

## UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH POLICY 09-04-15

**CATEGORY:** STUDENT AFFAIRS  
**SECTION:** Registration and Records  
**SUBJECT:** Credit Hour  
**EFFECTIVE DATE:** November 16, 2016  
**PAGE(S):** 2

### I. SCOPE

This policy establishes the Credit Hour as the unit measure of instruction for awarding credit.

### II. POLICY

At the University of Pittsburgh, a semester credit hour is most typically awarded for an activity that consists of 50 minutes of classroom instruction with an expectation of two hours of outside study for each hour of time in class per week for the semester. The expectation for student effort is the same in all formats of a course whether they be fully online, hybrid, self-paced, or one delivered in lecture or seminar format. Courses that have less structured classroom schedules, such as research seminars, laboratories, independent studies, internships, practica, studio work, or any other academic work leading to the award of credit hours should state clearly learning objectives, expected outcomes, and workload expectations. Academic units are responsible for ensuring that credit hours are awarded only for work that meets the requirements outlined in this policy.

The University of Pittsburgh complies with Federal (U.S. Department of Education) and Middle States Commission of Higher Education (MSCHE) and Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) regulations pertaining to degree requirements and credit hours.

- The University of Pittsburgh associate degrees require the successful completion of 60 semester credit hours.
- Undergraduate degrees require the successful completion of 120 semester credit hours.
- Master's degrees require the successful completion of a minimum of 30 semester credit hours.
- The number of semester credit hours for a degree beyond a first professional or master's degree shall be determined by the faculty and further reviewed and approved in accordance with the University's Guidelines for the Review of Academic Planning Proposals as well as the Regulations Governing Graduate Study.

The University of Pittsburgh's academic year consists of fall and spring semesters with an optional summer semester. Fall and spring semesters are traditionally 14 weeks in length with an additional week for finals. During the Summer, an academic period may consist of four, six, twelve or fifteen weeks, with class time divided proportionally to satisfy the definition of a credit hour.

Schools are responsible to ensure that all courses comply with the credit hour policy, including new courses as part of the school's new course development and approval process. The Office of the Registrar will include approved courses in the catalog, and further reviews the class schedules 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. In addition, existing courses are reviewed periodically by the faculty and dean's office as part of our assessment of student learning.

### III. REFERENCES

- I. The U.S. Department of Education, at 34 CFR Section 600.2, defines "credit hour" as:

"...an 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.”

- II. The Pennsylvania regulation states, in part, “A semester credit hour represents a unit of curricular material that normally can be taught in a minimum of 14 hours of classroom instruction, plus appropriate outside preparation or the equivalent as determined by the faculty. A quarter credit hour represents a unit of curricular material that normally can be taught in a minimum of 10 hours of classroom instruction, plus appropriate outside preparation or the equivalent as determined by the faculty.” [22 Pa. Code Section 31.21\(b\)](#)
- III. The Middle States Commission on Higher Education, in its [Credit Hour Policy](#), effective August 23, 2013, requires institutions to verify compliance with Credit Hour regulations.