows:

Fieldwork	General guideline specifies 30-40 total hours of fieldwork per hour of credit per 15-week period
Internship	General guideline specifies at least 3 times the number of contact hours per week per credit per 15-week period
Practica	General guideline specifies at least 3 contact hours per week per credit hour for on the job per 15-week period
Clinical	General guideline specifies at least 3 clinical contact hours per week per credit hour per 15-week period
Laboratory Work	General guideline specifies 2 or 3 contact hours per week per credit hour per 15-week period
Studio Work	General guideline specifies 2 or 3 contact hours per week per credit hour
Applied Lessons (Music)	General guideline specifies 7.5 hours of one-on-one instruction per term per credit hour

SOURCES

- [Federal Register \(75 FR 66832\)](#) (p. 66946)
- [THEC Chapter 1540-01-02](#) Authorization and Regulation of Regularly Authorized Postsecondary Educational Institutions

RELATED POLICIES

N/A

Approved by President's Cabinet 4/24/23; revised 11/24/25