

Title: Credit Hour Definition and Application to Courses Policy

- Initial Action: October 27, 2011
- Board Resolution: 11-054, 24-037
- Last Revised:
 - Policy: June 5, 2024
 - Procedure: June 5, 2024
- Last Reviewed: June 5, 2024
- Effective: June 15, 2018
- Next Review: June 5, 2027
- Responsibility: Academic Programs

Policy:

In accordance with regulations published on October 29, 2010 by the U.S. Secretary of Education on program integrity issues (75 FR 66832 and 34 CFR 600.2 – effective July 1, 2011; updated July 1, 2023), Cecil College will use the definition specified by the Department of Education, for a “credit hour” to maintain the College’s eligibility and that of its programs to participate in Federal programs and to determine the eligibility of a student for Federal student assistance and the amount of the student’s assistance. This definition corresponds with Maryland Higher Education Commission requirements.

Procedure:

Academic Senate and the Academic Affairs Committee will review and provide feedback on this procedure every three years or as needed.

Credit Hour Definition:

At Cecil College, a credit hour is defined as the 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 or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time.
2. At least an equivalent amount of work as required in item 1 of this definition for other academic activities, including laboratory work, internships, practicum, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

The Maryland Higher Education Commission defines **one** semester hour of credit as (COMAR13B.02.02.16D):

- a) A minimum of 15 hours (50 minutes each) of actual class time, exclusive of registration, study days, and holidays;
- b) A minimum of 30 hours (50 minutes each) of supervised laboratory or studio time, exclusive of registration, study days or holidays;
- c) A minimum of 45 hours (50 minutes) of instructional situations, such as practicums, internships, and cooperative education placements, when supervision is assured and learning is documented;

- d) Instruction delivered by instructional television (ITV) or electronic media based on the equivalent outcomes in student learning of (a) above, and may include a combination of telelessons, classroom instruction, student consultations with instructors, and readings, when supervision is assured and learning is documented.

Credit Hour Calculation

The *minimum* amount of time required for **one** credit hour is calculated using 50 minutes as the recognized length of a classroom “hour.”

One Hour of Classroom or Direct Faculty Instruction per Semester

$(50 \text{ minutes} \times 15 \text{ weeks}) \div 60 \text{ minutes in an hour} = 12.5 \text{ hours of classroom or direct faculty instruction.}$

Two Hours of Student Work Out-of-Classroom or Direct Faculty Instruction per Semester

$(2 \times 50 \text{ minutes} \times 15 \text{ weeks}) \div 60 \text{ minutes in an hour} = 25 \text{ hours of out-of-class student work}$

One Credit Hour equals 37.5 clock hours of instruction/student work per 15 week semester

The U.S. Department of Education (Institutional Eligibility, 2023) is flexible on how much of this time is used in the classroom or for direct faculty instruction. Each course must account for 37.5 hours of instruction and student work per credit hour credit. This is based on direct instruction time, plus out of classroom time

Clock hour Requirements for Courses

Note: In the following clock hour requirements, the term “instructional time” is synonymous with “in-class” and “direct faculty instruction.” Examinations may be included as instructional time. Instructional time applies to courses taught in all modalities, i.e., face-to-face, online, hybrid, etc. The term “student work” means all assignments or other academic activities required to be completed outside of instructional time. Student work may include reading, studying, writing, completing assignments, research, etc.

15-Week Courses

Lecture hour

A scheduled presentation or faculty led educational activity, on or off campus, held in an instructional area. One lecture (taught) or seminar (discussion) credit hour represents 1 hour per week of scheduled class/seminar time and 2 hours of student preparation time.

Each 1-credit lecture hour requires a minimum of 15 hours (12.5 clock hours) of instructional time and 30 hours (25 clock hours) of student work, for a total of 45 hours (37.5 clock hours). These courses typically have 50 minutes of instructional time that account for 12.5 hours per semester $(50 \text{ minutes} \times 1 \text{ credit} \times 15 \text{ weeks}) \div 60 \text{ minutes}$. The remaining 25 hours $(37.5 - 12.5)$ or the equivalent of, must be accounted for by student work outside of instructional time.

Laboratory hour

A scheduled laboratory, discussion, studio or other faculty directed activity, conducted on or off campus, held in an instructional area that is directly taught or supervised by a faculty member. Includes practical application where major focus is “hands on” experience to support student learning.

Each 1-credit lab hour requires a minimum of 30 hours (25 clock hours) of instructional time, and 15 hours (12.5 clock hours) of student work for a total of 45 hours (37.5 clock hours)

Practicum (clinical) hour

A scheduled clinical, internship, practicum, cooperative work, externship, or guided work experience, conducted on or off campus, where supervision is ensured and student learning is documented. Practicum hour credit is awarded for academic learning.

Each 1-credit practicum hour requires a minimum of 45 hours (37.5 clock hours) of supervised instructional time. These courses typically have 150 minutes of instructional time that accounts for 37.5 clock hours per semester (150 minutes x 1 credit x 15 weeks ÷ 60 minutes).

Courses that meet for less than 15 weeks should be adjusted to meet hour requirements.

Online and Hybrid Courses

Online and hybrid courses must meet the same lecture, laboratory or practicum and out of class credit hour requirements as traditional face-to-face courses.

Logging on constitutes neither active faculty teaching nor active student learning. Faculty should demonstrate active faculty engagement in online teaching/instructing students. Methods such as discussion boards, chats, blogs, video lectures, examinations, student conferences and other formats that facilitate student interaction, can serve as instructional time.

References:

Institutional Eligibility Under the Higher Education Act of 1965, as Amended, 34 C.F.R § 600.2 (2023). <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/subtitle-B/chapter-VI/part-600/subpart-A/section-600.2>

Maryland Higher Education Commission. (2014, July 21). *Minimum Requirements for In-State Degree-Granting Institutions*.

https://mhec.maryland.gov/institutions_training/Documents/acadaff/acadproginstitapprovals/COMAR%2013B%2002%2002.pdf

Middle States Commission on Higher Education. (2009, June 26). *Degrees and Credits*. <https://www.purchase.edu/live/files/14-msche-degree-and-credit-guidelines-06-22-09-finalp>