

Academic Credit Policy

Academic credit provides a common basis for measuring the amount of engaged student learning in an academic setting. A credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement in a course, laboratory, studio and internship or other experiential learning activity delivered by any instructional mode.

The credit hour is used as a common currency by students, institutions and the federal government to measure a variety of academic activities. Credit hours are used by universities to calculate, record, and interpret the amount of work students need to fulfill degree, certificate, and other similar academic requirements. Credit hours facilitate the transfer of students from one institution to another and it is the basis for the awarding of federal financial aid.

Definition of Credit Hour

1. For traditionally delivered courses, no less than one hour of classroom¹ or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of coursework outside the classroom for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester hour of credit. There may be additional contact hours for those courses that include a final examination week.
2. For other academic activities including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours, an equivalent amount of work as required in item 1 above is necessary.
3. Online, hybrid, shortened, intensive format courses and other nontraditional modes of course delivery may not meet the credit/contact hours assigned above. In such instances, the course will be reviewed and approved by a faculty review process that evaluates the course and its learning outcomes to determine if the course has equivalent learning outcomes to those in a traditionally delivered course.
4. In determining the amount of work a course's learning outcomes will require, alternative delivery methods, measurements of student work, academic calendar, discipline, and degree levels may be taken into consideration.

Maximum Credit Hours per Semester

Each academic course is assumed to involve a significant amount of non-contact time for student learning and reflection. To ensure the quality of student learning, students should not carry courses in any term (regular or shortened) that would allow them to earn more than one semester credit hour per week over the term. For example, in a five and a half week summer term, students should not generally be allowed to enroll for more than six semester credit hours (Texas Administrative Code Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 4, Subchapter A, Rule §4.6). An exception may be granted pursuant to written policy (see definition of Maximum Course Load in the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs).

¹ The glossary in the UTRGV Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs indicates “a class that meets for one 50-minute period per week for a regular semester will carry a credit of one hour.”