

TITLE:	Definition of a Credit Hour
AUTHOR:	Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
APPROVAL DATE:	December 5, 2025
EFFECTIVE DATE:	December 5, 2025
PURPOSE:	To establish a policy that outlines how the institution defines and awards credit for courses and programs.
REVIEWER:	Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Academic Council and Faculty Senate
REVIEW DATE:	Fall 2030 and every five years thereafter

OPERATING DETAILS:

Mississippi University for Women (MUW) measures courses and programs in semester credit hours. The credit hour is the unit by which MUW measures its academic coursework. The number of credit hours assigned to a course is based upon the expected student learning outcomes, the method of instructional delivery, the amount of time spent in class, and the amount of effort required outside of class.

MUW follows the policy of its governing board, the Board of Trustees of the State Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL Board), which specifies, “The number of weeks must meet federal financial aid requirements and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges requirements” (IHL Policy 506 Course Requirements).

For the purposes of implementing this policy, MUW defines “credit hour” as follows:

Lecture and Seminar Courses: For most classroom lecture/discussion courses, one credit hour equals one hour of classroom instruction and at least two hours of student work outside of class for a minimum of fifteen weeks.

Online Courses: Online courses meet asynchronously in full or in part and are hosted in an online environment where faculty and students do not regularly meet in the same physical space. All online courses should meet the equivalent levels of quality, assessment, learning outcomes, and requirements as face-to-face courses in the discipline. For online courses, one credit hour equals at least 45 hours of student engagement during the course of the session; including, but

not limited to, the time required for reading, watching videos, participating in discussions or group work, and/or working on individual assignments. Faculty members must demonstrate regular and substantive interaction with online students per the distance learning policy (PS#1201). Further guidelines for how to best create an active online course environment can be found in the Online Faculty Procedural Manual.

Blended/Hybrid Courses: A blended or hybrid course combines online learning with a physical classroom experience to incorporate the best of both educational environments. For blended/hybrid courses, one credit hour equals at least 45 hours of student engagement during the course of the session, and must include both scheduled face-to-face, and online synchronous and/or asynchronous content delivery methods. Contact time requirements can be met through a blend of the requirements for Lecture and Seminar Courses and Online Course, as long as the same departmental standards for quality, assessment, learning outcomes, and active faculty and student engagement are met. Further guidelines on how to best create an active online course environment can be found in the Online Faculty Procedural Manual.

Individual Courses: Independent studies, theses, and other individual courses do not have regular meeting times. Students are expected to exert the equivalent student effort of 45 hours of work per credit hour, during the course of the session. This work may be done through face-to-face contact with the instructor, online, or in a blended learning environment.

Abbreviated Courses: For courses that meet in abbreviated time periods (e.g. accelerated, summer, or intersession courses) students must satisfy the same time requirements as in the guidelines for similar courses during the regular academic term, as well as achieve comparable learning outcomes.

Internships: A minimum of 40 hours of supervised internship experience is required for each credit hour awarded.

Credit by Examination: Credit may be awarded for attaining a certain level of performance on national and international standardized examinations, such as CLEP, AP, IB, and Cambridge International Program in accordance with generally accepted standards and practices.

Determination and Assignment of Course Credit: The process for determining the amount and level of credit awarded for courses is defined in the policies of the Undergraduate Curriculum Council and the Graduate Council. The information required for course/program proposals includes the proposed number of credit hours as well as the details by which the appropriateness of the amount and level of credit can be measured, including student learning outcomes, instructional methods, accreditation requirements, relationship of the course to the program and university goals, course prerequisites, course outline, and faculty qualifications to teach the course. Additionally, the degree planning forms required by the IHL for new program approval include requirements for program credit hours and program length, which assures compliance with credit policies and generally accepted standards and practices.

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