

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 28, 2015

TO:: Deans, Department Chairs, School Directors and Faculty

FROM: Gary Perry, Provost and
Vice President for Academic Affairs 

SUBJECT: **Policy and Procedures: Definitions of a Credit Hour**
(Supersedes all prior memoranda and policies)

BACKGROUND: The United States Department of Education as well as the University's regional accrediting agency, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools-Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), requires institutions of higher education to define the credit they will award for student work, and accrediting agencies are required to review the institution's policies and procedures for determining and applying its credit hour policies. In addition, as adopted by the Florida Board of Governors, the Florida Department of Education defines College Credit as:

"The type of credit assigned to courses or course equivalent learning that is part of an organized and specified program leading to a graduate, baccalaureate, or associate degree. One (1) college credit is based on the learning expected from the equivalent of fifteen (15) fifty-minute periods of classroom instruction; with credits for such things as laboratory instruction, internships, and clinical experience determined by the institution based on the proportion of direct instruction to the laboratory exercise, internship hours, or clinical practice hours."

At Florida Atlantic University, and at most institutions of higher education, it has been the common understanding that students will complete a minimum of two hours of course work outside of the classroom for every one hour of credit in the classroom.

The United States Department of Education has recently provided guidance on the definition of a credit hour for institutions and accrediting bodies for programs at for-profit, non-profit, and public institutions of higher education. To comply with this regulation, institutions are required to define the credit they will award for student work, and accrediting agencies are required to review the institution's policies and procedures for determining and applying its credit hour policies.

PURPOSE: Academic credit has provided the basis for measuring the amount of engaged learning time expected of a typical student enrolled not only in the traditional classroom settings but also in laboratories, internships, studios, clinical, field work and other experimental learning and in eLearning

education. Credit hours are the common currency for academic credit used by students and universities to calculate, record, interpret the number of credits students earn to fulfill degree, certificate, and other similar academic requirements. The credit hour unit is used to measure student course work, and is founded on the important concept of student achievement and learning outcomes. The value of a credit hour can be determined by contact time, the education experience, and out-of-class preparation by the student.

DEFINITION: A credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement, for the various modes of instruction offered at Florida Atlantic University, in accordance with the following guidelines:

1. For traditionally delivered courses, not less than one (1) hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction each week for fifteen (15) weeks per Fall or Spring semester, and a minimum of two (2) hours of out-of-class student work for each credit hour. Equivalent time and effort is required for Summer semesters which may be offered over a shortened time frame. ELearning, hybrid, shortened, intensive format courses and other non-traditional modes of delivery will demonstrate equivalent time and effort.
2. At least an equivalent amount of work outlined in item 1 above for other academic activities, including laboratory courses, internships, clinical practice, field work, studio work, and other academic work leading to award of credit.
3. The credit for courses in professional degree programs will be determined in accord with the appropriate accrediting agency. For example, the Charles E. Schmidt College of Medicine determines successful accomplishment of course objectives in accordance with the accreditation standards of the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME).
4. In determining the amount of coursework to achieve learning competencies and outcomes, the university will take into account and consideration alternative delivery methods, measurements of student work, academic calendars, disciplines, and degree levels.

PROCEDURES:

1. Faculty develop the syllabi for each of their courses, following the Provost's Guidelines for Course Syllabi and any additional guidelines provided by the department/school and college, and the credit hour guidelines in this memorandum.
 - a. The course syllabus must document not less than one hour (50 minutes) of in-class instruction each week for fifteen weeks per semester for each credit hour.
 - b. The course syllabus must document an average of not less than two hours of out-of-class assignments each week for fifteen weeks per semester, or adjusted equivalent for other delivery modes, for each credit hour. Out-of-class assignments may include readings, research, homework assignments, research papers, interactive tutorials, study groups, or other activities appropriate for the course.

2. Each semester, the chair/director will certify to the Dean that the syllabi being used that semester follow the Provost's Guidelines for Course Syllabi and the definition of a credit hour policy outlined in this memorandum.
3. College Curriculum Committees, and the University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee and Graduate Curriculum Committee, will review new and revised courses for conformity to these guidelines and commonly accepted practices in higher education.

cc: Diane Alperin, Vice Provost, Academic Affairs
Russell Ivy, Associate Provost, Programs and Assessment