

POLICY FOR AWARDING CREDIT

Policy Number: 3.3.115

MTSA uses semester credit hours as the basis for measuring the amount of learning accomplished. This measurement of engaged learning delineates the units connected with student learning experiences in both traditional classroom settings and nontraditional classroom settings such as laboratories, studios, internships, practica and other experiential learning, and in semester and non-semester-based, face-to-face and distance learning delivery modes.

The purpose of this policy is to provide academic administrators and faculty of MTSA guidance in setting credit hour recommendations for MTSA academic courses and programs consistent with federal regulations.

To comply with federal regulations and with the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) policy, MTSA has adopted the federal definition of the Credit Hour as identified by SACSCOC in their policy statement on credit hours (approved June 2011, edited January 2012 and August 2018), as follows:

Federal Definition of the Credit Hour. For purposes of the application of this policy and in accord with federal regulations (34 CFR 600.2), 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:

- a. Not less than 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 at least the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time, or
- b. At least an equivalent amount of work as required outlined 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.

The awarding of credit hours for academic courses and programs:

MTSA is responsible for determining the amount of credit hours awarded for MTSA academic courses and programs and will abide by the SACSCOC guidelines for flexibility in interpretation when assigning credit hours for student coursework, stated as follows.

The institution determines the amount of credit for student work.

- a. A credit hour is expected to be a reasonable approximation of a minimum amount of student work in accordance with commonly accepted practice in higher education*
- b. The credit hour definition is a minimum standard that does not restrict an institution from setting a higher standard that requires more student work per credit hour.
- c. The definition does not dictate particular amounts of classroom time versus out-of- class student work.
- d. In determining the amount of work the institution's learning outcomes will entail, the institution may take into consideration alternative delivery methods, measurements of student work, academic calendars, disciplines, and degree levels.
- e. To the extent an institution believes that complying with the Federal definition of a credit hour would not be appropriate for academic and other institutional needs, it may adopt a separate measure for those purposes.
- f. Credits may be awarded on the basis of documentation of the amount of work a typical student is expected to complete within a specified amount of academically engaged time, or on the basis of documented student learning calibrated to that amount of academically engaged time for a typical student.

For the purposes of this policy, an “hour” of instruction is interpreted as 50 minutes of contact time or its equivalent. Thus, each semester hour of credit involves 15 weeks x 50 minutes = 750 minutes = 12.5 hours of contact time, or its equivalent, excluding registration and final examination periods.

This is also in compliance with U.S. Department of Education (DOE) definition of a credit hour, as published in the “instructions” for completing Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data Systems (IPEDS) reports on 12-month enrollment and the Federal Student Aid Handbook. The Glossary accompanying the IPEDS instructions defines a credit hour as:

A unit of measure representing the equivalent of an hour (50 minutes) of instruction per week over the entire term. It is applied toward the total number of credit hours needed for completing the requirements of a degree, diploma, certificate, or other formal award.

Instructional engagement activities include lectures, presentations, discussions, groupwork, and other activities that would normally occur during class time. Instructional engagement activities may occur in a face-to-face meeting or in a synchronous online class.