

Credit Hour Definition

Policy:

All undergraduate and graduate courses at the American Public University System adhere to the Federal Credit Hour Definition below:

Department of Education Definition (34 CFR 600.2)

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/09/02/2020-18636/distance-education-and-innovation>

Credit hour: Except as provided in 34 CFR 668.8(k) and (l), a credit hour is an amount of student work defined by an institution, as approved by the institution's accrediting agency or State approval agency, that is consistent with commonly accepted practice in postsecondary education and that—

1. Reasonably approximates 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 the equivalent amount of work over a different period of time; or
- At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) (i) 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; and

2. Permits an institution, in determining the amount of work associated with a credit hour, to take into account a variety of delivery methods, measurements of student work, academic calendars, disciplines, and degree levels.

APUS also adheres to guidance from the Higher Learning Commission found in the policy language below:

HLC Policy Language (FDCR.A.10.020)

<https://www.hlcommission.org/Policies/assignment-of-credits.html>

An institution shall be able to equate its learning experiences with semester or quarter credit hours using practices common to institutions of higher education, to justify the lengths of its programs in comparison to similar programs found in accredited institutions of higher education, and to justify any program-specific tuition in terms of program costs,

program length, and program objectives. Affiliated institutions shall notify the Commission of any significant changes in the relationships among credits, program length, and tuition.

Assignment of Credit Hours. The institution's assignment and award of credit hours shall conform to commonly accepted practices in higher education. Those institutions seeking, or participating in, Title IV federal financial aid, shall demonstrate that they have policies determining the credit hours awarded to courses and programs in keeping with commonly-accepted practices and with the federal definition of the credit hour, as reproduced herein for reference only, and that institutions also have procedures that result in an appropriate awarding of institutional credit in conformity with the policies established by the institution.

Procedure:

All new programs, concentrations, certificates, and courses assure quality from their inception through a multi-stakeholder process involving review by the School Curriculum Committee, the Academic Leadership Committee, the executive leadership, and, if a new program or certificate, by an external reviewer, and the Board of Trustees. APUS developed the process to ensure all new programs, concentrations, certificates, and courses are current and the level of student performance is appropriate. The APUS curriculum guidebook and program proposal templates are used as tools for stakeholders to develop and revise academic programs, concentrations, and courses based on the credit hour definition and policy language above.

Over the past decade, APUS has used information provided through its contact hour calculator based on the traditional Carnegie unit as an additional method for ensuring course workload sits at the appropriate level. APUS continues to evaluate and will update the aforementioned policy and corresponding procedures as needed and in accordance with applicable law and best practices for learning.