

East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania

Assignment of Semester/Credit Hours Policy and Procedural Compliance

Purpose

To establish and define the standards and procedures for assigning semester/credit hours to the courses offered by ESU. In addition, to establish the method by which the University ensures compliance with its credit hour assignment policy.

Policy Statement

The credit hour serves as ESU's common measure of instruction based on the expected number of contact hours of coursework during the semester/term. All credit hours awarded by East Stroudsburg University will conform with the definitions and guidance outlined by the U.S. Department of Education (CFR, Title 34: Education, Part 600 – Institutional Eligibility under the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, Subpart A-General, Section 600.2), the Pennsylvania State Board of Education Curricular Credit Policy (22 Pa. Code Chapter 31, §§ 31.21) and the Middle States Commission on Higher Education ([Verification of Compliance with Accreditation-Relevant Regulations](#), 2016). One credit hour of instruction equals 15 hours over the term, forty-five hours for a three credit course. Please note that not all of this instruction is necessarily conducted face-to-face with an instructor. Different types of courses require different amounts of contact time and may be delivered in multiple formats to students including but not limited to distance education, face-to-face, hybrid and interactive media.

A semester hour of contact time is defined as at least fifty minutes of contact each week in a standard semester. East Stroudsburg University follows the Pennsylvania System of Higher Education Common Calendar (Board of Governor's Policy 2002-04). The standard semester – fall and spring – includes 16 weeks where 14 weeks are used for instruction, one week is assigned for final examinations each semester and once week used for non-teaching days in the fall semester and spring break in the spring semester. In the absence of a Common Calendar, ESU will follow the USDOE guidance that defines a semester as having 15 weeks inclusive of 1 week for final examinations.

The following standards are intended to specify the minimum contact time for the assignment of one (1) semester / credit hour. Some courses may exceed these minimum standards.

Course Type	Total Semester Hours (minimum)	Total Actual Contact Minutes (minimum)
Clinical	45	150 minutes X 15 = 2,250
Lecture/Seminar	15	50 minutes X 15 = 750
Laboratory	30	100 minutes X 15 = 1,500
*Internship/Practicum/Field Experience	40	60 minutes X 15 = 900
Studio	30	100 minutes X 15 = 1,500
Physical Activity	22.5	150 minutes X 7.5 = 1,110

**calculated based on an actual work week.*

Procedures and Compliance Process

The faculty and program administrators are responsible for developing, maintaining and evaluating the curriculum within an academic program, although the Provost retains final control and approval of curriculum. Assignment of credit hours for courses are determined within the program based on faculty expertise and course learning objectives. Existing courses will be

evaluated for adherence to the policy specified above. New courses will, upon review and approval at the program level, be reviewed by the University-Wide Curriculum Committee and recommended for approval or denial by the Provost.

The University-Wide Curriculum Committee is charged with following the policy in their review, approval, and recommendations to the Provost of all courses and curricula and for certifying that the expected student learning for the course meets the credit hour standard.

The Curriculum Implementation Team maintains approved courses in the university catalog and student information system. The University Registrar reviews the class schedule prior to the start of each semester to ensure that all classes are scheduled for the minimum number of minutes corresponding to the credits assigned, or otherwise notes when the course schedules do not match assigned credit hours. Any discrepancies are brought to the attention of the appropriate department for correction or explanation.

Course Definitions (for consideration)

Lecture/Seminar: Courses with multiple students, which meet to engage in various forms of group instruction under the direct supervision of a faculty member. The minimum contact time per week is 50 minutes plus a minimum of 100 minutes of out of class student work time per week in a standard semester for an assignment of one credit hour.

Laboratory: Courses with a focus on experiential learning under the direct supervision of a faculty member wherein the student performs substantive work in a laboratory setting. The minimum contact time is typically twice that of a lecture (2:1 ratio) or a minimum of 100 contact minutes per week plus a minimum of 50 minutes of out of lab/class student work time per week in a standard semester for an assignment of one credit hour.

Clinicals: Courses with a focus on experiential learning under the direct supervision of a faculty member wherein the student performs substantive work in a clinical setting. The minimum contact time per credit is typically **three times** that of a lecture (3:1 ratio) which is also dependent upon the amount of outside work and professional accreditation requirements. Specifically, a minimum of 150 contact minutes per week and no (0) minutes out of class student work time per week in a standard semester results in an assignment of one credit hour.

Internship/Practicum/Field Experience: Courses in which a faculty member regularly interacts and directs students' outcomes with periodic contact, but where the actual learning environment takes place off-campus at an approved site. The learning experience will typically involve a site supervisor and directed activity/learning will occur outside of a lecture setting. Contact time and outside student work requirements must be established and documented. The faculty member or program director responsible for the experience keeps the records of the amount of supervised work and the amount of outside work assigned so that contact hours can be calculated using the definitions above. Note: this should be consistent with best professional practices in the discipline and field.

Online Courses: Courses offered entirely online without any on-site face-to-face meeting have the same learning outcomes and substantive components of a standard lecture/seminar course with an alternate delivery method. Contact time is satisfied by several means which can include but is not limited to: a) regular instruction or interaction with a faculty member once a week for each week the course runs; b) academic engagement through interactive tutorials, group discussions moderated by faculty, virtual study/project groups, engaging with class peers, and computer tutorials graded and reviewed by faculty. In any case, these courses must meet the total amount of instructional and student work times as the definitions above even if delivered online, synchronously or asynchronously.

Hybrid Courses: Courses offered in a blended format with one or more on-site face-to-face sessions and at least one or more online sessions, both containing direct interaction with a faculty member. Contact time is assessed using both on-site definitions (for the on-site portion) and online definitions (for the online portion). In any case, these course must meet the total amount of instructional time and student work time as the definitions above even if delivered online, synchronously or asynchronously.

Accelerated Courses: Courses offered outside of a standard 15-week semester in which the credit hours offered are the same as standard semester courses and the content and substantive learning outcomes are the same as those in the standard semester. These courses must satisfy the total amount of instructional and out of class student work time as the definitions above even if delivered within an accelerated time frame.

Independent Study/Individualized Instruction: Courses where a student studies a specific area of content to meet student learning outcomes under the direct supervision of a faculty member. The minimum combined faculty instructional contact minutes and out of class student work time is 150 minutes per credit hour. The faculty member monitors the meeting times.

Studio: One credit hour for a studio course represents a minimum of 100 minutes per week of class work time, either spent under the direct supervision of a faculty member or carried out individually. There is no minimum required amount of student preparation time.

Physical Activity: Courses for physical activity are typically scheduled for a term of 7.5 weeks. One credit hour for a physical activity course represents a minimum of 150 minutes per week of activity time. There is no minimum required amount of student preparation time.

Approved by the University Wide Curriculum Committee on 2/25/16;
Approved by the Academic Council on 3/7/16 with recommendation to update chart for studio semester hours to 30; and
Approved by the Provost on 3/8/16.