

POLICY #7.001 Credit Hour Policy

Policy Category: Academic/Research
Responsible Department: Registrar's Office

Effective Date: 24 March 2021
Latest Revision: 22 July 2022

Policy links: U.S. Department of Education Office of Post-Secondary Education, "Guidance to Institutions and Accrediting Agencies Regarding a Credit Hour as Defined in the Final Regulations Published on October 29, 2010." This policy also reflects regulations specified in 34 CFR §600.2, §602.24 and §668.8. IES NCES Distance Education in IPEDS, <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data/distance-education-in-ipeds>.

SCOPE: The Credit Hour Policy follows or exceeds the guidelines set by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS™), and the US Department of Education. Middle States Commission on Higher Education¹ is the same as the US Department of Education. For MSCHE compliance, an institution must maintain written policies and procedures to assign credit hours, and provide evidence and analyses demonstrating that these policies and procedures are consistently applied across programs and courses, regardless of delivery mode or teaching/learning format.

POLICY STATEMENT: The US Department of Education defines "credit hour" as 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 instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work 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."

DEFINITIONS:

Academic engagement – active participation by a student in an instructional activity related to the student's course of study that is defined by the institution and includes, but is not limited to,

- Attending a synchronous class, lecture, laboratory activity, face-to-face or online
- Participating in simulated patient exercises or objective structured clinical examinations (OSCEs)
- Submitting an academic assignment
- Taking an assessment or exam

¹ MSCHE Credit Hour Policy, Effective date 20 October 2012

- Participating in an interactive tutorial, webinar, or other interactive computer-assisted instruction
- Participating in a group project or online discussion
- Interacting with an instructor about academic matters during a learning activity

Asynchronous learning activity – instruction using instructor created resources such as narrated PowerPoints, written material, or videos. Students are given an opportunity to comment and discuss the material through various media, i.e. face-to-face, video conferencing, chat room discussions. The amount of student work expected in any asynchronous learning activity must be determined to assign a credit hour based on at least an equivalent amount of work represented in the credit hour definition.

Carnegie unit – a time-based reference for measuring educational attainment; typically equivalent to 1 credit hour or 1 hr (50 minutes) instruction each week for 15 weeks; At PCOM, this is equal to 12.5 hrs or 750 minutes of instruction *per term*.

Case studies, online scenarios, simulations – examination and exploration requiring critical thinking skills which relate to course objectives. Simulations refer to a realistic looking clinical sim lab room with manikins and equipment that allows studs to practice and develop clinical reasoning experiences.

Credit hour – In-person instruction sessions *per term* or the equivalent for mixed instructional methods that equals 12.5 60-minute hours, 15 50-minute hours, or 750 minutes. These are all equal.

Credit hour calculation – the number of hours (or minutes) of course instruction (see equivalency chart) divided by 750 minutes.

Included activities for credit hour calculations – activities should

- Be related directly to the objectives of the course/program
- Be measurable
- Have the direct oversight or supervision of the faculty member responsible for the course
- Be equivalent of an activity conducted in the classroom

Dissertation research – guided project with specific learning objectives that is instructor mediated; student and instructor collaborate using electronic methods and/or face-to-face meetings to research, analyze, synthesize and prepare project with instructor providing guidance and feedback.

Distance education – An educational activity characterized by separation of the faculty member from the student by either distance or time or both. If student learning outcomes and assignments for an online course are the same as those used when the course is offered face-to-

face and distant students are required to regularly engage with the instructor and other students (discussion boards, synchronous sessions, etc.), then the credit hours are the same. If expectations are not the same, additional information is required to calculate credit equivalency.

Homework/out-of-class assignments – The federal definition includes this in the 2 hrs preparation and must be listed separately if exceeding 2 hrs per 1 hr face-to-face instruction; typically, these activities are not included in credit our calculations.

Hybrid courses – courses offered in a blended format with 1 or more face-to-face class sessions and at least one or more online sessions, both containing direct interaction with a PCOM faculty member. Online sessions, synchronous or asynchronous, equal less than 25% of the course. PCOM faculty members demonstrate through the course syllabus that the content and activities equate to a standard assignment of lecture credit.

Courses and Program designations – considerations are given to delivery methods to comply with state and federal requirements for reporting.

Course and Program Designation	Face-to-Face Requirement	Online Requirement	Campus Requirement
Distance Education Course	No	100% of course activities are online	No
Distance Education Program	No	100% of program requirements are online	no
Hybrid Course	Yes	≥25% of course activities delivered online	Yes
Hybrid Program	Yes	≥25%, but <100% of courses delivered online	Yes
Face-to-Face Course	Yes	<25% of course activities delivered online (synchronous or asynchronous)	Yes
Face-to-Face Program	Yes	<25% of courses delivered online (synchronous or asynchronous)	Yes

Independent study – courses of study in which a PCOM faculty member regularly interacts and directs student outcomes with periodic contact. Minimum credit hours are based on lecture contact minutes with face-to-face meetings and student work.

Instructional equivalency – online and other types of instructional time that may include traditional or blended instruction. Any course that does not meet face-to-face for all instructional credit hours must contain an instructional equivalency chart.

Instructional equivalency chart

Instructional Activity	Instruction Hrs	Credit
Asynchronous learning activity (lecture, online assignments, etc)	1 hr scheduled = 1 hr instruction	12.5 hr = 1 credit
Synchronous learning activity (lecture, seminar, small groups, etc)	1 hr scheduled = 1 hr instruction	12.5 hr = 1 credit
Case studies, online scenarios, and simulations	1 hr scheduled = 1 hr instruction	12.5 hr = 1 credit
Laboratory activity (anatomy, pathology, microbiology, etc)	1 hr scheduled = 0.5 hr instruction	25 hr = 1 credit
Patient care skill laboratories	1 hr scheduled = 0.5 hr instruction	25 hr = 1 credit
Skill laboratories	1 hr scheduled = 0.5 hr instruction	25 hr = 1 credit
Research (supervised, independent), clinical experiences, independent experiences and projects	Typically 3:1 or greater (scheduled or experience: instruction)	Defined by programs
Internship	Typically 3:1 or greater (scheduled or experience: instruction)	Defined by programs

Instructional time – any regularly scheduled instruction or examination and does not include vacation, homework, orientations, or counseling.

Internship – work in an organization to gain experience and satisfy degree qualifications.

Hybrid/blended learning – hybrid and blended learning are used synonymously. These formats may not conform to specific face-to-face time expectations; they must maintain comparable quality, time, and student learning outcomes. An online course may be the same as a distance education course if all instruction is online.

Online courses – distance learning courses offered entirely online without regard to face-to-face meetings. These courses have the same learning outcomes and substantive components of a standard lecture course with alternative deliver method. Contact time is satisfied by several means which can include, but is not limited to, the following: a.) regular instruction or interaction with a PCOM faculty member once a week for each week the course runs. b.) academic engagement through interactive tutorials, group discussions moderated by faculty, virtual study/project groups, engaging with class peers and computer tutorials graded and reviewed by faculty.

Regular and substantive interactions – predictable and scheduled opportunities for engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment and include at least two of the following:

- Provide direct instruction

- Assess or provide feedback on a student's coursework
- Provide information or respond to questions about the content of a course or competency
- Facilitate a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency
- Other instructional activities approved by the institution's or program's accrediting agency.

Repeatable credit - A course that a student is allowed to take multiple times for credit up to the maximum specified. This is typically reserved for those courses that either have rapidly changing content, instruction is different with each offering or where student participants receive advanced and sequential instruction depending on individual skill level (e.g., physical fitness, elective rotation experiences, independent studies, etc).

Research – students conduct experiments, perfecting skills, and practicing skills in a manner analogous to a research or workplace laboratory under the supervision of an instructor. Research may be part of an existing series of projects or a project that is more independent to fulfill the requirements of a degree.

Skill laboratories - any psychomotor focused activity in a clinically-representative setting to observed, learn, and practice to build skills and confidence to apply the same skills in a direct care clinical setting. Students may be videotaped practicing the skills to use for review, practice, and improvement. Skill laboratories may precede simulation experiences.

Internship – training designed to provide the student with intensive experience with supervision.

Synchronous learning activity – instructor led face-to-face or scheduled web conferencing instruction

Thesis research – guided project with specific learning objectives that is instructor mediated; student and instructor collaborate using electronic methods and/or face-to-face meetings to research, analyze, synthesize and prepare project with instructor providing guidance and feedback.

POLICY: For each hour of instruction, the expectation is that the student will spend two hours in preparation (federal definition). For example, a 1-credit course is expected to provide 12.5 hrs (750 mins) of instruction and 25 hrs (1500 mins) of preparation.² Credit for other instructional activity formats is detailed in the Instructional Equivalency Table.

Procedure to Determine Amount and Level of Credit

The faculty is responsible for the curriculum. Credit values for courses are determined at the department level based on faculty expertise and course objectives. It is recommended that

² The PDE does not accept compliance in terms of minutes. Courses must be scheduled for the correct number of hours per credit awarded. Even if a break is taken, a course is scheduled for the full hour(s).

- A table is created for each course listing each type of learning activity (see Definitions) and contact hours.
- Using the Instructional Equivalency Chart, the hours of instruction and credit appropriate for the course.

Sample calculation method: (number of scheduled hours including equivalency hours x 50 minutes)/750

- Faculty should consult with the Registrar if unsure of determinations.
- The Curriculum Committee is required to review the calculations and forward any approved changes and information to the Registrar for proper entry into the PCOM course management system and University Catalog.
- Each annual review of courses and syllabi should review hours of instruction and appropriate assignation of credit.
- Only when course information is received by the Registrar’s Office and appropriately documented is the course approved for delivery.

Review process – the Curriculum Committee will review the credit hour allocation for each course prior to the course being approved for the next academic year or term.

Interpretation Authority – Resolution of any discrepancies in credit hour allocation will be determined by the Registrar.

EFFECTIVE DATES AND REVIEW:

Reviewed by PCOM Cabinet

Reviewed and updated by Michael Roberts, Samuel Matheny, Maureen O’Mara Carver, Linda Adkison to better define course and program designation – July 2022

APPROVAL AUTHORITY AND DATE:

Approved by Dr. Veit 03/24/2021

Approved by Dr. Veit 07/22/2022

<u>Review Date</u>	<u>Reviewer</u>	<u>Revision</u>

