Resolution for Defining the Meaning of Credit Hour
Resolution of Non-Handbook Policy
EPSA
March 4, 2024
Passed

Whereas the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) policy on Assignment of Credits, Program Length, and Tuition [FDCR.A.10.020] requires:

An institution shall be able to equate its learning experiences with semester or quarter credit hours using practices common to institutions of higher education, to justify the lengths of its programs in comparison to similar programs found in accredited institutions of higher education, and to justify any program-specific tuition in terms of program costs, program length, and program objectives. Institutions shall notify HLC of any significant changes in the relationships among credits, program length, and tuition.

Assignment of Credit Hours. The institution’s assignment and award of credit hours shall conform to commonly accepted practices in higher education. Those institutions seeking, or participating in, Title IV federal financial aid, shall demonstrate that they have policies determining the credit hours awarded to courses and programs in keeping with commonly-accepted practices in higher education and with any federal definition of the credit hour, as may appear in federal regulations and that institutions also have procedures that result in an appropriate awarding of institutional credit in conformity with the policies established by the institution.

Whereas the United States Department of Education defines a credit hour as follows:

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 not less than:

1. One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction1 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.

1 50 minutes qualifies as an hour for purposes of this computation.
Whereas the Ohio University curricular process is in accordance with this standard, but the institution has never officially adopted the corresponding definition,

Be It Resolved that the following definitions and policies shall be in force:

1. Course credit earned at Ohio University is defined in terms of semester credit hours. In the typical lecture setting, a semester credit hour is awarded for at least 750 minutes of formalized direct instruction that carries an average of 1,500 minutes of indirect instruction completed by students outside the classroom. Thus, each credit hour entails at least 2,250 minutes of instruction (both direct and indirect) for the semester. For a course taught in the typical lecture setting over a standard 14-week semester, this comprises one clock hour (55 minute) meeting per week of in the classroom supplemented by at least two hours of out-of-classroom work. This requirement of at least 2,250 minutes of instruction remains in force for courses taught using alternative semester formats.

2. The default credit hour computation at Ohio University equates the number of credit hours with the number of weekly contact hours required to meet the course learning outcomes over a standard semester. This computation governs undergraduate courses taught in the typical face-to-face lecture format. As a corollary, in such courses each contact hour requires about two hours of out-of-class indirect instruction in the form of homework, readings, or other activities.

3. Certain types of instruction may utilize alternate computations to determine the credit hours awarded for a course, but in all circumstances a semester credit hour is expected to represent a minimum of 2,250 total minutes of student effort/time. The University Curriculum Council is responsible for determining what constitutes a permissible variation from the default credit hour computation, subject to the above constraints, and for maintaining documentation of such allowable variations in the Individual Course Committee Guidelines.

4. To ensure courses possess enough instructional time to meet the standards associated with their credit hours, all credit-bearing courses must be scheduled in accordance with the university's academic calendar and scheduling policies (e.g., Ohio University Policy 01-024 governing the scheduling of classroom and laboratory spaces). The academic calendar and associated scheduling policies must ensure that the scheduled meetings for a regularly scheduled course provide adequate instructional time to guarantee the minimum requirements for awarding credit hours are met.