



TITLE: Semester/Credit Hour Policy and Compliance

PURPOSE: To define SUNY New Paltz's policy on the assignment of semester/credit hours and the method by which the campus's compliance is assured.

State University of New York – Credit/Contact Hour Policy

SUNY New Paltz's calculations of credit hour follow the State University of New York (SUNY) [policy](#), which is applicable to its Community Colleges and State-Operated Campuses. The policy is below:

Summary

The State University of New York (University), like most American higher education, has adopted a variant of the traditional "Carnegie Unit" as a measure of academic credit. This unit is known in the University by the familiar term, "semester credit hour," and is the primary academic measure by which progress toward a degree is gauged. It is recognized that such a unit measures only a part, albeit a major part, of a composite learning experience, based upon formally structured and informal interactions among faculty and students.

Policy

Over the past several years, for academic purposes, some faculties have allowed modifications of the classical Carnegie definition of a semester credit hour, which has stipulated that one semester credit hour be awarded for fifteen sessions of 50 minutes duration in classroom lecture-recitation each requiring two hours of outside preparation by the student. Today there are many types of educational experiences with which credit hour assignment may properly be associated.

In the interest of accurate academic measurement and cross-campus comparability, the following definitions and practices apply in controlling the relationship between contact and credit hours. These definitions constitute a formalization of current and historic policy in order to ensure consistency throughout the University. Courses may be composed of any combination of elements described, such as a lecture course which also has required laboratory periods or a lecture course having an additional requirement for supervised independent study or tutorial activity.

A semester credit hour is normally granted for satisfactory completion of one 50-minute session of classroom instruction per week for a semester of not less than fifteen weeks. This basic measure may be adjusted proportionately to reflect modified academic calendars and formats of study.

New York State Education Department

All credit-bearing degree and certificate programs at SUNY New Paltz are approved by the New York State Education Department (NYSED). Calculation of credit hours for these programs follow NYSED guidelines, which are consistent with the State University of New York's adoption of the Carnegie definition of a credit hour.

Codes, Rules and Regulations of the State of New York, Title 8 – Education Department, Chapter II – Regulations of the Commissioner, Subchapter A – Higher and Professional Regulations, Part 50 – General, Section 50.1 (o) stipulates the following: *Semester hour means a credit, point, or other unit granted for the satisfactory completion of a course which requires at least 15 hours (of 50 minutes each) of instruction and at least 30 hours of supplementary assignments, except as otherwise provided pursuant to section 52.2(c)(4) of this Subchapter. This basic measure shall be adjusted proportionately to translate the value of other academic calendars and formats of study in relation to the credit granted for study during the two semesters that comprise an academic year.*

Section 52.2(c)(4) stipulates: *A semester hour of credit may be granted by an institution for fewer hours of instruction and study than those specified in subdivision (o) of section 50.1 of this Subchapter only: (i) when approved by the commissioner as part of a registered curriculum; (ii) when the commissioner has granted prior approval for the institution to maintain a statement of academic standards that defines the considerations which establish equivalency of instruction and study and such statement has been adopted by the institution; or (iii) in the event of a temporary closure of an institution by the State or local government as a result of a disaster, as defined in section 50.1(w) of this Title, when the commissioner has granted approval for the institution to maintain a statement of academic standards that defines the considerations which establish equivalency of instruction and study and such statement has been adopted by the institution.*

New York State Education Department's Policies Regarding Time on Task in Online Education

SUNY New Paltz adheres to the New York State Education Department's Office of College and University Evaluation policies on "[Determining Time on Task in Online Education](#)," which is excerpted below.

Time on task is the total learning time spent by a student in a college course, including instructional time as well as time spent studying and completing course assignments (e.g., reading, research, writing, individual and group projects.) Regardless of the delivery method or the particular learning activities employed, the amount of learning time in any college course should meet the requirements of Commissioner's Regulation Section 50.1 (o), a total of 45 hours for one semester credit (in conventional classroom education this breaks down into 15 hours of instruction plus 30 hours of student work/study out of class).

"Instruction" is provided differently in online courses than in classroom-based courses. Despite the difference in methodology and activities, however, the total "learning time" online can usually be counted. Rather than try to distinguish between "in-class" and "outside-class" time for students, the faculty member developing and/or teaching the online course should calculate how much time a student doing satisfactory work would take to complete the work of the course, including:

- *reading course presentations/"lectures"*
- *reading other materials*

- *participation in online discussions*
- *doing research*
- *writing papers or other assignments*
- *completing all other assignments (e.g., projects)*

The total time spent on these tasks should be roughly equal to that spent on comparable tasks in a classroom-based course. Time spent downloading or uploading documents, troubleshooting technical problems, or in chat rooms (unless on course assignments such as group projects) should not be counted.

In determining the time on task for an online course, useful information includes

- *the course objectives and expected learning outcomes*
- *the list of topics in the course outline or syllabus; the textbooks, additional readings, and related education materials (such as software) required*
- *statements in course materials informing students of the time and/or effort they are expected to devote to the course or individual parts of it*
- *a listing of the pedagogical tools to be used in the online course, how each will be used, and the expectations for participation (e.g., in an online discussion, how many substantive postings will be required of a student for each week or unit?)*

Theoretically, one should be able to measure any course, regardless of delivery method, by the description of content covered. However, this is difficult for anyone other than the course developer or instructor to determine accurately, since the same statement of content (in a course outline or syllabus) can represent many different levels of breadth and depth in the treatment of that content and require widely varying amounts of time.

New Paltz Guidelines and Procedures

All semester/credit hours awarded by SUNY New Paltz will conform to the definitions listed above. Therefore, all units of credit awarded will conform to the SUNY and NYSED definitions. These guidelines are also in compliance with policies set forth by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

SUNY New Paltz generally follows a semester system with fall and spring semesters consisting of a minimum of 15 weeks, which includes one week for exams. Summer terms are typically less than 15 weeks but adhere to the policy in terms of meeting time and the amount of work required. Terms for certain academic programs (for example, compressed summer schedules) have been adjusted but nonetheless adhere to the policy in terms of the amount of work required. The winter session occurs over a 21-day period of instruction. Time on task and instructional activities are designed to replicate the summer. Only select courses are approved for offering in the winter session.

Faculty and program administrators are responsible for developing, maintaining, and evaluating the curriculum within an academic program, although the SUNY Board of Trustees or its representative retains final control and approval of the curriculum. Assignment of credit hours for courses is determined within the program based on faculty expertise and student learning outcomes. New courses are, upon review and approval at the program level, reviewed by the Curriculum Committee (undergraduate level) or the Graduate Council (graduate level) and the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs or designee.

In their review and approval of new courses and major revisions of existing courses, the Curriculum Committee and Graduate Council are charged with following the policy on credit hours and certifying that the expected student learning for the course meets the credit-hour standard.

Approved courses are sent to the Office of Records & Registration for inclusion in the Undergraduate or Graduate Catalog. Records & Registration reviews the class schedules prior to the start of each semester to ensure that all classes are scheduled for the minimum number of minutes corresponding to the credits assigned. Any discrepancies are brought to the attention of the appropriate department for correction or explanation.

The following tables summarize how the credit hour translates to particular instruction methods.

Lecture and Seminar: Courses with multiple students which meet to engage in various forms of group instruction under the direct supervision of a faculty member.

Lectures and Seminars: Classroom/Faculty Instruction and Outside Student Work					
Credits awarded	Minimum contact time per week	Minimum contact time per semester (15 weeks) (contact time x 15)	Minimum out-of-class student work per week (contact time per week x 2)	Minimum out-of-class student work per semester (15 weeks) (out-of-class work x 15)	Total instructional time per semester (contact time per semester + out-of-class student work per semester)
1	50 contact minutes	750 contact minutes	100 minutes	1500 minutes	2250 minutes (45 hours @ 50 mins each; or 37.5 hours @ 60 mins each)
2	100 contact minutes	1500 contact minutes	200 minutes	3000 minutes	4500 minutes (90 hours @ 50 mins each; or 75 hours @ 60 mins each)
3	150 contact minutes	2250 contact minutes	300 minutes	4500 minutes	6750 minutes (135 hours @ 50 mins each; or 112.5 hours @ 60 mins each)
4	200 contact minutes	3000 contact minutes	400 minutes	6000 minutes	9000 minutes (180 hours @ 50 mins each; or 150 hours @ 60 mins each)

Laboratory: Courses with a focus on experiential learning under the direct supervision of a faculty member wherein the student performs substantive work in a laboratory setting. The minimum contact time per credit is typically twice that of a lecture (2:1 ratio), assuming “substantial outside preparation.”

Laboratory: Classroom/Faculty Instruction and Outside Student Work					
Credits awarded	Minimum contact time per week	Minimum contact time per semester (15 weeks) (contact time x 15)	Minimum out-of-class student work per week (contact time per week ÷ 2)	Minimum out-of-class student work per semester (15 weeks) (out-of-class work x 15)	Total instructional time per semester (contact time per semester + out-of-class student work per semester)
1	100 contact minutes	1500 contact minutes	50 minutes	750 minutes	2250 minutes (45 hours @ 50 mins each; or 37.5 hours @ 60 mins each)
2	200 contact minutes	3000 contact minutes	100 minutes	1500 minutes	4500 minutes (90 hours @ 50 mins each; or 75 hours @ 60 mins each)
3	300 contact minutes	4500 contact minutes	150 minutes	2250 minutes	6750 minutes (135 hours @ 50 mins each; or 112.5 hours @ 60 mins each)
4	400 contact minutes	6000 contact minutes	200 minutes	3000 minutes	9000 minutes (180 hours @ 50 mins each; or 150 hours @ 60 mins each)

Clinicals: Courses with a focus on experiential learning under the direct supervision of a faculty member wherein the student performs substantive work in a clinical setting. The minimum contact time per credit is typically three times that of a lecture (3:1 ratio), depending upon the amount of outside work assigned.

Clinicals: Classroom/Faculty Instruction and Outside Student Work					
Credits awarded	Minimum contact time per week	Minimum contact time per semester (15 weeks) (contact time x 15)	Minimum out-of-class student work per week	Minimum out-of-class student work per semester (15 weeks) (out-of-class work x 15)	Total instructional time per semester (contact time per semester + out-of-class student work per semester)
1	150 contact minutes	2250 contact minutes	0 minutes	0 minutes	2250 minutes (45 hours @ 50 mins each; or 37.5 hours @ 60 mins each)
2	300 contact minutes	4500 contact minutes	0 minutes	0 minutes	4500 minutes (90 hours @ 50 mins each; or 75 hours @ 60 mins each)
3	450 contact minutes	6750 contact minutes	0 minutes	0 minutes	6750 minutes (135 hours @ 50 mins each; or 112.5 hours @ 60 mins each)
4	600 contact minutes	9000 contact minutes	0 minutes	0 minutes	9000 minutes (180 hours @ 50 mins each; or 150 hours @ 60 mins each)

Independent Study: Courses of study in which a faculty member regularly interacts and directs student outcomes with periodic contact. Minimum credit hours are determined based on faculty instructional contact minutes and student outside work time. In all such instances, such courses must match the total amount of work using the examples listed above, and the faculty member is required to keep records of the meeting times and student work assigned so that contact hours can be calculated.

Internship/Practicum/Field Experience: Courses of study in which a faculty member regularly interacts and directs student outcomes with periodic contact, but where the actual learning environment takes place on or off campus at an approved site. The learning experience will typically involve a site supervisor or preceptor, and directed activity/learning will occur outside of a lecture setting. Contact time and outside student work requirements must be established and documented and must match the total amount of work using the examples above. The faculty member or program director responsible for the experience is required to keep records of the amount of supervised work and the amount of outside work assigned so that contact hours can be calculated.

Accelerated Courses: Courses offered outside of a standard 15-week semester in which the credit hours offered are the same as standard semester courses and the content and substantive learning outcomes are the same as those in the standard semester. These courses must meet the total amount of instructional and student work time as the examples above even if delivered within an accelerated time frame.

Online Courses must meet the total amount of instructional and student work time as the examples above, whether delivered synchronously, asynchronously, or through a combination of modalities. The Office of Records & Registration publishes a summary of [teaching modalities](#) that defines and distinguishes five types of online courses:

- **Synchronous Online courses** are offered entirely online without any on-site face-to-face meetings, but they meet synchronously, just as seated courses do.
- **Asynchronous Online courses** are offered entirely online without any on-site face-to-face or required synchronous meetings. Contact time is satisfied by several means, identified in the syllabus. “Milestones” and due dates provide parameters for activities rather than specific, scheduled days and times.
- **Hybrid courses** combine asynchronous online and face-to-face instruction, delivering a substantial proportion of the content online with a reduced number of face-to-face meetings. Contact time for hybrid courses is assessed using both online definitions and on-site definitions as above. **Combined Online courses** combine asynchronous online and synchronous online instruction, delivering a substantial proportion of the content asynchronously online with a reduced number of synchronous online meetings.
- **Hyflex courses** involve simultaneous instruction to students who may choose to attend fully asynchronously, synchronously online, or seated. Again, contact time is assessed using both on-site definitions (for on-site delivery) and online definitions (for online delivery).

In all instances, online courses have the same learning outcomes and substantive components as a standard lecture/seminar course with an alternate delivery method. Expected “time on task” for online courses is consistent with the requirements outlined in the tables above.

Class Schedule

The Office of Records & Registration uses the roster below to schedule each course SUNY New Paltz offers.

Class Schedule (effective fall 2014)

Time Period	75 minutes	70 minutes	50 minutes	2 hr 50 min	1 hr 50 min	5 hr 30 min (Studio)
DAYS	MR, MWR, TF, TWF, M, T, W, R, F MW*, TR*	MR, MWR, TF, TWF, M, T, W, R, F MW*, TR*	MR, MWR, TF, TWF, M, T, W, R, F MW*, TR*	MR, TF, M, T, W, R, F	MR, TF, MW*, TR*	MR, TF, M, T, W, R, F
1	800-915	800-910	800-850 825-915	800-1050 (W, studio & lab only)**	800-950 (with approval)	800-130

2	930-1045	930-1040	930-1020 955-1045	930-1220 (studio & Lab only)	930-1120 (with approval)	930-300
3	1100-1215	1100-1210	1100-1150 1125-1215	1100-150 (W, studio & lab only)	1100-1250 (with approval)	
4	1230-145	1230-140	1230-120 1255-145	1230-320 (studio & lab only)	1230-220 (with approval)	1230-600
5	200-315	200-310	200-250 225-315	200-450 (W, studio, & lab only)**	200-350 (with approval)	200-730
6	330-445	330-440	330-420 355-445	330-620	330-520 (with approval)	330-900
7	500-615	500-610	500-550 525-615	500-750 600-850	500-650	
8	630-745	630-740	630-720 655-725	630-920		
9	800-915	800-910	800-850 825-915	800-1050	800-950	

* Allowable in time periods 7-9 only

** Other day(s) allowable with approval

Procedures

1. All courses offered by SUNY New Paltz will be reviewed periodically by the program faculty and program director for evidence of compliance with the semester/credit hour definitions as set forth by New York State and the U.S. Department of Education. Information indicating such compliance will be provided to the Academic Dean and/or the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Lastly, such results will be shared with the Registrar to ensure ongoing compliance of assignment of credit hours to courses.
2. Courses which appear to be out of compliance will be evaluated and immediate measures taken to rectify the discrepancies. New courses or changes to existing courses and curriculum will normally be evaluated as part of the work of the Curriculum Committee or Graduate Council.
3. The Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs shall serve as the campus's official publications providing information on credits assigned to each course.
4. Records of credits assigned for each course will be maintained in the campus's administrative database.