



Title: Credit Hour Policy
Effective Date: March 14, 2025
Issuing Authority: Provost
Policy Contact: Vice Provost for Institutional Effectiveness
478-301-2070

Purpose

This policy defines Mercer University's unit for academic work—the semester credit hour—in alignment with and as required by United States regulations and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SASCSCOC) guidelines and standards.

Scope

The Credit Hour Policy applies to all courses at all levels (undergraduate, graduate, and professional) that award academic credit.

Exclusions

None

Definitions

As used in this policy, the following terms have the meaning specified below:

Classroom or Direct Faculty Instruction: Includes but is not limited to: (1) student content creation or (2) interaction with students and/or the instructor about the academic subject matter. Examples of these activities include the following:

1. In-class, faculty-led instruction
2. In-class tests/quizzes
3. In-class student presentations
4. Online lectures/instruction (synchronous or asynchronous)
5. Online content modules
6. Virtual synchronous class meetings
7. Videoconference meetings
8. Videoconference presentations
9. Online tests/quizzes
10. Discussion boards
11. Virtual labs
12. Virtual or non-virtual field trips
13. Virtual or non-virtual service learning

14. Group and/or team-based activities
15. Audio lectures (including podcasts) accompanied by a low-stakes assessment

Policy Statement

Course instructors and academic units and leadership must ensure that semester credit hours are awarded in compliance with this policy.

Mercer University uses the semester credit hour as the institution's unit of academic work and complies with the US federal definition of the credit hour, which is stated in the SACSCOC Credit Hour Policy Statement as follows:

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

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 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.

Mercer University defines an hour as 50 minutes and adheres to the Carnegie unit for contact time per semester credit hour, which is 750 minutes of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of 1,500 minutes of out-of-class student work for each credit awarded. The expectation for classroom/direct faculty instruction and out-of-class student work is the same in course modalities and formats, whether classroom/direct faculty instruction is delivered face-to-face, online, blend of face-to-face and electronic means, or by lecture or seminar format.

Examples of Implementation of Mercer University's Credit Hour Policy

A. 15-Week, Three-Semester-Credit Hour Course Delivered Face-to-Face, Online Synchronous, or a Mix of Face-to-Face and Online Synchronous

At least 2250 minutes of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of 4,500 minutes of out-of-class student work.

B. Other Term Lengths

All courses must include the stated minimum amounts of classroom or direct faculty instruction, and out-of-class student work per semester credit hour, regardless of term length. For example, School of Law courses meet 180 minutes each week for a 14-week

semester. A course taught during an 8-week session is scheduled for 285 minutes of classroom or direct faculty instruction each week. A faculty member who, with requisite approval by the dean's office, wishes to move some of the required direct instructional time to a web-based environment or to another out-of-class experience for pedagogical reasons must clearly delineate in the syllabus the additional out-of-class experiences that will substitute for in-class instruction. Such experiences must exceed assignments required for the fully face-to-face version of the course in order to count toward direct instructional time and must be required, structured, and faculty-directed. Faculty are responsible for designing their courses to ensure the required number of direct instructional minutes each week, as well as the expected additional student preparatory work (100 minutes of out-of-class student work for each 50 minutes of classroom or direct faculty instruction). Deans' offices are responsible for reviewing and monitoring any proposed deviations from the regular face-to-face class schedule.

C. Blended or Online Courses

A course that is delivered partially or fully online must meet the same requirements of 750 minutes of classroom or direct faculty instruction and 1,500 minutes of out-of-class student work per credit hour. Faculty teaching online or blended courses must account for 2,250 minutes of classroom or direct faculty instruction for each 3-credit hour course. The syllabus must clearly delineate classroom or direct faculty instruction activities, as well as any required synchronous activities required outside class session times indicated in the schedule. Courses carrying the same course number that are offered both face-to-face and blended/online must meet the same learning objectives, be organized around the same or comparable learning activities, and be assessed by similar, comparable assessments.

D. Thesis/Dissertation and Independent Study Courses

Courses where students are working on independent projects, such as thesis/dissertation hours and independent studies, will conform to the minimum of 2,250 minutes for each semester credit hour awarded (e.g., 150 minutes of student work per week over a 15-week semester or the equivalent amount of work distributed over a different period of time).

E. Laboratory and Studio Courses

Laboratory and studio courses often have increased classroom or direct faculty instruction time with a commensurate decrease in required out-of-class student work. For example, a one-semester-credit-hour laboratory or studio course may include 1500 minutes of classroom or direct faculty instruction (e.g., 100 minutes of laboratory or studio work per week throughout a 15-week semester) and a minimum of 750 minutes of out-of-class student work.

F. Performance/Recital/Ensemble

In accordance with the National Association of Schools of Music recommendations, 1 credit hour of ensemble work or applied music lessons represents a minimum of 3 hours

of practice each week, on average, for a period of 15 weeks, plus the necessary individual instruction as defined by the major subject.

G. Internships, Clinical Experiences, and Student Teaching

Such experiential, field-based courses require a minimum of 2,250 minutes for each credit hour awarded (e.g., 150 minutes of student work per week over the 15-week semester). Student work includes time at the field site, meetings with supervisors, and outside preparation and assignments. Programs may require more than the minimum amount of student work per credit hour and may be guided by their specific accrediting bodies or applicable state regulations.

H. Variable Credit Courses

Courses that are available for variable credit must adhere to this policy and clearly articulate the expectations for classroom or direct faculty instruction, and out-of-class student work for each credit hour.

Additional Resources

1. Emergency Conditions Policy: <https://policies.mercer.edu/emergency-conditions/>
2. Virtual Learning Policy: <https://policies.mercer.edu/virtual-learning/>

History

Approved by President William Underwood June 18, 2023

Revised May 13, 2024

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