



SUNY Oswego Academic Credit Hour Policy

State University of New York Credit Hour Policy

SUNY Oswego's calculations of credit hour follow the State University of New York (SUNY) policy: http://www.suny.edu/sunypp/documents.cfm?doc_id=168 which is applicable to its Community Colleges and State-Operated campuses. The policy is below:

Summary

The State University of New York (University), like most American higher education, has adopted a variant of the traditional "Carnegie Unit" as a measure of academic credit. This unit is known in the University by the familiar term, "semester credit hour," and is the primary academic measure by which progress toward a degree is gauged. It is recognized that such a unit measures only a part, albeit a major part, of a composite learning experience, based upon formally structured and informal interactions among faculty and students.

Policy

Over the past several years, for academic purposes, some faculties have allowed modifications of the classical Carnegie definition of a semester credit hour, which has stipulated that one semester credit hour be awarded for fifteen sessions of 50-minutes duration in classroom lecture-recitation each requiring two hours of outside preparation by the student. Today there are many types of educational experiences with which credit hour assignment may properly be associated.

In the interest of accurate academic measurement and cross-campus comparability, the following definitions and practices apply in controlling the relationship between contact and credit hours. These definitions constitute a formalization of current and historic policy in order to ensure consistency throughout the University. Courses may be composed of any combination of elements described, such as a lecture course which also has required laboratory periods or a lecture course having an additional requirement for supervised independent study or tutorial activity.

A semester credit hour is normally granted for satisfactory completion of one 50-minute session of classroom instruction per week for a semester of not less than fifteen weeks. This basic measure may be adjusted proportionately to reflect modified academic calendars and formats of study.

New York State Education Department Credit Hour Definition:

All credit-bearing degree and certificate programs at SUNY Oswego are approved by the New York State Education Department (NYSED). Calculation of credit hours for these programs follows NYSED guidelines, which are consistent with the U.S. Department of Education's definition of a credit hour:

Codes, Rules and Regulations of the State of New York, Title 8 – Education Department, Chapter II – Regulations of the Commissioner, Subchapter A – Higher and Professional Regulations, Part 50 – General, Section 50.1 (o) stipulates the following: *“Semester hour means a credit, point, or other unit granted for the satisfactory completion of a course which requires at least 15 hours (of 50 minutes each) of instruction and at least 30 hours of supplementary assignments, except as otherwise provided pursuant to section 52.2(c)(4) of this Subchapter. This basic measure shall be adjusted proportionately to translate the value of other academic calendars and formats of study in relation to the credit granted for study during the two semesters that comprise an academic year.”*

Section 52.2(c)(4) stipulates: *“A semester hour of credit may be granted by an institution for fewer hours of instruction and study than those specified in subdivision (o) of section 50.1 of this Subchapter only: (i) when approved by the commissioner as part of a registered curriculum; (ii) when the commissioner has granted prior approval for the institution to maintain a statement of academic standards that defines the considerations which establish equivalency of instruction and study and such statement has been adopted by the institution; or (iii) in the event of a temporary closure of an institution by the State or local government as a result of a disaster, as defined in section 50.1(w) of this Title, when the commissioner has granted approval for the institution to maintain a statement of academic standards that defines the considerations which establish equivalency of instruction and study and such statement has been adopted by the institution.”*

New York State Education Department's Policies Regarding Time on Task in Online Education

SUNY Oswego adheres to the [New York State Education Department's Office of College and University Evaluation policies on “Determining Time on Task in Online Education,”](#) which is excerpted below.

Time on task is the total learning time spent by a student in a college course, including instructional time as well as time spent studying and completing course assignments (e.g., reading, research, writing, individual and group projects.) Regardless of the delivery method or the particular learning activities employed, the amount of learning time in any college course should meet the requirements of Commissioner's Regulation Section 50.1 (o), a total of 45 hours for one

semester credit (in conventional classroom education this breaks down into 15 hours of instruction plus 30 hours of student work/study out of class.)

"Instruction" is provided differently in online courses than in classroom-based courses. Despite the difference in methodology and activities, however, the total "learning time" online can usually be counted. Rather than try to distinguish between "in-class" and "outside-class" time for students, the faculty member developing and/or teaching the online course should calculate how much time a student doing satisfactory work would take to complete the work of the course, including

- *reading course presentations/ "lectures"*
- *reading other materials*
- *participation in online discussions*
- *doing research writing papers or other assignments*
- *completing all other assignments (e.g., projects)*

The total time spent on these tasks should be roughly equal to that spent on comparable tasks in a classroom-based course. Time spent downloading or uploading documents, troubleshooting technical problems, or in chat rooms (unless on course assignments such as group projects) should not be counted.

In determining the time on task for an online course, useful information includes

- *the course objectives and expected learning outcomes*
- *the list of topics in the course outline or syllabus; the textbooks, additional readings, and related education materials (such as software) required*
- *statements in course materials informing students of the time and/or effort they are expected to devote to the course or individual parts of it*
- *a listing of the pedagogical tools to be used in the online course, how each will be used, and the expectations for participation (e.g., in an online discussion, how many substantive postings will be required of a student for each week or unit?)*

Theoretically, one should be able to measure any course, regardless of delivery method, by the description of content covered. However, this is difficult for anyone other than the course developer or instructor to determine accurately, since the same statement of content (in a course outline or syllabus) can represent many different levels of breadth and depth in the treatment of that content, and require widely varying amounts of time.

U.S. Department of Education Credit Hour Definition:

Electronic Code of Federal Regulations, Title 34: Education, Part 600 – Institutional Eligibility under the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, Subpart A – General, Section 600.2 stipulates the following:

“Credit hour: Except as provided in 34 CFR 668.8(k) and (l), a credit hour is 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.”

U.S. Department of Education guidance on Program Integrity regulations related to the credit hour is stipulated at (<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/reg/hearulemaking/2009/credit.html>)

The credit-hour definition does not dictate particular amounts of classroom time versus out-of-class student work. Further note that the definition provides that a credit hour may be for an equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time. There is no requirement that a 3- semester hour course meet 3 hours per week during a semester or a 3-quarter-hour course meet 3 hours per week during a quarter. The requirement is that the institution determine that there is an amount of student work for a credit hour that reasonably approximates not less than one hour of class and two hours of out-of-class student work per week over a semester for a semester hour or a quarter for a quarter hour. For example, an institution with a semester-based calendar has a graduate seminar for which it awards 3 semester hours. The class meets only one hour per week over a 15-week semester with the students expected to perform a substantial amount of outside research that is the equivalent of 8 or more hours of student work each week of the semester. For purposes of the Federal definition, the institution would be able to award up to 3 semester hours for the course.”

SUNY Oswego Academic Credit Hour Guidelines and Procedures

Assignment of all credit hours is a part of all course proposals at SUNY Oswego. All course proposals are required to be reviewed and approved by the SUNY Oswego Undergraduate Curriculum Council (UCC): <https://www.oswego.edu/undergraduate-curriculum-council/> or, for graduate courses, by the Graduate Council (GC). The UCC and GC are both charged with following the College’s policy on credit hours in their review and approval of all courses and curricula and for certifying that the expected student learning for the course meets the credit hour standard.

The primary function of the UCC is to review all undergraduate course proposals and advise Faculty Assembly for final approval of those courses. The role of UCC is defined by the **Faculty Assembly By-laws**: <https://www.oswego.edu/faculty-assembly/bylaws> A related duty of UCC members is to

provide support to department chairs and curriculum committees in the development or revision of course outlines. This process may involve reworking the course and bringing it back for additional review. If the course meets the satisfaction of the council, it is reported out to Faculty Assembly. In addition, the School of Education (SOE) requires review by the SOE Faculty Council and the Dean's office prior to forwarding to UCC or GC.

The UCC's secondary, but very important function, is to communicate about approved course outlines to faculty and offices across campus, including the Registrar, the Catalog Editor, the Director of the Penfield Library, Penfield Library Archives and Reserves, the Director of Campus Technology Services, Academic Deans, and Department Chairs. This communication includes the maintenance of a record of all approved courses and those under review.

All semester / credit hours awarded by SUNY Oswego conform to the SUNY, state and federal definitions. These guidelines are also in compliance with policies set forth by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

SUNY Oswego generally follows a semester system with fall and spring semesters consisting of a minimum of 15 weeks, plus one week for exams. Summer terms are typically less than 15 weeks but adhere to the policy in terms of meeting time and the amount of work required. Terms for certain academic programs (for example, compressed schedules) have been adjusted but nonetheless adhere to the policy in terms of the amount of work required.

Prior to each semester, all courses proposed to be taught are reviewed and validated to ensure they adhere to the college's credit hour policy.

Approved courses are then sent to the Registrar's Office for inclusion in the College Catalog. The Registrar's Office reviews the class schedules prior to the start of each semester to ensure that all classes are scheduled for the minimum number of minutes corresponding to the credits assigned, or otherwise notes when course schedules do not match assigned credit hours. Any discrepancies are brought to the attention of the appropriate department for correction or explanation.

The following provides general guidance on the how the credit hour translates to the particular instruction method. Note, however, that the credit-hour definition does not dictate particular amounts of classroom time versus out-of-class student work – the information below serves as general guidance only.

Lecture and Seminar: Courses with multiple students which meet to engage in various forms of group instruction under the direct supervision of a faculty member. The minimum contact time (that is, direct instructor-led time) per credit per week is typically one (50 minute) hour for each credit (1:1 ratio of contact time to credits, per week). In addition, students are assigned two (50 minute) hours of outside work for each credit, per week. An example of the minimal amounts for

each activity on a per credit basis using a traditional 15-week semester of course instruction as the base is displayed in **Table 1**.

Laboratory: Courses with a focus on experiential learning under the direct supervision of a faculty member wherein the student performs substantive work in a laboratory setting. The minimum instructor contact time per credit is typically twice that of a lecture (2:1 ratio of contact time to credits, per week) An example of the minimal amounts for each activity on a per credit using a traditional 15-week semester as the base is displayed in **Table 1** on following page.

Table 1: Classroom/Faculty Instruction and Outside Student Work*

Instructional Type	Credits Awarded	Minimum Contact Time Per Week	Minimum Instructional Time Total for 15 Weeks	Minimum Out of Class Student Per Week	Minimum Out of Class Student Work Total for 15 Weeks	Total of Instructional and Contact Time and Out of Class Student Work
Lecture and Seminar	1	50 contact minutes	750 contact minutes	100 minutes	1500 minutes	2250 minutes (37.5 hours)
Laboratory	1	100 contact minutes	1500 contact minutes	50 minutes	750 minutes	2250 (37.5 hours)

***Note: Multiply all of the values in each of the above columns by 2 for 2 credits awarded, by 3 for 3 credits awarded, etc.**

Independent Study:

Courses of study in which a faculty member regularly interacts and directs student outcomes with periodic contact. Minimum credit hours are determined based on faculty instructional contact minutes and student outside work time. In all such instances, such courses must match the total amount of work using the examples listed above, and the faculty member is required to keep records of the meeting times and student work assigned so that contact hours can be calculated.

Internship/Practica/Field Experience (including Student Teaching):

Courses of study in which a faculty member regularly interacts and directs student outcomes with periodic contact, but where the actual learning environment takes place off-campus at an approved site. The learning experience will typically involve a site supervisor or preceptor and directed activity/learning will occur outside of a lecture setting. Contact time and outside student work requirements must be established and documented, and must match the total amount of

work using the example above. The faculty member or program director responsible for the experience is required to keep records of amount of supervised work and the amount of outside work assigned so that contact hours can be calculated.

Accelerated Courses (e.g. Summer and Winter Sessions):

Courses offered outside of a standard 15 week semester in which the credit hours offered are the same as standard semester courses and the content and substantive learning outcomes are the same as those in the standard semester. These courses must meet the total amount of instructional and student work time as the examples above even if delivered within an accelerated time frame.

Online Courses:

Courses offered entirely online without any on-site face-to-face meetings. These courses have the same learning outcomes and substantive components of a standard lecture / seminar course with an alternate delivery 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 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. In all such instances, these courses must meet the total amount of instructional and student work time as the examples above even if delivered online or asynchronously. The college's instructional designers work extensively with faculty to ensure face-to-face class time is appropriately and effectively replaced. These activities include but are not limited to online discussions, quizzes, exams, presentations, and virtual laboratory activities that ensure the learning outcomes of a face-to-face course are met in the online course. Students in online courses will have all the same expectations with out of class preparations and assignments required in face-to-face courses. These include group projects, essays, term papers, and other activities that enable appropriate assessment of how well a student is meeting the learning outcomes of the course.

Hybrid Courses:

Courses offered in a blended format with one or more on-site face-to-face class sessions and at least one or more online sessions, both containing direct interaction with a faculty member. Contact time is assessed using both on-site definitions (for the on-site portion) and online definitions as above (for the online portion). In all such instances, these courses must meet the total amount of instructional and student work time as the examples above even if delivered online or asynchronously.