

CREDIT/CONTACT HOUR POLICY

The following policy is derived from Trocaire College’s Credit Hour Policy and the State University of New York’s (SUNY’s) Credit/Contact Hour Policy.

Policy Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, the definition of a semester hour and credit hour are used interchangeably in order to address the regulatory agencies involved.

Semester hour/Credit hour: According to New York State Education Department (NYSED), *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.* This definition is consistent with the U.S. Department of Education’s definition of a credit hour.

Contact hour: a unit of measure that represents an hour (50 minutes) of scheduled instruction given to students. Please see the tables in this policy for guidance on contact hours in relation to various instructional types (e.g., lecture, laboratory, clinical, practicum, etc.).

Assignment of Credit Hours

All courses taken for credit at Suffolk County Community College, which are applied toward completion of degree and certificate completion requirements, conform to applicable state and federal regulations concerning the assignment of credit hours. The following provides information concerning credit hour assignment policies.

I. Credit Hour Definition

New York State:

All credit-bearing degree and certificate programs at Suffolk County Community College are approved by the New York State Education Department (NYSED). Calculation of credit hours for these programs follows 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:

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, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.”

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

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 meet 3 hours per week during a semester or a 3-quarter-hour course meet 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.”

New York State Education Department’s Policies Regarding Time on Task in Online Education

The College adheres to the New York State Education Department’s Office of College and University Evaluation policies on “Determining Time on Task in Online Education,” which is excerpted below.

Time on task is the total learning time spent by a student in a college course, including instructional time as well as time spent studying and completing course assignments (e.g., reading, research, writing, individual and group projects.) Regardless of the delivery method or the particular learning activities employed, the amount of learning time in any college course should meet the requirements of Commissioner's Regulation Section 50.1 (o), a total of 45 hours for one semester credit (in conventional classroom education this breaks down into 15 hours of instruction plus 30 hours of student work/study out of class.)

"Instruction" is provided differently in online courses than in classroom-based courses. Despite the difference in methodology and activities, however, the total "learning time" online can usually be

counted. Rather than try to distinguish between "in-class" and "outside-class" time for students, the faculty member developing and/or teaching the online course should calculate how much time a student doing satisfactory work would take to complete the work of the course, including:

- *reading course presentations/"lectures"*
- *reading other materials*
- *participation in online discussions*
- *doing research*
- *writing papers or other assignments*
- *completing all other assignments (e.g., projects)*

The total time spent on these tasks should be roughly equal to that spent on comparable tasks in a classroom-based course. Time spent downloading or uploading documents, troubleshooting technical problems, or in chat rooms (unless on course assignments such as group projects) should not be counted.

In determining the time on task for an online course, useful information includes:

- *the course objectives and expected learning outcomes*
- *the list of topics in the course outline or syllabus; the textbooks, additional readings, and related education materials (such as software) required*
- *statements in course materials informing students of the time and/or effort they are expected to devote to the course or individual parts of it*
- *a listing of the pedagogical tools to be used in the online course, how each will be used, and the expectations for participation (e.g., in an online discussion, how many substantive postings will be required of a student for each week or unit?)*

Theoretically, one should be able to measure any course, regardless of delivery method, by the description of content covered. However, this is difficult for anyone other than the course developer or instructor to determine accurately, since the same statement of content (in a course outline or syllabus) can represent many different levels of breadth and depth in the treatment of that content, and require widely varying amounts of time.

II. Credit Hour Assignment Policies

All semester/credit hours awarded by Suffolk County Community College will conform to the definitions listed above. Therefore, all units of credit awarded will conform to the federal and state definitions. These guidelines are also in compliance with policies set forth by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

Suffolk County Community College generally follows a semester system with fall and spring semesters consisting of 15 weeks for day classes and 14 weeks for evening classes. Summer terms are typically less than 15 weeks but adhere to the policy in terms of meeting time and the amount of work required. Terms for certain academic programs (for example, compressed schedules) have been adjusted but nonetheless adhere to the policy in terms of the amount of work required.

Curriculum Process

The faculty and program administrators are responsible for developing, maintaining and evaluating the curriculum within an academic program, although the President retains final control and approval of the curriculum. Assignment of credit hours for courses is determined within the program based on faculty expertise and course learning outcomes. New and revised courses will, upon review and approval at the

department level, be reviewed by the College Curriculum Committee and the Vice President for Academic Affairs and recommended for approval or denial. Existing courses will be evaluated for adherence to the federal credit hour regulation using an annual audit, conducted collaboratively through Academic Affairs and Student Affairs.

The College Curriculum Committee is charged with following the policy on credit hours in their review and approval of all courses and curricula and for certifying that the expected student learning for the course meets the credit hour standard.

Approved courses are sent to the Office of Curriculum Development for inclusion in the College Catalog and website. The Office of the College Registrar reviews class schedules prior to the start of each semester to ensure that all classes are scheduled for the minimum number of instructional minutes corresponding to the credits and contact hours assigned, and notes when course schedules do not match assigned credit and contact hours. Any discrepancies are brought to the attention of the appropriate department and necessary corrections are made.

The following provides general guidance on the how the credit hour translates to the particular instruction method. 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, Seminar, Quiz, Discussion, Recitation: Courses with multiple students, which meet to engage in various forms of group instruction under the direct supervision of a faculty member. A semester credit hour is an academic unit earned for a minimum of fifteen 50-minute sessions of classroom instruction with a normal expectation of two (50-minute) hours of outside study for each class session. Typically, a three-semester credit hour course meets three 50-minute sessions per week for fifteen weeks for 45 sessions. Examples of the minimal amounts for each activity on a per credit basis are displayed in the table below, using a traditional 15-week semester as the base:

Lecture, Seminar, Quiz, Discussion, Recitation:

Credits awarded	Minimum contact time per week	Minimum instructional time Total for 15 Weeks (Contact time x Weeks)	Minimum Out of Class Student Work per week	Minimum Out of Class Student Work Total for 15 Weeks (Outside Work x Weeks)	Total of instructional contact time and out of class student work
1	50 contact minutes	750 contact minutes	100 minutes	1500 minutes	2250 minutes (37.5 hours)
2	100 contact minutes	1500 contact minutes	200 minutes	3000 minutes	4500 minutes (75.0 hours)
3	150 contact minutes	2250 contact minutes	300 minutes	4500 minutes	6750 minutes (112.5 hours)
4	200 contact minutes	3000 contact minutes	400 minutes	6000 minutes	9000 minutes (150 hours)

Activity supervised as a group with substantial outside preparation expected

(laboratory, field trip, practicum, workshop, group studio): Courses with a focus on experiential learning under the direct supervision of a faculty member, with substantial outside preparation expected by the student. A semester credit hour is awarded for the equivalent of fifteen periods of such activity, where each activity period is 100 minutes or more in duration. (2:1 ratio of contact time to credits, per week).

Activity supervised as a group with substantial outside preparation expected:

Credits awarded	Minimum contact time per week	Minimum instructional time Total for 15 Weeks (Contact time x Weeks)	Minimum Out of Class Student Work per week	Minimum Out of Class Student Work Total for 15 Weeks (Outside Work x Weeks)	Total of instructional contact time and out of class student work
1	100 contact minutes	1500 contact minutes	50 minutes	750 minutes	2250 minutes (37.5 hours)
2	200 contact minutes	3000 contact minutes	100 minutes	1500 minutes	4500 minutes (75.0 hours)
3	300 contact minutes	4500 contact minutes	150 minutes	2250 minutes	6750 minutes (112.5 hours)
4	400 contact minutes	6000 contact minutes	200 minutes	3000 minutes	9000 minutes (150 hours)

Activity supervised as a group with little or no outside preparation expected

(laboratory, field trip, practicum, workshop, group studio): Courses with a focus on experiential learning under the direct supervision of a faculty member, with little or no outside preparation expected by the student. A semester credit hour is awarded for the equivalent of fifteen periods of such activity, where each activity period is 150 minutes or more in duration. (3:1 ratio of contact time to credits, per week).

Activity supervised as a group with little or no outside preparation expected

Credits awarded	Minimum contact time per week	Minimum instructional time Total for 15 Weeks (Contact time x Weeks)	Minimum Out of Class Student Work per week	Minimum Out of Class Student Work Total for 15 Weeks (Outside Work x Weeks)	Total of instructional contact time and out of class student work
1	150 contact minutes	2250 contact minutes	0 minutes	0 minutes	2250 minutes (37.5 hours)
2	300 contact minutes	4500 contact minutes	0 minutes	0 minutes	4500 minutes (75.0 hours)
3	450 contact minutes	6750 contact minutes	0 minutes	0 minutes	6750 minutes (112.5 hours)
4	600 contact minutes	9000 contact minutes	0 minutes	0 minutes	9000 minutes (150 hours)

Independent Study:

Courses of study in which a faculty member regularly interacts and directs student outcomes with periodic contact. Minimum credit hours are determined based on faculty instructional contact minutes and student outside work time. In all such instances, such courses must match the total amount of work using the examples previously provided, 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/Practica/Field Experience/Clinical:

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 site supervisor or preceptor and directed activity/learning will occur outside of a lecture setting. A semester credit hour is awarded for a minimum of 45 hours of work. The faculty member or program director responsible for the experience 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.

Accelerated Courses:

Courses offered outside of a standard 15-week semester in which the credit hours offered are the same as standard semester courses and the content and substantive learning outcomes are the same as those in the standard semester. These courses must meet the total amount of instructional and student work time as the examples previously provided even if delivered within an accelerated time frame.

Online Courses:

Courses offered entirely online without any on-site face-to-face meetings. These courses have the same learning outcomes and substantive components of a standard lecture/seminar course with an alternate delivery method. Contact time is satisfied by several means, which can include, but is not limited to, the following: a) Regular instruction or interaction with a faculty member once a week for each week the course runs. b) Academic engagement through interactive tutorials, group discussions moderated by faculty, virtual study/project groups, engaging with class peers and computer tutorials graded and reviewed by faculty. In all such instances, these courses must meet the total amount of instructional and student work time as the examples previously provided even if delivered online or asynchronously.

Blended 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 previously provided even if delivered online or asynchronously.