

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IN HUNTSVILLE

CREDIT HOUR, CONTACT HOUR, AND COURSE TYPES POLICY

Number 02.01.01

Division Academic Affairs

Date August, 2006; Reviewed and Revised June 15, 2024

Purpose To formalize a *credit hour* and *contact hour* policy for both traditional in-person courses and non-traditional courses offered at UAH as well as to define the different types of courses offered at UAH. This policy will ensure consistency in the awarding of credit for a variety of methods of delivery.

Policy The UAH definition of a *credit hour* is guided by requirements of the U.S. Department of Education, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), and the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE). A *credit hour* is an academic unit of credit awarded for the completion of educational activities. The amount of credit awarded depends on the expected amount of time required to complete in-class and out-of-class work during a semester for a course that is completed with a passing grade. This definition of a *credit hour* applies to all courses at all levels (graduate and undergraduate) that award academic credit regardless of the mode of delivery, including, but not limited to, traditional, online, hybrid, lecture, laboratory, studio, clinical, internship, study abroad, thesis, dissertation, independent studies, research, special topics, co-op, ensemble, validation, recitation, and practicum.

For UAH purposes, a *contact-hour* is defined as the number of 50-55 minute time periods that a class meets for scheduled instruction. A traditional (in-person course at UAH that awards one credit-hour of instruction meets once a week for 50-55 minutes for the fifteen weeks of a semester (15 *contact-hours* per semester). Generally, for a traditional in-person course, the number of *contact-hours* per week is equal to the number of credit hours awarded. Courses taught at UAH via other modes, however, generally have a greater number of *contact-hours* per week than the credit hours awarded.

The time expectations for work outside of class listed in the Procedures section are minimums and may be higher depending on the nature and level of the course as well as the ability, commitment, and learning style of the student. The institution reserves the right to make semester hour assignments

that exceed the minimum time requirements stated. Learning objectives, expected outcomes, and workload expectations that meet the standards set forth above should be clearly stated in all courses. Different types of courses will follow the guidelines detailed below.

Procedures

1) Traditional Lecture Courses (in-person)

Each semester hour awarded for a lecture course at UAH requires at least 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. An in-person course at UAH that awards one credit-hour of instruction meets once a week for 50-55 minutes for the fifteen weeks of a semester (fifteen contact-hours per semester). Examples of the most commonly awarded blocks of credit and their corresponding contact hours are:

1. A 1-credit hour class will approximate 750 minutes of instruction/examination per semester.
2. A 2-credit hour class will approximate 1,500 minutes of instruction/examination per semester.
3. A 3-credit hour class will approximate 2,250 minutes of instruction/examination per semester.
4. A 4-credit hour course will approximate 3,000 minutes of instruction/ examination per semester.

2) Online (Asynchronous/online synchronous)

Courses where “instructors and students do not meet in the same space”. Regardless of mode of instruction, courses should be consistent in terms of quality, assessment, learning outcomes, requirements, etc. as courses offered in person with the same college prefix, number, and course title. Faculty must demonstrate active academic engagement through interactive methods, including, but not limited to, interactive tutorials, online meetings, group discussions, virtual study/project groups, discussion boards, chat rooms, etc. Credit hours assigned to a course delivered online must equal the number of credit hours for the same course delivered in person.

3) Hybrid

Hybrid courses are those for which 51% to 99% of the course is delivered via the internet and the Learning Management System with the remaining portion delivered via in-person class meetings. Contact time is measured using the criteria listed in (a) item 1 (above) for Traditional courses and (b) item 2 (above) for Online Courses for portions of the Hybrid course delivered via the internet using the Learning Management system.

An online or hybrid version of a course will be considered to have met the credit hour requirement if it covers the same amount of material with the

same rigor of assessment as if the course were delivered in an in-person format. See the Online and Hybrid Education Policy (02.01.35) for more details.

4) Laboratory Courses

All laboratory courses meet for a minimum of two *contact-hours* per week for one hour of credit awarded and the majority meet for three *contact-hours* per week for one hour of credit awarded, whether they are stand-alone laboratory courses or combined with a face-to-face format course. For a laboratory course having less than three *contact-hours* per week to be approved, the department must demonstrate that: (1) the faculty have recently reviewed the number of *contact-hours* for each of their laboratory classes; (2) the proposed number of *contact-hours* per week conforms to the practice at many other U.S. universities with teaching and research missions similar to UAH; (3) the faculty have determined that the proposed *contact-hours* per week are sufficient for a pedagogically sound laboratory; and (4) this practice is consistent with any specified standards for professional accreditation.

5) Clinical Courses

Bachelor of Science in Nursing and Master of Science in Nursing clinical courses meet for three (3) *contact-hours* per week for one credit hour awarded. Doctor of Nursing Practice clinical courses meet for four (4) *contact-hours* per week for one credit hour awarded.

6) Studio Courses

Art Studio

In the Department of Art, Art History & Design, each studio credit hour consists of at least 1.66 hours of in-class instruction with a minimum expectation of at least 1.33 hours of work outside of class each week. A three-credit hour studio art course equates to at least five (5) hours in class and at least four (4) hours outside of class per week during a 15-week semester. In order to meet the National Association of School of Art and Design (NASAD) recommendations for three-credit hour art studio courses, one *contact-hour* per week should be lecture and four *contact-hours* per week should be studio. Time expectations for work inside and outside of class are minimums and may be higher depending on the nature and level of the course, and, for work outside of class, also on the ability, commitment, and learning style of the student.

Music Studio

One-on-one instruction in music follows the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) recommendations.

7) Internship Courses

Internship courses, other than those in the Colleges of Education and Nursing, will average at least 8 hours of internship work per week for an entire semester for three hours of credit. Internships in Education and Nursing are subject to other guidelines specified by state and federal agencies.

8) Study Abroad Courses

Study Abroad courses include both a lecture component and cultural experience/excursions. Study Abroad courses must adhere to the rigorous academic standards of any other course taught at UAH. Over the period of the course, the requirement is 15 *contact hours* or 45 *contact hours* of cultural experiences/excursions for each hour of credit awarded. Although the time periods of study abroad courses do not conform to the normal fifteen-week semester, this is the equivalent of one *contact-hour* per week of lecture and three *contact-hours* per week of experiences/excursions for one credit-hour awarded on a fifteen-week semester basis. The policy states that such class time may be comprised of instructional and learning activities in the classroom and/or instructional and learning activities that take place during site visits, cultural experiences, and excursions. Course syllabi must demonstrate that such site visits, cultural visits, and excursions have clear academic relevance for the course.

9) Ensemble

Music ensembles vary in size and scope from small coached chamber ensembles to large, conducted ensembles such as choirs, bands, and orchestras. Regardless of size, instrumentation, or genre, all music ensembles share a common mission to rehearse and perform throughout the semester. Large music ensemble courses meet for three *contact-hours* per week for one hour of credit while chamber ensembles meet for one *contact-hour* per week for 0.5 hour of credit.

10) Other

Any other type of class, including, but not limited to, thesis, dissertation, independent studies, research, special topics, validation, recitation, and practicum should meet the minimum thresholds for contact-hours as outlined in this policy in a manner appropriate for that course.

Review

Academic Affairs will review the policy every five years or at an earlier time if needed.