

Manhattan College



Credit Hour Policy and Definitions

I. Rationale for Policy

Federal regulations (*34 CFR parts 600 and 668*), with an effective date of July 1, 2011, require that institutions comply with rules that define a credit hour for purposes of eligibility for Title IV student aid programs.

The regulations also require institutional accreditors (*e.g. Middle State Commission on Higher Education*) to review the reliability and accuracy of an institution's credit-hour assignments, including through review of the institution's policies and procedures for credit-hour assignment and application of those policies and procedures.¹

II. Requirements

Under the federal definition, "credit hour" means: "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 15 weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or 10 to 12 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.²

Additionally, the College must ensure its compliance with the rules of the New York State Education Department (*NYSED*). NYSED defines a "semester hour" as follows:

Semester hour means a credit, point, or other unit granted for the satisfactory completion of a course which requires at least 15 hours (of 50 minutes each) of instruction and at least 30 hours of supplementary assignments, except as otherwise provided pursuant to section 52.2(c)(4) of this Subchapter. This basic measure shall be adjusted proportionately to

¹ [75 Fed. Reg. at 66,947](#) (to be codified at 34 C.F.R. § 602.24(f)(1))

² *Id.* at 66,946 (to be codified at 34 C.F.R. § 600.2)

translate the value of other academic calendars and formats of study in relation to the credit granted for study during the two semesters that comprise an academic year.³

III. Current Practices

Presently, the College, which embraces a traditional two semester model, holds classes pursuant to its annual academic calendar which is published in its undergraduate and graduate catalogs, for fifteen (15) weeks (14 semester weeks followed by a weeklong final exam period each semester). Each class period comprises fifty (50) minutes per week for each student credit hour. Thus, for example, a three credit course would meet for at least 150 minutes spread over three, two or, in some cases, one class meeting each week. Over a 15 week period, this results in 750 contact minutes per credit hour thus meeting the NYSED requirement of 750 minutes (15 hours @ 50 minutes each). A three credit course would meet for 2,250 minutes.

The U.S. Dept of Education has emphasized that it intends the credit hour definition to be flexible. A credit hour for Federal purposes is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates some minimum amount of student work reflective of the amount of work expected in a Carnegie unit: key phrases being "institutionally established," "equivalency," "reasonably approximates," and "minimum amount."⁴

Manhattan College's current institutionally established equivalency for classroom contact time, is that its present practice of 750 classroom contact minutes meets the Federal definition of "credit hour" and meets the NYSED requirement of 750 minutes for a "semester hour".

In addition to classroom based teacher-student contact time, Manhattan College's current practice also calls for at least two hours of out of class student work for each such credit hour as defined above. Additionally, for laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours, at least an equivalent amount of work is required for these other academic activities.

Finally, a credit hour is more than an amount of clock time, it also represents an amount of work resulting in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement. Through course syllabi, classroom assessment activities, and reviews of learning outcomes through the Office of the Director of Institutional Research and Assessment, the College ensures that its students are achieving through realization of the intended learning outcomes.

³ [Regulations of the Commissioner of Education, Chapter II, § 50.1\(o\)](#)

⁴ [U.S. Department of Education, "Dear Colleague" Letter GEN-11-06 at 2-3 \(Mar. 18, 2011\).](#)

IV. Policy Statement and Definitions

- This policy applies to all full time, visiting and adjunct faculty members as well as all laboratory instructors or laboratory supervisors, as appropriate, and anyone responsible for supervising student internships, practicums, or studio work.
- This policy also applies to all department chairpersons as it relates to scheduling of classes each semester and to the Registrar's Office and all others responsible for the College calendar and/or each semester's or term's academic schedule.
- One on-campus class credit hour is defined as one class hour of at least 50 minutes of classroom or direct faculty instruction per week for a fifteen week semester and a minimum of 2 class hours of out-of-class student work each week for each such credit hour.
- One laboratory credit is defined as a minimum of 2 class credit hours of work each week in a laboratory under the supervision of a lab supervisor/instructor and an expectation of 1 class hour of additional out-of-class student work each week.
- One internship or practicum credit is defined as at least 45 hours of supervised work in a field placement each semester.
- One individualized study credit (e.g. thesis, independent study, etc) is defined as a minimum of 3 credit hours of direct instruction and/or individual work each week.
- For asynchronous online courses, the U.S. Department of Education has explained that an institution must determine the amount of student work expected in each course in order to achieve the course objectives and must assign a credit hour based on at least an equivalent amount of work as represented by the credit hour definition.⁵ Therefore, one distance learning or hybrid class credit is defined as an equivalent amount of instruction and student work leading to equivalent learning outcomes, as required for an on-campus class as defined above.

Summary Credit Hour Statement

(as approved by Educational Affairs Commission on Nov. 7, 2011)

During the fall and spring semesters, each class shall meet for at least 50 minutes per week per credit hour. Thus, a three credit course shall meet for at least 150 minutes each week through three 50 minute periods, two 75 minute periods or one 150 minute period.

After the last scheduled class of each semester and during the final exam period scheduled by the Registrar, each class shall have at least 150 minutes of class contact time. This contact time may be used for a final exam or, as appropriate: final project or papers including reflective papers; presentations or other recitations; annotated anthologies; poster sessions; annotated portfolios; fact sheets; question banks; memoranda or briefs; or other instructor supervised activities.

Additionally at least 30 hours (of 50 minutes each hour) of supplementary assignments for each semester credit hour shall be required.

⁵ Id at 6

By the last day of each semester, every course shall have met for 750 minutes of contact time for each credit hour such that, for example, a three credit course shall meet for 2,250 minutes each semester. For laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours, at least an equivalent amount of contact time is required for these other academic activities.

V. Procedures to Implement this Policy

- Department Chairs shall schedule classes to conform to the above definitions.
- The Registrar shall assist departments in assigning and calculating times for classes.
- Prior to student registration, the Registrar shall verify through Banner – the College’s ERP system – that scheduled class meetings meet minimum time requirements in accordance with this policy.
- The Director of Institutional Research and Assessment shall work with all academic departments to ensure that all students are achieving through realization of the intended learning outcomes.

