



**Policy Title:** AA3027 - Academic Credit Hour

**Subject Area:** Academic

**Responsible Official(s):** Executive Vice President and Provost

**Responsible Office(s):** Office of the Provost

## Policy Statement

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges SACSCOC core requirement 10.7 (Policies for Awarding Credit) states, *“The institution publishes and implements policies for its courses, regardless of format or mode of delivery. These policies require persons academically qualified to make the necessary judgments. In educational programs not based on credit hours (e.g., direct assessment programs), the institution has a sound means for determining credit equivalencies.”* As such, this core requirement requires the University to have a policy or procedure that defines credit hours.

The Department of Education in Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) 34 Section 600.2 requires accredited institutions comply with the established definition of the credit hour.

Undergraduate and graduate academic programs and courses at the University of Memphis (UofM) are delivered both on-ground and online. On-ground courses are scheduled on the basis of 750 contact minutes for each credit hour awarded. Laboratory instruction requires 1,500 contact minutes for the same amount of credit. This applies to all terms: fall, spring, summer, or compressed sessions. When providing nontraditional class formats, the UofM ensures equivalence in terms of instructional time, student effort, and student achievement. From the student's perspective, the semester hour is defined as the credit earned for the successful completion of one hour per week in a lecture class for one semester, or for two hours per week of laboratory for one semester. A three-credit hour course normally meets for three lecture hours or for two lecture hours and two laboratory hours per week. Each lecture hour presupposes a minimum of two hours of preparation on the part of the student. The level of credit, such as undergraduate or graduate, is defined by the academic rigor and requirements as determined by the faculty and explained in the academic curriculum approval process. Semester length of instruction time is approximately 16 calendar weeks including a registration period and a final exam period. Undergraduate degrees require a minimum of 120 credit hours. Master's degrees require a minimum of 30-36 credit hours; and doctoral degrees require a minimum of 72 hours beyond the bachelor's degree.

Credit hour determination and the academic credit hour policy pertain to all formats and/or modes of delivery. Therefore, the policies and procedures for credit hour determination explained in this policy pertain to the main campus, off-campus locations, and distance education.

## Definitions

**Credit Hour** - The Office of Post-secondary Education, Department of Education in Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) 34 Section 600.2 defines credit hour 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 the credit hour.

## Policy

### **Procedures for Determining Academic Credit:**

Faculty in the University Undergraduate Council and the University Council for Graduate Studies review proposals for new and revised courses, including determining whether the courses exhibit academic rigor appropriate for the level of instruction and amount of academic credit.

Faculty scrutiny and oversight of academic rigor of all courses, regardless of delivery mode, is exercised through this extensive curriculum review process. New programs—new degrees, majors, concentrations, minors, certificates—and courses, as well as any program or course revisions begin at the department level (departmental curriculum committees or separated into undergraduate and graduate committees) for all colleges and schools that are organized by departments. For other academic units organized differently, curriculum decisions and proposals are made at appropriate levels within academic disciplines analogous to departments.

Typically, colleges or schools have Curriculum Councils (sometimes two, undergraduate and graduate) made up of a representative cross-section of faculty within the college or school who review and make decisions about curricula. From the college/school level of review, proposals

proceed to either the University Undergraduate Council (UUC) or the University Council of Graduate Studies (UCGS) for review and vote. Both the UUC and UCGS are representative groups with voting members from faculty from each of the UofM academic units and the Faculty Senate. Ex-officio members of the UUC also include a student representative from the Student Government Association, and staff members from the Academic Advising Center, the Academic Advising Network, and the Office of the Registrar. All decisions of the UUC and the UCGS are made as recommendations to the Executive Vice President and Provost, the Chief Academic Officer of the UofM. Most UUC and USGS curriculum decision recommendations involve new courses; course revisions (including course titles, descriptions, pre-requisites, credit hours); new majors, concentrations, and minors; and revisions to majors, concentrations, and minors. Proposals for new degree programs and majors or program revisions over 24 credit hours are subject to review and approval by the UoM Board of Trustees and the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC). For a number of other decisions, the UofM is required to provide notification to THEC three times per year.

## FAQs

### **Who do I contact with further questions?**

Contact the [Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Accreditation, & Academic Assessment](#)

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