

COLUMBUS STATE UNIVERSITY

Policy Name:	Credit Hour and Course Level Policy
Policy Owner:	Provost & Chief Academic Officer
Responsible University Office:	Office of the Provost & Chief Academic Officer
Approval Date:	February 11, 2022
Effective Date:	February 11, 2022
Revisions:	August 22, 2025
Related Policies:	BOR Policy 3.4.4 Instructional Time SACSCOC Credit Hours Policy SACSCOC Principle of Accreditation 10.7

I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to establish the number of credit hours and level of credit assigned to courses offered at Columbus State University and to ensure compliance with all applicable policies and regulations of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, and the United States Department of Education.

II. DEFINITIONS

- **Classroom Minutes** - Classroom minutes can include, but are not limited to the following types of activities and may be completed in a face-to-face or online environment: lecture to include lecture capture, video streaming, narrated PowerPoint presentations, and Podcasts; discussion to include both large and small group formats, as well as discussion boards and chat; role play; modeling and simulation; student presentations or performances; group problem solving exercises, and assessment.
- **Credit Hour Statement** – The credit hour statement for a course is a 3-number description of the weekly time commitments in class and in lab/practicum, and the total number of credit hours awarded for the course. For example, the statement “(2-2-3)” following the course title indicates the course requires two class (50-minute) hours per week, two laboratory or practicum hours per week, and three semester hours of credit. Braces enclosing a range of figures indicate that the hours are variable within the range given. For example, ({1-3}-0-{{1-3}}) indicates one, two or three lecture class hours; no laboratory hours; and one, two or three credit hours.

- **Out-of-Class Student Academic Engagement Activities** - Out-of-class student academic engagement may include, but are not limited to, activities such as assigned readings; review of media clips, films, or dramatic productions; group projects; written assignments; quantitative problem-solving; interviews; research; preparation for individual presentations; vocal or instrumental practice; theatrical rehearsal; creation of studio art; creation of lesson plans; portfolio development; critiques; development of electronic media or web pages; and problem-solving activities.
- **Zero-credit hour courses** - Non-credit bearing courses that may be required within a program but do not contribute to total credit hour requirements for graduation. Courses will be reflected on the transcripts but will not be included in a student's GPA.

III. CREDIT HOUR POLICY

CSU defines a credit hour as the equivalent of meeting one hour (50 minutes) for classroom or direct faculty instruction and 100 minutes of out-of-class student work for 15 weeks in a semester. This equates to a minimum of 750 minutes of instruction and 1,500 minutes of out-of-class engagement, for a total of 2,250 minutes per semester credit hour. An equivalent amount of student work is required for other educational activities that are out of the classroom or do not include direct faculty instruction, including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, independent study, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

Laboratory courses require a minimum of 1,500 classroom minutes and 750 out-of-class student academic engagement per credit hour for a total of 2,250 minutes of expected student academic engagement per credit.

IV. LEVEL OF ACADEMIC CREDIT AND COURSE NUMBERING

The level of academic credit awarded for a course is determined by the faculty in a manner consistent with sound academic practice in the discipline, taking into account the level of prior knowledge and skills needed for the course. The following are some general guidelines for course numbering and their correspondence to the level expected.

- 0***-level courses (numbered 0001-0999) are for learning support and do not apply credit towards degrees.
- 1000-level courses (numbered 1000-1999) are introductory and survey courses, usually requiring few or no prerequisite courses, and designed to be suitable for first-year undergraduate students.
- 2000-level courses (numbered 2000-2999) are also introductory and survey courses, usually requiring few or no prerequisite courses, that are designed to be suitable for first-year students or sophomores.
- 3000- and 4000- level courses (numbered 3000-4999) are designed to be suitable for juniors and seniors; they are more advanced and may require prerequisite

course work. The 3000-level courses are normally designed for juniors, while 4000-level courses are designed for seniors. Some students in Master of Arts in Teaching programs might also take courses at this level.

- 5000-level courses (numbered 5000-5999) are designed to be suitable for senior and graduate students. These are accompanied with a U or G designator indicating Undergraduate or Graduate course credit. 5***G courses should be clearly distinguished from their companion 5***U course through the Student Learning Outcomes and level of performance required.
- 6000-level courses (numbered 6000-6999) are designed for master's degree students.
- 7000-level courses (numbered 7000-7999) are designed for specialist and other advanced post baccalaureate students.
- 8000-level courses (numbered 8000-8999) are designed for doctoral students.

V. ZERO-CREDIT HOUR COURSES

Zero-credit hour ("0") courses allow students to participate in valuable, innovative educational experiences beyond traditional credit-bearing curriculum. Such opportunities may include internships, studio activities, experiential learning, co-curricular academic activities, program convocation, career or professional development, international activities, teaching assistantships, practicum requirements, or other enhanced learning experiences integral to program progression or graduation. Programs must limit the number of required zero-credit hour courses to avoid undue burden on students and faculty.

Zero-credit hour courses must adhere to the following conditions:

- A. Courses are assigned satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade and are not included in the calculation of the GPA.
- B. Courses may serve as requirements for program progression or completion; courses may serve as prerequisites or co-requisites with approval by the provost or provost's designee.
- C. Courses reflect use of existing university resources and require minimal use of university resources (e.g., faculty time involvement, library resources, technology resources).
- D. Courses reflect minimal faculty and student engagement wholly different from existing class types.
- E. Course may include course fees provided the fees are minimal, tied to a specific and necessary cost, and integral to the ability of the student to reach the intended learning objectives. Course fees are subject to approval by the President and the University System of Georgia Board of Regents.
- F. Courses may not be offered as for-credit courses without formal curriculum review and approval.
- G. Courses may not substitute for degree-required, credit-hour coursework.

- H. Courses must be included in the program of study and CSU Catalog.
- I. Courses already in the catalog prior to the implementation policy are exempt; subsequent course changes will trigger review under this policy.
- J. Exceptions may be considered with substantive written justification during the curriculum review process.

All zero-credit hour courses must be proposed and approved through CSU's established curriculum approval process consistent with existing protocols for credit-bearing courses.

The proposal must justify the unique nature of the course, goals and objectives of the course, student learning outcomes, method of assessment, explain why zero credit is appropriate, course structure, mode of delivery, demonstrate minimal utilization of university resources, and present a plan for faculty workload associated with the course within the allocation of the faculty workload.

The final approval rests with the provost or their designee.

VI. PROCEDURES TO IMPLEMENT POLICY

- A. New Course Proposals.** As new courses are proposed, the credit hour statement and course details (description, learning outcomes, assessments, etc.) are reviewed and approved by members of the department, college, and university curriculum committees to ensure that the credit hour statement is appropriate and that the proposed student learning outcomes and course requirements appropriately reflect the amount and level of credit to be awarded for the course.
- B. Course Scheduling.** Information on the number of credit hours and the dates, time, part of term, and delivery format for each course is published online through the course schedule and is publicly accessible prior to student registration each term. This process is monitored by the department chair, the dean of the college, and the Registrar's Office.

Online courses, or courses which have an online component with reduced classroom time, are monitored by department chairs and deans to provide learning outcomes, course requirements, and substantive faculty-student interactions that are equivalent to the same course offered in a traditional face-to-face format.

Additional guidance on the implementation of this policy will be maintained in the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President, posted on the Academic Affairs website, and disseminated through the Council of Deans.

VII. HISTORY OF REVIEWS AND REVISIONS

- Credit Hour Policy Approved by the CSU University Curriculum Committee on 1/22/2013.
- Policy on the Amount and Level of Credit endorsed by the CSU University Curriculum Committee on 8/24/2021.
- Policy on the Amount and Level of Credit reviewed by the Academic Council on 8/24/2021.
- Policy on the Amount and Level of Credit endorsed by the Faculty Senate on 10/4/2021.
- Policy on the Amount and Level of Credit endorsed by the Graduate Council on 10/15/2021.
- Policy on the Amount and Level of Credit recommended by the Executive Leadership Team on 1/3/2022.
- Revisions to the Policy on the Amount and Level of Credit endorsed by the CSU University Curriculum Committee on 8/19/2025.
- Revisions to the Policy on the Amount and Level of Credit endorsed by the Academic Leadership Team on 8/20/2025.
- Revisions to the Policy on the Amount and Level of Credit recommended by the Executive Leadership Team on 8/21/2025.
- Revisions to the Policy accepted by the Executive Leadership Team on 8/22/2025

Signed by:
APPROVED: Stuart Rayfield
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DATE: _____

ADDENDUM A

(Procedures documentation to be published on Academic Affairs Website)

Additional Guidance Columbus State University Policy for the Amount of Credit

Information on the number of credit hours and the dates, time, part of term, and delivery format for each course is published online through the course schedule and is publicly accessible prior to student registration each term. This process is monitored by the department chair, the dean of the college, and the Registrar's Office.

A credit hour statement is available for each course and is published in the course description in the Columbus State University Academic Catalog along with the following explanatory statement describing the meaning of each number in the credit hour statement.

"Numbers following a descriptive title of each course indicate the number of weekly class hours, the number of weekly laboratory or practicum hours, and the credit hour value of the course expressed in semester hours. For example, **(2-2-3)** following the course title means two class hours, two laboratory or practicum hours and three semester hours of credit. Braces enclosing a range of figures indicate that the hours are variable within the range given. For example, **{1-3}-0-{1-3}** indicates one, two or three lecture class hours, no laboratory hours and one, two or three credit hours."

The formula for converting classroom instructional time and laboratory time to the maximum number of credit hours awarded is:

$$\begin{aligned} & (\text{number of hours of classroom instruction per week}) + \\ & (\text{number of lab or practicum hours}/2) \qquad \qquad = \text{maximum total credit hours awarded.} \end{aligned}$$

The credit hour statement in the above example (2-2-3) would yield a minimum of (2 hours of classroom instruction per week) + (2 hours of laboratory or practicum per week/2) = 3 credit hours.

In some instances, the university does require more student work per credit hour. For example the credit hour statement (2-3-3) yields

$$\begin{aligned} & (2 \text{ hrs classroom instruction per week}) + (3 \text{ hours of laboratory or practicum per week}/2) \\ & = 3.5 \end{aligned}$$

but the third number in the credit hour statement indicates that only 3 credit hours will be awarded for the successful completion of the course.

Justification of Reasonable Equivalencies for Credit Hour Awards across Various Modes of Delivery

Face-to-Face Courses

Courses delivered in the face-to-face format require a minimum of 750 classroom minutes and 1,500 out-of-class student academic engagement per credit hour for a total of 2,250 minutes of expected student academic engagement per credit hour for course completion with a passing grade. The minimum number of minutes required for classroom and for out-class academic engagement for 2 and 3 credit hours in a face-to-face course are identified below in Table 1. Full- semester courses typically meet 1-3 times per week with the total minutes equally distributed.

Laboratory Courses

Laboratory courses require a minimum of 1,500 classroom minutes and 750 out-of-class student academic engagement per credit hour for a total of 2,250 minutes of expected student academic engagement per credit hour for course completion with a passing grade. The minimum number of classroom and out-class academic engagement for 2 and 3 credit hours in a laboratory course are identified in Table 1. Full- semester courses typically meet 1-3 times per week with the total minutes equally distributed.

Type of Course	Standard Total Number of Classroom Minutes scheduled per credit hour per term			Minimum total number of minutes of out-of-class student academic engagement expected per credit hour for that type of course			Total minutes per credit hour of expected student academic engagement for course completion with a passing grade		
	1 credit	2 credits	3 credits	1 credit	2 credits	3 credits	1 credit	2 credits	3 credits
Lecture	750	1500	2250	1500	3000	4500	2250	4500	6750
Lab	1500	3000	4500	750	1500	2250	2250	4500	6750

Table 1: Credit Hours for Face-to-face and Laboratory Courses

Online Courses:

Synchronous online courses must also meet the equivalent of 750 minutes of instruction and expect at least 1500 minutes of out-of-class student engagement for each credit hour awarded. Asynchronous online courses will be designed so that a total of at least 2250 minute of student engagement time will be expected for each credit hour awarded. Syllabi for online courses are constructed carefully by faculty members and are reviewed by the appropriate department chair to ensure that the rigor of the course and the student learning outcomes are equivalent to those in sections of the same course offered in the traditional classroom setting.

Hybrid/Reduced Classroom Time Courses:

Hybrid/ Reduced Classroom Time: Courses that combine the face-to-face classroom experience with asynchronous online learning conform to the minimum number of minutes of classroom time and out-of-class student academic engagement per credit hour. These courses have the same student learning outcomes and comparable course requirements as face-to-face courses. In these situations, students have reduced classroom time to meet the online course requirements. Classroom time is reduced by the stated percentage (33%, 50%, 75%, etc.) while online course work is increased by that same percentage as noted in Table 2 below.

	Standard Total Number of Weekly Classroom Minutes scheduled	Standard Total Number of Classroom Minutes scheduled per semester	Minimum total number of minutes of out-of-class student academic engagement expected per semester	Total minutes of expected student academic engagement for course completion with a passing grade
Lecture time	150	2250	4500	6750
33% reduced classroom time	100	1500	5250	6750
50% reduced classroom time	75	1125	5625	6750
75% reduced classroom time	37.5	562.5	6187.5	6750

Table 2: Reduced classroom time for a 15-week hybrid 3 credit hour course

Justification of Reasonable Equivalencies for Credit Hour Awards across Various Locations

Courses delivered in a face-to-face setting (main campus or approved external instructional site) require a minimum of 750 minutes of classroom minutes and 1500 minutes of out-of-class student academic engagement for each hour of credit awarded. In Spring 2023, a section of ENGL 1102: English Composition 2 might be scheduled on Monday/Wednesday/Friday from 8:00-8:50 a.m. on main campus or while another section of the same course might be scheduled on Tuesday/Thursday from 7:30-8:45 p.m. at the Fort Benning instructional site. Both courses require the same number of minutes for out-of-class student academic engagement as well as the same number of classroom minutes per week.

Justification of Reasonable Equivalencies for Credit Hour Awards by Term Length

Columbus State University uses multiple parts of term, multiple delivery methods (synchronous online, asynchronous online, face-to-face, and hybrid), and multiple instructional sites. The number of credit hours assigned, the allotted instructional time, and the student learning outcomes are monitored at departmental, college, and institutional levels to maintain equivalency to traditional courses.

CSU utilizes a variety of parts of term to meet diverse student scheduling needs. Examples include:

- Regular term: 15 weeks (Inclusive of Finals)
- 2/3 term: 10 weeks
- Half term: 7 weeks plus finals
- 1/3 term: 5 weeks
- Jan-term: 12 class meeting days in January
- 1 week: 5 days

The Dates of Academic Terms are published on the CSU website by the Office of the Registrar. Regardless of the part of term used, the total number of minutes required is equal to that required of a 15-week course but is divided over a shorter period of time.

In order to meet USG and SACSCOC requirements for class meeting time, the time designated as the final exam period for each course is included in the total meeting minutes for the course. Therefore, all courses must include activities consistent with the "Classroom Minutes" section of this document during the final exam period.

Justification of Reasonable Equivalencies for Credit Hour Awards by Course Type

Internship: There is great variability in the handling of internship courses, as the requirements for hours and amount of outside work are dependent on the discipline. However, the normal guideline requires 45 hours worked in an internship per credit hour awarded. This time may be adjusted up, when accreditation requirements necessitate it, or down when outside work is supplemented with instructional time. In all cases, the total minutes of student engagement per credit hour will be expected to meet or exceed the total engaged minutes per credit hour indicated in Table 1. Examples include the following:

ACCT 4698: Internship in Accounting (BBA Accounting) is a variable-credit course that can be taken for 1-3 semester hours of credit. This course follows the normal internship guidelines, requiring at least 45 hours worked (2700 minutes) for 1 credit hour, 90 hours worked (5400 minutes) for 2 credit hours, and 135 hours worked (8100 minutes) for 3 credit hours.

COUN 6697: Internship in School Counseling (Master of Education in School Counseling) is a variable-credit course that can be taken for 1-6 semester hours of credit. The course requires 100 hours of internship in the counseling setting per credit hour, in accordance with the accreditation standards established by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related-Educational Programs. This is equal to 6000 minutes of internship experience for one credit hour.

ITDS 4698: Internship (Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies) is worth 3 credit hours requiring 9 hours per week for a total of 135 hours across 15 weeks. This is equal to 6750 minutes of lab/internship work and assumes that all required work may be completed during internship hours.

THEA 4698: Internship (BA Theatre, BFA Theatre) is a variable-credit course that can be taken for 1-6 semester hours of credit. The course is designed to allow the student to gain hands-on field experience working with approved non-academic theatre companies

and/or organizations. The minimum requirement is 50 hours of work for each credit hour awarded, although most placements require more. This corresponds to a minimum of 3000 minutes of work for one credit hour, 6000 minutes of work for two credit hours, and so on. Most theatre internships are for 1-3 credits, and it is rare to exceed that number. The hours worked may be “standard business hours” per week, but it is more often the case that the hours worked vary due to production schedules (e.g., building, rehearsing, and performing each demand differing time commitments).

Studio art courses typically follow the formula for lab hours. (See Table 1.)

Field experiences in teaching typically follow the formula for lab hours. That is, per credit hour, the students meet 1500 minutes and have approximately 750 minutes of out-of-class work, for a total of 2250 minutes. The University System of Georgia requires one year (commonly interpreted as 900 hours of work with students) prior to teacher certification of which CSU students obtain approximately 300 hours in field experiences and 600 hours in student teaching.

Field Experiences in counseling programs follow Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs standards, requiring a total of 700 hours of field work. These are divided between practicum (100 hours for 3 hours credit) and internship (2 courses, 3 credit hours each, 300 hours each). This is consistent with practice in other counseling programs.

Student Teaching/Clinical Practice requires that students work full-time, 5 days/week, for 15 weeks. Student teachers receive 10 credit hours. This is consistent with common practice in education and meets the standards of Georgia Professional Standards Commission and the Board of Regents’ requirement.

Clinical Practice in nursing is associated with specific courses; the number of hours per credit hour exceeds those stated in Table 1 for lab courses (typically 3 lab hours = 1 credit hour). The total number of clinical hours, 795, is within the range of other nursing programs within the state (range of 720 -900), making it consistent with common practice in Georgia.

Thesis work is accomplished through varying means depending on the discipline. It may be provided through variable-credit research (1-9 hours) and a 0-credit thesis defense or through directed study thesis option that total 3-credit hours. For one credit hour of thesis work, it is expected that students will spend approximately 150 minutes per week or a total of 2250 minutes in some combination of meeting with the advisor and/or committee and doing independent research.

Dissertation work is accomplished through variable-credit research (1-9 credit hours) and a 0-credit dissertation defense. Students in the EdD Curriculum and Leadership program must complete a minimum of 9 credit hours. For each 1-credit hour of dissertation research, students are expected to spend approximately 150 minutes per week or a total of 2250 minutes in some combination of meeting with the advisor and/or committee and doing independent research (to include data collection and analysis, conducting a literature review, writing and editing, and similar tasks).

Applied Music courses follow the expectation that a student should generally devote 300 minutes per credit hour each week to personal practice. A student taking a 1-credit lesson course should practice 300 minutes per week, a 2-credit lesson 600 minutes, a 3-credit lesson 900 minutes, and a 4-credit lesson

1200 minutes. Following this formulation for a 15-week semester, the student will be expected to devote $300 \times 15 = 4500$ minutes of personal practice in a 1-credit course, 9000 minutes for a 2-credit course, 13500 minutes for a 3-credit course, and 18000 minutes for a 4-credit course. Activities can include individual practice, chamber music rehearsals, and coachings with collaborative artists, as well as score study, diction, and the study of historical context. These guidelines are general expectations, to be taken in conjunction with specific recommendations from the applied professor to ensure student progress in an appropriate way toward degree recitals, ensemble performances, and departmental professional goals within each major.

Study Abroad courses combine faculty-led field experiences and classroom instruction. It is typical to replace up to half the classroom hours with field experience (at least two hours experience for every hour in class). In addition, students spend at least one hour per week per credit hour in non-classroom and non-field activities. (Per credit hour: class = 375 minutes; field = 750 minutes; other = 1125; Total = 2250 minutes)

Independent Study courses are typically worth 1-3 credits with time distributed between independent reading, meetings with the instructor, written assignments, research, presentations, and other activities as appropriate for the academic discipline and level of the course.

Procedures for Ensuring Compliance with the CSU Credit Hour Policy

As new courses are proposed, the credit hour statement and course details (description, learning outcomes, assessments, etc.) are reviewed and approved by members of the department, college, and university curriculum committees to ensure that the credit hour statement is appropriate and that the proposed student learning outcomes and course requirements appropriately reflect the amount and level of credit to be awarded for the course.

Each course approved through the institutional curriculum process (i.e. departmental, college, and institutional approval) has a designated credit hour statement which is published in the CSU Academic Catalog. The credit hour statement reflects time required for course instruction (whether face-to-face or online) and laboratory or practicum experiences. Changes to the credit hour statement of a course must be approved through the institutional curriculum process.

Department chairs and deans monitor the development of the course schedule to ensure that each course complies with the credit hour policy. Online courses, or courses which have an online component with reduced classroom time, are monitored by department chairs and deans to provide learning outcomes, course requirements, and substantive faculty-student interactions that are equivalent to the same course offered in a traditional face-to-face format.