

DEFINITION OF THE CREDIT HOUR

The University of Michigan-Dearborn has adopted a credit hour standard for all classes based on the U.S. Department of Education's definition of a credit hour which reads:

"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 -
 - a. 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
 - b. 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."

The following definition of a credit hour at University of Michigan-Dearborn applies to all credit-bearing courses, undergraduate and graduate, regardless of their delivery modality:

UM-Dearborn Credit Hour Definition: One hour [defined as a 50 minute class period] of classroom or direct faculty instruction (or equivalent, see below) typically with the schedule type of discussion, laboratory, lecture, recitation, internship/co-op, field placement, independent study, or seminar and a minimum of two additional hours of student work each week [100 minutes] for approximately 15 weeks for one semester.

The total per credit hour classroom or direct instruction time should total at least 750 minutes. Students should undertake a total of at least 1500 minutes of additional work outside of the classroom and instructional time. There are various online tools that faculty can use to estimate student workload that faculty monitor and/or provide guidance in undertaking.

- One credit course examples: For a full-semester course, this is 50 minutes of classroom or direct instruction plus 100 minutes of additional student work per week. For a half-semester course, this is 100 minutes of direct instruction and 200 minutes of additional student work per week.
- Three credit course examples: For a full-semester course, this is 150 minutes of classroom or direct instruction plus 300 minutes of additional student work per week. For a half-semester course, this is 300 minutes of direct instruction and 600 minutes of additional student work per week.

- Four credit course examples: For a full-semester course, this is 200 minutes of classroom or direct instruction plus 400 minutes of additional student work per week. For a half-semester course, this is 400 minutes of direct instruction and 800 minutes of additional student work per week.
- Condensed semester classes: For classes that are offered during a condensed semester, faculty are required to provide an equivalent amount of direct instruction delivered over an abbreviated period of time. In these short sessions, the student continues to receive credits for the course type using the standard definitions provided above. The adjustment occurs since students meet more often and/or for longer periods of time. The total required credit hours and student work can be divided by the number of weeks the course is scheduled to determine the required time per week.

It is primarily the responsibility of faculty to design their courses to ensure that the stipulated credit hours align with the documented minimum contact hours, including direct or equivalent guided instruction which can involve a combination of synchronous and/or asynchronous work. However, it is also the duty of the college curriculum committees along with the University Curriculum and Degree Committee and Graduate Subcommittee to provide oversight in this area by monitoring course proposals to ensure minimum contact hours are documented. When finalizing the course schedule each college shall be responsible for ensuring each course section is meeting minimum contact hours.

Equivalents to classroom or direct instruction and student work: Faculty must provide guidance to students for work required outside of the regular class time and be certain that the work is meeting minimum academic standards. In essence, determining equivalent activities is about ensuring the integrity of the credit hour by connecting the student to the instructor who is providing academic guidance.

The federal definition provides the statement below about substantive interaction in distance education, which UM-Dearborn uses as an equivalent to classroom or direct instruction. For UM-Dearborn, "substantive interaction" is defined as requiring at least one of the elements embodied in iii, iv, and v and the second element from the i-v listing.

"Substantive interaction is engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and also includes at least two of the following -

1. Providing direct instruction;
2. Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework;
3. Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;
4. Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or
5. Other instructional activities approved by the institution's or program's accrediting agency."

UM-Dearborn defines other "instructional activities" to include PBL projects which embodies an engaged component of learning (e.g., visiting a site for learning, field trips, meeting with practitioners, etc.).

Approved by UCDC on December 15, 2016

Last amended by UCDC on March 30, 2023

¹ 34 CFR 600.2 (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/subtitle-B/chapter-VI/part-600/subpart-A/section-600.2/>) (2022)

² Exception is the laboratory, where the lab time counts towards both direct instruction and student work time.

³ 34 CFR 600.2 (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/subtitle-B/chapter-VI/part-600/subpart-A/section-600.2/>) (2022)