

LMU Definition of Credit Hour Policy

Purpose of the Policy:

The SACSCOC (2024) *Resource Manual for The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement* states, “Effective academic policies related to an institution’s educational programs are developed in concert with the appropriate input and participation of the constituencies affected by the policies, conform to commonly accepted practices and policies in higher education, accurately portray the institution’s programs and services, and are disseminated to those benefiting from such practices. These academic policies lead to a teaching and learning environment that enhances the achievement of student outcomes and success.

To advance learning, all coursework taken for academic credit has rigor, substance, and standards connected to established learning outcomes. To protect the integrity of degrees offered, the institution is responsible for the quality of all coursework transcribed as if it were credit earned from the institution” (p. 92).

SACSCOC (2024) Standard 10.7 states, “The institution publishes and implements policies for determining the amount and level of credit awarded for its courses, regardless of format or mode of delivery. These policies require oversight by persons academically qualified to make the necessary judgments. In educational programs not based on credit hours (e.g., direct assessment programs), the institution has a sound means for determining credit equivalencies. (*Policies for awarding credit*)” (p. 102).

This policy is designed to ensure compliance with SACSCOC Standard 10.7 of *The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement* as well as to ensure that Lincoln Memorial University, and each of its academic programs, operates within its mission and consistent with good practice in higher education. LMU’s mission specifically expresses a “commitment to quality instruction at every level.” Institutional Goal #4 declares that the University seeks to “Provide quality educational experiences that have their foundation in the liberal arts and professional studies, promote high personal standards, and produce graduates with relevant career skills to compete in an ever-changing, increasingly global society.” Strategic Goal #1 is to “Assess and enhance academic quality.”

This policy is intended to document existing procedures and practices for determining credit hours awarded for all courses and programs, regardless of degree level or mode of delivery, at Lincoln Memorial University.

Policy

Lincoln Memorial University operates on the semester system and has adopted the federal definition of a credit hour. In accordance with federal regulations, Lincoln Memorial University defines a credit hour as 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 the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time, or;
2. At least an equivalent amount of work as outlined in item one above for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practica, clinical experiences, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

Note: Consistent with federal policy, “hour” within this document refers to a 50-minute unit.

This credit hour policy applies to all programs at all academic degree levels (graduate, professional, and undergraduate) awarding academic credit (i.e., any course that appears on an official transcript issued by the University) regardless of the mode of delivery including, but not limited to, online, blended, lecture, seminar, and laboratory. Credits are awarded on the basis of the amount of work a typical student is expected to complete in a traditional classroom-based course delivery system over a traditional semester. Academic Schools and Colleges within the University are responsible for ensuring that credit hours are awarded only for work that meets the requirements outlined in this policy.

Note: For professional programs accredited by the Department of Education-recognized accrediting agencies, the University follows generally accepted practices for determining credit hours established by the recognized programmatic accrediting agency.

Procedures

The expectation of student engagement/work necessary to attain the expected learning outcomes for each course credit is equivalent for all formats of a course whether it is fully online, a blend of face-to-face contact with some content delivered by electronic means, or one delivered in lecture or seminar format. Courses that have less structured classroom schedules, such as research seminars, independent studies, directed studies, internships, practica, studio work, or any other academic work leading to the award of credit hours, at a minimum, should have clearly stated learning objectives and expected outcomes and workload expectations that meet the standards set forth above. Regardless of the mode of course delivery, the amount of student effort/work required to earn credit must be consistent with the terms of this definition.

LMU adheres to the Carnegie unit for contact time (750 minutes for each credit awarded). The Academic Calendar typically has a minimum of 750 minutes of instruction per credit hour. During the fall and spring semesters, the standard meeting times for courses are a 50-minute, Monday/Wednesday/Friday schedule and a 75-minute, Tuesday/Thursday schedule. For the standard three-credit hour course, 2,250 minutes of instruction are required. The calendar is normally planned with a minimum of 43 Monday/Wednesday/Friday meeting days (2,150 minutes) and 29 Tuesday/Thursday meeting days (2,175 minutes). This policy accommodates a mandatory examination period to be counted in the minutes of instruction. The University typically requires final examinations that add additional minutes of instruction for every planned term in the Academic Calendar. Final examinations for three-credit hour courses are typically scheduled for a minimum of 120 minutes (longer examinations may be necessary for some courses). Therefore, the standard three-credit hour course with Monday/Wednesday/Friday meeting days typically consists of a minimum of 2,270 minutes of contact time. Similarly, the standard three-credit hour course with Tuesday/Thursday meeting days typically consists of a minimum of 2,295 minutes of contact time. The calculation for summer sessions follows this same standard of 750 contact minutes for each unit of credit, which means longer class meeting times over the course of the summer terms. Credit hours may be awarded based on the amount of documented work a typical student is expected to complete within a specified amount of academically engaged time (typically a semester) or based on documented student learning that is calibrated to the amount of academically engaged time for a typical student.

The University maintains the official Academic Calendar on its website:

<https://www.lmunet.edu/academics/academic-calendar>. In addition, Academic Calendars are published in both the printed and online versions of the *Undergraduate Catalog*, the *Graduate Programs Catalog*, and program-specific handbooks.

The collective faculty members of each College or School within the University are charged with following the policy on credit hours in their review and approval of all courses and for certifying that the expected student learning for the course meets the University's credit hour standards. The determination of credit hours is made when a new course or a revision to an existing course is proposed. Each proposed course is examined for contact time as well as for assignments and evaluation mechanisms. Following Academic College/School review, the University's Academic Council is responsible for approving the amount and level of credit assigned to each course and program.

When a course may be taken for variable credit, the number of credits to be taken must be listed at the time of registration and cannot be changed during the semester.

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Academic Council Approval:

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03-21-2024

References

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). (2024). *The principles of accreditation: Foundations for quality enhancement*. <https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2024/02/2024-POA-Resource-Manual.pdf>