

School of Integrative Health / NDMU

Academic Policy and Procedures

August 2025

Review Period: 2 Years

Subject: Credit Hour Policy

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1. Purpose

The School of Integrative Health (SOIH) at NDMU has a definition of a credit hour that is consistent across courses and congruent with state lawⁱ, federal regulationsⁱⁱ, and federal guidelinesⁱⁱⁱ.

2. Policy

All credit hours awarded by SOIH are compatible with Maryland state law and federal regulations. Credit awards also comply with policies set forth by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

SOIH follows a trimester system with fall, spring, and summer trimesters consisting of a minimum of 14 weeks of instruction. The University's Academic Calendar Guidelines are used to establish the academic calendar and trimester dates for each year to ensure scheduling consistency. Each 14-week trimester at the University is considered the equivalent of a traditional university semester, and credits awarded by SOIH are semester credits corresponding to approximately 45 hours of combined contact hours and outside work. Coursework in some academic programs may fall outside of the University's trimester schedule, but nonetheless all academic courses adhere to SOIH's Policies in terms of the amount of work required to award credit.

The faculty, program administrators, and the University Curriculum Committee are responsible for following this policy when developing, maintaining, and evaluating the curriculum within an academic program, although the Board of Trustees retains final review and approval of all new academic programs.

Assignment of credit hours for courses is determined within the program based on faculty expertise, student learning outcomes, course objectives, anticipated contact hours, and expected outside study. After review at the program level, new courses must be approved or denied by the University Curriculum Committee.

Approved courses are entered into the University's Student Information System (SIS) and sent to the Registrar's Office for inclusion in the University's Academic Catalog. Three times annually, as part of the course scheduling process, academic departments review course syllabi and associated learning activities to ensure that appropriate clock hours and credit hours are assigned to each existing course that will be taught in the proceeding trimester. Any discrepancies between course schedules and clock hours or credit hours are rectified by the Department Chair and Department Manager prior to the start of the trimester.

3. Procedures

The following provides overall guidelines on how SOIH awards credits for representative instructional methods. These guidelines are intended to be adaptable enough to allow the implementation of innovative teaching approaches and new technologies that support instruction. They are not intended to prescribe exact amounts of classroom or instructional time (in any format) versus outside student work. Rather, they serve as general guidance only.

It should be noted that SOIH asserts that a course is not defined by the delivery method utilized for the particular course. The same course may be delivered via different instructional methods, but the outcomes, rigor, and scope must remain constant through all methods of delivery. For example, credit hours assigned to a course delivered online must equal the number of credits hours for the same course delivered face-to-face.

3.1 Instructional Time

Instructional time or contact time used to assign credit hours may be satisfied by several means, including, but not limited to, the following:

- (i) Attending a synchronous class, lecture, recitation, or field or laboratory activity, physically or online, where there is an opportunity for interaction between the instructor and students;
- (ii) Taking an assessment or an exam;
- (iii) Participating in an interactive tutorial, webinar, or other interactive computer-assisted instruction;
- (iv) Participating in a study group, group project, or an online discussion that is assigned by the institution; or
- (v) Interacting with an instructor about academic matters

Student activities completed as homework (e.g., assigned readings or other homework assignments that in a fully face-to-face class would be assigned for students to complete outside of class time) are considered outside student work. Such activities are not counted as instructional time.

3.2 Instructional Hour

For on-campus courses, an instructional hour is defined as instructional or contact time for a period of 50 minutes in a 60-minute period.

In distance education, an instructional hour is defined as 50 minutes in a 60-minute period of attendance in -

(A) A synchronous or asynchronous class, lecture, or recitation where there is opportunity for direct interaction between the instructor and students; or

(B) An asynchronous learning activity involving academic engagement in which the student interacts with technology that can monitor and document the amount of time that the student participates in the activity.

See Appendix 1: Instructional Equivalencies Guidelines for details of how instructional equivalencies are calculated for distance learning.

In all instances, courses must meet the total amount of instructional time and outside student work as detailed below no matter the delivery method or format (e.g., face-to-face, online, blended, synchronous, asynchronous, accelerated, or extended).

3.3 Didactic (Lecture/Seminar)

Courses with multiple students who engage in various forms of group instruction under direct supervision of a faculty member. Course instruction may include, but is not limited to, lecture, presentations, demonstrations, simulations, guest speakers, quizzes, and tests. (1:2 ratio of instructional time to outside student work).

3.4 Laboratory

Courses with a focus on experiential and applied learning under the direct supervision of a faculty member wherein the student develops skills and/or performs substantive work in an adapted/simulated classroom or laboratory setting (2:1 ratio of instructional time to outside student work).

3.5 Clinical Observation

Courses with a focus on experiential learning under the direct supervision of a faculty member wherein the student actively observes the clinical treatment or counseling of one or more clients or patients in an adapted/simulated classroom or clinical setting (2:1 ratio of instructional time to outside student work).

3.6 Clinical Practice

Courses with a focus on experiential and/or applied learning under the direct or indirect (as appropriate) supervision of a faculty member wherein the student performs substantive work and gains practical experience in a clinical or simulated setting (2:1 ratio of instructional time to outside student work).

3.7 Internship

Courses of study with a focus on applied learning related to the academic and/or career interests of the student where a faculty member regularly interacts and directs student outcomes with periodic contact, but where the actual learning environment takes place off-campus at an approved site. Internships approximate the full scope of professional responsibilities associated with the position. Instructional time

must be established and documented (3:0 ratio of instructional time to outside student work).

3.8 Practicum

Courses of study with a focus on practical work experience in a particular field where a faculty member regularly interacts and directs student outcomes. Practica may be conducted on campus or off-campus at an approved site and provide students with a focused learning experience whereby the student is assigned a limited set of duties or projects, but not the full scope of duties customarily associated with the position. Instructional time must be established and documented (3:0 ratio of instructional time to outside student work).

3.9 Field Experience

Courses of study developed for independent learning and the development and application of job related or practical skills in a particular discipline. Field experience allows for observation, participation, and fieldwork. Field experiences are supervised by a faculty member and are generally offered off campus (3:0 ratio of instructional time to outside student work).

3.10 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 time and student outside work. Non-variable credit independent studies have a fixed number of credits awarded based on a predetermined scope and amount of work required. Variable credit independent studies allow credit awards to be determined after course completion, based on the total amount of work completed (variable ratio of instructional time to outside student work).

3.11 Charts

Didactic (Lecture/Seminar): Instructional Time and Outside Student Work			
Credits Awarded	Minimum Instructional Time	Minimum Outside Student Work	Total Instructional Time and Outside Student Work
0.25	3.75 Instructional Hours	7.50 Hours	11.25 Hours
0.50	7.50 Instructional Hours	15.00 Hours	22.50 Hours
0.75	11.25 Instructional Hours	22.50 Hours	33.75 Hours
1.00	15.00 Instructional Hours	30.00 Hours	45.00 Hours
2.00	30.00 Instructional Hours	60.00 Hours	90.00 Hours
3.00	45.00 Instructional Hours	90.00 Hours	135.00 Hours
4.00	60.00 Instructional Hours	120.00 Hours	180.00 Hours

Laboratory, Clinical Observation, and Clinical Practice: Instructional Time and Outside Student Work			
Credits Awarded	Minimum Instructional Time	Minimum Outside Student Work	Total Instructional Time and Outside Student Work
0.25	7.50 Instructional Hours	3.75 Hours	11.25 Hours
0.50	15.00 Instructional Hours	7.50 Hours	22.50 Hours
0.75	22.50 Instructional Hours	11.25 Hours	33.75 Hours
1.00	30.00 Instructional Hours	15.00 Hours	45.00 Hours
2.00	60.00 Instructional Hours	30.00 Hours	90.00 Hours
3.00	90.00 Instructional Hours	45.00 Hours	135.00 Hours
4.00	120.00 Instructional Hours	60.00 Hours	180.00 Hours

Internship, Practicum, and Field Experience: Instructional Time and Outside Student Work			
Credits Awarded	Minimum Instructional Time	Minimum Outside Student Work	Total Instructional Time and Outside Student Work
0.25	11.25 Instructional Hours	0.00 Hours	11.25 Hours
0.50	22.50 Instructional Hours	0.00 Hours	22.50 Hours
0.75	33.75 Instructional Hours	0.00 Hours	33.75 Hours
1.00	45.00 Instructional Hours	0.00 Hours	45.00 Hours
2.00	90.00 Instructional Hours	0.00 Hours	90.00 Hours
3.00	135.00 Instructional Hours	0.00 Hours	135.00 Hours
4.00	180.00 Instructional Hours	0.00 Hours	180.00 Hours

Documentation of instructional time is necessary for Internship, Practicum, and Field Experience in order to award credit. The student may be required to keep a log detailing the amount of supervised work; logs may include approval signatures by the faculty member responsible for site supervision. The preceptor, workplace supervisor, faculty member, and/or academic program director responsible for the experience is required to verify the amount of supervised work so that instructional time can be calculated.

Independent Study: Instructional Time and Outside Student Work
Credits awarded for Independent Study courses must match the <u>Total</u> amount of work using the examples listed above. The faculty member responsible for the experience is required to verify the amount of supervised work and the amount of outside student work assigned so that instructional time can be calculated.

4. **Approval and Revisions**

Approved by Dean, School of Integrative Health, Christina Sax, PhD (August 2025).
Conversion of policy from Maryland University of Integrative Health

Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) §13B.02.02.16

D. Credit Hours.

(1) An in-State institution shall award 1 credit hour for:

- (a) A minimum of 15 hours, of 50 minutes each of actual class time, exclusive of registration, study days, and holidays;
- (b) A minimum of 30 hours, of 50 minutes each of supervised laboratory or studio time, exclusive of registration, study days, and holidays;
- (c) A minimum of 45 hours, of 50 minutes each of instructional situations such as practica, internships, and cooperative education placements, when supervision is ensured and learning is documented; or

(d) Instruction delivered by electronic media based on the equivalent outcomes in student learning in §D(1)(a) of this regulation, and may include a combination of telelessons, classroom instruction, student consultation with instructors, and readings, when supervision is ensured and learning is documented.

(2) One quarter hour of credit is awarded for instruction equivalent to 2/3 of the contact hours required for 1 credit hour.

ii Electronic Code of Federal Regulations, Title 34: Education

Part 600 – Institutional Eligibility under the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended

Subpart A – General, Section §600.2 Definitions

Academic engagement: Active participation by a student in an instructional activity related to the student's course of study that -

- (1) Is defined by the institution in accordance with any applicable requirements of its State or accrediting agency;
- (2) Includes, but is not limited to -
 - (i) Attending a synchronous class, lecture, recitation, or field or laboratory activity, physically or online, where there is an opportunity for interaction between the instructor and students;
 - (ii) Submitting an academic assignment;
 - (iii) Taking an assessment or an exam;
 - (iv) Participating in an interactive tutorial, webinar, or other interactive computer-assisted instruction;
 - (v) Participating in a study group, group project, or an online discussion that is assigned by the institution; or
 - (vi) Interacting with an instructor about academic matters; and
- (3) Does not include, for example -
 - (i) Living in institutional housing;
 - (ii) Participating in the institution's meal plan;
 - (iii) Logging into an online class or tutorial without any further participation; or
 - (iv) Participating in academic counseling or advisement.

Clock hour:

- (1) A period of time consisting of -
 - (i) A 50- to 60-minute class, lecture, or recitation in a 60-minute period;
 - (ii) A 50- to 60-minute faculty-supervised laboratory, shop training, or internship in a 60-minute period;
 - (iii) Sixty minutes of preparation in a correspondence course; or
 - (iv) In distance education, 50 to 60 minutes in a 60-minute period of attendance in -
 - (A) A synchronous or asynchronous class, lecture, or recitation where there is opportunity for direct interaction between the instructor and students; or
 - (B) An asynchronous learning activity involving academic engagement in which the student interacts with technology that can monitor and document the amount of time that the student participates in the activity.

(2) A clock hour in a distance education program does not meet the requirements of this definition if it does not meet all accrediting agency and State requirements or if it exceeds an agency's or State's restrictions on the number of clock hours in a program that may be offered through distance education.

(3) An institution must be capable of monitoring a student's attendance in 50 out of 60 minutes for each clock hour under this definition.

Credit hour: Except as provided in [34 CFR 668.8\(k\)](#) and [\(l\)](#), a credit hour is an amount of student work defined by an institution, as approved by the institution's accrediting agency or State approval agency, that is consistent with commonly accepted practice in postsecondary education and that -

(1) Reasonably approximates not less than -

(i) One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different period of time; or

(ii) At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1)(i) 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; and

(2) Permits an institution, in determining the amount of work associated with a credit hour, to take into account a variety of delivery methods, measurements of student work, academic calendars, disciplines, and degree levels

U.S. Department of Education, Laws & Guidance / Higher Education Program
Integrity Questions and Answers - Credit Hour

CH-A3: The credit-hour definition does not dictate particular amounts of classroom time versus out-of-class student work. Further note that the definition provides that a credit hour may be for an equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time. There is no requirement that a 3-semester hour course meet 3 hours per week during a semester or a 3-quarter-hour course meet 3 hours per week during a quarter. The requirement is that the institution determine that there is an amount of student work for a credit hour that reasonably approximates not less than one hour of class and two hours of out-of-class student work per week over a semester for a semester hour or a quarter for a quarter hour. For example, an institution with a semester-based calendar has a graduate seminar for which it awards 3 semester hours. The class meets only one hour per week over a 15-week semester with the students expected to perform a substantial amount of outside research that is the equivalent of 8 or more hours of student work each week of the semester. For purposes of the Federal definition, the institution would be able to award up to 3 semester hours for the course.

Appendix 1: Instructional Equivalencies Guidelines

Instructional Activity	Description of Instructional Activity	Rate of Equivalency
Active learning strategies	With instructor facilitation, students (in small groups/pairs) engage in cohort-based, professionally-focused learning, examining concepts via professional experience. Facilitators lead students in evaluating course concepts/objectives in light of experience, enhancing the depth and breadth of content by intensely-focused group activities in class.	1 active learning strategy = 1 hour instruction

Blogs, journals, logs	Instructor guides students in applying learned concepts or reflecting on learning experiences; learned concepts to be shared with instructor and/or classmates for thoughtful analysis, feedback, and assessment.	1 private post = ½ hour instruction 1 shared post (incl. reading all classmates' posts) = 1 hour instruction
Case studies and problem solving scenarios	Instructor leads students in performing Indepth analysis utilizing higher-order analytical skills, which relate to course objectives. Analysis is shared with instructor and/or classmates for feedback and assessment.	1 case study analysis and post = 1-2 hours Instruction 1 case study analysis and post = 2- hours instruction
Chat rooms for class or group projects	Instructor directs students in collaborative, synchronous discussion with specific expectations for participation and feedback. (Chats are retained within course for further review.)	1 hour chat = 1 hour instruction
Conferences (group)	Under instructor's guidance, students participate in collaborative, synchronous learning with specific expectations for participation and feedback (including required exam reviews). When possible, calls or online meetings are recorded for review.	½ hour conference = ½ hour instruction 1 hour conference = 1 hour instruction
Conferences (in-depth individual)	Instructor engages students in collaborative, one-to-one synchronous learning experience; student will need to submit materials for prior review and meet specific participation and feedback expectations. When possible, calls or online meetings are recorded for review.	20 minute conference = 1 hour instruction (based on practice for independent studies)
Discussion board	Instructor guides/mediates threaded discussion, engaging learners with content that directly relates to course objectives and that has specified timeframes, expectations for participation, and thoughtful analysis.	Initial post – min. 250 words = ½ hour instruction 1 post/reply (requires reading all posts and responding) = 1 hour instruction; must meet specified criteria 2 posts/reply (requires reading all posts and responding to a minimum of 2) = 2 hours instruction Equivalencies may vary further based on specific course expectations/content Posts may require citation, which would impact rate of equivalency.
Field trips or tours (includes virtual tours)	Instructor provides leadership as students (individuals or in groups) analyze an activity and prepare a paper or presentation, to be shared in whole or in part with instructor and/or classmates.	Instructor-led 1 hour tour = 1 hour instruction Student(s) without instructor: 1 hour tour and reflection paper = 1 hour instruction

Guided project	Instructors lead students in a summative individual project with specific learning objectives; student and instructor collaborate via email, chat, discussion board, and/or in person to research, analyze, synthesize, and prepare project. Instructor receives periodic updates and provides guidance and feedback.	1 hour of instruction per week for duration of project. Rate of equivalency may vary based on specific project.
Instruction and presentations	Instructors provide students with instruction, including presentations in a virtual classroom setting.	1 hour = 1 hour instruction
Instructional PowerPoints/videos	Instructor-mediated content is made available in an alternative delivery format for students to view/interact with in order to expand upon and clarify course concepts and objectives.	Student reviews. 1 hour of content = 1 hour instruction
Learning Teams/Group project	Instructors engage students in a mediated, culminating activity with specific learning objectives. With faculty guidance, students collaborate via email, chat rooms, discussion boards, and/or face-to-face contact to research and then analyze, synthesize, and prepare project, with instructor receiving periodic updates and providing guidance to group.	1 hour of instruction per week for duration of project Rate of equivalency may vary based on specific project.
Lecture activity video, written or audio	In response to direction from instructor, students develop questions, comments, or observations to be shared with classmates and instructor through discussion boards or participation in chat rooms.	Student reviews 1 lecture and posts response = 1 hour instruction Rate of equivalency may vary based on specific activity
Online quizzes and exams	Instructor-created quiz or exam through which students demonstrate subject knowledge to provide faculty with feedback on students' progress.	1 hour test = 1 hour of instruction
Peer Review/assessment	Employing instructor-designated criteria, students evaluate each other's work.	Student review of peer assessment and follow up response post/email to student/teacher = 0.5-2 hours of instruction based on scope and estimated number of hours of review/interaction
Portfolio Preparation	Instructors guide learners through compilation, evaluation, and production of learning portfolios prepared according to course /program rubrics and aligned with specific learning outcomes.	Portfolio conferencing with final presentation of completed portfolio = 1 instructional hour, or equivalent to length of the exercise.
Reflection paper or article review	Instructor-guided activity whereby students apply learned concepts to personal experiences or apply higher order analytic skills in assessing scholarly articles or professional journals.	1 private post = ½ hour instruction 2 shared posts (required to read all classmates'

		posts) = 1.5-2 hours instruction Posts may require citations which would impact equivalency rate.
Service learning project	Instructor leads students in completion of service project with specific learning objectives that integrates community service with academic study; faculty provides guidance, support, and feedback to students; student shares experience and reflection with classmates via emails, chats, discussion boards, and/or face-to-face.	1 hour of instruction per week for duration of project Rate of equivalency may vary based on specific activity
Virtual Laboratory and Lab Reports	Instructor provides students with computer-simulation or online laboratories. Instructors require students to submit, share, or post lab reports produced and assess work according to course rubric.	1 hour of virtual laboratory = 1 instructional hour, or equivalent to length of the exercise 1 lab report post and review with response to classmates posts = ½ hour instruction Rate of equivalency may vary based on specific activity
Web Conferencing	Instructor engages students in desktop-to-desktop or classroom video streaming instruction for collaborative, synchronous learning with specific expectations for participation and feedback (e.g., Zoom, Teams).	1 hour webinar = 1 hour instruction
Web Quest (Internet research)	Under instructor guidance, students research information via Internet that enhances learning and addresses specific course outcomes; findings are shared with the instructor and classmates.	1 in-depth post = 1 hour instruction
Workplace Integration	Guided by course instructor, students engaged in a structured, professional program make intentional application of classroom knowledge within the workplace and evaluate that experience in conjunction with instructor and classmates.	1 hour of instruction per week for duration of project (a maximum of 2 hours per week)

Source: Adapted from [Credit and Contact Hour and Instructional Equivalencies Guidelines](#) from Valdosta State University. Originally Shared by Kennesaw State University (March 2013).