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| UT Health Science Center: AA101-H Credit Hour Policy | |
| Version 2 | Publication Date: 02/06/2026 |

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| No./Title: AA101 – CREDIT HOUR POLICY | Resp. Office: ACADEMIC AFFAIRS Approval Body: CASA | Effective Date: 05/05/2012 |
| Category: Students | Last Review: 01/12/2026 | Next Review: 01/12/2029 |
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| Related Policies: | Withdrawal Policy Attendance Policy | |

POLICY

At the University of Tennessee Health Science Center, each college must establish a formal review process for determining the appropriate number of credit hours for each of its course offerings, aligning their processes with federal guidelines to assure that assigned value can be roughly equated to the amount of student work required to achieve an intended learning outcome.

POLICY RATIONALE AND PROCEDURE

For each course in each college, the process must ensure that the amount and level of credit awarded for each undergraduate and graduate course is compatible with sound academic practices and appropriate for their field, based on the number of formal contact hours for each offering as well as the number of hours of individual and group activities performed outside of the classroom setting. For courses taught through distance education formats, the review process must ensure that the anticipated learning outcomes are equivalent to the outcomes for the same or similar courses delivered through traditional formats. Where appropriate, the colleges may adopt the policies and processes for assigning credit hours recommended by their discipline-specific professional organizations so long as these processes meet or exceed the minimum requirements indicated below. In the absence of college- or program-specific guidelines, the following will apply:

1. Credit Hour calculations for each course must be normalized relative to the required contact hours in lecture, lab and/or clinic. For these purposes, the amount of work required in order to reasonably attain the intended learning outcomes (as verified by evidence of student achievement) would require not less than one hour of direct faculty instruction plus 2 additional hours of out-of-class student activity each week for approximately 15 weeks. Thus, a traditional 3 semester-credit-hour course using a face-to-face lecture format would involve approximately 45 contact hours as well as 90 or more hours of additional student effort over the course of the term. If a course is laboratory- or seminar-based a pro-rata calculation is utilized. For example, a laboratory- based course normally requires at least two to three 50-minute periods for 15 weeks to be considered a 1 credit course while a seminar-based course requires two 50-minute periods for 15 weeks to be considered a 1 credit course. For purposes of this policy, laboratory-based

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courses are defined as either courses with activities designed to improve student skills (e.g. simulation, dental material preparation, compounding/drug formulation, clinical measurement/procedure practice, etc.) or courses to enhance student knowledge (team-based learning activities, anatomical dissection, etc.)

2. A clinic-based/experiential-based course normally requires 40 hours of work (for example 40 hours in a hospital, clinical office or pharmacy setting) to be considered 1 credit. The number of hours in laboratory or clinic required per credit hour may vary depending upon the nature of the activity, extent of student engagement, and expected learning outcomes.
3. Courses offered during an abbreviated time frame require the same number of contact hours as those delivered during a standard term that are of comparable credit hours and means of delivery.
4. For terms longer than 15 weeks, credit hours for a given course should be increased commensurate with the increase in contact hours and/or expected learning outcomes using the general guidelines described herein.
5. Credit for courses that have a combination of activities (e.g. lecture, lab and/or clinic) will be determined using the general guidelines in 1 and 2 above, adjusted for the relative proportions of the different types of experiences and settings.
6. Courses taught in a non-traditional manner, such as online, may be assigned credit hours based on learning outcomes rather than on standard contact hour requirements. In such cases, courses in which the learning outcomes are documented by direct assessment of student learning and/or by demonstrating that the outcomes are equivalent to those in a traditionally delivered course would receive credit comparable to a traditional lecture-based course.
7. Courses taught through combined delivery modalities (hybrid courses), using both face-to-face instruction and asynchronous on-line instruction, may be assigned credit hours based on learning outcomes rather than on standard contact hour requirements as above.

Types of activities/student work outside of formal instructional time that might also be factored into credit hour calculations include:

1. Clinical rounds, seminars, completion of on-line tutorials/how-to videos, participation in small group activities, virtual labs/simulations, participation in required live or online discussion (e.g. review sessions, case discussions), or other such activities delivered live or by electronic media.
2. Field experience, cultural events, group projects, research and information literacy, service learning and civic engagement, individual or group conferences, oral presentations or other activities may also be considered.
3. Activities that are counted for credit must be **required** and **structured**. Examples of activities that do not count toward formal instructional time: readings, homework and

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other intrinsic preparation or activities (e.g. practicing calculations, clinical procedures, etc.).

The number of meeting hours (and credit) for a clinical activity may vary from component to component depending upon the nature of the activity, extent of student engagement, and expected learning/training outcomes. In all cases, however, colleges must be able to justify the assigned credit based on specific activities designed to meet learning outcomes.

Special considerations for assigning credit to on-line courses include:

1. Online and hybrid courses must meet the same course credit requirements as face-to-face courses.
2. By itself, logging on to online courses does not constitute active student learning. Students must demonstrate active engagement in online courses. Participate in discussion boards, chats, etc. are considered relevant for assigning credit hours.

RELATED POLICIES AND INTERPRETATION

This policy addresses the federal definition of credit hours as required by Section 4.9 in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges compliance requirements <https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/Credit-Hours.pdf>

APPROVAL HISTORY

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Revision: April 2, 2013, Committee on Academic and Student Affairs (CASA)

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Chancellor Approved: May 23, 2018

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Approved: January 6, 2026, Chief Academic Officer