21 Credit Hour Policy

21.1 Credit definition (Academic Regulation 27)

Academic credit is a measure of the total minimum time commitment required of a typical student enrolled in a specific course. For the WSU semester system, a one-semester lecture credit is assigned a minimum of 45 hours, of which 15 hours are spent in instructor-led activities and 30 hours are spent in outside activities. Instructor-led activities include time spent in scheduled course activities organized by an instructor (lectures, discussions, laboratories, studios, ensembles, visual media, fieldwork, etc.), while outside activities are related to students completing course requirements (reading, studying, problem solving, writing, homework, and other preparations for the course). Achievement of course goals may require more than the minimum time commitment.

Based on a 15-week semester and a traditional format, the minimum in-class time commitment must follow these scheduling contact hour policies:

1. Lecture—15 hours of lecture per term for each credit hour (1 hour per week);
2. Studio—30 hours of studio per term for each credit hour (2 hours per week);
3. Laboratory—45 hours of laboratory per term for each credit hour (3 hours per week);
4. Ensemble—60 hours of ensemble per term for each credit hour (4 hours per week).

Courses which do not have in-class meeting times must follow these guidelines:

1. Independent study and internships (including field experiences, professional work experiences, and clinical experiences) — approximately 45 hours per term for each credit hour.

Courses taught during periods of time other than the 15-week semester (e.g., intersessions, fall/spring vacations, weekends, etc.), including short courses and study abroad must adjust the class contact hours to meet the minimum in-class time commitment outlined above.

Courses taught using non-traditional formats (e.g., online, hybrid) must define how the time commitment leads to the achievement of stated course goals and how the course covers the same material in the same depth as traditionally-taught courses subject to minimum in-class time commitments.

As part of the initial approval process for new courses, the catalog subcommittee reviews course syllabi for adherence to credit and minimum time commitments. For ongoing adherence to credit and minimum time commitments, colleges review the schedule of classes each term to check a judgment sample of scheduled courses.

EPPM 1996; Faculty Senate, 2016; academic affairs, rev. 11/2017

Related policies:

NWCCU, credit hour policy