

Chicago State University Credit Hour Policy

The United States Department of Education requires that each institution develop a written credit hour policy that conforms to the definition of a credit hour outlined in the Federal Register (75 FR 66832 p. 66946). In this document the credit hour has been defined 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.

At Chicago State University, the credit hour is the unit of instruction used to quantify student learning. One credit hour is constituted by a minimum of three class work hours; where a class hour is defined as 50 minutes.¹ Typically, this will include one class hour of direct instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week during the semester² for a one credit hour course. However, in courses and academic activities where direct instruction is not the primary mode of learning, such as online and hybrid courses, laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, etc., an equivalent amount of work (minimum of three hours per week for a semester) must be represented for a credit hour.

Due to the fact that the pace of reading, writing, and other activities varies widely, time spent in any of these areas will not be identical for all students, instructors and courses. Rather assigned activities should reflect a reasonable expectation by the instructor of the time it would take to meet the learning objectives of the course or assignment.

The following guidance indicates how this policy is applied to credit situations that are not taught in the standard 15-week format or are not classroom based learning experiences.

¹ Federal guidance does not specify the number of minutes implied by “one hour” stating that “We believe it is unnecessary to define one hour as either 50 minutes or one clock hour because the primary purpose of...the definition is to provide institutions with a baseline, not an absolute value for determining reasonable equivalencies or approximations for the amount of academic activity defined” (Federal Register, Vol. 75, No. 209, p. 66486).

² Semester is defined as not less than 15 weeks. Courses offered in shorter timeframes must have an equivalent number of hours dedicated to instruction and student work as that spent in a semester-based class.

Courses Meeting Fewer than 15 Weeks or Online

The credit hours awarded for a given course or academic experience must be reasonably equivalent to the standard of 3 hours combined direct instruction and student work per credit hour for a 15-week semester.

For example, a 3-credit course should require the equivalent of 9 hours of combined direct instruction and student work per week for the equivalent of a 15-week semester. Given that the “class hour” is 50 minutes, this would be a baseline of 112.5 total hours for the course. These hours may consist of course activities including, but not limited to, those listed below.

- Face-to-face course meetings
- Virtual course meetings or student-instructor and student-student interactions
- Time to read/view assigned texts or other assigned materials
- Experiential learning activities consistent with the learning objectives of the course
- Synthesis/processing/reflection time and activities (may be used for writing or production of creative work which may take many forms including but not limited to journals, formal papers, projects, blogs, art, music, etc.)

Clinical Experiences

Clinical experiences are defined as “a part of the program that allows for observation, participation, studies of individual pupils or clients, individual field work, and practicums both on and off campus.” Required pre-service clinical hours (clock hours) in teacher education programs are generally associated with specific courses and do not receive academic credit independent of course credit. Credit for clinical experiences in other programs is determined in accordance with recommendations of their specific accrediting bodies or applicable state regulation. If credit hours are provided for a clinical experience course the amount of time must be reasonably equivalent to the standard of 3 hours per week, per credit hour for a 15-week semester or 37.5 hours per credit hour.

Professional practice is defined as “one or more credit-generating, academic/career related, non-salaried experiences. Professional Practice sites may be located on the Chicago State University campus and with business, industry, government and other agencies and organizations outside the University campus. At least one full-time five-day week of professional practice or the equivalent over a longer period of time will be required for one credit hour. Depending on specific curriculum, programs may require more than one week in order to award one credit hour.

Thesis/Dissertation and Independent Study

Courses where students are working on independent projects, such as in thesis/dissertation hours and independent studies, will conform to the standard minimum of three hours of student work per credit hour per week throughout the course of the semester or the equivalent work distributed over a different period of time.