

C-8 POLICY Credit Hour Definition and Program Length

Scope of Policy

This policy supports and promotes academic rigor and satisfies Federal and Higher Learning Commission (HLC) compliance requirements. Specifically, this policy and related procedures define a credit hour, provide rationale for allocating credit hours by course and by credential level, and provide a reasonable approximation of the minimum amount of student work expected to be completed, based on the traditional Carnegie unit, in accordance with commonly accepted practices in higher education.

Credit Hour Definition - SCC

The credit hour at Southeast Community College (SCC) is based on a 15-week instructional semester where 1 (one) hour of direct instruction is provided each week for each assigned credit hour for a minimum of 15 (fifteen) hours of instructor-led activities per credit hour. Contact hours per week are adjusted for semesters/terms of varying length (e.g., accelerated and/or shorter summer sessions) to ensure compliance with the minimum of 15 (fifteen) hours of direct instructional time per credit hour. Southeast Community College adheres to federal regulation and the Enrollment FTE/REU Guidelines approved by the Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education and defines a Credit Hour as the unit used to ascertain the instructional value of course work offered by the institution to students enrolling for such course work, earned by such students upon successful completion of such course work, and for which tuition is charged.

Credit Hour Definition – United States Department of Education

An amount of work represented in intended student learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates not less than:

1. One (1) hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two (2) hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately fifteen (15) weeks for one (1) semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten (10) to twelve (12) weeks for one (1) quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of student work over a different amount of time; or
2. At least an equivalent amount of student work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution, including laboratory work, internships, practicums, studio work, and/or other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

Compliance with State Statute

Southeast Community College also adheres to the FTE/REU Guidelines approved by the Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education (CCPE). SCC complies with the following categories and is consistent with Nebraska Statutes. https://ccpe.nebraska.gov/sites/ccpe.nebraska.gov/files/FTE-REU_Guidelines.pdf

Description	Semester Calendar
Classroom Hour	1 to 15
Academic Transfer & Academic Support Laboratory Hour	1 to 30
Vocational Laboratory Hour & Clinical Hour	1 to 45
Practicum Hour	1 to 45
Cooperative Work Experience	1 to 60

The total credit hours allocated to each course shall include those hours generated through any combination of categories.

Credit Hour Definition for Distance Education

One (1) hour of credit is granted for each hour of direct instructional time in face-to-face, hybrid, and/or distance education courses (i.e., 15:1 contact hour to credit hour ratio). In an online environment, direct instructional time can constitute a variety of activities with a pedagogical purpose that is planned, facilitated, and documented by the faculty member. Distance education courses must be equivalent in content and student learning objectives and must mirror those of their traditional sections offered in face-to-face formats. Faculty teaching distance education courses must possess the same qualifications/credentials as those required for traditional sections of the same course, and must complete SCC's Distance Education Training course, or its equivalent. In addition, all distance education courses must comply with the federal definition of a credit hour, as documented in this policy.

Program Length

Credit hours are also used to establish the length of a program of study, as indicated below.

- **Associate of Applied Science Degree (A.A.S.)**
Awarded upon successful completion of a minimum of 60 (sixty) semester credit hours and the requirements of a prescribed Program of Study.
- **Associate of Arts Degree (A.A.)**
Awarded upon successful completion of a minimum of 60 (sixty) semester credit hours of a prescribed Program of Study.
- **Associate of Science Degree (A.S.)**
Awarded upon successful completion of a minimum of 60 (sixty) semester credit hours and the requirements of a prescribed Program of Study.
- **Associate of Occupational Studies (A.O.S.)**
Awarded upon successful completion of a minimum of 60 (sixty) semester credit hours and the requirements of a prescribed Program of Study.
- **Diploma**
Awarded upon successful completion of a minimum of 25 (twenty-five) semester credit hours and the requirements of a prescribed Program of Study.
- **Certificate**
Awarded for successful completion of a prescribed course of study that requires fewer credit hours than a diploma program.

Required Approvals

All academic programs require approval from the College's Curriculum Committee, the Vice President of Instruction, the Board of Governors, Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education, and the Higher Learning Commission before being implemented.

Related Procedure: C-8a

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