



Policy AC016: Semester Credit Hour

Recommended for Approval by: Scott E. Miller, Senior VP for Academic Affairs and Provost

Approved by: Dale-Elizabeth Pehrsson, President

Effective Date: 07/01/2022

A. Intent

To establish standards for assigning semester hours of credit to courses at Pennsylvania Western University.

B. Definition(s)

None.

C. Policy

The principle guiding the assignment of one semester hour of credit is that each semester hour reasonably approximates not less than forty-five hours of effort by the student over the duration of a semester. Not all of this effort is necessarily expended while in face-to-face contact with an instructor; the expectation is that each hour of directed faculty instruction will be associated with a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work. Different types of courses require different amounts of contact time.

The following standards are intended to specify minimum contact time for the award of one semester hour of credit. Some courses may exceed these minimum standards. For purposes of these standards, one hour of contact time is defined as fifty minutes of actual contact. Actual contact time is listed after each standard in parentheses.

- Lecture semester hour = 15 hours (750 minutes) of contact per semester or per equivalent session.
- Practice semester hour = 22.5 hours (1,125 minutes) of contact per semester or per equivalent session.
- Laboratory semester hour = 30 hours (1,500 minutes) of contact per semester or per equivalent session.
- Internship semester hour = 45 hours (2,250 minutes or 37.5 hours) of contact per semester or per equivalent session.
- Clock-hour semester hour = 45 hours (2,250 minutes or 37.5 hours) of contact per semester or per equivalent session.

Note that the “practice semester hour” category includes studio, supervised clinical, and student teaching courses.

Some courses may combine two or more of these categories. For example, a science course may combine two semester hours of lecture with one semester hour of laboratory for a total of three semester hours. In this case, the lecture component would include a minimum of 1,500 (2 times 750) minutes of contact and the laboratory component would include a minimum of 1,500 minutes of contact.

Online and individualized instruction courses are assigned the same number of semester hours of credit as an identical course delivered in a face-to-face format, based on a determination that the student learning objectives and outcomes attained by the online or individualized instruction course are consistent with those of the face-to-face course.

Similar standards apply to the assignment of credit based upon life experience or examination. Online courses for which there are no face-to-face equivalents and independent study courses will be designed and offered to achieve course learning objectives that will reasonably approximate not less than forty-five hours of effort by the student for each semester hour of credit assigned.

The common calendar of PASSHE for regular semesters (Fall and Spring) includes 16 calendar weeks. One week is assigned for final examinations each semester; with spring break and other non-teaching days, there are 14 instructional weeks.

D. Procedure(s)

1. At the time that a course is approved for inclusion in the curriculum, the basis for the assignment of credit hours will be specified and placed on file with the Office of the Registrar.
2. At the time that a course is approved for online delivery, it will be reviewed to ensure that the student learning objectives and outcomes are consistent with those of an identical course delivered face-to-face, if such a course exists.
3. The procedure for assigning undergraduate credits to reflect learning acquired in a non-traditional manner, such as prior learning/life experience or examination, may be found under PennWest Policy AC015: Earning Course Credit by Examination or Evaluation.

E. Related policies

Earning Course Credit by Examination or Evaluation Policy (AC015)

Evaluation of Credits Over Ten Years Old Policy (AC039)

Transfer Credit Policy (AC034)

F. Contact Information

For additional information, please contact the Office of the Registrar.

G. Policy Review Schedule

All policies will be reviewed every two years or on an as needed basis if a change in BOG, PASSHE or Pennsylvania law would create the need for an immediate change.