

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for determining the amount of credit for specific academic coursework at Sam Houston State University (SHSU). The guidelines are established in accordance with state, federal, and accrediting body regulations and apply to face-to-face, online, hybrid, shortened-format, and off-campus instruction courses.

2. GENERAL

Academic credit provides the basis for measuring the amount of engaged learning time expected of a typical student enrolled not only in traditional classroom settings but also in laboratories, internships, clinicals, and other non-traditional course formats. At SHSU, the semester credit hour (SCH) value is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement to include contact hours, out-of-class student work, and other considerations relevant to the educational context.

3. FEDERAL AND STATE DEFINITIONS

3.01 Credit Hour. 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:

- a. 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 period of time; or
 - (2) At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph 3.01 a. (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; and
- b. 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 (*Code of Federal Regulations*, Title 34, Subtitle B, Chapter VI, Part 600, Subpart A § 600.2).

- 3.02 Minimum Course Length. Traditionally delivered three-semester-credit-hour courses should contain 15 weeks of instruction (45 contact hours) plus a week for final examinations so that such a course contains 45 to 48 contact hours depending on whether there is a final exam (*Texas Administrative Code*, Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 4, Subchapter A, Rule §4.6).

4. DEFINITIONS

- 4.01 Contact Hour - When defining a contact hour of instruction, SHSU adheres to the commonly used Carnegie unit of measure, in which fifty minutes of instruction equates to one contact hour.
- 4.02 Instruction - Instructor-presented, -driven, or -moderated educational content. This includes course lectures, lessons, discussions, and may also include exams and quizzes. Instruction does not necessarily include activities that occur outside of scheduled class meeting times such as homework, studying, class preparation, group work, writing, or research.
- 4.03 Semester Credit Hour - SHSU defines Semester Credit Hour (SCH) as a reasonable approximation of, at a minimum, (i) one contact 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 fall or spring semester, or the equivalent amount of work over a different period of time; or (ii) at least an equivalent amount of work as required in section (i) of this definition for other academic activities leading to the award of academic credit. This definition serves as a minimum standard and does not restrict academic programs from setting a higher requirement when substantiated by discipline, accrediting, and/or licensure expectations.
- 4.04 Shortened Format Courses - Academic credit courses in formats that are shorter than semester or summer term length.

5. RULES

5.01 Contact Hour Requirements

- a. Lecture Courses. Each semester credit hour shall consist of at least one contact hour per week, or the equivalent, and two hours per week of out-of-class student work over a fifteen-week semester. The standard three-semester credit hour lecture course shall meet for a total of at least 45 contact hours per semester, with the typical student spending at least six hours on out-of-class work per week.

- b. Laboratory Courses. Each semester credit hour shall consist of at least 2 contact hours per week, or the equivalent.
- c. Contact hour requirements for courses with less structured instructional schedules, such as independent studies, seminars, internships, practica, private lessons, theses, and dissertations, will vary and may depend upon discipline expectations, course structure, amount and type of educational activity, and nature of faculty supervision. Semester credit hour determinants should be based upon equivalent student learning outcomes for traditionally delivered courses.
- d. Shortened Format Courses. A three-semester credit hour course must have a minimum of forty-five contact hours, or the equivalent, per semester. All requirements for three credit hour courses shall apply proportionally to courses for one, two, four, or other credit hour values. See APS 860110.

6. PROCEDURES

6.01 The SHSU course numbering system denotes the credit hour value of each course. The second digit in the four-digit sequence indicates the number of semester credit hours. A second digit of “0” indicates variable credit.

6.02 Review and approval of semester credit hour values are facilitated through the University’s curriculum review process.

a. New Course Additions:

Semester credit hour determinations for new course additions shall be reviewed and approved through the new course development process. As required by the curriculum review process, each new course proposal shall be reviewed by the department, college, and university curriculum committees. The proposed semester credit hour value shall be considered in relation to the proposed course description, instructional type, student learning outcomes, and 15-week schedule.

b. Changes to Existing Courses:

Changes to the semester credit hour value for existing courses shall be reviewed and approved through the course change request process. As required by the curriculum review process, each request to modify the semester credit hour value of a course (i.e., course number change) shall be reviewed by the department, college, and university curriculum committees. Changes to semester credit hour values shall be considered in relation to the justification provided by the proposing department. Justifications for changes to semester credit hour values

should include a description of changes to the course content. Course content changes may be reflected in changes to the course description, instructional type, student learning outcomes, and/or 15-week schedule.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 7.01 Faculty. Faculty members are responsible for ensuring that classes meet the required number of contact hours each week, or the equivalent amount of work for online, hybrid, or other non-traditional format courses, and for assigning out-of-class student learning activities that reasonably approximate the hours of out-of-class student work required by this policy.
- 7.02 Department Chairs. Department Chairs and/or School Directors are responsible for scheduling courses so that the required number of contact hours are met.
- 7.03 Office of the Registrar. The Office of the Registrar is responsible for collaborating with academic departments to ensure that courses are scheduled for the appropriate number of contact hours.

APPROVED: <signed>
Alisa White, Ph.D., President

DATE: 9/23/2024

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

This academic policy statement (APS) has been approved by the reviewer listed below and represents SHSU's Division of Academic Affairs' policy from the date of this document until superseded.

Original: September 17, 2024
Reviewer: Academic Affairs Council

Review Cycle: Five years*
Review Date: Fall 2029

Approved: <signed>
Michael T. Stephenson, Ph.D.,
Provost and Sr. Vice President
for Academic Affairs

Date: 9/18/2024

*Effective January 2018, Academic Policy Statements will be reviewed on a rotating 5-year schedule. To transition to a distributed review load, some policies may be reviewed prior to the 5-year timeframe, with subsequent reviews transitioning to the 5-year schedule.