



## CREDIT HOUR POLICY PER NYSED & US DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

### **SUNY/NYSED - Credit Hour Policy and Definition**

All credit-bearing degree and certificate programs at Erie Community College (ECC) are approved by New York State Education Department (NYSED). Calculation of credit hours for these programs follow NYSED guidelines, which are consistent with the U.S. Department of Education's definition of a credit hour.

Codes, Rules and Regulations of the State of New York, Title 8 – Education Department, Chapter II – Regulations of the Commissioner, Subchapter A – Higher and Professional Regulations, Part 50 – General, Section 50.1 (o) stipulates the following:

*Semester hour means a credit, point, or other unit granted for the satisfactory completion of a course which requires at least 15 hours (of 50 minutes each) of instruction and at least 30 hours of supplementary assignments, except as otherwise provided pursuant to section 52.2 (c)(4) of this Subchapter. This basic measure shall be adjusted proportionately to translate the value of other academic calendars and formats of study in relation to the credit granted for study during the two semesters that comprise an academic year.*

Section 52.2 (c)(4) stipulates:

*A semester hour of credit may be granted by an institution for fewer hours of instruction and study than those specified in subdivision (o) of section 50.1 of this Subchapter only: (i) when approved by the commissioner as part of a registered curriculum; (ii) when the commissioner has granted prior approval for the institution to maintain a statement of academic standards that defines the considerations which establish equivalency of instruction and study and such statement has been adopted by the institution; or (iii) in the event of a temporary closure of an institution by the State or local government as a result of a disaster, as defined in section 50.1(w) of this Title, when the commissioner has granted approval for the institution to maintain a statement of academic standards that defines the considerations which establish equivalency of instruction and study and such statement has been adopted by the institution.*

### **U.S. Department of Education – Credit Hour Policy and Definition**

Electronic Code of Federal Regulations, Title 34: Education, Part 600 – Institutional Eligibility under the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, Subpart A – General, Section 600.2 stipulates the following:

*Credit hour: Except as provided in 34 CFR 668.8 (k) and (l), 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 academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practical, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.*

U.S. Department of Education guidance of Program Integrity regulations related to the credit hour (<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/reg/hearulemaking/2009/credit.html>) also stipulate:

*The credit-hour definition does not dictate particular amounts of classroom time versus out-of-class student work. Further note that the definition provides that a credit hour may be for an equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time. There is no requirement that a 3-semester hour course meets 3 hours per week during a semester or a 3-quarter-hour course meets 3 hours per week during a quarter. The requirement is that the institution determine that there is an amount of student work for a credit hour that reasonably approximates not less than one hour of class and two hours of out-of-class student work per week over a semester for a semester hour or a quarter for a quarter hour. For example, an institution with a semester-based calendar has a graduate seminar for which it awards 3 semester hours. The class meets only one hour per week over a 15-week semester with the students expected to perform a substantial amount of outside research that is the equivalent of 8 or more hours of student work each week of the semester. For purposes of the Federal definition, the institution would be able to award up to 3 semester hours for the course.*

#### **POLICY:**

All credit hours awarded by Erie Community College (ECC) will conform to the guidelines listed above. These guidelines are also in compliance with policies set forth by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

Erie Community College (ECC) follows a semester system with fall and spring semesters consisting of 15 weeks. Summer terms are less than 15 weeks but adhere to the policy in terms of meeting time for credit hours and recommended amount of work required. Terms for special academic programs have been adjusted to adhere to the policy in terms of the amount of work and time required.

The faculty and college administrators are responsible for developing, maintaining, and evaluating the curriculum within an academic program, although the Board of Trustees or their representative retain final control and approval of the curriculum. Assignment of credit hours for courses are determined within the program based on faculty expertise and course learning objectives. Existing courses are evaluated for adherence to the federal credit hour regulation by the Registrar as a part of the building of the course schedule. Upon review and approval by New Curriculum Development Committee (NCDC) and subsequently by the College Wide Curriculum Committee (CWCC), new courses will be recommended for approval or denial to the department. Approved courses are then forwarded to the Vice President of Academic Affairs for processing through the State of New York Department of Education. Courses that are denied are returned to the Department for further review and updates.

The New Curriculum Development Committee and the College Wide Curriculum Committee are responsible for following the policy on credit hours in their review and approval of all courses and that the changes to curricula and additional new courses meet the credit hour and expected student learning as outlined in the charts to follow.

Approved courses are sent to the Registrar’s Office for inclusion in the College Catalog. The Registrar’s Office reviews the class schedules prior to the start of each semester to ensure that all classes are scheduled for the minimum number of minutes corresponding to the credits assigned, or otherwise notes when course schedules do not match assigned credit hours. Any discrepancies are brought to the attention of the appropriate department for correction.

The following table provides general guidance on the how the credit hour translates to the particular instruction methodology. Note, however, that the credit-hour definition does not dictate particular amounts of classroom time versus out-of-class student work – the information below serves as general guidance only.

**Lecture:** Courses that meet to engage in various forms of group instruction under the direct supervision of a faculty member.

<b>Lectures: Classroom/Faculty Instruction and Outside Student Work</b>			
Credits Awarded	Minimum Instructional Contact Time per Week	Minimum Instructional Time Total for 15 Weeks (Contact Time X Weeks)	Recommended Student Study Time per Week
1	50 contact minutes	750 contact minutes	100 minutes
2	100 contact minutes	1500 contact minutes	200 minutes
3	150 contact minutes	2250 contact minutes	300 minutes
4	200 contact minutes	3000 contact minutes	400 minutes

**Laboratory:** Courses with a focus on experiential learning under the direct supervision of a faculty member in which the student performs substantive work in a laboratory setting. The minimum contact time per credit is twice that of a lecture (2:1 ratio).

<b>Laboratory: Classroom/Faculty Instruction and Outside Student Work</b>			
Credits Awarded	Minimum Instructional Contact Time per Week	Minimum Instructional Time Total for 15 Weeks (Contact Time X Weeks)	Recommended Student Study Time per Week
1	100 contact minutes	1500 contact minutes	50 minutes
2	200 contact minutes	3000 contact minutes	100 minutes
3	300 contact minutes	4500 contact minutes	150 minutes
4	4000 contact minutes	6000 contact minutes	200 minutes

**Clinicals:** Courses with a focus on experiential learning under the direct supervision of a faculty member in which the student performs substantive work in a clinical setting. The minimum contact time per credit is three times that of a lecture (3:1 ratio), depending upon the amount of outside work assigned.

<b>Clinicals: Classroom/Faculty Instruction and Outside Student Work</b>			
Credits Awarded	Minimum Instructional Contact Time per Week	Minimum Instructional Time Total for 15 Weeks (Contact Time X Weeks)	Recommended Student Study Time per Week
1	150 contact minutes	2250 contact minutes	0 minutes
2	300 contact minutes	4500 contact minutes	0 minutes
3	450 contact minutes	6750 contact minutes	0 minutes
4	600 contact minutes	9000 contact minutes	0 minutes

**Other forms of instruction/Delivery methods:**

**Individualized Instruction:** Courses of study to accommodate a student who cannot meet with a regularly scheduled class. The faculty member regularly meets with a student(s) and applies the same criteria as outlined in the course syllabus, but does not meet in a scheduled class. Credit hours are determined based on faculty instructional contact minutes as dictated by the course catalog. All courses match the total amount of work using the examples listed above, and the faculty member is required to keep records of the meeting times and student work assigned so that contact hours can be calculated.

**Internship:** Courses of study in which a faculty member regularly interacts and directs student outcomes with periodic contact, but where the actual learning environment takes place off-campus at an approved site. The learning experience will typically involve a faculty member interacting with a site supervisor and directed activity/learning will occur outside of a lecture setting. Contact time and outside student work requirements are established to meet the time as listed in the tables above. The faculty member is responsible for the experience and is required to keep records of the amount of supervised work and the amount of outside work assigned so that contact hours can be calculated.

**Online/Distance Learning Courses:** Courses offered entirely online without any on-site face-to-face meetings required. These courses have the same learning outcomes and follow the same syllabus of a lecture course, but with online delivery methods. Contact time is satisfied by various means as outlined in each courses syllabus. These methods can include, but are not limited to, online group discussions and projects, papers and exams, and singular faculty engagement to name a few. In all cases the courses meet instructional time and projected student engagement time.

**Hybrid Courses:** Courses offered in a blended format with one or more on-site face-to-face class sessions and at least one or more online sessions, both containing direct interaction with a faculty member. Contact time is assessed using both on-site definitions (for the on-site portion) and online definitions as above (for the online portion). In all such instances, these courses must meet the total amount of instructional and student work time as the examples above even if delivered online or in class.

**Policy Adherence:**

A Review of credit hours and contact hours is conducted on a semester basis by the Deans in association with the Registrar’s office previous to the finalization of the course Schedule(s). Any course that

appears to be out of compliance with credit or contact hours is returned to the department for updating. The college catalog of courses is housed in the Registrar's office and is the depository for all active courses. The college catalog also serves as the official repository for all course information from course name to credit and contact hours.