



Title:	Academic Credit Hours and Levels of Courses	Type: Academic
No: AC 2000		Approval Date: 10-17-2013; Rev. 1, 4-7-2016
Responsible Office: VP for Academic Affairs & Provost		Rev. 1 Approved By: A&S AAC and Exec Comms, 11-17-15; A&S Full Faculty; 4-7-2016
Next Review: 2020		Revision No: 2; Updated 4-27-2017 for CLA governance and name change.

I. Purpose/Introduction/Rationale

Academic credit provides a means of measuring and valuing the amount of engaged learning time expected of students enrolled not only in traditional classroom settings, but also in laboratories, studios, internships/practica, independent study, thesis or dissertation research and writing, experiential learning, and blended or hybrid learning environments. Academic credit may also help to quantify the level and academic rigor of student learning.

II. Definition

In accordance with Federal regulations and for the purposes of this policy, at Rollins the semester hour is the basis for measuring, calculating, recording, and interpreting the number of credit hours accumulated by students in completing degree requirements. Factors for determining semester hours awarded in the Rollins definition include student time on task, subject competency, and achievement of learning outcomes attained by a typical student engaged in focused study for a designated period of time. Factors contributing to student time on task for purposes of awarding academic credit at Rollins may be comprised of direct and indirect instructional time (see below); course-related independent preparation, study, or additional out-of-class activities; and/or related educational experience(s).

The 1906 Carnegie Classification Unit is commonly accepted as the historical standard for determination of academic credit in higher education and informs the Rollins policy for determining and awarding academic credit.¹ This policy is also grounded in the fundamental notion that Rollins College students receive intensive direct instruction from professors in the form of: substantial individual in-class attention; extensive feedback on written work and assignments; comprehensive academic warnings that involve advisors, instructors, and the director of academic advising; and frequent one-on-one meetings with faculty instructors and advisors.

As substantiation, the median student-to-faculty ratio at Florida's state universities is 24:1, while at Rollins this ratio is 10:1. Thus, students at Rollins receive 2.4 times more attention from Rollins faculty than the average state student does from state university school faculty. Further, similar to a group of 23 peer and aspirant liberal arts colleges, Rollins delivers 73% of all undergraduate instruction via classes of 20 or fewer students; in Florida universities, typically 29% of instruction was delivered in classes with 20 or fewer students enrolled.² Using these data, 150 minutes per week of instruction at Rollins equates to at least double the same number of minutes per week at a state university, given that our student-to-faculty ratio is

¹ For additional information about the Carnegie Unit please see The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (<http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/faqs>).

² These comparisons were made using *U.S. News & World Report Best Colleges* reports, which draws its data from the Common Data Set (CDS) Initiative. The Florida state universities sample consisted of the nine Florida institutions classified as "national universities" by *U.S. News & World Report/CDS*.

less than half that of a state university, and given that more than double the percentage of our undergraduate instruction is delivered via classes of 20 or fewer students.

In practice and for the purposes of this policy, at Rollins College a direct or indirect instructional hour is defined as a 50-minute period and a course-related out-of-class activity hour is defined as a 60-minute period.

III. Procedure or Application

This policy applies to all courses that award academic credit as described in the sections that follow (e.g., any course that appears on an official transcript issued by the College) regardless of the mode of delivery including, but not limited to, traditional lecture-discussion, independent study, hybrid/online, seminar, laboratory, or other formats. Academic units and appropriate faculty governance bodies of the College are responsible for ensuring that academic credit is awarded at appropriate levels for work that meets the requirements outlined in this policy.

College of Liberal Arts (CLA) and Hamilton Holt School (Holt) Undergraduate Course Credit

Undergraduate course credit is typically determined on the basis of direct and indirect instructional time; course-related independent preparation, study, or additional out-of-class activities; related educational experience(s); and/or equivalent factors, as outlined previously. Rollins faculty expect undergraduate students to spend a minimum of two and one-half (2.5) hours (60-minute periods) per week working on course-related activities for every hour (50-minute period) of engaged learning time, an increased expectation from the commonly accepted higher education practice that students spend approximately two hours (60-minute periods) outside of direct/indirect instructional time for every hour (50-minutes) of direct/indirect instructional time.

Examples:

- For a typical four-semester-hour undergraduate course, the College schedules three (50-minute) hours of direct or indirect instructional time or the equivalent per week across a 14-week semester, a total of 42 (50-minute) hours per semester. Course learning outcomes and assignments are designed to require a typical student to spend an additional 7.5 (60-minute) hours per week, or 105 (60-minute) hours per semester, on outside preparation or course-related activities. The total engaged learning time for the semester is 147 hours. Non-laboratory courses that provide students with an additional fourth or a fifth (50-minute) hour of direct instructional time per week earn a maximum of five semester hours. Laboratory courses earn up to five or six semester hours depending on the length of the laboratories (two or four 50-minute hours). Studio and performance courses generally earn two to three semester hours.
- Academic credit awarded for short-term courses of variable length is determined proportionally based on the following calculation: each semester hour of academic credit requires a minimum of 9 (50-minute) hours of direct instructional time combined with 22.5 (60-minute) of additional preparation or course-related activities, for a total of 31.5 hours of engaged learning time.

Assurance of Standards. In each syllabus, faculty members must specify activities seen as justifying the fourth credit hour. Outside-of-class work may include additional reading and/or writing, fieldwork, research, experiential education, small group projects, etc. Course syllabi will be sampled and reviewed on a regular basis to assure compliance.

All syllabi must include the following statement and identification of additional outside-of class expectations for the fourth semester hour.

Credit Hour Statement.

Rollins College offers four-credit-hour courses that provide three (50-minute) hours of direct or indirect instructional contact. The value of four credit hours reflects the substantial individual attention each student receives from instructors as well as additional out-of-class activities. Faculty require that students undertake at least 7.5 (60-minute) hours of outside work per week, averaged over the course's duration and equaling two and one-half (2.5) 60-minute hours of outside work for every one (50 minute) hour of scheduled class time. In this course, the additional outside-of-class expectations are [please fill in what this course requires, e.g., additional reading and/or writing, fieldwork, research, experiential education, small group projects, etc.]:

New faculty will be informed during their Orientation that Rollins offers four-credit-hour courses and that faculty expectations should be commensurate with this expectation. The Curriculum Committee of the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) will include review of this expectation before new courses are approved.

Hamilton Holt School (Holt) Evening Graduate Program Course Credit

Holt graduate course credit is typically determined on the basis of direct instructional time; course-related independent preparation, study, or additional activities; related educational experience(s); and/or equivalent factors, as outlined previously. Holt graduate students are expected to spend a minimum of three to four hours (60-minute) hours per week working on course-related activities for every 50-minute hour of direct or indirect instructional time. Course credit in Holt graduate courses may be set at three or four semester hours of per course dependent upon the level of course-related activities expected outside of direct instructional time. In programs where a typical course earns four semester hours of credit, longer, deeper, or experiential learning is required through additional projects, reading of the literature of the discipline, writing, training, or professional publications (*see Appendix I: MHR Credit Hour Justification, MLS Credit Hour Justification*).

Examples:

- For a typical three-semester-hour graduate level course, the College schedules three (50-minute) hours of direct instructional time per week or the equivalent across a 14-week semester, a total of 42 (50-minute) hours per semester. Course learning outcomes and assignments are designed to require a typical student to spend an additional nine (60-minute) hours per week, or 126 (60-minute) hours, per semester, in course-related activities and/or preparation. The total engaged learning time for the semester is 168 hours.
- For a typical four-semester-hour graduate course, the College schedules three (50-minute) hours of direct or indirect instructional time or the equivalent per week across a 14-week semester, a total of 42 (50-minute) hours per semester. Course learning outcomes and assignments are designed to require a typical student to spend an additional 12 (60-minute) hours per week, or 168 (60-minute) hours per semester, in course-related activities and/or preparation. The total engaged learning time for the semester is 200 hours.
- Academic credit awarded for short-term courses of variable length at the graduate level is determined proportionally based on the following calculation: each semester hour of academic credit requires a minimum of 9 (50-minute) hours of direct or indirect instructional time combined with 27 (60-minute) hours of course-related activities and/or preparation, for a total of 36 hours of engaged learning time per hour.

Validation of factors contributing to and calculation of academic credit (semester hours) awarded and levels of courses are determined by academic departments. The Curriculum Committee of the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) will include review of this expectation before new courses are approved.

Crummer Graduate School of Business (Crummer) Course Credit

Crummer graduate course credit is typically determined on the basis of direct instructional time; course-related independent preparation, study, or additional activities; related educational experience(s); and/or equivalent factors, as outlined previously. Crummer graduate students are expected to spend a minimum of three hours per week working on course-related activities for every hour of direct instructional time. Course credit in Crummer's graduate courses is typically set at three semester hours of per course.

Examples:

- **Early Advantage and Professional MBA** students are scheduled for 180 minutes of direct instructional time, or the equivalent, per week across a 12-week semester, a total of 36 hours per semester. Course learning outcomes and assignments are designed to require a typical student to spend an additional 9 hours per week, or 108 hours, per semester, in course-related activities and/or preparation. The total engaged learning time for a typical 12-week offering is 144 hours.
- **Executive MBA** students are scheduled for 240 minutes of direct instructional time, or the equivalent, per week across an 8-week session, a total of 32 hours per session. Course learning outcomes, on-line sessions and assignments are designed to require a typical student to spend an additional 12 hours per week, or 96 hours, per semester, in course-related activities and/or preparation. The total engaged learning time for a typical 8 week offering is 128 hours.
- **Executive Doctorate in Business Administration** students are scheduled for 160 minutes of direct instructional time, or the equivalent, per week across an 12-week session, a total of 32 hours per semester. Course learning outcomes, on-line sessions, meetings with advisors, and assignments are designed to require a typical student to spend an additional 12 hours per week, or 144 hours, per semester, in course-related activities and/or preparation. The total engaged learning time for a 12-week offering is 176 hours.

Validation of factors contributing to and calculation of academic credit (semester hours) awarded and levels of courses are determined by academic departments. Proposals are then reviewed and approved by the appropriate faculty governance bodies.

IV. Related Policies or Applicable Publications

Faculty Handbook, All Faculty of Rollins College, Section II Policies and Procedures, Policy on Academic Credit Hours and Levels of Courses

V. Appendices/Supplemental Materials

From: Don Rogers
Sent: Tuesday, October 01, 2013 10:42 AM
To: Toni Holbrook
Subject: MLS Clarification re: Credit Hours

When Holt graduate programs were asked to go to 4 credit hours from 3, we agreed. We did not initiate the change.

At the time we agreed to increase the time spent out-of-class to justify the additional credit hour. We did so by adding projects and additional material. Strategic HRM requires students to write & submit an article for publication. Recruiting, Selection, & Retention and Employment & Labor Law require significantly more outside reading of original documents (and legal cases). Training & Development required students to actually conduct a training program for their organization. Organization Change & Development required a large scale OD project. Etc.

We have continued the policy of longer, deeper engagement in HR content material & experiential learning. We use this in advertising, promotion, and external reviews as a differentiating factor.

The move to 4 credit hours also provides a financial benefit to our students. Many of our students from large companies receive tuition remission based on the number of credit hours. A four credit hour course provides remission of a larger percentage of the total per course tuition (a fact noted by some of our students from Disney, Florida Health, and OIA).

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From: Patricia Lancaster
Sent: Monday, October 28, 2013 2:32 PM
To: Toni Holbrook
Subject: MLS Clarification re: Credit Hours

The MLS program adopted the 4-credit course standard when the undergraduate program moved to a system that awarded 4 credits for a regular course. I believe that it was, at the time, designated a Rollins Unit (RU). The expectation was that courses would require students to do a significant amount of independent work each week in addition to the 150 minutes that they spent in class.

Prior to the change, the credit for an MLS course was 3.3 semester hours. The MLS faculty reviewed course requirements, especially in the six core courses to make certain that the amount of work required outside of class was sufficient to justify awarding 4 credits.

Because most courses are taught as seminars, it is virtually impossible for a student to succeed without spending three or more hours outside of class for every hour in class. In contrast to courses taught in lecture style with learning evaluated through tests, the learning experience in MLS courses is based on the students' ability to contribute meaningfully to the discussion of the assigned readings. Both the reading and writing assignments in MLS courses require significant time outside of class. In most courses students read at least one book a week as well as supplementary critical and analytical texts, usually made available by the professor using Blackboard courseware.

Students in the first core course, *Human Order*, write one paper each week and a longer paper at the end of the term. In the second core course, *Religion and Western Culture*, they write several short papers and one long research paper. The research project is monitored from note-taking, through outline and draft form, to final draft. The emphasis on writing and research in these first two courses prepares students for the work they will do in subsequent courses and in the thesis project.

Often students are required to present written and oral reports to the class two or three times each semester. Thus, a student in the third core course, *Origins of Modernity*, will read at least one book each week, make at least two presentations in class, write two or three short papers on subjects other than their presentation topics, and write one longer paper.

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CREDIT HOURS

Policy Statement

As part of its review of an institution seeking initial or continuing accreditation, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) conducts reviews of an institution's assignment of credit hours. Academic credit has provided the basis for measuring the amount of engaged learning time expected of a typical student enrolled not only in traditional classroom settings but also laboratories, studios, internships and other experiential learning, and distance and correspondence education. Students, institutions, employers, and others rely on the common currency of academic credit to support a wide range of activities, including the transfer of students from one institution to another. For several decades, the federal government has relied on credits as a measure of student academic engagement as a basis of awarding financial aid.

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to institutions and evaluation committees on the Commission's expectations regarding credits and to set forth the federal regulations regarding the award of credit.

Federal Definition of the Credit Hour. For purposes of the application of this policy and in accord with federal regulations, 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

1. Not less than 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 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 outlined in item 1 above 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.

Guidelines for Flexibility in Interpretation. An institution is responsible for determining the credit hours awarded for coursework in its programs in accordance with the definition of a credit hour for Federal program purposes. The definition does provide some flexibility for institutions in determining the appropriate amount of credit hours for student coursework.

- The institution determines the amount of credit for student work.
- A credit hour is expected to be a reasonable approximation of a minimum amount of student work in a Carnegie unit in accordance with commonly accepted practice in higher education.
- The credit hour definition is a minimum standard that does not restrict an institution from setting a higher standard that requires more student work per credit hour.
- The definition does not dictate particular amounts of classroom time versus out-of-class student work.
- In determining the amount of work the institution's learning outcomes will entail, the institution may take into consideration alternative delivery methods, measurements of student work, academic calendars, disciplines, and degree levels.

- To the extent an institution believes that complying with the Federal definition of a credit hour would not be appropriate for academic and other institutional needs, it may adopt a separate measure for those purposes.
- Credits may be awarded on the basis of documentation of the amount of work a typical student is expected to complete within a specified amount of academically engaged time, or on the basis of documented student learning calibrated to that amount of academically engaged time for a typical student.

The intent of the above flexibility as provided by Federal guidance is to recognize the differences across institutions, fields of study, types of coursework, and delivery methods, while providing a consistent measure of student work for purposes of Federal programs.

Commission Obligations in the Review of the Credit Hour. The Commission reviews the institution's (1) policies and procedures for determining credit hours, including clock to credit hour conversions, that the institution awards for coursework and (2) the application of its policies and procedures to its programs and coursework. Following the evaluation, the Commission is obligated to make a reasonable determination regarding the institution's assignment of credit hours and whether it conforms to commonly accepted practice in higher education. In doing so, the Commission may use sampling or other methods in its evaluation. As with the identification of non-compliance with other standards, the Commission is obligated to take action in accord with that used in relation to other standards of non-compliance. If the Commission finds systemic non-compliance with this policy or significant non-compliance regarding one or more programs at the institution, the Commission is required to notify the U.S. Secretary of Education.

Procedures

1. **Institutions preparing Compliance Certifications in anticipation of reaffirmation of accreditation (accredited institutions) or initial membership (candidate institutions).**
The institution will be required to document compliance with Federal Requirement 4.9 (Definition of Credit Hours) as relates to credit hours. If the Board imposes a public sanction or takes adverse action in part or in full for continuing non-compliance with FR 4.9 as applies to the credit hour, the Commission will notify the U.S. Secretary of Education. The institution will be informed of such action.
2. **Institutions undergoing substantive change review related to an academic program review in anticipation of continuing accreditation.**
The institution will be required to address Federal Requirement 4.9 (Definition of Credit Hours) as part of its prospectus (program expansion) or application (degree level change). Following review of the prospectus, Commission staff will refer the substantive change case to the Commission's Board of Trustees if there is evidence of non-compliance with FR 4.9. For substantive change cases involving level change, the application will automatically be forwarded to the Commission's Board of Trustees.

As a result of Board review that may include a site visit, if the Board imposes a public sanction or takes adverse action in part or in full for continuing non-compliance with FR 4.9 as applies to the credit hour, the Commission will notify the U.S. Secretary of Education. The institution will be informed of such action.

3. The Commission is not responsible for reviewing every course and related documentation of learning outcomes; rather, the Commission will review the policies and procedures that the institution uses to assign credit hours, with the application verified by a sampling of the institution's degree and nondegree programs to include a variety of academic activities, disciplines, and delivery modes. The review process for sampling encompasses a varied sample of the institution's degree and nondegree programs in terms of academic discipline, level, delivery modes, and types of academic activities. In reviewing academic activities other than classroom or direct faculty instruction accompanied by out-of-class work, the Commission will determine whether an institution's processes and procedures result in the establishment of reasonable equivalencies for

the amount of academic work described in paragraph one of the credit hour definition within the framework of acceptable institutional practices at comparable institutions of higher education for similar programs.

4. The Commission will notify the U.S. Secretary of Education of its findings of systemic non-compliance with this policy or FR 4.9 or of significant non-compliance regarding one or more programs at the institution only after the Commission follows its review process that includes notification to the institution of non-compliance and a reasonable time period for the institution to respond to the citations and provide documentation of compliance.
5. Comprehensive Standard 3.4.8 reads as follows: "The institution employs sound and acceptable practices for determining the amount and level of credit awarded for courses, regardless of format or mode of delivery." It is to be reviewed in conjunction with FR 4.9.

Document History

Approved: Board of Trustees, June 2011

Edited: January 2012

VI. Rationale for Revision

10-17-2013: Alignment with 2012 revisions to Federal and regional accreditation requirements.

11-17-2015: General revisions to philosophy and assurance of standards systems for the fourth semester hour.

4-27-2017: Updated for CLA governance and name changes.