

Credit Hour Definition

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Consistent with the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) Program Integrity rules published October 29, 2010, Northeastern 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 not less than:

- (1) One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week for approximately 15 weeks for one semester 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 in paragraph (1) of this definition 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.”

For traditional lecture, seminar, special topics, contract, grant, video conferencing, and temporary courses, a one credit hour class meets a minimum of 50 minutes per week, and includes 100 minutes of out of class student work totaling 150 minutes per week over the course of the semester. For example, a three credit hour class meets 150 minutes per week and requires 300 minutes out of class student work per week.

Courses such as science laboratories, music ensembles, applied music, and art studios, typically meet a minimum of 100 minutes per credit hour per week.

Thesis, master’s project, independent study, tutored study, internship, practicum, fieldwork, and other individualized instruction courses must include: a) regularly scheduled contact, evaluation, and/or assessment with faculty, b) appropriate site experience and/or project activities, and c) independent work by the student, the combination of which must be equivalent to the amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of the DOE definition.

Credit hour criteria for student teaching, clinical, or practicum experience are determined in accordance with recommendations of a program’s specific accrediting body or applicable state regulation. In the event that the specific accrediting body or the applicable state regulation does not meet Northeastern’s credit hour policy minima, the program must obtain approval for an exemption from the University’s credit hour policy from the Faculty Council on Academic Affairs and the Provost.

Northeastern’s credit hour policy applies to all courses that award academic credit, regardless of the location of the course or the mode of delivery (e.g., hybrid, blended, online, etc.). Courses offered over a different period of time (i.e., half-semester courses, summer session courses, etc.) will require the same amount of classroom and out of class student work per credit hour as required of semester-long courses.

Curriculum committees and administration are charged with upholding the credit hour policy in their review and approval of all courses.