

ECU Credit/Contact Hour Guidelines

ECU adheres to institutional definition of credit hour as outlined in [REG02.07.01](#), the federal definition of a credit hour, as well as [UNC Policy Manual 400.1.6](#), and the Carnegie unit for contact time. This regulation applies to all courses at all levels that award academic credit (i.e. any course that appears on an official transcript issued by the university) regardless of the mode of delivery or site of instruction, including but not limited to self-paced, online, blended/hybrid, lecture, seminar, studio, laboratory, independent studies, internship, practicum, and experiential learning activities.

One **credit hour** is 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:

2.1 One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours 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

2.2 At least an equivalent amount of work as required outlined in item 2.1 above 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. (Federal Regulation [34 CFR 668.8](#), July 1, 2011)

In fully online, hybrid and other courses where direct instruction is not the primary instructional method of delivery, an equivalent amount of work inside and/or outside of an online learning management system is required, which includes but not limited to readings, recorded lectures, tutorials, interactive activities, virtual labs, online testing, discussion boards, virtual project groups, essays, etc. Time expectations for students in online and hybrid courses are consistent with traditional classes when time committed to readings and videos, participation in shared discussions or group work, and time working independently on course-related activities and assignments are equivalent. Credits hours assigned to a course where direct instruction is not the primary mode of learning must equal the number of credit hours that would be assigned to that course were direct instruction the primary mode of learning. Regardless of the format of course content delivery, course workload expectations must align with the stated learning outcomes for students. This basic measure may be adjusted proportionately to reflect modified academic calendars and formats of study.

Definition of Credit and Contact Hours

Credit Hour: A unit of measure representing the time and activity required for one semester hour of credit.

Contact Hour: A unit of measure consisting of 50 minutes of either scheduled faculty instruction given to the student or student self-directed activity.

Relationship of Pedagogical Forms to Instructional Format

Pedagogical forms are the learning activities that support the unit of content. Different instructional formats utilize different combinations of pedagogical forms, such as direct faculty instruction; faculty directed experiential work; self-directed experiential work; supervised group activity; and outside of class student preparation. Some instructional formats require little to no student preparation, while others require an average of 2 hours of student preparation for each contact hour of faculty instruction.

In adhering to the [Federal Student Aid Handbook](#) definition of a credit hour, the amount of academic work assigned through different pedagogical forms that goes into a single semester credit hour is often calculated as follows:

- One lecture (taught) or seminar (discussion) credit hour represents 1 hour per week of scheduled class/seminar time and 2 hours of student preparation time. Most lecture and seminar courses are awarded 3 credit hours. Over an entire semester, this formula represents at least 45 hours of class time and 90 hours of student preparation.
- Other academic activities (supervised clinical rounds, visual or performing art studio, supervised student teaching, field work, etc.) one credit hour represents 3-4 hours per week of supervised and /or independent practice. This in turn represents between 45 and 60 hours of work per semester. Blocks of 3 contact hours, which equate to a studio or practice course, represent between 135 and 180 total hours of academic work per semester.

Application of Credit Hour Policy to Instructional Format¹

Clinical

A course that requires medical- or healthcare-focused experiential work where students test, observe, experiment, or practice a field or discipline in a hands-on or simulated environment.

Clinical experience credit hours are assigned based on 40 contact hours, or one week, per credit hour or otherwise determined by programmatic accreditors.

Colloquia

A course that requires students to participate in an unstructured or informal meeting for the exchange of views on a specific topic with an expert or qualified representative of the field or discipline.

Credit hours associated with this type of instruction will be assigned credit depending upon the amount of activity undertaken, faculty supervision, the student's outside activity and determination of programmatic accreditors, when applicable.

Individual Study

A course that requires students to participate in individualized, independent, directed, or guided studies under the supervision of an expert or qualified representative of the field or discipline that cannot be otherwise classified as internship, field experience, cooperative education, practicum, recital, performance, or ensemble.

Credit hours associated with this type of instruction will be assigned credit depending upon the amount of activity undertaken, faculty supervision, and the student's outside activity.

Internship/Field Experience/Cooperative Education

A course that requires students to participate in a partnership, professional employment, work experience, or cooperative education with an entity external to the institution, generally under the supervision of an employee of the given external entity.

A minimum of 45 contact hours per semester = 1 credit or as otherwise determined by programmatic accreditors.

Laboratory

A course that requires scientific- or research-focused experiential work where students test, observe, experiment, or practice a field or discipline in a hands-on environment, typically held in spaces containing special purpose equipment or a specific space configuration for student participation, experimentation, observation, or practice in an academic discipline.

Faculty-directed and/or laboratory courses with outside preparation assigned require a total of 2 contact hours per week of combined faculty instruction and experiential/laboratory work, plus one hour of student preparation for 15 weeks for each credit hour.

Self-directed laboratory courses require a total of 3 contact hours per week of combined faculty supervision, experiential/laboratory work, and student preparation for 15 weeks for each credit hour.

Lecture

A course that requires the extended expression of thought supported by generally-accepted principles or theorems of a field or discipline led by an expert or qualified representative of the field or discipline.

One credit requires one contact hour of faculty instruction and a minimum of two contact hours Student preparation each week for 15 weeks.

Lecture & Lab

A course that requires the combined attributes of a lecture course and a lab course. Credit hours should be an aggregate of the credit hours for lecture and lab based on the existing lecture and lab credit hour guidelines.

Physical Activity

A course that requires students to participate in physical training, physical conditioning, or other physical exercise activities, sports, or games.

Faculty-directed and/or laboratory courses with outside preparation assigned require a total of 2 contact hours per week of combined faculty instruction and experiential/laboratory work, plus one hour of student preparation for 15 weeks for each credit hour.

Self-directed physical activity courses require a total of 3 contact hours per week of combined faculty supervision, experiential/laboratory work, and student preparation for 15 for each credit hour.

Practicum

A course that requires students to participate in an approved project or proposal that practically applies previously studied theory of the field or discipline under the supervision of an expert or qualified representative of the field or discipline.

A minimum of 45 contact hours per semester = 1 credit hour or as otherwise determined by programmatic accreditors.

Recitation

A course that requires the extended expression of thought supported by generally-accepted principals or theorems of a field or discipline led by a teaching assistant or instructor under the guidance of a permanent faculty member, which often supplements or expands upon the content of a related or co-requisite course.

One credit requires one contact hour of faculty instruction and a minimum of two contact hours student preparation each week for 15 weeks.

Recital/Performance/Ensemble

A course that requires recital-, performance-, or ensemble-focused experiential work, including individual lessons, where students practice or rehearse and ultimately perform works of music, dance, or theatre for a jury or audience.

A course that requires no fewer than 2 contact hours per week of combined faculty instruction and experiential/laboratory work, plus one hour of student preparation for 15 weeks for each credit hour.

Seminar

A course that requires students to participate in structured conversation or debate focused on assigned readings, current or historical events, or shared experiences led by an expert or qualified representative of the field or discipline.

One credit requires one contact hour of faculty instruction and a minimum of two contact hours student preparation each week for 15 weeks per credit hour.

Studio

A course that requires visual- or aesthetic-focused experiential work where students test, observe, experiment, or practice a field or discipline in a hands-on environment.

For studio coursework, 1 semester hour represents 2 contact hours of in-class time and one hour of work outside of class for each credit hour.

Student Teaching

A course that requires students to instruct or teach at an entity external to the institution, generally as part of the culminating curriculum of a teacher education or certification program.

A minimum of 45 contact hours per semester = 1 credit hour or as otherwise determined by programmatic accreditors.

Study Abroad

A course that includes a short-term, faculty-led study abroad experience.

Credit hours vary by the duration of overseas experience as well as the amount of pre-trip and post-trip academic work. A minimum of 45 contact hours per semester = 1 credit as outlined on the Study Abroad Contact Hour Worksheet.

Dissertation/Thesis

A course that includes individual research towards a project completed as part of a postgraduate degree.

Credit hours associated with this type of instruction will depend upon the amount of activity undertaken, faculty supervision, and the student's outside activity.

¹ Note: An hour of instruction/student work is defined as 50 minutes.