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Policy Name

15.1000 Credit Hour

Purpose and Scope

This policy defines the credit hour policy for Alvernia University (“AU”). The policy is intended to ensure all prospective and current AU students and staff are aware of how credit hours are determined. This policy:

- Defines roles and responsibilities regarding course credit hours.
- Identifies the standards and best practices used by the Registrar’s Office related to assignment of credit hours and course modes.
- Lists the related AU policies which provide more detailed guidance on credit hours.
- Specifies the different modes of coursework and the application of credit hours to each mode.

This policy applies to all AU students and its scope includes students enrolled in AU programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Responsibilities

Title or Role	Definition and What They are Responsible For
Departments	Determine credit hours per courses offered each term. Ensure courses offered uphold the correct credit and contact hours.
Registrar	Maintains and enforces this policy.
Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost	Serves as approval for policy and assists with reviewing exceptions to the policy.
Senior Leadership Team	Serves as final approval for policy and assists with reviewing exceptions to the policy.

Policy

Alvernia University has adopted the traditional Carnegie Unit as a measure of the academic experience associated with a “credit hour.” The Registrar’s Office uses this policy to help schedule didactic and lab courses each semester.

In most cases, credit hour equivalency for each course is determined according to the number of hours a class meets for the duration of a course regardless of course delivery time period. For all course delivery time periods (semester, mod, summer, etc.) a credit hour is equivalent to a minimum of one of the following:

700 minutes of direct instruction (based on a 50-minute clock-hour) and 1800 minutes of out-of-class student work (based on a 60 minute clock-hour) (See PA Code definitions below);

2700 minutes of internship or clinical experience, unless greater if required by a program’s accrediting body; or

a combination of the foregoing.

Some courses may require additional minutes per credit received. These requirements are discipline specific and relate to requirements for national certification or internships. These occur in graduate nursing, engineering, other health care-focused programs, and others as designated by the Provost Office.

Alvernia complies with the following laws and regulations from the U.S. Department of Education, Pennsylvania Department of Education, and Middle States Commission on Higher Education in defining credit hours Credit Hour.

Per the U.S. Department of Education:

“...An amount of work representing 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 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.”

Per the 22 Pa. Code § 73.1. Definitions. (pacodeandbulletin.gov):

Clock hour - A minimum of 50 minutes of instruction.

Correspondence - A systematic course or program of nonresident instruction.

Course - A unit of learning covering specific subject matter.

Credit hour - A unit of curricular material which normally can be taught in a minimum of 750 minutes of instruction. For laboratory instruction, a credit hour represents a minimum of 1800 minutes. For shop instruction and practicum experiences, including externship/internship experiences, a credit hour represents a minimum of 2700 minutes.

Pennsylvania Department of Education (22 Pa. Code, Section 31.21(b)) states: “...a semester credit hour represents a unit of curricular material that normally can be taught in a minimum of 14 hours of classroom instruction, plus appropriate outside preparation or the equivalent as determined by faculty.”

Middle States Commission on Higher Education (Verification of Compliance with Accreditation-Relevant Federal Regulations, 2017) states: “...In accordance with the Commission policy, Credit Hour, and 34 CFR 602.24(f), the Commission ‘must conduct an effective review and evaluation of the reliability and accuracy of the institution’s assignment of credit hours.’ Specifically, the Commission must review the institution’s policies and procedures for determining the credit hours awarded as well as the institution’s policies and procedures to its programs and coursework, and make a ‘reasonable determination of whether the institution’s assignment of credit hours conforms to commonly accepted practice in higher education.”

Policy Framework

Course Delivery Time Periods

Academic Year Length: 30 weeks of instructional time

Semester Length: 15 weeks of instructional time, excluding final examination periods and vacations, but including a dedicated study day during any finals week.

Module Length: Either (i) 7 weeks including final exams, (ii) 3 weeks including final exams, and (iii) other Provost approved course delivery time periods such as Summer and Winter sessions.

All course delivery time periods must adhere to the total credit hour equivalency specified within this policy across the delivery of each course.

Independent Study/Directed Study/Research

Courses offered as directed studies/independent studies/research with approval of the Chair, Dean, and Provost Office and under supervision of faculty member. Student(s) meet periodically as agreed upon for the duration of the course. Credit hour equivalency must be comparable in scope, content, academic rigor, and student study time as courses offered in lecture format over the course delivery time period.

Internships, Practicum, Clinical, Field/Cooperative Experience, Externships

Courses developed for experiential and hands-on learning involving off-site placement. Employers work collaboratively with the appropriate university staff or faculty to develop outcomes, learning experiences, and expectations in order for students to meet credit level requirements. Such credit is awarded at the minimum rate of 42 hours per credit.

Online and Hybrid Courses

Students are expected to be academically engaged with comparable learning outcomes of a standard lecture course with alternate delivery methods. At Alvernia University online courses are divided into different categories based on the percentage of the course delivered in an online format. Please reference the Registrar for current definitions. Current Seat time equivalences for calculating adherence to credit hour equivalencies are available from the Registrar's Office.

Exceptions to Policy

Exceptions to this policy must be requested in writing by filling out the Policy and Procedure Exception form and submitting to the individual named in the Responsibilities section who assists with reviewing exceptions to this policy.

Policy Review

The Registrar Office policies should be reviewed on a 5-year cycle and updated when institutional needs or goals change.

Approved versions of this policy will be posted on the Alvernia University Portal.

References and Related Policies

References

pacodeandbulletin.gov

Related Policies

N/A

Exhibits

[Policy and Procedure Exception Form](#)

Document Review Log

Date Reviewed	Description of Changes
09/5/2023	Initial Draft
09/6/2023	Draft shared with Registrar Team for review
09/21/2023	Draft forwarded to Provost Office for review
10/9/2023	Provost Office revision
02/01/2023	SLT Approved