
POLICY TITLE: CREDIT HOUR POLICY**Date of Initial Approval:** 10/16/2012**Date Revised:** 8/9/2023**Category:** 1.0 Academic Programs**Responsible Department:** Registrar, Provost

PURPOSE & SCOPE

The U.S. Department of Education requires institutions of higher education to develop written policies regarding the assignment of credit hours to courses which conform to the federal definition of a credit hour as described in [34 CFR 600.2](#) and [34 CFR 602.24](#). The purpose of this policy is to ensure institution-wide compliance with the federal definition of a credit hour. The policy applies to all credit-bearing courses offered at Rocky Vista University (RVU).

POLICY STATEMENT

RVU assigns credit hours and program length in accordance with the Higher Learning Commission's *Assignment of Credits, Program Length and Tuition Policy* ([FDCR.A.10.020](#)), which is based on the aforementioned federal regulations.

POLICY

A credit hour is a unit which quantifies student work (learning and assessment) as established by commonly accepted practice in postsecondary education.

One credit hour reasonably approximates not less than:

- (i) 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 period of time; or
- (ii) At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1)(i) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution, including laboratory work, clinicals, simulations, and other teaching/learning activities leading to the award of credit hours; and
- (iii) In addition, in determining the amount of work associated with a credit hour, instructional leaders may consider a variety of delivery methods, measurements of student work, academic calendars, disciplines, and degree levels.¹

This rule refers to a Carnegie hour, which is broadly understood to be 50 minutes in length. Therefore, the requirement for one semester credit is 12.5 hours of direct instruction or a total of 37.5 hours of total student work. The table below provides guidance regarding minimum instructional and other time required for credit-bearing courses.

¹ [34 CFR 600.2](#)

Credit Hours	Traditional In-Class Credit-Bearing Course		Distance Education or Other Credit Bearing Experience (clinicals, blended delivery, etc)
	Minimum Amount of Instructional Time Required	Minimum Amount of Time Required Outside of Class/Instructional Time	Minimum Amount of Time Required for All Activities (sum of previous two columns)
1 Credit	12.5 Hours	25 Hours	37.5 Hours
2 Credits	25 Hours	50 Hours	75 Hours
3 Credits	37.5 Hours	75 Hours	112.5 Hours
4 Credits	50 Hours	100 Hours	150 Hours
5 Credits	62.5 Hours	125 Hours	187.5 Hours
6 Credits	75 Hours	150 Hours	225 Hours
7 Credits	87.5 Hours	175 Hours	262.5 Hours
8 Credits	100 Hours	200 Hours	300 Hours
9 Credits	112.5 Hours	225 Hours	337.5 Hours
10 Credits	125 Hours	250 Hours	375 Hours

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Annual Responsibility Program-Level Curriculum Committees	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Program-level Curriculum Committees will, on an annual basis, review courses offered within their respective programs and perform an audit of scheduled instructional time and syllabi to ensure compliance with the credit hour policy. 2. Review findings must be reported to program leadership no later than March 1, annually.
Annual Responsibility Program Dean/Director/Chair	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Program leaders will, on an annual basis, randomly select no less than 10% of courses offered within their respective areas and perform an audit of scheduled instructional time and syllabi to ensure compliance with the credit hour policy. 2. Review findings must be reported to the Provost no later than March 31st annually.
Annual Responsibility Provost	The provost will review departmental credit hour policy review findings and share findings and any necessary adjustments with the Provost's Advisory Council annually in April .
Ongoing Responsibilities Registrar	<p>As the chair of the Institutional Curriculum Committee (ICC), the Registrar will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure ICC reviews program and course revisions and proposals for compliance with this policy. 2. Provide minutes which document how ICC determinations were made pertaining to compliance with this policy. 3. Work with appropriate institutional personnel to update this policy as may be necessary.
Every Three Years Responsibility Institutional Curriculum Committee	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The ICC will conduct a periodic compliance review of the credit hour policy every three years or as changes to federal regulations may merit. 2. Proposals for new and revised programs and courses will be reviewed to ensure compliance with this policy prior to approval.
Responsibilities in Years 3 and 9 of Institutional Accreditation Cycle Federal Compliance Task Force	To ensure that RVU's credit hours reflect the minimum amount of work required to earn assigned credits the Federal Compliance Task Force will conduct a Syllabus Audit in Year 3 and Year 9 of RVU's institutional accreditation cycle.

RELATED DEFINITIONS & PROCEDURES

- Appendix 1: Definitions of Curricular Events
- Appendix 2: Credit Hour Calculation Worksheet

POLICY REVISION HISTORY

10/16/2012	Initial approval
10/23/2012	Revised; unknown
5/16/2018	Reviewed for currency
6/19/2023	Updated to include reference to current regulations, guidance table, and roles/responsibilities

APPENDIX 1: DEFINITIONS OF CURRICULAR EVENTS

Lecture: A standard didactic presentation involving direct faculty instruction in a classroom setting lasting a minimum of 50 minutes. Each hour of lecture assumes a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work.

Laboratory: A 50-60 minute session in a laboratory or clinical setting that requires “hands on” instruction. Each hour of laboratory assumes a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work.

Clinical Integration Session (CIS): A required, large classroom session in which faculty stress application of previous material to clinical case scenarios. The emphasis is on application, integration, and interaction between faculty and students versus passive learning. Each hour of CIS assumes a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work.

Designated Student Assignment (DSA): A “self-study” assignment created by a faculty member consisting of a specific reading assignment, learning objectives, and examination questions that will not be accompanied by a lecture or laboratory session. Students are held responsible for DSA assignments during CIS sessions, quizzes, and examinations. Each hour of DSA assumes a minimum of three hours of out-of-class student work.

Basic Science Correlations (BSC): A required classroom session in which faculty stress application of previous basic science material to clinical case scenarios. Each hour of BSC assumes a minimum of two hours of additional student work outside of the classroom.

Examination: A summative evaluation of student learning outcomes delivered via proctored written examination, computerized examinations, or practical examinations in anatomy, OPP, or PCM.

Post-Exam Review (PER): A formal review of examination questions and results following a major examination.

Clinicals A program-specific series of supervised interactions with patients in a healthcare facility.

Out-of-Class Learning Experiences: Out-of-class learning experiences may include assignments, readings, research, grand round presentations or other academic activities and must be described in the course syllabus.

Team-based learning (TBL): A collaborative learning strategy which incorporates teams of students. Three components are included in TBL modules consisting of a pre-work assignment, in-class readiness assurance testing, and a team-based application exercise. A class is comprised on one module.

Problem-based Learning (PBL): A student-centered approach that involves groups (typically 5-7) of students working collaboratively to find solutions to real-world complex and open-ended problems. Group size is typically 5-7 students.

APPENDIX 2: CREDIT HOUR CALCULATION WORKSHEET

Lecture, Lab & Clinical Courses	Number of Credit Hours	Minimum # Instructional Hours Required	Minimum # Expected Hours Outside of Instructional Time	Total Combined Instructional Time (Hours)
Instructional session (lecture, case-based learning, team-based learning, directed student assignments, etc.)	1	12.5	25	37.5
Lab	1	37.5	12.5	50
Clinical	1	37.5	0	37.5
Distance Education, Blended, or Other Delivery Courses	Number of Credit Hours	Minimum # Required for All Activities		
	1	37.5		