

# Columbus State University

## Credit Hour Policy and Procedures

### Definition of Credit Hours

The institution has policies and procedures for determining the credit hours awarded for courses and programs that conform to commonly accepted practices in higher education and to Commission policy. (See Commission policy "Credit Hours.") (Federal Requirement 4.9)

### Narrative

Columbus State University has policies and procedures for determining the credit hours awarded for courses and programs. These policies and procedures comply with commonly accepted practice in higher education as well as the Commission on Colleges 2011 Credit Hours policy and the federal definition. The policies and procedures apply to courses in all delivery formats (online, face-to-face, or hybrid) and at all locations (main campus or approved external instructional site). The appropriate application of these policies and procedures is monitored at the department, college, and institutional levels.

### Institutional Policies and Procedures for the Definition and Award of Semester Credit Hours

Columbus State University conforms to the credit hour policy established by the SACS Commission on Colleges and Policy 3.4.1 of the Board of Regents (BOR) of the University System of Georgia (USG). The BOR policy conforms to COC standard and the commonly accepted practice in higher education of a minimum of 50 minutes of seat time per week (750 per credit hour per term). Although not explicitly mentioned in the BOR policy, the University also expects 300 minutes of out-of-class student engagement each week for a 15 week, 3 credit-hour course. The University has also defined expectations for the amount of time required per credit hour for other types of academic work such as laboratory experiences, practica, field experiences, internships, studios, independent study.

Information on the number of credit hours and the dates, time, part of term, and delivery format for each course is published online through the course schedule and is publicly accessible prior to student registration each term. This process is monitored by the department chair, the dean of the college, and the Manager of Academic Data in the Office of the Provost.

A credit hour statement is available for each course and is published in the course description in the Columbus State University Academic Catalog along with the following explanatory statement describing the meaning of each number in the credit hour statement.

Numbers following a descriptive title of each course indicate the number of weekly class hours, the number of weekly laboratory or practicum hours, and the credit hour value of the course expressed in semester hours. For example, **(2-2-3)** following the course title means two class hours, two laboratory or practicum hours and three semester hours of credit.

The formula for converting classroom instructional time and laboratory time to the number of credit hours awarded is:

$$\begin{aligned} &(\text{number of hours of classroom instruction per week}) + (\text{number of lab or practicum hours}/2) \\ &= \text{total credit hours awarded.} \end{aligned}$$

The credit hour statement in the above example (2-2-3) would yield a minimum of (2 hours of classroom instruction per week) + (2 hours of laboratory or practicum per week/2) = 3 credit hours. In some instances, the university does require more student work per credit hour (2-3-3). This would yield (2 hours of classroom instruction per week) + (3 hours of laboratory or practicum per week/2) = 3 credit hours.

### Classroom Minutes

Classroom minutes can include, but are not limited to the following types of activities and may be completed in a face-to-face or online environment: lecture to include lecture capture, video streaming, narrated PowerPoint presentations, and Podcasts; discussion to include both large and small group

formats, as well as discussion boards and chat; role play; modeling and simulation; student presentations or performances; and assessment.

### **Out-of-Class Student Academic Engagement Activities**

Out-of-class student academic engagement may include, but not be limited to, activities such as assigned readings; review of media clips, films, or dramatic productions; group projects; written assignments; quantitative problem-solving; interviews; research; preparation for individual presentations; vocal or instrumental practice; theatrical rehearsal; creation of studio art; creation of lesson plans; portfolio development; critiques; development of electronic media or web pages; and problem-solving activities.

### **Justification of Reasonable Equivalencies for Credit Hour Awards across Various Modes of Delivery**

#### Face-to-Face Courses

Courses delivered in the face-to-face format require a minimum of 750 classroom minutes and 1,500 out-of-class student academic engagement per credit hour for a total of 2,250 minutes of expected student academic engagement per credit hour for course completion with a passing grade. The minimum number of minutes required for classroom and for out-class academic engagement for 2 and 3 credit hours in a face-to-face course are identified below in Table 1.

#### Laboratory Courses

Laboratory courses require a minimum of 1,500 classroom minutes and 750 out-of-class student academic engagement per credit hour for a total of 2,250 minutes of expected student academic engagement per credit hour for course completion with a passing grade. The minimum number of classroom and out-class academic engagement for 2 and 3 credit hours in a laboratory course are identified below in Table 1.

**Table 1: Credit Hours for Face-to-face and Laboratory Courses**

Type of Course Delivery by Credit Hours, Class Meetings, and Term Length	Standard Total Number of Classroom Minutes scheduled per credit hour per term			Minimum total number of minutes of out-of-class student academic engagement expected per credit hour for that type of course			Total minutes per credit hour of expected student academic engagement for course completion with a passing grade		
	1 credit	2 credits	3 credits	1 credit	2 credits	3 credits	1 credit	2 credits	3 credits
Face-to-Face	1 credit	2 credits	3 credits	1 credit	2 credits	3 credits	1 credit	2 credits	3 credits
Lecture hour	750	1500	2250	1500	3000	4500	2250	4500	6750
Class meetings	Courses typically meet 1-3 times per week with the total minutes equally distributed.								
Lab hour	1500	3000	4500	750	1500	2250	2250	4500	6750
Class Meetings	Courses typically meet 1-3 times per week with the total minutes equally distributed.								

#### Online Courses:

Online courses must also meet the equivalent of 750 minutes of instruction for each credit hour awarded. Syllabi for online courses are constructed carefully by faculty members and are reviewed by the appropriate department chair to ensure that the rigor of the course and the student learning outcomes are equivalent to those in sections of the same course offered in the traditional classroom setting.

#### Hybrid/Reduced Seat Time Courses:

Hybrid/ Reduced Seat Time: Courses that combine the face-to-face classroom experience with online learning conform to the minimum number of minutes of classroom time and out-of-class student academic engagement per credit hour. These courses have the same student learning outcomes and comparable

course requirements as face-to-face courses. In these situations, students have reduced seat time to meet the online course requirements. Seat time is reduced by the stated percentage (33%, 50%, 75%, etc.) while online course work is increased by that same percentage as noted in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: 33% reduced seat time for a hybrid 3 credit hour course**

Face-to-Face	Standard Total Number of Classroom Minutes scheduled per credit hour per week	Standard Total Number of Classroom Minutes scheduled per credit hour per term	Minimum total number of minutes of out-of-class student academic engagement expected per credit hour for that type of course	Total minutes per credit hour of expected student academic engagement for course completion with a passing grade
Lecture hour	150	2250	4500	6750
33% reduced seat time	100	1500	5250	6750
50% reduced seat time	75	1125	5625	6750
75% reduced seat time	37.5	562.5	6187.5	6750

**Justification of Reasonable Equivalencies for Credit Hour Awards across Various Locations**

Courses delivered in a face-to-face setting (main campus or approved external instructional site) require a minimum of 750 minutes of classroom minutes and 1500 minutes of out-of-class student academic engagement for each hour of credit awarded. In Spring 2013, a section of ENGL 1102: English Composition 2 might be scheduled on Monday/Wednesday/Friday from 8:00-8:50 a.m. on main campus or while another section of the same course might be scheduled on Tuesday/Thursday from 7:30-8:45 p.m. at the Fort Benning instructional site. Both courses require the same number of minutes for out-of-class student academic engagement as well as the same number of classroom minutes per week.

**Justification of Reasonable Equivalencies for Credit Hour Awards by Term Length**

Columbus State University uses multiple parts of term, multiple delivery methods (online, face-to-face, and hybrid), and multiple instructional sites. The number of credit hours assigned, the allotted instructional time, and the student learning outcomes are monitored at departmental, college, and institutional levels to maintain equivalency to traditional courses taught on the main campus. CSU utilizes a variety of parts of term to meet diverse student scheduling needs. These include:

- Regular term: 15 weeks (Inclusive of Finals)
- 2/3 term: 10 weeks
- Half term: 8 weeks
- 1/3 term: 5 weeks
- 1 week: 5 days

The Dates of Academic Terms are published on the CSU website by the Office of the Registrar. Regardless of the part of term used, the total number of minutes required is equal to that required of a 15 week course, but is divided over a shorter period of time.

In order to meet USG and SACSCOC requirements for class meeting time, the time designated as the final exam period for each course is included in the total meeting minutes for the course. Therefore, all courses must include activities consistent with the "Classroom Minutes" section of this document during the final exam period.

## **Justification of Reasonable Equivalencies for Credit Hour Awards by Course Type**

Internship: There is great variability in the handling of internship courses, as the requirements for hours and amount of outside work are dependent on the discipline. Examples include the following:

ITDS 4698: Internship (Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts) is worth 3 credit hours requiring 9 hours per week for a total of 135 hours across 15 weeks. This is equal to 6750 minutes of lab/internship work and assumes that all required work may be completed during internship hours.

EXSC 4698: Internship (Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science) is worth 12 credit hours requiring 24 hours of work per week for 15 weeks (total of 1500 minutes per credit hour). This is consistent with the lab hour policy in Table 1.

COUN 6697: Internship in School Counseling (Master of Education in School Counseling) is a 3 semester hour course that is taken for two semesters (6 total credit hours earned). Each semester the course requires 300 hours of internship in the counseling setting divided over the 15 weeks of each semester (20 hours per week). This requirement is in accordance with the accreditation standards established by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related-Educational Programs.

Studio art courses typically follow the formula for lab hours. (See Table 1.)

Field experiences in teaching typically follow the formula for lab hours. That is, per credit hour, the students meet 100 minutes and have approximately 750 minutes of out-of-class work, for a total of 2250 minutes. The University System of Georgia requires one year (commonly interpreted as 900 hours of work with students) prior to teacher certification of which CSU students obtain approximately 300 hours in field experiences and 600 hours in student teaching.

Field Experiences in counseling programs follow Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs standards, requiring a total of 700 hours of field work. These are divided between practicum (100 hours for 3 hours credit) and internship (2 courses, 3 credit hours each, 300 hours each). This is consistent with practice in other counseling programs.

Student Teaching/Clinical Practice requires that students work full-time, 5 days/week, for 15 weeks. Student teachers receive 10 credit hours. This is consistent with common practice in education and meets NCATE standards and the Board of Regents' requirement.

Clinical Practice in nursing is associated with specific courses; the number of hours per credit hour exceeds those stated in Table 1 for lab courses (typically 3 lab hours = 1 credit hour). The total number of clinical hours, 795, is within the range of other nursing programs within the state (range of 720 -900), making it consistent with common practice in Georgia.

Thesis work is accomplished through varying means depending on the discipline. It may be provided through variable-credit research (1-9 hours) and a 0-credit thesis defense or through a 3-credit, directed study thesis option. For one credit hour of thesis work, it is expected that students will spend approximately 150 minutes per week or a total of 2250 minutes in some combination of meeting with the advisor and/or committee and doing independent research.

Dissertation work is valued at 3 semester hours; students enroll three semesters (9 hours) and receive no grade until the dissertation has been completed. It is expected that students will spend approximately 450 minutes per week or a total of 6750 minutes in some combination of meeting with the advisor and/or committee and doing independent research (to include data collection and analysis, conducting a literature review, writing and editing, and similar tasks).

Applied Music courses require that students spend one hour per week in private instruction, 1-2 hours in a group class with other students of the studio, and 6-12 hours practicing their instrument per credit hour awarded. Two or three credit hour sections require, in addition, a larger and more advanced repertoire and correspondingly more practice.

Study Abroad courses combine faculty-led field experiences and classroom instruction. It is typical to replace up to half the classroom hours with field experience (at least two hours experience for every hour in class). In addition, students spend at least one hour per week per credit hour in non-classroom and non-field activities. (Per credit hour: class = 375 minutes; field = 750 minutes; other = 1125; Total = 2250 minutes)

Independent Study courses are typically worth 1-3 credits with time distributed between independent reading, meetings with the instructor, written assignments, research, presentations, and other activities as appropriate for the academic discipline and level of the course.

### **Procedures for Ensuring Compliance with the CSU Credit Hour Policy**

As new courses are proposed, the credit hour statement and syllabus are reviewed and approved by members of the department, college, and university curriculum committees to ensure that the credit hour statement is appropriate and that the proposed student learning outcomes and course requirements appropriately reflect the amount of credit to be awarded for the course. These documents are archived in the University Curriculum Committee minutes.

Each course approved through the institutional curriculum process (i.e. departmental, college, and institutional approval) has a designated credit hour statement which is published in the CSU Academic Catalog. The credit hour statement reflects time required for course instruction (whether face-to-face or online) and laboratory or practicum experiences. Changes to the credit hour statement of a course must be approved through the institutional curriculum process.

Department chairs and deans monitor the development of the course schedule to ensure that each course complies with the credit hour policy. Online courses, or courses which have an online component with reduced seat time, are monitored by department chairs and deans to provide learning outcomes, course requirements, and substantive faculty-student interactions that are equivalent to the same course offered in a traditional face-to-face format.

### **Policies and Procedures for Credit Hours Awarded for Programs**

Columbus State University also complies with Board of Regents policy regarding credit hours awarded for programs. The maximum number of credit hours that can be required for each level of degree program is determined by the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia in accordance with national standards for degree program lengths. The University adheres to the Board of Regents policy regarding maximum number of credit hours allowable for undergraduate and graduate programs.

Associate of Arts and Associate of Science transfer degrees have a maximum of 60 semester hours (exclusive of physical education activity/basic health or orientation course hours that the institution may require) (USG Academic and Student Affairs Handbook, Section 2.3.5).

Absent the approval of the USG chief academic officer, no bachelor's degree program shall exceed one hundred and twenty (120) semester credit hours, exclusive of physical education activity/basic health or orientation course hours that the institution may require (BOR Minutes, 1980-81, p. 49; December, 1995, p. 47) (BOR Policy Manual, Section 3.8).

Absent the approval of the USG chief academic officer, no master's degree program shall exceed thirty-six (36) semester credit hours (BOR Minutes, 1953-54, pp. 51-52; 1953-54, pp. 220-221; December, 1995, p. 47) (BOR Policy Manual, Section 3.8).

The total number of credit hours awarded for a new program of study is reviewed and approved at multiple levels (departmental, college, and university) during the curricular review process at the institution. The credit hours awarded for existing programs of study are monitored by the appropriate department chair and dean to ensure that they are in accord with the institutional, System, and Commission policies and procedures for credit hour award and program length. The Board of Regents also maintains a number of academic advisory committees to provide input on curricular matters related to academic programs.

Programs that exceed the maximum number of credit hours allowed by the Board of Regents must be approved by the Chief Academic Officer of the University System of Georgia. All programs at CSU that exceed the maximum number of allowable credit hours are in the fields of education or counseling and are listed and addressed in detail in section FR. 4.4: Appropriate Program Length. These programs exceed the maximum credit hours referenced above for a variety of reasons and have been approved by the Chief Academic Officer of the USG. The reasons for exceeding the maximum credit hour limits include:

1. to meet the requirements of the University System of Georgia;
2. to address initial teacher or counselor certification requirements; and/or
3. to meet standards established by relevant accrediting bodies such as the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) or the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs(CACREP).

### **Summary**

Columbus State University has policies and procedures in place to determine the number of credit hours awarded for courses and programs. These policies and procedures include faculty, staff, and administrators at multiple levels (departmental, college, and institutional). They comply with commonly accepted practice in higher education as well as the Commission policy and apply to courses in all delivery formats (online, face-to-face, or hybrid) and at all locations (main campus or approved external instructional sites).