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# SOUTHEASTERN

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L O U I S I A N A U N I V E R S I T Y

## **Credit Hour Policy**

The federal government requires all institutions to adopt policies defining credit hours and conforming to federal definitions ([Federal Register Vol 75 No 117 pg 34811](#)). In response, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS COC) includes Federal Requirement 4.9, requiring institutions to have policies and procedures for determining the credit hours awarded for courses and programs that conform to commonly accepted practices in higher education. Students, institutions, employers and others rely on credits as a measure of student academic engagement. Therefore, this policy is applicable to all courses and curricula developed at Southeastern Louisiana University and shall be strictly adhered to by all units associated with the university.

### **Credit Hour Defined**

The credit hour is a unit that measures course work. More specifically, it is hours assigned to a course that measures the time spent in class, the amount of work expected outside the class and a measure of the expected outcomes required to complete all course objectives. The most commonly used unit for reporting credit earned in a course is based on a fifteen week semester for which the University of Louisiana System, in accordance with the Louisiana Board of Regents, has stated:

“For each semester hour of credit, a traditional lecture or laboratory course shall strive to meet a minimum of 750 minutes. Final Exam periods may be counted as class time when computing required minutes.”

[http://www.ulsystem.net/assets/docs/searchable/boards/Chpt\\_1\\_VII\\_Academic\\_Programs.pdf](http://www.ulsystem.net/assets/docs/searchable/boards/Chpt_1_VII_Academic_Programs.pdf)

Southeastern’s Credit Hour policy must not only strive to meet the above requirement, but also comply with the Federal credit hour definition, which states:

“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.”  
<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/Credit%20Hours.pdf>

Therefore, a 3-credit hour course, for example, should require the reasonable equivalent of 9 hours of combined direct instruction (3 hours) and student work (6 hours) per week for the equivalent of a 15-week semester. Depending on the type of course, these hours may consist of activities including, but not limited to:

- Face-to-face course meetings
- Time to read/view assigned texts or other assigned materials
- Virtual course meetings or student-instructor and student-student interactions
- Experiential learning activities consistent with the learning objectives of the course
- Practicum placements
- Research with faculty
- Service learning projects
- Synthesis/processing/reflection time and activities (may be used for writing or production of creative work which may take many forms including but not limited to journals, formal papers, blogs, art, music, etc.)

### **Credit Guidelines**

The number of credit hours awarded for coursework at Southeastern Louisiana University is based upon the traditional Carnegie unit of one credit hour as it reflects approximately one hour of direct faculty instruction per week over the course of a traditional semester. It is expected that at a minimum an additional two hours of out-of-class student work supplements such instruction for each credit hour awarded.

Courses offered as interim, summer, term or independent study courses must be structured around the same intended learning outcomes and organized around the same or complementary learning activities when taught as a regular course. In addition, similar assessments of student learning must be used and the same data gathered. The equivalence of content, activity and evaluation allows Southeastern to validate the parallel quality of learning as well as the equivalence of credit.

In courses offered using “distance education” methods (i.e. online courses, television courses, hybrid courses, etc.), students are expected to engage in online “classroom” activities and independent “homework” activities equivalent in quality and variety to traditional “in class” courses in the same discipline. Due to the fact that pace of reading, writing, and other activities varies widely, time spent in any of these areas will not be identical for all students. Rather, assigned activities should reflect a reasonable expectation by the instructor of the time it would take to meet the learning objectives of the course or assignment.

Courses offered as Study Abroad should be equivalent in credit hours to the course delivered in another format. The Office of International Initiatives at Southeastern has specific guidelines to ensure that courses meet the appropriate number of contact hours for credit hours awarded.

Listed below are the minimum contact hours that faculty should strive to meet for the various type of courses offered at Southeastern.

Clinical: courses with a minimum of three contact hours of supervised hands-on learning experience per week per credit hour. This type of instruction is usually reserved for the health sciences discipline and includes lecture, laboratory and seminar work with multiple meetings per week.

Ensemble: courses with a minimum of two and one half to five hours of faculty contact per week per credit hour that are usually limited to the music unit's ensemble courses in the Department of Fine and Performing Arts.

Field Experience/Field Learning: supervised work experience activities outside the classroom related to skills/knowledge acquired during a degree program with limited lecture time requiring a minimum of two hours of work per week per credit hour.

Internships: supervised work experience activities outside the classroom related to skills/knowledge acquired during a degree program requiring a minimum of one hundred twenty hours of work per three credit hours.

Laboratory: courses involving supervised hands-on learning activities in a laboratory setting for a minimum of one and one half to three contact hours of faculty contact per week per credit hour.

Laboratory/Clinical: courses involving supervised seminar and hands-on learning activities for a minimum of three, one-hour supervised meetings per week per credit hour that are usually limited to the School of Nursing.

Lecture: traditional in-seat courses having one hour of faculty contact per week per credit hour.

Lecture/Laboratory: courses that are nominally lecture courses, but which include extensive hands-on and active learning components/observation of clinical sessions that require between one and two contact hours of faculty contact per week per credit hour.

Lesson/Individual Instruction: courses with a minimum of one to two hours of faculty contact per week per one to three credit hours that are usually limited to the Department of Fine and Performing Arts.

Performance/Recital Hour: courses with a minimum of one hour of faculty contact per week per credit hour that are usually limited to the music unit's performance-based courses in the Department of Fine and Performing Arts.

Practicum: courses offered in specialized fields of study designed to give students supervised practical application of a previously or concurrently studied theory requiring a minimum of five contact hours per week per credit hour.

Seminar: courses involving comprehensive overviews of specific topics in the discipline to be explored in considerable depth with a minimum of one hour of faculty contact per week per credit hour.

Student Teaching: courses offering college-supervised instructional experiences for student teachers culminating in at least thirty hours of supervised instruction and observation per credit hour.

Studio: courses offered such that students tend to work either individually or in groups so that they are more responsible for their own learning with a minimum of three hours of faculty contact per week per three credit hours.

Thesis/Dissertation/Independent Research: less stringently scheduled variable-hour courses requiring a minimum of three hours of student work per week (though not always in direct contact with a faculty member) per credit hour.

### **Implementation of the Credit Hour Policy**

The credit hour assignment for a course is made at the time a course is presented to and reviewed by the University Curriculum Council (UCC). Any proposal for a new course, as well as one requesting to change the credit hours, should contain specific information on the investment of time by the average student necessary to achieve the learning outcomes of the course, and must be in agreement with the abovementioned minimum guidelines.

The syllabus for a course shall provide information on the investment of time by the average student necessary to achieve the learning outcomes of the course. Such information will be tailored to the length of the sessions and the format of the course (e.g. face-to-face, hybrid, online, independent study, *etc.*) and will detail all applicable items related to class contact, laboratories, examinations, recitations, assignments and preparation and study.