

To: Educational Policy Committee
 From: Credit System Transition Task Force
 Re: Policies Related to Credit Hours and Instructional Methods
 Date: February 19, 2022

The Credit System Transition Task Force recommends to the Educational Policy Committee the following policies and models related to credit hours and instructional methods as we move into a new credit system that uses a majority of 4- and 2-credit courses.

CREDIT HOUR

Definition

One student 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

- (1) a minimum of 1 hour of class time (defined as approximately 50 minutes) and a minimum of 2 hours of out-of-class student work per week over a 15-week semester¹, or student work that reasonably approximates to the same over a different amount of time (note that a 15-week semester includes one week of final exams, and an 8-week term includes three days of final exams); or
- (2) At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution, including laboratory work, internships, independent studies, practicums, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

Implementation – In-person courses

In-person, 4-credit courses will typically have a minimum of either 200 (2 x 100) or 195 (3 x 65) minutes of class time and 8 hours of out-of-class student work per week over a 15-week semester.

In-person, 2-credit courses will typically have a minimum of either 200 (2 x 100) or 195 (3 x 65) minutes of class time and 8 hours of out-of-class student work per week over an 8-week *half-semester*. The default for 2-credit courses will be that they fall into half-semesters; however, 2-credit courses may also be offered as a minimum of 100 minutes of class time and 4 hours of out-of-class student work per week over a full, 15-week semester.

Although such courses are rare, in-person, 1-credit courses will typically have a minimum of either 100 minutes of class time and 4 hours of out-of-class student work per week over an 8-week half-semester or a minimum of 50 minutes of class time and 2 hours of out-of-class student work per week over a full, 15-week semester.

Typical minimum class and out-of-class times per week can be summarized as follows:

Credits	Class time per week	Out-of-class student work per week	Total student work per week	Number of weeks
1	50 minutes	2 hours	170 minutes	15
	100 minutes	4 hours	340 minutes	8
2	100 minutes	4 hours	340 minutes	15
	195 or 200 minutes	8 hours	680 minutes	8
4	195 or 200 minutes	8 hours	680 minutes	15

Note that because of holidays and advising breaks not all weeks in a 15-week semester are full weeks; each full-semester course will typically have at least 39 65-minute in-class sessions (2535 min) or the equivalent.

¹ Because of the Department of Education standard of counting every week with at least one day of class time, and the different ways that holidays can be scheduled, the fall semester typically occurs in a 16-week format, while the spring semester occurs in a 15-week format. There are the same number of minutes per semester in both semesters.

Implementation - Online and Hybrid Courses

As they now exist, online courses would be constructed in a way to achieve equivalencies with face-to-face courses, using the online course development processes described in the [Guidelines for Online Teaching and Learning](#) to make sure that learning outcomes are achieved. Overall time-on-task should be the same as in-person courses.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

There are 17 identified instructional methods at Calvin University, explained and described in the chart below. Note that the times indicated for in-class scheduled times are all minimums. There may be situations where more in-class time is appropriate. In all cases, the total student work time per week must follow the parameters given on the chart on page one.

These instructional methods were developed with two key principles in mind: 1) consistency – each instructional type corresponds to an equitable number of student credit hours and time-on-task; 2) standardization – the recognized instructional types and in-class blocks are intended to avoid excessive boutique options and diversity to avoid schedule conflicts for students. **For unique instructional circumstances that do not align with one of the instructional types described below, the appropriate school dean will work with department chairs to make decisions about student credit hours and in-class blocks.**

Descriptions for most categories can be found in the chart below. The following categories require some further explanation:

Science Lecture-Lab Combination (LLB)

Courses where the lecture and lab are combined allow for the practice of skills or applications of scientific principles to occur immediately following the presentation of theory. The lab portion of the course is not assigned credit hours or registered separately. The total contact hours in the lecture-lab combination are similar to the sum of the contact hours in separate lecture and lab courses.

Studio, Practicum, and Physical Education (STU)

Like the lecture-lab combination described above, studio, practicum, and physical education courses all involve practicing skills under the close supervision of faculty, often in a space tailored for such practice (e.g. theater, keyboard lab, media lab, art studio, gymnasium). Such classes will involve some lecture, explanation, and/or demonstration by faculty, but a significant percentage of class time is devoted to student practice. Contact hours are thus higher than for these courses than a typical lecture course, while overall student work hours per week stay the same.

Internships, Clinicals, and Field Work (INT)

There is significant variety in this category regarding types of student work, level of faculty supervision, in-class meeting expectations, homework assigned, and credit or load hours received by students and faculty. There are important reasons for this variety, and departments and programs should be allowed to create learning structures that fit the needs of students. However, the relationship of student work to the credit hour must follow the same guidelines given in the chart on page one, such that 1-credit internship, clinical, or field work experience should equal approximately 3 hours of work per week or 48 hours in a semester as a minimum. 2- and 4-credit internships would involve approximately 6 or 12 hours of work per week, or 96 or 192 hours of work per semester, respectively. This work may include in-class time, or it may not.

Code	Title	Description	Typical scheduled in-class blocks (min)	SCH	FLH
LEC	Lecture	Course in traditional classroom setting, which may include multiple methods of delivery. <i>This is the default code for courses that do not fit another category.</i> Examples include BIOL 206, PHYS 221, HIST 151, and ENGL 101.	2 x 100 min 3 x 65 min	4 (3 when paired with a STEM lab)	4
			2 x 100 min (half) 3 x 65 min (half) 1 x 100 min (full)	2	2
LAB	STEM Lab	Course in a laboratory setting in which students apply scientific methods and principles. Examples include BIOL 206 L and PHYS 221 L.	1 x 80 min 1 x 100 min 2 x 100 min 1 x 170 min	1 (paired w/LEC)	1 1 2 2 (Contact hrs x .67)
	Non-STEM Lab	Course in a non-traditional classroom setting in which students practice principles and techniques learned in class. Examples include SOWK 370.	Varies	0 (paired w/ LEC)	0 or stipend
LLB	STEM Lecture-Lab Combination	Course in which a Lecture course and Science Lab course are blended into one experience. Examples include BIOL 115, BIOL 123, CHEM 100, PHYS 212, and SCES 110.	2 x 180 min 3 x 120 min	4	4 + 2 = 6 4 + 2 = 6
STU	Studio/ Practicum/ Physical Education	Course in a studio, theater, or gymnasium setting in which students engage in faculty-supervised practice of skills. Examples include studio art, keyboard musicianship, Calvin Media Company, Calvin Theater Company, and health and fitness courses.	2 x 180 min 3 x 120 min	4	4
			2 x 180 min (half) 3 x 120 min (half) 3 x 60 min (full) 2 x 90 min (full)	2	2
			2 x 90 min (half) 2 x 45 min (full)	1	1
INT	Internship/ Clinical/ Field Work	Course in an off-campus setting where students work under the supervision of a professional mentor and are intermittently supervised by Calvin faculty. Examples include student teaching, cooperative education, field work, and nursing externships.	Varies [see guidelines below]	Varies	Varies ²

² Faculty load hours are typically only given for internships if one or more of the following apply: a) there are multiple students involved and significant work needed by a professor to set up the experience for students; b) there is an in-class component to the internship; c) there is significant faculty oversight and evaluation of the off-site experience.

MUE	Music Ensemble	Music ensemble.	3 x 65 min 2 x 100 min	1 0 (overload)	4
			1 x 100 min (full) 2 x 50 min (full)	1 0 (overload)	2
MUL	Music Lesson	One-on-one music instruction. Course fee applies.	1 x 60 min	1 (credit) 0 (non-credit)	Paid hourly
SEM	Seminar	Course in which guests, faculty, or students deliver professional or scholarly presentations, led by a faculty member. Examples include GEO 190, BIOL 295, and PHYS 195.	Varies	0	Varies
CPI	Calvin Prison Initiative	Courses that take place inside the Handlon prison.	TBD	4 2	4 2
ONLA	Online-Asynchronous	A course offered online, asynchronously.	n/a	4	Varies
				2	
ONLS	Online-Synchronous	A course offered online, synchronously.	n/a	4	Varies
				2	
HYB	Hybrid-Online + Lecture	A course that combines online and in-person learning modes.	Varies	4 2	Varies
IND	Independent Study	Independent reading and research done for a course that does not exist in the catalog. Requires approval and supervision.	Varies	Varies	0
TUT	Tutorial	A course that exists in the catalog that a student takes independently. Requires approval and supervision.	Varies	Varies	0
THE	Student Thesis, Recital, or Exhibit	A course in which a student prepares a significant piece of research, scholarship, or creative inquiry. Examples include senior theses, music recitals, and art exhibits.	Varies	Varies	0 (stipends)
OCP	Off-Campus Program Course	A course taken as part of an off-campus program.	Varies	Varies	Varies (overload)

Special instructions for distance education

Contact Hours Versus “Time on Task”

One of the challenges of online instruction can be calculating the appropriate amount of student work for a course. For on-ground courses, Calvin generally has counted “seat time” (time spent in class) and an expected number of hours spent on work outside of class. “Seat time” does not – and should not – translate one-to-one in an online mode. For example, while an hour-long lecture can be appropriate for an on-ground course, long lectures are not effective in online classes, where experts recommend limiting video lectures to fewer than 20 minutes. How, then, to get the equivalent of “contact hours” in a course that is not face-to-face? The typical approach is to think about “time on task.” Each contact hour in an on-ground course (one course credit is generally one contact hour) should include another 2-3 hours of work outside the classroom. In a three-credit course, for example, if each contact hour is the equivalent of 3-4 hours of time on task, and those hours are multiplied over a 14-week semester (at Calvin, this includes exam week), a course will generally range from 126-168 total hours during the semester. The idea, then, for online courses is to assign work for students that they can fulfill within those boundaries of time. Instructors can find a fuller description of that formula here: <https://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/tls/course-design/online-courses/time-task>

What does that look like in practice? It depends. Some faculty might find this workload calculator handy in thinking through some elements of instruction: <https://cte.rice.edu/workload>. But this calculator does not necessarily include the best ways of teaching online. The development opportunities recommended in these Guidelines provide instructors some direction in adapting time on task to the online environment. Instructors can read the US Department of Education’s formal definition of credit hours here: <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/reg/hearulemaking/2009/credit.html>.