

## OWU Credit Hour Policy

At Ohio Wesleyan University, as at many selective liberal arts colleges, we hold an educational philosophy that richer learning experiences are more valuable than numerous courses that divide a student's attention and train as much as teach. In keeping with that philosophy, we require four regular (1.0-unit) courses per semester and a supplementary experience that is worth 0.25 units. Each OWU unit is worth 3.70 semester hours when transferring credits to or from OWU.

To be eligible for federal fund for grants and student financial aid OWU must meet federal guidelines for the Credit Hour. Federal compliance is monitored by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). HLC's credit hour policy is included in Appendix A. The specifics for total instructional time (direct and indirect or in- and out-of-classroom) is shown in Tables 1 and 2.

**Table 1: Weekly Indirect and Direct Instructional Time for OWU course units using Federal Guidelines for instructional time**

OWU Units	Semester Hour Equivalent	Minimum direct and indirect instructional time per week
$\frac{1}{8}$ (.13)	0.4625	~80 min (1 $\frac{1}{3}$ hr)
$\frac{1}{4}$ (.25)	0.925	~160 min (2 $\frac{2}{3}$ hr)
1	3.70	~630 min (10 $\frac{1}{2}$ hr)
1.25	4.625	~790 min (13 $\frac{1}{6}$ hr)

Table 2 provides semester hour totals assuming each course has a 3-hour culminating activity during final exam week.

**Table 2: Semester total Hours Required Excluding Final Exam Week**

Course Unit Value	Semester Hour Equivalent	Total Direct and indirect instructional time
0.13	0.4625	~18 hours
0.25	0.925	~ 37 hours
1.00	3.70	~150 hours
1.25	4.625	~180 hours

The federal credit hour definition assumes a one-third, two-thirds breakdown of the instructional time between “direct faculty instruction” and student out-of-class work. “Direct faculty instruction” for a 1.0-unit class might be accomplished through class meetings that total at least 3.7 “hours” (or  $3.7 * 50 \text{ minutes} = 185 \text{ minutes}$ ) per week. For classes that meet three times per week for 50 minutes, the additional instruction should come through one of the many ways that OWU provides significant faculty interaction with our students. Examples of these types of instructive interactions are listed in Appendix B. The out-of-class work required of students to be successful in a course should be at least two-thirds of the total instructional time in Tables 1 and 2. Students should be aware that these are your expectations (as well as the federal governments’).

Faculty are expected to design their courses in ways that meet both the direct and indirect instructional requirements. While a detailed accounting of how the hours are met need not be given in the course syllabus, the level of engagement and work should be evident to the student or others viewing the syllabus, and the faculty member should be able to demonstrate, if asked, the ways in which their interactions with students and work-expectations for students meet the federal requirements.

## **Appendix A: The Higher Learning Commission Policy Statement**

### Commission Policy FDCRA.10.020—Assignment of Credits, Program Length, and Tuition

An institution shall be able to equate its learning experiences with semester or quarter credit hours using practices common to institutions of higher education, to justify the lengths of its programs in comparison to similar programs found in accredited institutions of higher education, and to justify any program-specific tuition in terms of program costs, program length, and program objectives. Affiliated institutions shall notify the Commission of any significant changes in the relationships among credits, program length, and tuition.

**Assignment of Credit Hours.** The institution's assignment and award of credit hours shall conform to commonly accepted practices in higher education. Those institutions seeking, or participating in, Title IV federal financial aid, shall demonstrate that they have policies determining the credit hours awarded to courses and programs in keeping with commonly-accepted practices and with the federal definition of the credit hour, as reproduced herein for reference only, and that institutions also have procedures that result in an appropriate awarding of institutional credit in conformity with the policies established by the institution.

**Federal Credit Hour Definition:** A credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally-established equivalency that reasonably approximates not less than:

(1) 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 amount of time; or (2) at least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other activities as established by an institution, including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading toward to the award of credit hours. 34CFR 600.2 (11/1/2010)

**Commission Review.** The Commission shall review the assignment of credit hours, program length, and tuition in conjunction with a comprehensive evaluation for reaffirmation of accreditation during the Commission's assurance process. The Commission may sample or use other techniques to review specific institutional programs ensure that it has reviewed reliability and accuracy of the institution's assignment of credit. The Commission shall monitor, through its established monitoring processes, the resolution of any concerns identified during that evaluation with regard to the awarding of academic credit, program length, or tuition, and shall require that an institution remedy any deficiency in this regard by a date certain but not to exceed two years from the date of the action identifying the deficiency.

## **Appendix B: Examples of Significant Faculty Interactions outside of class**

- Discussion sessions
  - Could combine with other sections of the same course
  - Could combine with other (different) courses taught by the same instructor
  - Could combine with complementary courses taught by another faculty member
- Review sessions
- Evening exams
- Library sessions (outside of class time)
- Required work with Writing Center or Q Center
- Required outside speakers
- Required community service
- Guidance for group or individual projects
- Required videos with discussion in class or on Blackboard
- Faculty recorded lectures (as in a flipped classroom)
- Concerts, museum visits, other “field trips”
- Departmental seminar
- Use of discussion board (such as in Blackboard)
- Individual student guidance (counts on a per student basis)
  - Required conferenced (such as to discuss writing)
  - Significant written feedback on papers