

COLLEGE of CHARLESTON

OFFICIAL POLICY

12.1.5

Assignment of Credit Hours

08/30/2016

Policy Statement

The College of Charleston shall employ sound, standard practices for determining the amount and level of credit awarded for courses, regardless of format, location, or mode of delivery.

Consistent with the federal definition of a credit hour at 34 CFR 600.2, the College of Charleston defines a 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 of out-of-class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester . . . hour . . . 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.¹*

Further, and consistent with the federal definition, the College of Charleston aligns its business practices with the explanation of a credit hour supplied by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education:

CREDIT HOUR *A unit of measure that represents the equivalent of an hour (50 minutes) of instruction that can be applied to the total number of hours needed for completing the requirements of a degree, diploma, certificate or other formal award.*

At the College of Charleston, the process of creating a new course begins in the academic department or program. The academic department or program determines the amount

¹ See U.S. Department of Education/Office of Postsecondary Education GEN-11-06, "Guidance to Institutions and Accrediting Agencies Regarding a Credit Hour as Defined in the Final Regulations Published on October 29, 2010," at <https://www.ifap.ed.gov/dpccletters/attachments/GEN1106.pdf>.

and level of credit to be awarded for the course and recommends a course number consistent with the College's Course Numbering Policy (College Policy 7.6.9) and with disciplinary norms and best practices related to student learning outcomes. In assigning credit, the requirement is that, for every one (1) hour in class, students will have a minimum of two (2) hours of additional academic work beyond the class time (e.g., completion of term papers, problem sets, reading assignments); therefore, for every semester credit hour awarded, a total of at least three (3) hours per week for each week of the term is required. Each program, department, and school must account for the nuances and requirements of the particular fields of study in assuring this minimum requirement is met. Credit is assigned to a course on this basis without regard to mode of delivery.

The department or program completes a formal proposal for a new course or a revised course. The proposal is reviewed and approved by: department or program faculty, the Department Chair or Program Director, Dean of the School(s), the Provost, the Faculty Curriculum Committee, and the Faculty Senate.

Fall and spring semester courses are scheduled for 15 weeks, excluding holidays, spring/fall break but including a week of final examinations, resulting in roughly 14 weeks of class meetings and one week of final examinations or, for example, 2100 minutes of instruction for three-credit courses. Courses must follow the minimum guideline of 700 minutes of instruction per credit hour. For the purposes of this Policy in calculating minutes of instructional time, final examination periods are not counted in those minutes.

With the approval of the School Dean and the Provost, the Department of Studio Art adheres to a four-hour block schedule for studio courses, with 60 minutes per hour for such courses. Typically, studio art courses meet one (1) time per week for four (4) hours over the course of a fall or spring semester. Thus, one (1) credit of a studio course will align with 80 minutes per week of studio instructional time.

One-credit-hour laboratories associated with natural science courses meet one (1) time per week for 180 minutes each.

For courses that meet on the downtown campus or at any other approved site during the fall and spring semesters, the College of Charleston provides the following approved meeting pattern time guidelines to ensure that the minimum instruction-time requirements are followed:

- Three-credit hour daytime courses that meet three (3) days per week meet for 50 minutes per class session. These courses meet for 42 sessions per term.
- Three-credit hour daytime courses that meet two (2) days per week meet for 75 minutes per class session. They meet for 28 sessions per term.
- Fall or spring evening courses may meet one (1) or two (2) nights per week. The total number of meeting minutes per semester is used in the calculation of the total length of each class meeting for evening courses (2100 minutes for a three-credit course).

Meeting patterns are adjusted appropriately for one-, two-, and four-credit courses.

Within the fall and spring semesters, Express I and Express II sessions constitute half-semester accelerated terms. Courses meet twice a week for 150 minutes per meeting for seven (7) weeks and one (1) additional day assigned for final exams in each session.

The College of Charleston has four (4) sessions during the summer term:

- The Maymester session is a two-week session during which courses meet five (5) days per week for three and one-half hours (210 minutes) per day for a total of 10 class meetings per session.
- Extended Summer is a six-week session during which courses meet two evenings per week for three and one-quarter hours (195 minutes) per meeting for a total of 11 class meetings per session.
- The Summer I and Summer II sessions are each four (4) weeks in duration, during which courses meet five (5) days per week. Courses are scheduled for 105 minutes per meeting for a total of 20-21 meetings.

Though the schedule for the summer sessions courses is compressed, the total number of instructional hours remains the same as the total number of fall and spring instructional hours, and the course credits remain the same.

For courses designed to include significant out-of-class experiences (e.g., student teaching, internships) and Independent Studies, Tutorials, and Bachelor's Essays, guidelines are set by the academic department or program for how the instructional time frame will meet credit guidelines outlined above. These courses require individual enrollment accompanied by a detailed contract specifying the nature of the student work product, learning outcomes, the frequency of interactions between the faculty member and student, and the method of final evaluation (grading).

For online courses (defined as 75% or more of instruction delivered entirely online) "academic engagement" is the equivalent of "class time" in a face-to-face course. In assigning credit, the assumption is that for every one (1) hour of online academic engagement, students will have a minimum of two (2) hours of additional academic work and preparation beyond the instructional time. Therefore, it is expected that for every semester credit hour given, a total of at least three (3) hours per week for each week of the term is required. *Academic engagement* may include, but is not limited to, submitting an academic assignment, listening to class lectures or webinars (synchronous or asynchronous), taking an exam, completing an interactive tutorial or computer-assisted instruction, attending a study group that is assigned by the institution, contributing to an academic online discussion, initiating contact with a faculty member to ask a question about the academic subject studied in the course, conducting laboratory work, and completing an externship or internship. *Academic work and preparation* is typically homework, such as reading and study time, and completing assignments and projects.

College of Charleston courses delivered abroad or at other off-campus settings are developed by faculty to take full advantage of the unique location and must be consistent

with the expectations for academic engagement and instructional time articulated in this Policy.

Academic units shall ensure that credit hours are awarded consistent with the requirements of this Policy.

This Policy does not apply to non-credit-bearing instruction at the College of Charleston.

Policy Manager and Responsible Department or Office

Provost and Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs (or Provost's designee)

Purpose/Reason for the Policy

Academic credit provides the basis for measuring the amount of engaged learning time expected of a typical student enrolled in academic courses. Students, institutions, employers, and others rely on the common currency of academic credit to support a wide range of activities, including the transfer of students from one institution to another. The federal government relies on credits as a measure of student academic engagement as a basis of awarding financial aid.

Departments/Offices Affected by the Policy

Academic Affairs (Academic Schools, Departments, and Programs; Registrar's Office; Financial Aid; Summer School)
Business Affairs (Treasurer)
Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Strategic Planning

Procedures Related to the Policy

Faculty in Academic Programs and Departments, Department Chairs and Program Directors, Deans, appropriate faculty committees, and the Provost's Office review the amount and level of credit as new courses are proposed or significant changes are made to courses using the approved process of curriculum review at the institution.

The Registrar ensures that course schedules are consistent with the clock-to-credit formula outlined in this policy by utilizing an approved meeting schedule.

Related Policies, Documents or Forms

Faculty/Administration Manual
College Policy 7.6.9, "Course Numbering Policy"
Course Forms and Instructions, Faculty Curriculum Committee
Policy Statement on Credit Hours, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools,
Commission on Colleges

Review Schedule

Issue Date: 3/4/2013
Revised: 7/26/2016
Revised: 8/30/2016

Next Review: 10/01/2021

POLICY APPROVAL

(For use by the Office of the Board of Trustees or the Office of the President)

Policy Number: 12.1.5

President or

Chairman, Board of Trustees

Alan E. McLaughlin, Pres.

Date: 8/30/16