

Title/Subject: **CREDIT HOUR DEFINITION AND APPLICATION TO COURSES**

Applies to:  faculty  staff  students  student employees  visitors  contractors

Effective Date of This Revision: April 22, 2016

Contact for More Information: Academic Effectiveness

Board Policy  Administrative Policy  Procedure  Guideline

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**BACKGROUND:**

The United States Department of Education requires that each institution develop a written credit hour policy that conforms to the definition of a credit hour outlined in the Federal Register (75 FR 66832 p. 66946). As noted in the Curricular Authority Document and the academic bulletins, Central Michigan University uses the federal definition of a credit hour:

*A 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:*

*(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 activities as established by an institution, including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading toward to the award of credit hours. 34CFR 600.2 (11/1/2010)*

This definition has been commonly understood by faculty and is described in the Curricular Authority Document and the academic bulletins.

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this document is to define a credit hour and to locate in one place policies used to determine credit hours for courses.

**DEFINITIONS:**

Credit Hour. For physical face-to-face courses, one credit hour means one class hour of direct instruction (see definition below) and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week during the 15-week semester.

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However, for online, hybrid, or other courses and academic activities where direct instruction is not the primary mode of learning, such as laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, dissertations/theses, independent study, etc., an equivalent amount of work (one credit is a minimum of three hours per week for 15 weeks) must be represented for a credit hour.

The federal definition of a credit hour noted above is intended to provide a baseline and does not define the number of minutes in an instructional hour. At Central Michigan University, one hour of direct instruction is defined as 50 minutes.

Direct faculty instruction. For most physical face-to-face courses, direct faculty instruction is synonymous with “in-class, synchronous instruction.” Much of the time, this direct instruction means lectures and/or structured whole class or group discussions and other activities. Examinations may be included as instructional time.

Because online and hybrid courses must meet the same credit-hour requirement as physical face-to-face courses, faculty must demonstrate active engagement in online teaching through structured synchronous and/or asynchronous interactions with students, such as providing online chat sessions with individual students or groups of students, moderating discussion-board forums and writing responses to students’ posts, providing written and/or oral feedback on students’ writing assignments other course projects, etc. Logging on to a learning management system does not constitute active faculty teaching or active student learning.

Student work. Student work includes all assignments or other academic activities required to be completed outside of instructional time. Student work may include reading, studying, writing, completing worksheets, research, etc.

Master Course Syllabus. The official record of a course, containing the course description, prerequisites, co-requisites, recommended prior coursework and/or experiences, a rationale for course level, materials and other requirements, typical instructional formats, course objectives, an outline of topics, and typical methods for student evaluation.

## **POLICY:**

The following guidance indicates how credit hours are determined for a variety of course formats. This process is simplified because the master course syllabus defines the scope and learning objectives of a course independent of the delivery method.

## **PROCEDURE:**

A consistent process for determining credit hours must be implemented for all courses. The application of the credit-hour definition is straightforward if there is direct faculty instruction. Because all course instruction is based on the master course syllabus independent of delivery method, this definition will be applied to online or hybrid courses as follows: because 1) the student learning outcomes and the scope of the course for an online or hybrid course are the same as those used when the course is offered solely in a physical face-to-face classroom environment, and 2) students in online or hybrid courses are required to regularly engage with the instructor and other students, then the hybrid or online course is equivalent to the physical face-to-face course, and therefore the credit hours are the same.

*Central Michigan University reserves the right to make exceptions to, modify or eliminate this policy and or its content. This document supersedes all previous policies, procedures or guidelines relative to this subject.*