



POLICY & PROCEDURE DOCUMENT

NUMBER: 1.4034

DIVISION: Academic Affairs

TITLE: Engagement Requirements for Hour of Credit

DATE: February 1, 1977

REVISED: July 19, 2005, January 28, 2013, September 23, 2013, September 5, 2017

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I. Purpose and Scope

Western Kentucky University uses semester credit hours (SCH) as the basis for measuring the amount of learning accomplished. This measurement of engaged learning delineates the units connected with student learning experiences in both traditional classroom settings and nontraditional classroom settings such as laboratories, studios, internships, practica and other experiential learning, and in semester and non-semester-based, face-to-face and distance learning delivery modes.

The purpose of this policy is to provide faculty of Western Kentucky University guidance in setting credit hour expectations for WKU academic courses and programs consistent with federal regulations.

II. Policy

A. Definition of Credit Hour

1. In order to comply with federal regulations and comply with Southern Association of Schools and Colleges: Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) policy, Western Kentucky University has adopted the federal definition of the Credit Hour as identified by SACSCOC in their policy statement on credit hours approved June 2011, edited January 2012, which follows:

Federal Definition of the Credit Hour. For purposes of the application of this policy and in accord with federal regulations, 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

- a. 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
 - b. At least an equivalent amount of work as required outlined in item 1 above 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.
2. Western Kentucky University is responsible for determining the amount of credit hours awarded for WKU academic courses and programs and will abide by the SACSCOC guidelines for flexibility in interpretation when assigning credit hours for student coursework, stated as follows:
 - a. The institution determines the amount of credit for student work.
 - b. A credit hour is expected to be a reasonable approximation of a minimum amount of student work in accordance with commonly accepted practice in higher education.*
 - c. The credit hour definition is a minimum standard that does not restrict an institution from setting a higher standard that requires more student work per credit hour.
 - d. The definition does not dictate particular amounts of classroom time versus out-of-class student work.
 - e. In determining the amount of work the institution's learning outcomes will entail, the institution may take into consideration alternative delivery methods, measurements of student work, academic calendars, disciplines, and degree levels.
 - f. To the extent an institution believes that complying with the Federal definition of a credit hour would not be appropriate for academic and other institutional needs, it may adopt a separate measure for those purposes.
 - g. Credits may be awarded on the basis of documentation of the amount of work a typical student is expected to complete within a specified amount of academically engaged time, or on the basis of documented student learning calibrated to that amount of academically engaged time for a typical student.

*Note: For the purposes of this policy, an "hour" of instruction is interpreted as 50 minutes of contact time or its equivalent. Thus each semester hour of credit involves $15 \times 50 = 750$ minutes = 12.5 hours of contact time, or its equivalent, including formally-scheduled final examination periods during the period allotted for final examinations but excluding the registration period.

3. Alternative delivery modes that form a component of any course must maintain standards of educational integrity and must demonstrate a degree of engagement consistent with the intent of this policy.

III. Procedure

1. Determination of credit hours for WKU academic courses and programs will be proposed by program faculty, recommended by the University Senate and approved by the Provost, according to the established university curriculum approval process.
2. Minutes of classroom instruction associated with each course section will be regularly audited by the Office of the Provost. Course sections with alternative delivery modes (e.g. required out-of-class learning experiences, use of WKU supported learning technologies, etc.) will be provided a notation in Topnet describing the nature of planned replaced contact time.

IV. Related Policies

V. Reasons for Revision

January 2013

Substantially amended to include federal definition of credit hour and comply with SACS policies.

September 2013

Amended note in II.A.2 to allow formal class sessions that occur during the final examination period to be included in the determination of contact time

Modified policy title and II.A.3 to more fully address requirements for alternative delivery modes.

September 2017

Added item III.2. to reflect existing practice and align with Policy 1.421V.