Rice University Policy No. ______
Area Policy for the Division of Academic Affairs

Policy on Academic Credit Hours

General Policy

It is the policy of Rice University that the amount of credit that is to be awarded depends on the course workload, amount of contact time with the instructor and the amount of study time. A semester course typically requires two units of study time (e.g. preparation and reflection time) by the student for every one unit of contact time (synchronous or asynchronous) with the instructor. The ratio of contact time versus study time (i.e., preparation/reflection time) may vary depending on the type of course and method of instruction.

This policy applies to all “for credit” undergraduate and graduate courses and related activities, including lectures, seminars, labs, combination lecture/labs, studios, independent studies, internships, externships, and online/distance education, whether occurring on campus, online, or off campus. These activities include various methods of instruction (e.g., synchronous vs. asynchronous), pedagogies (e.g., flipped, hybrid), and schedules (e.g., full semesters, summer sessions, condensed semesters, week-long seminars).

A course’s workload and hence its credit hours should be appropriate to the stated learning outcomes. Oversight of determination of credit hours rest, as appropriate with the department, dean, provost, or Faculty Senate.

Policy Implementation

The Office of the Registrar will maintain guidelines for determining a course’s semester credit hours. The Provost has final authority to determine compliance with this policy.

Definitions

Contact Time: student engagement in scheduled instruction with instructor (synchronous or asynchronous). The typical unit of contact time is the contact hour (50 minutes).

Study Time: student engagement outside of contact time (e.g., preparation and reflection). The typical unit of study time is the study hour (50 minutes).

Course Workload: the sum of contact time and study time.

Instructor: the Instructor of Record and Instructor’s designees (e.g. TAs, guest lecturers, substitutes, etc.)
Approved by the Faculty Senate, November 18, 2015

**Semester Credit Hour:** the amount of credit awarded for successful completion of 2100 minutes of student engagement over a period of not less than fourteen weeks. Typically this is defined as one contact hour (50 minutes) and two study hours (100 minutes) per week. This unit of measure may be adjusted proportionately to reflect modified academic calendars, schedules, types of courses and/or methods of instruction.

**Types of Courses:** the format in which the course is taught. This includes, but is not limited to: lectures, seminars, labs, studios, independent studies, internships, externships, etc.

**Methods of Instruction:** the way in which the course is delivered to a student. This includes, but is not limited to: traditional face-to-face, online/distance, hybrid, etc.

**Cross References to Related Policies**
Policy on Distance and Online Education, Technologies and Pedagogies (under development)
Faculty Senate Procedures for Creation of Online Degree Programs (under development)
Faculty Senate Procedures for Creating, Administering, and Eliminating Majors and Minors
Faculty Senate Policy on Creating and Changing Graduate Programs

**Responsible Officer**
Provost

**Key Offices to Contact Regarding the Policy and its Implementation**
Dean of Undergraduates
Dean of Graduate Studies
Office of the Registrar
Office of the Provost

**Date of Initial Policy**

**Signature Line**

**Links**
Guideline for Determining a Course’s Semester Credit Hours - Office of the Registrar

**Action Item**
Documentation of the guidelines for determining a course’s semester credit hours (by the OTR)