Credit Hour
Department of Education Regulation Definition for Credit Hour

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 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.

Cardinal Stritch Definition of Credit Hour

Credit and Time Requirements (always applicable in postsecondary institutions)

Program Lengths
a. Associate degrees require a minimum of 60 semester credits and the equivalent of two academic years.
b. Baccalaureate degrees require a minimum of 120 semester credits and the equivalent of four academic years.
c. Post-baccalaureate degrees require a minimum of 30 semester credits and the equivalent of one academic year and must meet additional credit and time requirements according to degree level and title.
d. Postsecondary professionally-oriented non-degree-granting programs in degree-granting institutions have semester, clock hour, and/or other time requirements commensurate with the subject matter and purposes of specific programs.

A credit hour at Cardinal Stritch University is the amount of work a typical student is expected to complete while meeting all of the learning outcomes of the course at a level of competency. The amount of work may be dictated by the delivery methods of the course, pedagogy, calendar, discipline, and degree level and typically involves the amount of time on task, academic rigor, complexity of outcome, and resources.

The amount of work completed by the student must be connected directly to the learning outcomes of the course and be verified by evidence of student achievement, e.g., readings, assignments, study team requirements, practicum, homework, classroom attendance, examinations, practica, laboratory work, internships, and supervised studio work.
Credit shall be awarded consistently according to the published credit policies of Stritch and in compliance with the Department of Education standards. Normally, a semester hour of credit represents at least three hours of work each week, on average, for a period of fifteen to sixteen weeks. Correspondingly, a quarter hour of credit represents at least three hours of work each week for a period of ten or eleven weeks. Credit for short-term offerings must be computed on the same basis. In all cases, faculty contact must be sufficient to ensure the development of knowledge and skills required by each course. Normally faculty contact is greater at the foundation or introductory level.

For colleges and programs offering courses for abbreviated time periods, or in independent study, faculty must ensure that students completing such programs or courses acquire levels of knowledge, competence, and understanding comparable to that expected of students completing work in the standard time period.

All courses at Cardinal Stritch University must comply with the policy of one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for a minimum of fifteen weeks for one semester credit or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time by using commonly accepted educational standards, the work must be verifiable, and the work must be specified in the following three areas, at all levels at the institution (undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral): 1) classroom instruction (in person or online); 2) study team hours (typically outside of scheduled class time); and 3) Out-of-class work, such as homework, online work (e.g., CMS), field work, practica, laboratory work, internships, and so forth. For each of the different levels at the University the expectation is that the work quality and quantity will differ based on learning outcomes. The traditionally formatted courses at Cardinal Stritch University adhere to #1 definition from the Department of Education and the non-traditionally formatted courses adhere to #2 definition from the Department of Education.

For example for the College of Business and Management students in a three credit course may spend, at a minimum, 20 hours in classroom instruction for every three semester hours earned (4 hours weekly x 5 weeks = 20 hours).

- Students spend, at a minimum, 20 hours in structured learning team activities for every three semester hours earned (4 hours weekly x 5 weeks = 20 hours).
- In addition, “homework” which equals 20 hours per week in addition to class time is expected of the students through the assignments and outcomes, providing approximately 100 hours of study outside of class per course (20 hours weekly x 5 weeks = 100 hours)
- Course modules document the learning team and homework requirements. Each module requires specific, measurable individual student assignments as well as one major learning team assignment. These published assignments/outcomes document the rigor of the course and have, historically, served to prove that “seat time” comparability exists in each accelerated course.
- In this example, the total number of hours dedicated to a three credit course is 140 hours.

For example, in the College of Arts and Sciences students in a three credit course may meet in class for one hour each day for three days per week for 15 weeks in the semester for total of 45 hours in class. In addition, students may be assigned a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work per credit, each week for approximately fifteen weeks during the semester, as verified in the syllabus, for a
total of 90 hours of work. In this example, the total hours of work dedicated to learning outcomes would be 135 hours for the three credit course.

For example, in the College of Education and Leadership, the doctoral students in a three credit course may meet for eight hours one weekend per month for 15 weeks, or four total weekends for a total of 30 hours in class. In addition, students will be assigned a minimum of 6 hours of homework per week (80 hours total) and a minimum of 4 hours of study team work per month outside of class for a total of 20 hours per semester. In this example, the total hours of work dedicated to the learning outcomes would be 130 hours for the three credit course.

In the College of Nursing, ADN students in a three credit course meet in class for 50 minutes three times a week for a total of 37.5 hours (or the equivalent hours in one or two class sessions per week). In addition, students are assigned a minimum of 2 hours of out-of-class work per credit each week for 15 weeks, as verified in the syllabus. For a three credit course the total out-of-class work is approximately 90 hours. In this example, the total hours of work dedicated to learning outcomes would be 127.5 for a three credit theory course. If a course has a clinical component, students meet for three clock hours per clinical credit for 14 weeks or 42 hours per credit.

The BSN Completion program is accelerated. BSN Completion students in a three credit course meet in class for 3.5 hours in class for six weeks and 3.5 hours in study teams during weeks two to six, for a total of 38.5 hours. In addition, students are assigned a minimum of five hours of outside-of-class work per credit, each week for six weeks, as verified in the syllabus. For a three credit course the total out-of-class work is 90 hours. In this example, the total hours of work dedicated to learning outcomes would be 128.5 for a three credit theory course. If the course has a clinical component, students meet for 4.5 clock hours per clinical credit for 9 weeks or 40.5 hours per credit.

The MSN Completion program is accelerated. A one credit course requires 4 hours of class related work per week. In addition, students are assigned a minimum of 3.3 hours of outside-of-class work per credit, each week for nine weeks, as verified in the syllabus. For a three credit course the total out-of-class work is 90 hours. In this example, the total hours of work dedicated to the learning outcomes would be 121.5 hours for the three credit course. Practicum courses are 3 credits and require 7.5 hours of precepted time per week for 12 weeks for a total of 90 hours.

Verification

Adherence to the definitions of Credit Hours is verified by the details within the syllabi for each course. The faculty member, department chair, and College Deans are responsible for oversight and verification of credit hours. The department chair reviews and evaluates syllabi for all of the courses every semester. Part of the review includes adherence to the Credit Hour policy. In addition, the assessment tools and data are utilized (e.g., LiveText) to evaluate if the learning outcomes are being accomplished, thereby adhering to the academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

Directed, Independent Study, and Internship Guidance
Credit hours applicable for a given course or academic experience must be reasonably equivalent to the standard of 3 hours combined direct instruction and student work per week, per credit hour for a 15-week semester.
A 3-credit directed or independent study or internship should require the equivalent of 9 hours of combined direct instruction and student work per week for the equivalent of a 15-week semester. Given that the “course hour” is 50 minutes, this would be a baseline of 112.5 total hours for the course.

Specific directed or independent study and internship guidelines and forms are provided at the school/college from which the course is being taken. Guidelines at the college/school level may include the number of directed or independent studies (or credits) and internships permitted per student for a single degree. Course numbers are assigned as the directed or-independent study. However, the general standards apply across all academic units and all levels of students.

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