

CCS Administrative Procedure

4.40.03-A Credit Hours

Implementing Board Policy [4.40.03](#)

Contact: Provost/Chief Learning Officer, 434-5060

1.0 Purpose

All courses offered and reported on by Washington's community and technical colleges must meet minimum standards as determined by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC). The credit value or credit equivalent assigned to any course or instructional activity must meet federal guidelines for credit hour and follow the rules as approved by the SBCTC.

2.0 Limitations and Requirements

- 2.1 This credit hour procedure applies to all courses that award academic credit (i.e., any course that appears on an official transcript issued by CCS) regardless of the mode of delivery including, but not limited to, self-paced, online, hybrid, lecture, seminar, and laboratory.
- 2.2 Academic units are responsible for ensuring that credit hours are awarded only for work that meets the requirements outlined in this procedure.
- 2.3 The Curriculum Committee of each college is charged with following this procedure on credit hours in their review and approval of all courses and for certifying that the expected student learning for the course meets the credit hour standard.
- 2.4 The determination of credit hours is made when a new course or a revision to an existing course is proposed. The submitted syllabus is examined for contact time as well as for assignments and evaluation mechanisms.

3.0 Definitions

In accordance with federal regulations, 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:

- 3.1 Not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours 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;
- 3.2 At least an equivalent amount of work as outlined in 3.1, above, 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.

4.0 Credit Ratios

In addition to federal guidelines, the SBCTC has established the basis for determining the credit value or credit equivalent that may be assigned to any course or instructional activity. See SBCTC Policy Manual, Chapter 4, [Appendix B: Credit Hours/Credit Equivalents by Type of Instruction](#).

- 4.1 Lecture/discussion, 1:1. One hour of lecture or classroom discussion per week and approximately two additional hours of out-of-class assignments per classroom contact hour earns one credit hour. For example, a five credit course would equal five classroom hours per week plus substantial out-of-class assignments and study time.

- 4.2 Laboratory/applied learning, 2:1. Two hours of laboratory work per week and approximately one additional hour for out-of-class assignments earns one credit hour.
- 4.3 Work site educational experience, 3:1. Three (3) hours of work per week under the intermittent supervision of the instructor or under the direction of professional practitioners earns one credit hour.

5.0 Contact Time

- 5.1 The expectation of contact time inside the classroom and student effort outside the classroom is the same in all formats of a course whether it be fully online, a hybrid of face-to-face contact with some content delivered by electronic means, or one delivered in lecture or seminar format.
- 5.2 Courses that have less structured classroom schedules, such as seminars, independent studies, internships, practica, studio work, or any other academic work leading to an award of credit hours, at a minimum, should state clearly learning objectives and expected outcomes and workload expectations that meet the standards set forth in 3.0, above.

6.0 Compliance Review

- 6.1 It is recommended that each department or academic unit conduct an initial comprehensive review of the credit hour assignment of approximately no less than 25 percent of its courses each year for the next four years. This ensures that all the college's courses' credit worthiness would be reviewed in a timely manner to satisfy the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) policy.
- 6.2 The review will be done either by the pertinent department faculty and/or college's curriculum committee. Whereas each academic unit should determine how best to organize and conduct its initial review, some common themes should be observed.

7.0 Related Information

- 7.1 Northwest Commission on Colleges & Universities (NWCCU) [Policy on Credit Hour](#)
- 7.2 Institutional Eligibility under the Higher Education Act, [34 CFR 600.2](#)
- 7.3 Higher Learning Commission Accreditation Requirements, [34 CFR 668.8 \(k\)\(l\)](#)
- 7.4 SBCTC Policy Manual, Chapter 4, [Appendix B: Credit Hours/Credit Equivalents by Type of Instruction](#)