

Augusta University

Policy Library

Definition of a Credit Hour

Policy Manager: Office of the Vice Provost

POLICY STATEMENT

For academic purposes, Augusta University conforms to standards set by the BOR (Board of Regents) [Policy 3.4.4 of the University System of Georgia](#), the SACSCOC (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) Commission on Colleges Policy Statement, the Federal definition (Federal Register (75 FR 66832 p. 66946), Carnegie unit recommendations, and individual program accrediting agency guidelines to define and measure semester credit hours awarded to students for course work.

AFFECTED STAKEHOLDERS

Indicate all entities and persons within the Enterprise that are affected by this policy:

- ☐ Alumni ☒ Faculty ☒ Graduate Students ☒ Health Professional Students
☐ Staff ☒ Undergraduate Students ☐ Vendors/Contractors ☐ Visitors
☐ Other:

DEFINITIONS

Credit Hour Definition applies to all Undergraduate, Graduate, and College of Dental Medicine Courses:

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

- (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 institution including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

Augusta University Definition of a Credit Hour

Although not explicitly stated in the BOR policy which defines one semester credit hour as 750 minutes of total instruction or equivalent per a 15 week semester (50 minutes/week), AU also expects the minimum of 1500 minutes (2 class hours; 100 minutes/week) of out of class student work in line with SACSCOCs and Federal definitions. Thus overall, one credit hour is constituted by a minimum of the equivalent of three class work hours; where a class hour is defined as 50 minutes. However, the ratio of in class/direct instruction time vs out of class student work, will vary depending on the course type.

The standard for a one-semester credit hour course is one class hour (50 minutes) of direct instruction

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and a minimum of two class hours (100 minutes) of out of class student work/student academic engagement activities each week during the standard semester (15 weeks). This equates to a total of 750 minutes of direct instruction and 1500 minutes of out-of-class student work per standard semester (15 weeks).

A course offered in fewer than 15 weeks shall contain the same total hours (contact hours, preparation time, content, and requirements) as the same course offered in the standard 15-week semester.

Reasonable Equivalencies for Course Types and Methods of Delivery

Semester credit hours are granted for various types of instruction as follows:

- Lecture: One credit hour = one class hour (50 minutes) plus minimum of two class hours (100 minutes) of out-of-class student work/week
- Seminar: One credit hour = one class hour (50 minutes) plus a minimum of two class hours (100 minutes) of out-of-class student work/week.

In courses and academic activities where direct instruction is not the primary mode of learning, such as laboratory courses, internships, practica, clinical experiences, research, etc., an equivalent amount of work (minimum of three hours per week for a semester) must be completed for a credit hour.

- Laboratory- One credit hour = two class (laboratory) hours (100 minutes) plus minimum of one class hour (50 minutes) out of class student work/week.
- Internship/Practicum – Ratio of in class/out of class time engagement can be variable by discipline – typically one credit hour = two class (Internship/Practicum)hours (100 minutes) plus minimum of one class hour (50 minutes) out of class student work/week.
- Clinical Experiences– variable by program and determined in accordance with recommendations of program’s specific accrediting bodies or state regulation (if/as applicable). (Typically one credit hour = two clinical hours (100 minutes) plus minimum of one hour out of class student work/week or one credit hour = three clinical hours (150minutes) /week or for a 15 week semester, 37.5 hours per credit hour).
- Research, Thesis/Dissertation and Independent Study Courses where students are working on independent projects, such as in thesis/dissertation hours and independent studies, will conform to the standard minimum of three hours of student work per credit hour per week throughout the course of the semester or the equivalent amount of work distributed over a different period of time. For a 15 week semester this would be 37.5 hours per credit hour.

Distance Learning/Online Courses – Distance learning/Online courses shall be defined as those courses and programs in which 95% or more of class time is delivered by distance by technology. Actual contact time should follow the same guidelines as traditional face-to-face courses.

- Online courses should meet an equivalent of the required 750 minutes of instruction per credit

hour per 15-week semester and expect the minimum of 1,500 minutes (2 class hours; 100 minutes per week) of out-of-class student work.

- Partially at a Distance – The combination of face-to-face and distance instruction must equal an equivalent of 750 minutes of instruction per credit hour per 15-week semester and expect the minimum of 1,500 minutes (2 class hours; 100 minutes per week) of out-of-class student work.
- Hybrid - A course is considered hybrid (or blended) when it has the following characteristics: 1) the course is carefully designed integration of online and face to face experiences using the best aspects of both environments to meet the learning objectives. And 2) a significant portion of traditional face-to-face class time is replaced by on-line components. For example, a course that is taught (50% online, 50% face-to-face) would require 375 minutes of instruction per semester hour must be conducted face-to-face; 375 minutes of instruction per semester hour must be conducted via distance per 15-week semester. In addition, the minimum of 1,500 minutes (2 class hours; 100 minutes per week) of out-of-class student work is expected.

Length of a Semester

- i. Full term – Standard Semester = 15 weeks of instruction (not counting exam weeks). Standard credit/contact hours are calculated for this time frame.
- ii. Summerville summer sessions
 - a) Full session – 45 days of instruction. Class time must be scheduled to include 750 minutes of instruction and the minimum of 1500 minutes of out-of-class student work per credit hour.
 - b) Short sessions – range from 5 to 7 ½ weeks. Class time must be scheduled to include 750 minutes of instruction per credit hour and the minimum of 1500 minutes of out-of-class student work per credit hour.
- iii. Health Sciences summer session – 55 days of instruction. Class time must be scheduled to include 750 minutes of instruction per credit hour and the minimum of 1500 minutes of out-of-class student work per credit hour.

Location

All courses must be equivalent to the standard credit hour calculation (depending on the course type), and must be consistently delivered as such across all locations offered:

- i. Online (fully at a distance)
- ii. Main campus (Summerville and Health Sciences)
- iii. Satellite campuses

PROCESS & PROCEDURES

The above definition shall be used whenever calculating the award of credit hours by Augusta University.

REFERENCES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Curriculum Revision Forms: <https://www.augusta.edu/registrar/curriculog/resources.php#Templates>

University Academic Calendar: <https://www.augusta.edu/registrar/academiccalendar/>

University System of Georgia Credit Hour Policy:
<https://www.usg.edu/policymanual/section3/C339>

RELATED POLICIES

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APPROVED BY:

Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, Augusta University

Date: 8/20/2025

President, Augusta University

Date: 8/20/2025