



COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Credit Hour

Policy Number [X-XX]

Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania

Approved by University Senate, [Date of Approval]

Revised [Date of Revision]

Responsible Office: [Insert Division or Office]

Previous Policy: Credit Hour (IAP 21)

1. Purpose

Commonwealth University establishes a semester credit hour in accordance with federal law (34 CFR 668.8 (k) and (l)), Pennsylvania code (22 Pa Code § 31.21.b. and 22 Pa Code § 73.1), and PASSHE policies (1990-06-A, 1985-01-A, and 1999-01).

2. Scope

All Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania credit-bearing courses

3. Definitions, Roles and Responsibilities

3.1. Definitions

3.1.1. **Credit:** A unit of measurement that represents the amount of learning a student has completed in a course. Credits are used to track a student's progress towards their degree.

3.1.2. **Credit hour:** One credit hour is 50 minutes of faculty instruction (contact time) and 2 hours of student preparation once per week for 14 weeks, including an additional 120 minutes of a designated final exam period.

3.1.3. **Final examination period:** Defined in Commonwealth University Policy 1-15.

3.2. Roles and Responsibilities



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- 3.2.1. University Curriculum Committee reviews proposals and approves the number of credits per course or equivalent activity.

4. Policy

- 4.1. The university defines a credit hour using the well-established Carnegie Unit. Each credit hour represents 50 minutes of faculty instruction and 120 minutes of student preparation once per week for 14 weeks and 120 minutes for a designated final examination period. One credit, therefore, represents a minimum contact time of 700 minutes over 14 weeks and expects 1400 minutes of student preparation with at least 120 minutes of a designated final examination period for a total of a minimum of 2220 minutes per semester.
- 4.2. A typical lecture or seminar course of 3 credits would, therefore, include a minimum of 2100 minutes of instruction and 4200 minutes of preparation over 14 weeks and 120 minutes of designated final exam period for a total of 6420 minutes.
- 4.3. A designated final examination period occurs exclusive of the 14 weeks. Holidays or instructional breaks are excluded from the count of weeks for credit hour purposes. A typical fall or spring semester occurs over 16 consecutive calendar weeks.
- 4.4. Other academic courses, like laboratories and lessons, redistribute contact and preparation hours to meet learning objectives, as long as minimum credit hour guidelines are met.
- 4.5. Commonwealth University programs may determine contact time over the minimum requirements as needed to achieve student learning goals and maintain compliance with programmatic accreditation bodies.
- 4.6. Programs may determine the appropriate contact and preparation hours for their supplementary laboratory, lesson, or studio courses. For example, sciences, art, music, theater, and others, may designate their contact and preparation hours as necessary with the credit hour guidelines in mind.
- 4.7. Internships, practica, field experiences, and student teaching should consider the use of a 40-hour work week for contact hours. For example, a credit hour would be 2400 minutes of supervised work and a minimum of 120 minutes of a designated final examination period. Internships, practica, field experiences, and student teaching are a minimum of 3 credits, 120 hours or 7200 minutes, plus a designated final examination period.
- 4.8. All course modes follow the above general guidelines; this includes individualized and independent study. For courses in which some or all contact hours are delivered asynchronously, the course activities should represent the same amount of content learning time, in addition to preparation time. For hybrid or blended courses, at least



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one class session should be in-person or at least one class session should be online with the same amount of content learning time, in addition to preparation time, over the remaining class sessions. Accelerated courses must include the same number of content learning hours distributed across a shorter amount of time.

- 4.9. Contact time must also abide by the faculty workload hours agreed upon in the collective bargaining agreement between the university and APSCUF.

5. Procedures, Standards, and Guidelines

- 5.1 [Procedures, standards, and guidelines may be issued, revised or rescinded by the President (or designee). Links to forms, procedure instructions, etc. may be linked here.]

6. Compliance and Enforcement

- 6.1. Every University policy will undergo a regular review on a five-year cycle, with approximately 20% of the total policies inventory being reviewed each year.
- 6.2. All policy reviews will be conducted by the responsible Senate Committee to assure that the policy remains relevant and aligns with applicable federal and state laws and regulations, PASSHE Board of Governors policies, and other University policies, procedures, standards, or guidelines.

7. Additional Information

7.1. Supporting Legal Definitions

7.1.1. Regulations provided by the U.S. Department of Education define "Except as provided in 34 CFR 668.8(k) and (l), 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 academic activities as established by the



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institution including laboratory work, internships, practicum, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.”

- 7.1.2. Pennsylvania Code, Title 22 § 31.21.b states, “Degree requirements stated in this section may be stated in terms of semester credit hours or quarter credit hours, as determined by the institution and conforming to generally accepted academic practices. [...] A semester credit hour represents a unit of curricular material that normally can be taught in a minimum of 14 hours of classroom instruction, plus appropriate outside preparation or the equivalent as determined by the faculty.”

7.2. **History**

- 7.2.1. [Indicate whether the policy is a new policy, or whether it supersedes an existing policy. Include the effective date of the original policy as well as the date(s) of any subsequent amendments (if known).]
- 7.2.2. Effective Date – [Date Approved by the University Senate or Issued by the Office of the President as an Interim Policy]
- 7.2.3. Revised - [Date of Revision]
- 7.2.4. Next Review Date - [Date of Revision]

7.3. **Related Policies** - [Reference related policies]

7.4. **Contacts for Additional Information and Reporting**

[Name of Office/Division, Commonwealth University, Attn: [Name of person to serve as contact, email address of contact hyperlinked, office phone of contact in format of XXX.XXX.XXXX]