

Concord University's

Credit Hour Definition

Concord University follows the U.S. Department of Education's rule, 34 CFR 600.2 definition of a credit hour as the “amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates not less than:

1. “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 amount of time; or
2. At least an equivalent amount of work as required 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.

A semester hour approximates one hour (or 50 minutes) of classroom time and two hours of out-of-class student work each week in a 15-week semester or its equivalent. (*Report of the Meeting of the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity*, December 2010, U.S. Department of Education, pp. 25-26).

Concord University also follows Title 34 CFR 668.8

[§ 668. 3.d.(1)] () An eligible program provided by a proprietary institution of higher education or postsecondary vocational institution must require a minimum of 15 weeks of instruction, beginning on the first day of classes and ending on the last day of classes or examinations;

[§ 668. 3.i.(1)] Except as provided in [paragraph \(l\)\(2\)](#) of this section, for purposes of determining whether a program described in [paragraph \(k\)](#) of this section satisfies the requirements contained in paragraph (c)(3) or (d) of this section, and determining the number of credit hours in that educational program with regard to the title IV, HEA programs –

- (i) A semester hour must include at least 37.5 clock hours of instruction;
- (ii) A trimester hour must include at least 37.5 clock hours of instruction; and
- (iii) A quarter hour must include at least 25 clock hours of instruction.

I. Background

New federal regulations (Title 34 CFR 600 and 668) require that institutions submit their definitions and related policies regarding credit hours to their accrediting agencies and receive an official, recorded certification from that agency that the definitions meet the new federal definition of a credit hour.

II. Credit Hour Calculations

A. Basic one credit hour [§ 600.2(1)]

At least 15 contact hours (with each hour being 50 minutes) of recitation, lecture, discussion, seminar, or colloquium, as well as a minimum of 30 hours of student homework, are required for each unit of student credit.

B. Lecture, traditional class [§ 600.2(1)]

A semester credit hour is earned for fifteen 50-minute sessions of classroom instruction with a normal expectation of two hours of outside study (homework, reading assignments, preparation for class) for each class session (meeting time). Typically, a three-semester credit hour course meets for three 50-minute sessions per week for fifteen weeks, for approximately 45 sessions and 90 hours of work outside of the classroom. (This usually yields 16 weeks when including the final exam.)

C. Supervised group activity [§ 600.2(2)] (*laboratory, field trip, practicum, workshop, group studio*)

The equivalent of three 50-minute sessions per week over a traditional 15-week semester of a lab, rehearsal, or studio time would qualify for one semester credit hour.

Where such activity involves substantial outside preparation by the student, the equivalent of two 50-minute sessions will earn one semester credit hour.

Field trips are to be counted hour-for-hour as laboratory meetings (not including travel time).

D. Supervised individual activity [§ 600.2(2)] (*independent study, individual studio, tutorial, dissertation*)

One semester credit hour credit for independent study (defined as study given initial guidance, criticism, review and final evaluation of student performance by a faculty member) will be awarded for the equivalent of three one-hour sessions of student academic activity in a traditional 15-week semester.

E. Full-time Independent Study [§ 600.2(2)] (*clinical placements, student teaching, practicum*)

If a student's academic activity is essentially full-time (as in a student teaching or in a clinical placement), at least one full-time, eight-hour per day, 40-hour, five day week of such experience will be required for one credit hour. Depending on specific curriculum, programs may require more than one week in order to award one credit hour.

Clinical placement experiences are defined as “a part of the program that allows for observation, participation, studies of individual pupils or clients, individual field work, and practicums both on and off campus.” *Credit for clinical experiences is determined in accordance with recommendations of a program’s specific best practices, accrediting body, or applicable state regulation.*

IV. Short Sessions [§ 600.2(1)]

Credit hours may be earned in short sessions (summer sessions, intersessions, weekend sessions, workshops, seminars, etc.) proportionately to those earned for the same course during a traditional 15-week semester, normally at no more than one credit per week of full-time study.

Courses offered over a period of time other than a traditional 15-week semester will require the same amount of classroom and out-of-class work per credit hour as is required of semester-long courses. The same amount of work will be distributed over a shorter period of time and may be allocated in various ways.

Forty-five hours of work are required to earn one credit hour. The allotment of face-to-face instruction and work outside of class may vary. Examples:

1. For one credit, a workshop could require 15 hours of contact time and 30 homework hours (total hours = 45).
2. For one credit, a seminar could require 20 hours of contact time and 25 homework hours (total hours = 45).
3. For one credit, a studio could require 30 hours of contact time and 15 homework hours (total = 45).

Since it would be virtually impossible for a student to satisfactorily complete 45 hours of work in less than one week, the policy regarding the duration of courses maintains that a course must cover at least a one-week period for every unit of credit given. During the intensive summer session, however, eight units of credit might be given over a four-week period.

V. *Credit by Examination* [§ 600.2(2)]

At its discretion, an institution may award semester hour credits for mastery demonstrated through credit-by-examination. When such credit by examination is allowed, it may be used to satisfy degree requirements or to reduce the total number of remaining hours required for a degree.

VI. *Distance Education, Internet and Hybrid (Blended) Courses* [§ 600.2(1)]

Concord University's credit hour policy for distance education, Internet and hybrid courses is consistent with the standards for courses offered through face-to-face instruction, although some or all of course content and faculty-student interaction occurs through one or more forms of distance education.

References:

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/34/668.8> - clock hour

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/34/600.2> definition of clock hour and distance education

Concord University's fall/spring semesters are 16 weeks in length (15 instructional weeks and one week of final exams); two summer terms are five weeks each. Credit hours are identified through Concord's course schedule (seats taken) by affirmation of meeting times (hours and days) for each course and the credit hours awarded for successful completion of the course.

See: <https://apps.concord.edu/schedules/seatstaken.php>.

Concord University's Credit Hour Chart

| Type of Instruction | Contact Hours per week ("class hours," 50--minute segments) A | Weekly Preparation Time (50 minute segments) B | A+B | Total Number of Weeks C | Total number of hours (A+B) x C | Minimum Number of credit hours awarded 45 = 1 90 = 2 135 = 3 |
|--|---|--|------------|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| Traditional Class [§ 600.2(1)] | | | | | | |
| Lecture, recitation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 15 | 45 | 1 |
| | 2 | 4 | 6 | 15 | 90 | 2 |
| | 3 | 6 | 9 | 15 | 135 | 3 |
| Supervised Group Activity [§ 600.2(2)] | | | | | | |
| Lab, Group studio, Practicum | 3 | 0 | 3 | 15 | 45 | 1 |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 15 | 45 | 1 |
| | 2 | 4 | 6 | 15 | 90 | 2 |
| Supervised Individual Activity [§ 600.2(2)] | | | | | | |
| Independent study, individual studio, dissertation | .5 | 2.5 | 3 | 15 | 45 | 1 |
| | .5 | 5.5 | 6 | 15 | 90 | 2 |
| | .5 | 8.5 | 9 | 15 | 135 | 3 |
| Full--time Independent Study [§ 600.2(2)] | | | | | | |
| Student teaching, practicum, clinical placement | 0 | 45 <i>(prep time and work time)</i> | 45 | 1 | 45 | 1 |
| Short Sessions [§ 600.2(1)] | | | | | | |
| Courses offered in summer sessions | 8.5 (4X weekly) Summer I & II | 18 | 26.5 | 5 | 138.0 | 3 |
| | 8.5 (4X weekly) Summer I & II | 10 | 18.5 | 5 | 92.5 | 2 |
| | 8.5 (4X weekly) Summer I & II | 5 | 13.5 | 5 | 47 | 1 |

Regulatory Updates (2021-2025)

1. Clock-to-Credit Conversion Rule (Effective July 1, 2021):

- 30 clock hours = 1 semester credit hour.
- 20 clock hours = 1 quarter credit hour.
- Out-of-class work is excluded from conversion calculations.

2. Gainful Employment Program Requirements (Effective July 1, 2024):

- Programs must comply with state-defined clock-hour caps for Title IV eligibility.

3. Amendments to Federal Regulations:

- 34 CFR 600.2 updated January 3, 2025: Revised definitions including "academic engagement."
- 34 CFR 668.8 updated August 15, 2025: Clarifications on eligible program requirements.

Ensure institutional policies align with these updates for compliance.