

CREDIT HOUR POLICY

Introduction

The University of San Francisco operates under a semester credit hour system of approximately 15 weeks each semester in the academic year, or its equivalent in the winter intersession, summer session, and online semester. This policy aims both to codify the University's requirement of course contact hours and keep it in compliance with Federal, State, and accrediting agency guidelines. The policy applies to all courses.

Credit Hour at USF

The credit hour policy applies equally to courses of varying credits, duration, and modes of instruction.

One unit of credit in lecture, seminar, and discussion work should approximate one hour of direct faculty instruction and a **minimum** of two hours of out-of-class student work per week through one 15-week semester.

Alternately, if the time is wholly occupied with either the seminar, studio, field, clinical or laboratory work, or internships, service learning, directed study or intensive semester (e.g. summer, online or courses offered in shorter form), a **minimum** of 45 hours of student work is expected for each unit of credit. Note that there may be other and/or future modes of instruction to which this alternate satisfaction of the credit hour requirement may apply.

Additionally, where classroom work is supplemented by systematic outside reading, experiment or research under the direction of the instructor, a reduction may be made in the actual studio, field, clinical, laboratory, internship or classroom time as seems appropriate to the instructor with the approval of the pertinent department and/or school or college's curriculum committee.

Periodic Compliance Review of Credit Hour Policy

We recommend that each department conduct an initial comprehensive review of the credit hour assignment of approximately no less than 25% of its courses each year for the next four years. This ensures that all the University's courses' credit worthiness would be reviewed in time for WASC's next site visit. Review would be done either by the pertinent department faculty and/or school or college's curriculum committee. Whereas each school or college should determine how best to organize and conduct its initial review, some common themes should be observed. See section on **Guidance on Common Themes in Meeting WASC Credit Hour Requirement**.

New courses should be reviewed and approved by the pertinent school or college's curriculum committee for compliance with the credit hour policy. The periodic compliance review of the credit hour policy, called for by WASC, would be incorporated into each school's and college's established curriculum review schedule, after completion of the initial comprehensive review described above. The periodic compliance review should encompass no less than 25% of each department's courses.

In addition to the periodic compliance review, schools and colleges should also incorporate the credit hour review into comprehensive self-study requirements. Taken together, this would satisfy WASC's requirement for an explanation and documentation of the University's process for periodic review of the accurate and reliable application of its credit hour policy.

Guidance on Common Themes in Meeting WASC Credit Hour Requirement

1. Guiding principle: One unit equals one hour of direct faculty instruction and a **minimum** of two hours of out-of-class student work per week for 15 weeks. Generally, one unit is granted for 45 hours of student work.
2. Include information on expected amount of work on course syllabus. A course's credit hours should reflect the amount of work required to earn those credits.
3. A course offered in fewer than 15 weeks shall contain the same total hours – contact hours, preparation time, content, and requirements – as the same course offered in the standard 15-week semester.
4. Regardless of mode of instruction, courses should be consistent in terms of purpose, scope, quality, assessment, and expected learning outcomes with other courses with the same department code, number, and course title.