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Credit Hour Policy

Policy Statement:

The policy defines a credit hour unit for all undergraduate, graduate and credential courses.

Why the Policy is necessary:

To be in compliance of the federal definition of a credit hour as mandated by WASC and the CSU Chancellor's Office.

Who the Policy applies to:

Faculty, students and deans

I. Background and Definitions

A. The California State University (CSU) defines a credit hour as an amount of work represented in stated learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement. Such evidence is an institutionally established equivalency that:

1. Approximates not less than:

a. One hour of direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately 15 weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit (or 10 to 12 weeks for one quarter hour of credit) or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time (this amounts to 15 hours of direct faculty instruction and a minimum of 30 hours of out-of-class student work); or

b. At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph 1.a. 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. Institutions have the flexibility to award a greater number of credits for courses that require more student work.

This definition of a credit hour agrees with guidelines put forth by Federal law and the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC).

B. In this policy, the term *instructional hour(s)* refers to time spent in instructional contact provided by the course instructor, be it synchronous or asynchronous. Historically, this was defined as “seat time” in a classroom. For synchronous courses this is often still time in class. For asynchronous classes, this may be faculty created/curated recorded lectures, online modules, or other faculty-guided activities. The term *independent hours* (or *independent student work*) refers to time spent on coursework outside of time dedicated for instructional hours. Though labelled ‘independent,’ independent hours may consist of time spent with peers and/or others as determined by the instructor. A *Semester credit hour* is a credit hour defined over a 15-week semester. A credit hour is sometimes simply referred to as a *credit*.

C. Descriptions for common course types (such as *Lectures*, *Seminars*, etc.) are given in Section III below and are based on those available as options in the Form A Workflow (http://www.csus.edu/academic-affairs/curriculum-workflow/_internal/_documents/cs_numbers2015.pdf).

D. This policy establishes the following:

1. Institutional guidance on amount of work required by various academic activities to be equivalent to one credit hour;
2. Maximum credit hours students may enroll in; including Summer and Winter Sessions;
3. Corresponding credit hour definitions and policies for graduate academic units; and
4. Consistent credit hour policies for academic activities across all teaching modalities.

II. General Policies

A. For undergraduate courses, each credit hour in lecture courses will typically require 50 minutes (one instructional hour) of faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of independent student work for each week of a fifteen week semester (for a total of 45 hours per credit hour per semester). For common undergraduate courses which are not lecture courses, equivalent criteria are specified in Sections III and IV below.

B. For graduate courses, each credit hour in lecture courses will typically require 50 minutes (one instructional hour) of faculty instruction and a minimum of three hours of independent student

work for each week of a fifteen week semester (for a total of 60 hours per credit hour per semester). For common graduate courses which are not lecture courses, equivalent criteria are specified in Sections III and V below.

C. For credential courses, each credit hour in lecture courses will typically require 50 minutes (one instructional hour) of faculty instruction and a minimum of two and a half hours of independent student work for each week of a fifteen-week semester (for a total of 52.5 hours per credit hour per semester). For common credential courses which are not lecture courses, equivalent criteria are specified in Sections III and VI below.

D. For courses not described in Sections III-VI below, the course description must explain the conditions for credit which must reasonably approximate the standard for lecture courses. For instance, conditions for credit may be addressed by number of instructional hours per week and/or expected time spent in independent student work.

E. Courses may be offered for variable credit hours (either for a range of credits in a single term, or for a different number of credits from one term to another).

F. Each course may account for at most one credit hour per week of instruction for full time study.

G. Students shall take a maximum of 21 credit hours per semester, or the equivalent in credit hour load for Summer and Winter Sessions.

1. To determine Summer session credit hours, one 6-week Summer Session credit hour is equal to 2.5 Semester credit hours and one 12-week Summer session credit hour is equal to 1.25 Semester credit hours. Summer Session credit hours shall not exceed 16 across all Summer Sessions in a year, and 6-week Summer Session credit hours shall not exceed 8 for each 6-week Summer Session. Additional details are as follows:

- a. If coursework is entirely within a 6-week Summer Session, credit hours shall not exceed 8 (which is equivalent to 20 Semester credit hours)
- b. If coursework is entirely within a 12-week Summer Session, credit hours shall not exceed 16 (which is equivalent to 20 Semester credit hours).
- c. If coursework is a combination of concurrent 6-week and 12-week Summer Sessions, then combined credit hours shall not exceed the equivalent 21 Semester credit hours.
- d. The following table provides all combinations of 6-week and 12-week maximum Summer Session credit hours allowed:

	All combinations (columns) of maximum allowable concurrent 6-week and 12-week Summer Session credit hours								
6-week credit hours	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
12-week credit hours	0	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16

2. Winter Session credit hours shall not exceed 3 as each class may account for at most one credit hour per week for full time study (see Section II.F). One full 3-week Winter Session credit hour is equal to 5 Semester credit hours and so 3 Winters Session credit hours are equivalent to 15 Semester credit hours. Although 4 Winter Session credit hours is equivalent to the allowed 20 Semester credit hours when the session is 3 weeks, most Winter Sessions are less than a full 3 weeks and therefore exceed the 21 Semester credit hours equivalency if more than 3 credit hours are taken. To satisfy this and Section II.F above, the maximum credit hours shall not exceed 3 for any Winter Session.

3. Exceptions to the credit hour maximums may be granted by way of a student petition. The petition must be approved by major advising. Undeclared students must seek approval from advisors in the Academic Advising Center or College Student Success Centers.

H. This Credit Hour Policy is consistent across all modalities.

III. Guidelines for Common Course Types

The following are common course types across undergraduate, graduate, and credential areas of study. More specific instructional and independent hour information for undergraduate, graduate, and credential areas of study are given in Sections IV, V, and VI, respectively.

A. Activity (including group studio work and physical education):

One to four weekly instructional hours per credit.

1. There may be *fewer* instructional hours per week for laboratories which have higher expectations for outside independent work.
2. There may be *more* instructional hours per week for laboratories which have lower expectations for outside independent work.

B. Clinical:

Clinical 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. Required pre-service clinical hours (clock hours) in teacher education programs are generally associated with specific “field experience” or “student teaching” courses, and receive course credit. Credit for clinical experiences is determined in accordance with recommendations of their specific accrediting bodies or applicable state regulation. Generally, more required credit hours for a specific clinical experience involves greater levels of complexity, responsibility, skill and time as well as a greater number of learning outcomes assessed. Clinical experiences include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. **Supervised Field Experience:** a type of clinical experience that occurs primarily in an authentic professional context/setting. Candidates gain responsibility over time. Typically, candidates begin with limited responsibilities and execute a range of tasks that increase in complexity over time. All work is completed under the supervision of an in-service practitioner. All work is supervised and evaluated (by the in-service practitioner or proxy

and/or a university supervisor). Differing experiences may fulfill different program requirements.

2. Supervised Student Teaching/Intern: another type of clinical experience that occurs primarily in an authentic professional context/setting. Candidates take on considerable responsibilities and execute a wide range of tasks independently. By the end of the student teaching/intern experience, candidates' daily responsibilities and tasks should mirror those of the in-service professional. All work is completed under the supervision of an in-service practitioner. All work is supervised and evaluated (by the in-service practitioner or proxy and/or a university supervisor). Student teaching/interning is typically the culminating clinical experience in a program.

C. Discussion:

One weekly instructional hour per credit.

D. Field Study (including visual or performing art studio; excluding Clinical courses described above):

Contact between instructor and student is required, but variable and not necessarily on a weekly basis.

1. *Fewer* instructional hours will be necessary for a field study course in which a considerable amount of the student's time is devoted to reading, research, and other academic activities to which the field study is supplemental. *More* instructional hours will be necessary if the academic component involves a less significant proportion of the student's time.
2. *Fewer* instructional hours in the setting will be necessary for a field study course in which the student receives a significant amount of supervision and instruction from a regular member of the faculty. *More* instructional hours in the setting will be necessary if the student receives less direct supervision, or less time devoted to instruction, from the faculty.

E. Independent Study (including individual studio, tutorial, and culminating experience):

Contact between instructor and student is required, but variable and not necessarily on a weekly basis. Typically averages between three-fourths (3/4) and two instructional hours weekly, but may be between zero and three instructional hours.

F. Laboratory:

Generally, two types of lab experiences are offered:

1. Practical learning experiences in specially equipped facilities and specially designed learning contexts. Characterized by the candidates performing some activity designed to enhance understanding or knowledge of a particular topic, with the goal of candidate demonstration of an appropriate skill (i.e. a providing clear instructions, observing teaching while using a protocol, implementing concept attainment strategies, conducting student assessments), typically a minimum meeting of 50 minutes or more per week for 1 credit

hour. Typically, outside preparation time of 50 minutes per week for 1 credit hour.

2. Field application experiences based on content learned in a course. These field experiences use local educational settings as the learning “lab.” In the course, candidates learn about particular situations, behaviors, processes and protocols. In the learning “lab,” they use a framework provided through their course to execute this learning “lab” (usually a set of guidelines about where to observe and what observational data to collect). These learning “lab” experiences do not typically involve participation or actions from the candidate, who takes on a primarily observational role. They are monitored by instructors via specific assignments that the candidate must complete as part of the learning lab experience. The lab typically requires a minimum of 30 hours of lab experience and an additional 10 hours of preparation time per credit hour. These may sometimes instead be better suited as a Field Study course as in Section III.D.

G. Lecture:

One weekly instructional hour per credit.

H. Practicum (includes internships):

One to four weekly instructional hours per credit.

1. There may be *fewer* instructional hours per week for practicum which have higher expectations for outside independent work.
2. There may be *more* instructional hours per week for practicum which have lower expectations for outside independent work.

I. Research:

Contact between instructor and student is required, but variable and not necessarily on a weekly basis.

J. Seminar:

For each seminar, the average number of weekly instructional hours may range from two-thirds (2/3) of an hour to two hours per credit

1. There may be *fewer* instructional hours per week for seminars which have higher expectations for outside independent work.
2. There may be *more* instructional hours per week for seminars which have lower expectations for outside independent work.

K. Supervision:

Averages three to four weekly supervised hours per credit, but may vary.

Courses in which credit includes “field experience,” “clinical experience” (see also III.B above), “internship,” or “student teaching” are referred collectively as “Experience.” These include, but are not limited to the following:

1. **Supervised Field Experience:** a type of Experience that occurs primarily in an authentic

professional context/setting. Candidates gain responsibility over time. Typically, candidates begin with limited responsibilities and execute a range of tasks that increase in complexity over time. All work is completed under the supervision of an in-service practitioner. All work is supervised and evaluated (by the in-service practitioner or proxy and/or a university supervisor). Differing Experiences may fulfill different program requirements.

2. Supervised Student Teaching/Intern Experience: another type of Experience that occurs primarily in an authentic professional context/setting. Candidates take on considerable responsibilities and execute a wide range of tasks independently. By the end of the Teaching/Intern/Experience, candidates' daily responsibilities and tasks should mirror those of the in-service professional. All work is completed under the supervision of an in-service practitioner. All work is supervised and evaluated (by the in-service practitioner or proxy and/or a university supervisor).

L. Thesis Research:

Averages one and a half (1.5) weekly instructional hours per credit on average, but may vary.

M. Tutorial:

Contact between instructor and student is required, but variable and not necessarily on a weekly basis.

N. Other:

To be made consistent with course types given above as based on workload and instructional hours.

IV. Table of Credit Hours for Common Undergraduate Courses

The following tables provide more specific typical guidelines for instructional and independent hours for common undergraduate courses.

Course Type (15 Week Semester)	<i>Typical Number of Student Hours <u>in Class</u> Weekly per Credit</i>	<i>Typical Number of Student Preparation/ Activity Hours <u>Out of Class</u> Weekly per Credit</i>	<i>Minimum <u>Total</u> Hours per Credit</i>	<i>Number of Credit Hours Earned across 15 Weeks</i>
Activity	2-3 hours	0-1 hours	3 hours weekly	1
Clinical	0-1 hour	2-3 hours in supervised and/or independent practice	3 hours weekly	1

Discussion	1 hour	2 hours	3 hours weekly	1
Field Study	2-3 hours	0-1 hour	3 hours weekly	1
Independent Study	0-1 hour: time spent in initial guidance, criticism, review and final evaluation of student performance	2-3 hours	45 hours per semester	1
Laboratory	0-3 hours	0-1 hour	3 hours weekly	1
Lecture	1 hour	2 hours	3 hours weekly	1
Practicum	0-3 hours	0-3 hour	3 hours weekly	1
Research	2-3 hours	0-1 hour	3 hours weekly	1
Seminar	1 hour	2 hours	3 hours weekly	1
Supervision	3 hours	0 hours	3 hours weekly	1
Thesis Research	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tutorial	0-3 hours	0-3 hours	3 hours weekly	1

<u>Course Type (Not 15 Week Semester)</u>	<u>Typical Number of Student Hours in Class Weekly per Credit</u>	<u>Typical Number of Student Preparation/ Activity Hours Out of Class Weekly per Credit</u>	<u>Minimum Total Hours per Credit</u>	<u>Number of Credit Hours Earned</u>
<i>Credit by Examination:</i> student showing mastery through credit-by-examination	N/A	N/A	N/A	Number assigned at the discretion of the University
<i>Other Sessions</i> (e.g.	Variable but	Variable but	45 hours	Credits assigned

Summer Sessions, intersessions, special sessions, shortened sessions, term sessions)	proportional to hours spent for the same activity during a regular term (see Section II.G)	proportional to hours spent for the same activity during a regular term (see Section II.G)		proportionately to those earned for the same activity during a regular term (see Section II.G); credits assigned at the discretion of the University with no more than one course credit per week of full-time study
Sessions (e.g. Summer Sessions, intersessions, special sessions, shortened sessions, term sessions)	Variable but proportional to hours spent for the same activity during a regular term	Variable but proportional to hours spent for the same activity during a regular term	45 hours	Credits assigned proportionately to those earned for the same activity during a regular term; credits assigned at the discretion of the University with no more than one credit per week of full-time study

V. Table of Credit Hours for Common Graduate Courses

The following tables provide more specific typical guidelines for instructional and independent hours for common graduate courses.

Course Type (15 Week Semester)	<i>Typical Number of Student Hours in Class Weekly per Credit</i>	<i>Typical Number of Student Preparation/ Activity Hours Out of Class Weekly per Credit</i>	<i>Minimum Total Hours per Credit</i>	<i>Number of Credit Hours Earned across 15 Weeks</i>
Activity	2-4 hours	0-2 hours	4 hours weekly	1
Clinical	0-2 hour	2-4 hours in supervised and/or independent practice	4 hours weekly	1
Discussion	1 hour	3 hours	4 hours weekly	1

Field Study	2-3 hours	0-2 hour	4 hours weekly, on average	1
Independent Study	0-1 hour: time spent in initial guidance, criticism, review and final evaluation of student performance	2-3 hours	60 hours per semester	1
Laboratory	1-3 hours	0-1 hour	4 hours weekly	1
Lecture	1 hour	3 hours	4 hours weekly	1
Practicum	0-4 hours	0-4 hour	4 hours weekly	1
Research	2-4 hours	0-2 hour	4 hours weekly	1
Seminar	0.66-2 hours	2-3.33 hours	4 hours weekly	1
Supervision	0 hours	3-4 hours	3-4 hours weekly	1
Thesis Research	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tutorial	0-4 hours	0-4 hours	4 hours weekly	1

<u>Course Type (Not 15 Week Semester)</u>	<u>Typical Number of Student Hours in Class Weekly per Credit</u>	<u>Typical Number of Student Preparation/ Activity Hours Out of Class Weekly per Credit</u>	<u>Minimum Total Hours per Credit</u>	<u>Number of Credit Hours Earned</u>
<i>Credit by Examination:</i> student showing mastery through credit-by-examination	N/A	N/A	N/A	Number assigned at the discretion of the University
<i>Other Sessions</i> (e.g. Summer Sessions,	Variable but proportional to	Variable but proportional to	60 hours	Credits assigned proportionately to

intersessions, special sessions, shortened sessions, term sessions)	hours spent for the same activity during a regular term (see Section II.G)	hours spent for the same activity during a regular term (see Section II.G)		those earned for the same activity during a regular term (see Section II.G); credits assigned at the discretion of the University with no more than one course credit per week of full-time study
Sessions (e.g. Summer Sessions, intersessions, special sessions, shortened sessions, term sessions)	Variable but proportional to hours spent for the same activity during a regular term	Variable but proportional to hours spent for the same activity during a regular term	60 hours	Credits assigned proportionately to those earned for the same activity during a regular term; credits assigned at the discretion of the University with no more than one credit per week of full-time study

VI. Guidelines of Credit Hours for Common Credential Courses

The following provides more specific typical guidelines for instructional and independent hours for common credential courses.

- A. For credential course types that fit the descriptions in Section II, the relevant discussion therein as well as the appropriate table from either Section III or IV shall apply, unless the governing program establishes a different policy.
- B. Credential course types not fitting the descriptions in Section II shall have minimum instructional and independent hours consistent with the workload as described in Sections III, IV, and V, where relevant. Such additional course types may include, but are not limited to the following:
 1. **Professional Practice:** Professional practice is defined as one or more credit-generating, academic/career related, salaried or non-salaried work experiences. Professional Practice work sites are located on the University campus and with business, industry, government and other agencies and organizations outside the University campus.
 - a. At least one full-time five-day week of professional practice or the equivalent over a longer period of time will be required for one credit hour.
 - b. Depending on specific curriculum, programs may require more than one week in order to award one credit hour.

- 2. **Workshops and Contract Courses:** Workshops and Contract Courses are credit bearing courses offered for special populations by special arrangement will meet regular academic credit hour standards.

VII. Implementation of the Credit Hour Definition

- A. In order to address the WSCUC requirement to monitor the implementation of Sacramento State’s credit hour definition, for courses in the course approval process, course proposals should clearly indicate the course type. It is not the intent of this policy to describe all individual courses across the University, but rather to describe typical practices within course types. Programs proposing courses whose expectations lie significantly outside of those delineated in this policy shall provide a justification within the course proposal.
- B. For existing courses, each department will review their current courses and determine if each course adheres to the guidelines delineated in this Credit Hour Policy. Compliance affirmation will be evidenced as part of the academic program review.

Approval Signatures

Step Description

Approver

Date