



Policy 10.5 Credit Hours

Responsible Official: Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Administering Division/Department: General Policies

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Policy Sections:

- I. Overview
- II. Applicability
- III. Policy Details
- IV. Definitions
- V. Related Links
- VI. Contact Information
- VII. Revision History

Overview

This policy defines the credit hour in accordance with federal regulations for all courses and programs at Emory University.

Applicability

This policy applies to all schools and programs that provide academic credit.

Policy Details

I. Credit Hour Determination

The Department of Education 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:

1. Not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours 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 outlined in (1) above in 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.

Application of Credit Hour Policy

This credit hour policy applies to all certificate, undergraduate, graduate, and professional courses that award academic credit regardless of the mode of delivery. The expectation of direct classroom contact and student effort outside the classroom is the same in all formats of the course including but not limited to traditional lecture classes, seminars, fully online classes, or a combination of face-to-face contact and electronically delivered content.

Emory recognizes other forms of engaged/structured instruction outside of the traditional lecture or seminar class (e.g.,

research groups, internships, service learning or civic engagement). Credit hours for these forms of instruction are guided by the three hours of work per week formula outlined in federal regulations. Laboratory classes are considered all in class with little or limited outside assignments, although this may vary across courses and disciplines. Thus, one credit unit is assigned to three hours per week of laboratory time.

Some courses include additional structured academic work beyond the classroom. These additions generally take the form of supervised activities where students use college resources to engage in required learning activities as part of the course. An example may be a 3-unit lecture class in which students are required also to participate in a weekly 1-hour discussion section with associated homework. Total academic work for the class would consist of 4 hours per week in engaged instruction (lecture + discussion section) and 8 hours per week of homework. When additional instruction is based on supervised work similar to a lab with limited outside assignments (e.g., film series with film viewing plus discussion but no additional outside work), one credit unit is assigned for three hours of work per week.

For independent or directed study or structured and supervised experiential learning such as internships or research, one hour of academic credit is awarded for satisfactory completion of three hours of work each week for 15 weeks. These hours include organized contact with the instructor to discuss, review, and evaluate the learning experience.

Activities considered as engaged instruction must be required of all students, structured, and must contribute significantly to student learning and course performance. Examples of activities that do not count toward engaged instruction include readings, homework and other preparation or activities (e.g., practicing calculations). Simply logging on to the computer constitutes neither active faculty instruction nor active student learning. Active participation in online discussion boards, chats, wikis, etc., can serve as engaged instruction.

The School of Medicine determines the amount of credit awarded for courses according to the standards of the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME), which is the accrediting body for medical education programs in the United States and Canada. The LCME defines academic credit in terms of weeks of instruction rather than semester hours and requires a minimum of 130 weeks of instruction for the doctor of medicine degree. Emory University assigns credit hours to School of Medicine courses and clinical practicum and research requirements based on 40 clock hours in one week of instruction.

Academic Calendar

Emory University defines contact as 50 minutes of engaged instruction per week over the course of a 15-week semester ($50 \times 15 = 750$ minutes). Using the standards for work outlined in federal policy, a traditional lecture class would consist of 750 minutes of direct contact in the classroom and 1500 minutes of outside effort per semester for each credit hour assigned to the class for a total of 2250 minutes of work for each credit unit. This same formula is applied to the weeks of instruction as outlined by the LCME – 40 clock hours of instruction is equivalent to a minimum of 2400 minutes of academic work.

Courses scheduled outside of the standard academic calendar are prorated so they contain the same number of hours as if the course were scheduled for a full semester. To maintain the integrity of the instructional program, course instructors should make special efforts when scheduling non-standard courses so that there is adequate time for students to complete homework assignments or participate in discussion groups or other additional forms of engaged/structured instruction.

Curriculum Review

The Curriculum Committee or other appropriate governing body within each College or School within Emory University is responsible for the review and approval of credit hours for all courses according to the standards outlined in the Credit Hour Policy. Credit hours are determined when new courses are proposed or existing courses are revised. The syllabus submitted with the application is reviewed for contact time as well as the course requirements and assignments that comprise the “amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes.” The reviewing body is responsible for maintaining documents that record the review and approval process.

Definitions

Examples

The Credit Hour Policy is designed to establish standards for academic work while allowing Colleges and Schools the flexibility to determine the appropriate learning strategies and formats for their disciplines. To assist with the process of assigning credit hours to courses, the following examples are provided. These examples are not meant to be exhaustive but, rather, to illustrate the Credit Hour Policy and how it may be applied.

Format	Credit Unit	Student Contact with Instructor Time/week (minutes)	Outside Work/week (minutes)	Total /week (minutes)	Total Semester (minutes)
Traditional					
Lecture/Seminar	1	50	100	150	2250
	2	100	200	300	4500
	3	150	300	450	6750
	4	200	400	600	9000
Laboratory	1	150	limited/variable	150	2250
	2	300	limited/variable	300	4500
Alternative/Structured					
Discussion/Recitation	1	50	100	150	2250
Inquiry Guided Instruction	1	50	100	150	2250
Writing Instruction	1	50	100	150	2250
Alternative/Supervised Work					
Internship	1	Variable	150	150	2250
Internship	2	Variable	300	300	4500
Internship	3	Variable	450	450	6750
Service Learning	1	Variable	150	150	2250
Cultural Events	1	Variable	150	150	2250
Studio Work	1	Variable	150	150	2250
Studio Work	2	Variable	300	300	4500

Courses can also combine strategies. For example, a traditional 3 credit hour lecture class can be combined with a 2 credit-hour laboratory for a total of 5 credit hours for the course. A traditional 3 credit hour seminar can be combined with a pedagogy that requires more academic work such as Ways of Inquiry or Writing Instruction for a total of 4 credit hours as long as the pedagogy meets the one hour of contact plus 2 hours of outside work formula. Strategies with different time frames can be combined as well. For example a traditional lecture class that meets weekly can be combined with cultural events that occur outside of class in longer blocks of time (e.g., 3 credit hour class with 2250 minutes of film).

The weeks of instruction format used in the School of Medicine typically consists of combined formats including face-to-face instruction, small group discussion, laboratory exercises, and independent study. Combined formats require that course instructors thoroughly specify the learning objectives, contact time, course requirements, and assessments on the syllabus.

Related Links

- Current Version of This Policy: <http://policies.emory.edu/10.5>

Contact Information

Subject	Contact	Phone	Email
Clarification of Policy	Office of the Provost	404-727-7452	nbliwis@emory.edu

Revision History

No previous versions of this policy were found.

Emory University policies are subject to change at any time. If you are reading this policy in paper or PDF format, you are strongly encouraged to visit policies.emory.edu to ensure that you are relying on the current version.