



Title: Assignment of Credit Hours- Policy (v.7)

Purpose: To define Central Penn College's (the college) policy on the assignment of credit hours and the method by which the college assures compliance with the policy

Background

In 2010, the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) published the final regulations on program integrity issues; one such issue was the definition of a credit hour. The 2010 regulations included a definition of a credit hour under the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) for purposes of Federal programs along with provisions related to accrediting agencies' assessment of institutions' determination of credit hours. The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), through the PA Code, also has an established definition of a credit hour. As a result, it is up to the institution to establish a policy on the assignment of credit hours that meets the federal and state guidelines and be able to produce evidence as to the application and periodic review of the policy to accrediting bodies as requested. To assist with compliance in this area, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) has provided additional guidance as to what information/evidence should be included in an institution's Credit Hour Policy through its publications.

The following external rules, regulations, and guidance were used to create the Credit Hour Policy at Central Penn College:

U.S. 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 credit 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, internship, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours"

Pennsylvania Department of Education (22 Pa. Code, Section 31.21(b)) states:

“...a semester credit hour represents a unit of curricular material that normally can be taught in a minimum of 14 hours of classroom instruction, plus appropriate outside preparation or the equivalent as determined by faculty.”

Middle States Commission on Higher Education (Verification of Compliance with Accreditation-Relevant Federal Regulations, 2017) states:

“...In accordance with the Commission policy, *Credit Hour*, and 34 CFR 602.24(f), the Commission ‘must conduct an effective review and evaluation of the reliability and accuracy of the institution’s assignment of credit hours.’ Specifically, the Commission must review the institution’s policies and procedures for determining the credit hours awarded as well as the institution’s policies and procedures to its programs and coursework, and make a ‘reasonable determination of whether the institution’s assignment of credit hours conforms to commonly accepted practice in higher education’”

Code of Federal Regulations (668.8 (k)(2)(1)(i)) states:

“...for purposes of determining whether a program described in paragraph (k) (undergraduate programs in credit hours) of this section satisfies the requirements contained in paragraph (c)(3) or (d) of this section, and determining the number of credit hours in that educational program with regard to title IV, HEA programs: A semester hour must include at least 37.5 clock hours of instruction.”

Policy

The college complies with federal (USDOE; CFR), state (PDE), and accreditation (MSCHE) standards and regulations pertaining to the assignment of credit hours. In all courses, the college complies with the PDE regulation of 14 hours of classroom instruction per semester credit, and interprets the USDOE’s guidance of “...or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time...” to equal a total of 2,250 minutes of instruction per semester credit hour awarded; this also conforms to the CFR definition where, “A semester hour must include at least 37.5 clock hours of instruction.”

The college typically follows a term system. There are four terms a year and the terms are defined as: Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall. Each term consists of 11 weeks, without a finals week, and a 2-3 week break between terms as stated in the college’s catalog. All terms are equal in length; therefore, the college does not have accelerated terms or courses that are shorter in duration than the regularly scheduled terms. All courses offered at the college must comply with the college’s Credit Hour Policy regardless of delivery method (on-ground, online, or blended) or designation (internship, independent study, LA, clinical, etc.).

Program chairs, with guidance from the dean of each school, are responsible for developing, maintaining, and evaluating the curriculum within an academic program. The assignment of credit hours for new courses are determined by faculty and programs chairs, vetted through the curriculum review committee and ultimately approved/denied by the Vice President of Academic

Affairs before implementation. For existing courses, a random sample of courses will be evaluated for compliance with the federal credit hour regulation, annually, by the program chairs.

The following definitions, descriptions, and charts provide guidance on how credit hour(s) translates to the different methods of instruction used at the college. The federal definition of 37.5 clock hours of instruction per semester credit hour, does not dictate the exact ratio of classroom instruction and out of class student work; therefore, the following information serves as general guidance. Course(s) not aligning with the following guidance will be asked to provide supporting documentation to ensure/justify compliance with the Credit Hour Policy.

On-Ground courses: Courses that meet at a predetermined time and place to engage in instruction under the supervision of a faculty member.

On-Ground Courses: Classroom / Instruction and Outside Student Work					
Credits Awarded	Minimum contact time per week	Minimum instructional time total for 11 weeks	Minimum out of class student work per week	Minimum out of class student work per week for 11 weeks	Total of instructional time and out of class student work
1	80 contact minutes	880 contact minutes (14.6 hours)	125 minutes	1375 minutes	2255 minutes (37.5 hours)
2	160 contact minutes	1760 contact minutes (29.3 hours)	250 minutes	2750 minutes	4510 minutes (75 hours)
3	240 contact minutes	2640 contact minutes (44 hours)	375 minutes	4125 minutes	6765 minutes (112.75 hours)
4	320 contact minutes	3520 contact minutes (58.4 hours)	500 minutes	5500 minutes	9020 minutes (150 hours)

Laboratory courses: Courses where students perform substantive work in a laboratory setting under the direct supervision of a faculty member.

Laboratory: Classroom / Instruction and Outside Student Work					
Credits Awarded	Minimum contact time per week	Minimum instructional time total for 11 weeks	Minimum out of class student work per week	Minimum out of class student work per week for 11 weeks	Total of instructional time and out of class student work

1	160 contact minutes	1760 contact minutes (29.3 Hours)	45 minutes	495 minutes (8.25 hours)	2255 minutes (37.5 hours)
4	480 contact minutes	5280 contact minutes (88 hours)	340 minutes	3740 minutes	9020 minutes (150 hours)

Clinical Courses: Courses where students perform substantive work in a clinical setting under the direct supervision of a faculty member.

Clinical: Classroom / Instruction and Outside Student Work					
Credits Awarded	Minimum contact time per week	Minimum instructional time total for 11 weeks	Minimum out of class student work per week	Minimum out of class student work per week for 11 weeks	Total of instructional time and out of class student work
1	205 contact minutes	2255 contact minutes (37.5 Hours)	0 minutes	0 minutes	2255 minutes (37.5 hours)
2	410 contact minutes	4510 contact minutes (75 hours)	0 minutes	0 minutes	4510 minutes (75 hours)
3	615 contact minutes	6765 contact minutes (112.75 hours)	0 minutes	0 minutes	6765 minutes (112.75 hours)
4	820 contact minutes	9020 contact minutes (150 hours)	0 minutes	0 minutes	9020 minutes (150 hours)

Independent Study Courses: Course where the assigned faculty member directs student outcomes with periodic contact. In all instances, Independent Study courses must meet the minimum total amount of work using the examples listed in the above charts. The assigned faculty member must keep records of meeting times, which can be done via Campus Nexus, as well as records of the student work completed so contact hours can be calculated.

Internship Courses: Course where the actual learning environment is located outside of the classroom. Faculty are designated as Internship Coordinators and regularly interact with the student(s) and direct student outcomes. Typically, a site supervisor, who is employed by the internship site, is assigned to the student(s) and all learning will occur outside of a lecture setting. In all instances, Internship courses must meet the minimum total amount of work using the examples listed in the above charts. The Internship Coordinator assigned must keep records of meeting times, which can be done via Campus Nexus, as well as records of the student work completed so contact hours can be calculated.

Online Courses: Courses where all of the content is delivered online without face-to-face interaction. Despite the alternative delivery method, online courses have the same learning outcomes and components of a standard lecture course. Course contact time can be satisfied in several ways, which can include: 1) regular instruction/interaction with a faculty member, weekly, for the duration of the course. 2) Academic engagement through interactive tutorials, discussion posts (moderated by the faculty member), virtual group projects, graded computer tutorials, and engagement with class peers, among other ways. In all instances, online courses must meet the minimum total amount of work using the examples listed in the above charts, even though all content is delivered online.

Blended Courses: Courses where at least 50% of the content is delivered within the classroom setting and the rest is delivered online. Faculty assigned to courses that are blended directly interact with the students both in the classroom and online. The contact time is measured using the on-ground definition as well as the online definition, respectively. In all instances, Blended courses must meet the minimum total amount of work using the examples listed in the above charts, even though some content is delivered online.

Compliance Procedures

1. A sample of courses offered by the college will be reviewed by the program chairs on an annual basis for evidence of compliance with the USDOE, CFR, PDE and MSCHE definitions as stated earlier in this policy. Evidence of compliance, by means of a credit hour compliance form, will be forwarded to the dean of the school and/or Vice President of Academic Affairs for review, and ultimately housed in the office of the Institutional Effectiveness Officer.
2. Courses that appear to be in non-compliance will be evaluated and immediate action will be taken to remedy the discrepancies. As part of the curriculum review committee, all new and existing courses will be evaluated for compliance with this policy while the course is under review.
3. The college catalog serves as the official publication providing the number of credit hours assigned to each college course. Any proposed change to the number of credit hours assigned must go through the curriculum review committee's process for course edit approvals.
4. Records for courses which have been evaluated will be housed in the Institutional Effectiveness Officer's office for future reference.