

The University of Texas at Arlington Academic Credit Hour Policy and Guidelines

Overview

This policy defines the academic credit hour at the University of Texas at Arlington (UT Arlington) in accordance with federal regulations¹ and policies of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS-COC).²

Background

According to the SACS-COC, “academic credit has provided the basis for measuring the amount of engaged learning time expected of a typical student enrolled not only in traditional classroom settings but also laboratories, studies, internships and other experiential learning, and distance and correspondence education.”³

Definition

At UT Arlington, courses are measured in terms of credit hours. In determining the number of credit hours associated with a course, members of the academic community consider a number of factors, including:

- the amount of time students are expected to commit to the course on a weekly basis;
- the nature of the student-teacher interaction (including, but not limited to, the amount of time spent in class);
- the amount of outside preparatory work expected for the class; and
- other considerations relevant to the educational context.

Credit Guidelines

Credit equivalencies established by UT Arlington closely follow federal guidelines in that one credit hour “reasonably approximates not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction [plus] a minimum of two [to three] hours out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester hour of credit, ... or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time, or at least an equivalent amount of work for other academic activities including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to award of credit hours.”⁴

Semester credit hours for each course are calculated according to ratios established with regard to class type and duration:

- **LECTURE, SEMINAR:** One credit hour is associated with a class meeting for 1 hour (50 minutes) per week for an entire semester (or the equivalent 750 semester minutes, excluding final exams).
- **LABORATORY:** Credit hour assignment will vary depending upon the type of laboratory experience (stand-alone vs. course-associated; experimental vs. creative / studio), the amount and type of activity associated with the lab, the nature of faculty supervision, and other factors, within the parameters indicated in Table 1.

¹ Code of Federal Regulations, Title 34: Education, Part 600 – Institutional Eligibility under the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, Subpart A – General. (<http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr&sid=620da4e83d9a415aacc3d3074b24204&rgn=div8&view=text&nnode=34.3.1.3.1.1.1.23.2&idno=34>)

² “Credit Hours Policy Statement”, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges, last edited January 2012. <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/Credit%20Hours.pdf>.

³ “Credit Hours Policy Statement,” SACS-COC.

⁴ “Credit Hours Policy Statement,” SACS-COC.

- CUSTOMIZED COURSES, INCLUDING PRACTICUM, INDEPENDENT STUDY, PRIVATE LESSON, THESIS, DISSERTATION, INDIVIDUALIZED, CLINICAL: Credit hour assignment will vary depending upon the amount and type of activity associated with the course, the nature of faculty supervision, and other factors, within the parameters indicated in Table 1.

For online, hybrid, alternate format, and other nontraditional modes of delivery, the number of credit hours assigned will be equivalent to those awarded for a corresponding course delivered in a traditional course setting, based on the expectation that students will achieve comparable student learning outcomes, regardless of delivery format.

Procedure for Exceptions

Certain situations may warrant variance from the above guidelines. If such a situation should arise, a request should be sent through the appropriate curricular channel requesting the variance. This will permit the university to document any variances and will assist in determining any needed revisions to the guidelines.

Table 1: Summary of Semester Credit Hour Guidelines

“U” = “undergraduate; “G” = “graduate”

| | Instructional Type (a.k.a. “Component”) | Average Expected Student Commitment of Effort per Week | Semester Credit Hours (SCH) | |
|----------------------|---|--|--|--|
| Organized Courses | Lecture-A (no associated lab) | 1 lecture hour + <i>minimum</i> of 2 out-of-class hours* (per federal guidelines) | 1 SCH | |
| | Lecture-B (w/associated lab of 0 SCH) | 1 lecture hour + minimum of 3 out of class hours, including lab hours (1-6) | 1.33 SCH (rounded to nearest whole number) | |
| | Laboratory (“stand-alone” course; no associated lecture) | A: 2-4 laboratory hours B: 3-6 laboratory hours C: 5-8 laboratory hours D: 7-10 laboratory hours E: 9-12 laboratory hours F: 11+ laboratory hours | 1 SCH 2 SCH 3 SCH 4 SCH 5 SCH 6 SCH | |
| | Seminar | 1 class hour + minimum of 2 out-of-class hours* | 1 SCH | |
| Customized Courses** | Practicum | | | |
| | Independent Study | A: 1-4 hours B: 3-6 hours | 1 SCH 2 SCH | |
| | Private Lesson | C: 5-8 hours D: 7-10 hours | 3 SCH 4 SCH | |
| | Thesis | E: 9-12 hours F: 11-14 hours | 5 SCH 6 SCH | |
| | Dissertation | G: 13-16 hours H: 15-18 hours | 7 SCH 8 SCH | |
| | Individualized | I: 17-20 hours | 9 SCH | |
| | Clinical | | | |

*The expected two out-of-class hours is a minimum value; many faculty expect that students to dedicate three or four such hours of work.

**For customized courses, the estimated average number of hours of effort to be committed by student should include both time spent in contact with a faculty member and time spent by the student directly engaged in the practice, rehearsal, research, and/or preparation of materials as they directly relate to the course’s learning outcomes. The actual number of student credit hours awarded may vary within the parameters provided above.

Examples:

| Class | Contact Hours | Component Type | SCH to be awarded | Notes |
|-----------|---------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| HIST 1311 | 3 | Lecture-A | 3 | |
| SPAN 1441 | 3 (+Lab) | Lecture-B | 4 | Associated lab (online) |
| CHEM 1441 | 3 (+Lab) | Lecture-B | 4 | Associated lab |
| ENGL 4391 | 6 | Independent Study | 3 | 5-8 contact hours = 3 SCH |
| THEA 4395 | 6 | Practicum | 3 | 5-8 contact hours = 3 SCH |
| THEA 4695 | 12 | Practicum | 6 | 11-14 contact hours = 6 SCH |
| ART 3340 | 6 | Lab | 3 | Lab – stand alone |
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