


	Title: Credit Hour Policy	Policy # POL-405 Revision # 1.0
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#### 405.1 PURPOSE

The Credit Hour Policy provides guidelines for assigning the appropriate number of credits to courses based upon the amount of time, effort, and outcome attainment expected from students. It describes how adherence to these guidelines is monitored and how variances to these guidelines are to be addressed. This policy guides scheduling the appropriate amount of time when classes are implemented each quarter.

#### 405.2 SCOPE

This policy applies to the creation, revision, and implementation of all academic courses. Continuing Education Unit (CEU) courses are addressed in a separate Continuing Education Procedure.

#### 405.3 BACKGROUND

All accredited colleges and universities are required to establish policy that articulates how the institution assigns credit hours in accordance with the U.S. Department of Education's credit hour definition. Compliance is monitored by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) using its Credit Hour Policy. NWIC has followed the federal definition for credit hours for many years as a practice, with the Curriculum Committee articulating credit hour guidelines in 2010, which were then incorporated into the Credit Hour Policy as approved on March 12, 2014. The current revision to the Credit Hour Policy incorporates more recent descriptions of course types and modes of delivery.

#### 405.4 RESPONSIBILITY

The Curriculum Committee is responsible for assigning or revising the number of credits for each course at NWIC based upon the committee's review of the course outcomes, syllabus, and other supporting materials. Faculty and academic leadership proposing the creation or revision of courses are responsible for recommending the appropriate number of credits based upon the expected time, effort, and student learning outcomes for the course. Academic leadership is responsible for scheduling the appropriate number of credits when classes are implemented and for monitoring the application of this policy.

## 405.5 CREDIT HOUR POLICY STATEMENT AND DEFINITIONS

### Guidelines for Assigning Number of Credit Hours

The number of academic credits assigned to a course is a measure of the total time and effort commitment expected for a student to meet the course's learning outcomes.

Northwest Indian College follows the commonly used *Carnegie Unit* as the guideline for ascribing credit to courses. Each credit (one Carnegie Unit) represents 30 hours of student work per quarter or an average of three hours per week for a standard 10- or 11-week quarter, not counting holidays. The 30 hours per quarter for each credit are apportioned between each of three components according to the course type, as described below. All course types expect that students spend a minimum of 30 hours/credit except for the internship/practicum course type, which requires 40 hours participating in the internship/practicum per credit. NWIC uses these course types: lecture only, laboratory only, lecture with laboratory, physical education, and internship (which includes practicum and field experience). NWIC uses the following modes of delivery for classes: synchronous (in-person or at a distance using videoconferencing technology), asynchronous, and hybrid, which consists of a mixture of synchronous and asynchronous delivery. Course types and modes of delivery are described in more detail in the *Course Types, Class Delivery Methods, and Relationship to Section Codes* and the *Delivery Methods and Class Definitions* documents, which are available on the Curriculum Committee website. The following definitions and descriptions are based upon a synchronous delivery method and can be adapted for asynchronous and hybrid delivery as described later in this document.

Course components – The amount of time students are expected to spend and the number of credit earned for each of the three components is as follows:

1. Lecture component – Structured synchronous contact time, which includes but is not limited to lecture, seminar, or discussion. Each credit represents an average time commitment of at least one hour of synchronous lecture time per week for a standard-length quarter for a total of at least 10 hours of synchronous time for the entire quarter.
2. Laboratory component – Structured synchronous contact time, which includes but is not limited to laboratory or studio. Each laboratory credit represents an average time commitment of at least two hours of structured laboratory time per week for a standard length quarter. This represents at least 20 hours of structured laboratory time per quarter.
3. Out-of-Class component – Unscheduled time students spend addressing course requirements. The time may include but is not limited to online activities, independent or group activities, reading, studying, problem solving, writing, and other forms of preparation. Each credit awarded is based upon students spending a minimum of three hours per week for a typical quarter or a total of 30 hours per quarter devoted to all of the components of the course. Whatever amount of the 30 hours per credit is not covered in the lecture or laboratory components is expected to be spent outside of class time focused on class work.

Course Types – The allocation of time in each of the components for the different course types is as follows:

1. Lecture only – The course consists of lecture. The lecture course type may include seminar, discussions, and similar learning activities. For each credit earned in a lecture type course, students are expected to spend at least an average of one hour per week in scheduled synchronous lecture, whether in-person or at a distance using videoconferencing or other technologies, plus a minimum

of two hours per week in out-of-class activities. Lecture is the default course type unless the course satisfies one of the other course type definitions.

2. **Laboratory only** – The course consists of scheduled synchronous laboratory or studio activities. For each credit earned, students are expected to spend an average of two hours per week in scheduled synchronous laboratory activities, whether in-person or at a distance using videoconferencing, and at least one hour per week in out-of-class activities.
3. **Lecture and Laboratory** – The course consists of a mixture of lecture and laboratory course types. The lecture portion of the course follows the lecture only definition and the laboratory portion of the course follows the laboratory only definition. The relative allocation of lecture and laboratory portions can be determined each time the course is implemented. For example, a five-credit lecture and laboratory course expects that students devote an average of 15 hours to the class per week (five credits times a total of three hours per credit). Four of the five credits may be allocated to lecture (four hours/week) and the remaining one credit allocated to laboratory (two hours/week). The remaining nine hours/week of student time is allocated to the out-of-class component. Alternately, if a greater focus on the laboratory component is necessary, as is typical for higher-level courses, then three credits could be allocated to lecture (three hours/week) and two credits would then be allocated to the laboratory component (four hours/week). The remaining eight hours/week of student time is allocated to the out-of-class component.
4. **Physical Education** – Physical education courses consists entirely of scheduled synchronous physical education activities with no expectation of out-of-class student work. For each credit earned, students are expected to spend an average of three hours per week in scheduled synchronous physical education activities. This course type is only used for courses with the PHED subject code, although a course with a PHED subject code may have another course type, if appropriate and so assigned by the Curriculum Committee.
5. **Internship/Practicum** - The course consists entirely of internship, practicum, or field study activities. For each credit earned, students are expected to spend an average of four hours per week or 40 hours per quarter in internship activities and no additional time is required for out-of-class activities.

The course type is set for any particular course and is determined by the Curriculum Committee and can only be modified by the Curriculum Committee.

A course can be delivered synchronously, asynchronously, or as a hybrid class. While the above definitions and descriptions are based upon synchronous delivery, they may be adapted to asynchronous or hybrid delivery as long as expectations for student achievement of course student learning outcomes and any other course standards are maintained.

The definitions of the three methods of delivery are:

1. **Synchronous class** – a synchronous class focuses on concurrent, collective, and collaborative learning amongst students, *requires regularly-scheduled contact times between instructor and students, may be in-person or at a distance, and is listed in the quarterly class schedule.*

Synchronous classes may be in-person at a site or a telecourse (section code TC) or by videoconferencing (sections code VC).

2. Asynchronous class – an asynchronous class may be self-paced, individual or intermittently collaborative, requires that the content of the class be delivered using methods that do not rely on structured meeting times, and that no regularly scheduled contact times are listed in the quarterly class schedule. Online (section code OL), Independent learning (section code IL), and learning contract (section code LC) classes are asynchronous.
3. Hybrid class – In a hybrid class part of the contact time of a synchronous class is replaced by a required asynchronous component, thus reducing the amount of required scheduled contact time. Hybrid classes are typically 50% synchronous and the remainder asynchronous although they may be implemented between 25% and 75% synchronous and the remainder asynchronous. The section code for hybrid classes consist of a synchronous class section code with an "H" appended at the end. For example, AH, SWH, TCH, or VCH.

Tables for determining appropriate time to allocate for a course – the following tables provide examples of different types and modes of delivery for a five-credit hour course. The table on the left lists the number of hours a student is expected to devote to each of the three components for the five-credit hour course each week for a standard 10-week quarter. The table on the right lists the same information for an entire quarter. This table is useful for determining the number of hours in each component for courses taught in non-standard timeframes. Note that 50 minutes of face-to-face class time constitute one hour of class meeting time, which allows for breaks and time for students to move between classes.

Number of hours student spends per week  
for a 5 credit class assuming a 10 week quarter

	In Class	In Lab/Studio	outside of class	Total
Lecture (face to face)	5	0	10	15
Lecture w/ Lab OR	3	4	8	15
	4	2	9	
Online or Independent	0	0	15	15
Physical Education	15	0	0	15
Hybrid Lecture	2.5	0	12.5	15
Internship/Practicum	20	0	0	20

Number of hours student spends per quarter  
for a 5 credit class

	In Class	In Lab/Studio	outside of class	Total
Lecture (face to face)	50	0	100	150
Lecture w/ Lab OR	30	40	80	150
	40	20	90	
Online or Independent	0	0	150	150
Physical Education	150	0	0	150
Hybrid Lecture	25	0	125	150
Internship/Practicum	200	0	0	200

#### Monitoring Adherence to the Guidelines for Assigning Credit Hours

Northwest Indian College's Curriculum Committee will apply these guidelines in assigning credits in the process of creating or revising academic courses. The Curriculum Committee is responsible for ensuring that the number of credits assigned to a course is appropriate to the course's student learning outcomes and course type.

These guidelines will also be applied as courses are implemented as classes in the quarterly and annual class schedules. For classes that include a synchronous component, the instructional leadership will use

appropriate methods for scheduling the class meeting times using tools, such as formulas or tables as described above, in order to determine and assign the appropriate number of contact hours, at a minimum, for each component of the class based upon its course type and the number of class meetings each week and for the entire quarter. Classes that are taught for non-standard timeframes, either for shorter or longer periods of time than the standard quarter, will also adhere to the same guidelines so that the total time scheduled for the class adheres to these guidelines. In order to ensure that adherence to the credit hour guidelines is comprehensive, accurate, and applied reliably, the instructional leadership of NWIC will monitor the assignment of credits on an ongoing basis to ensure adherence to these guidelines for all classes by reviewing quarterly and annual class schedules prior to approval and making corrections, as needed, prior to approval and publication.

#### Variations from the Guidelines for Assigning Credit Hours

Any variance from the guidelines for assigning credit hours to an academic course will only be made if:

1. There is good cause, such as the course has qualities that are not adequately described by the guidelines for assigning credit hours, and the course is thus different from existing courses at NWIC, and ...
2. The assignment of credit conforms to commonly accepted practices used in higher education.

When the Curriculum Committee approves a variance, the rationale for assigning credit will be documented in the Curriculum Committee minutes and in the course creation or revision form. The documentation will explain why the variance was made and how the assignment of credit is appropriate to the learning outcomes and course type. It will also describe how it conforms to commonly accepted practices in higher education.

#### 405.6 RELATED INFORMATION

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) Credit Hour Policy – available on the NWCCU website at <http://www.nwccu.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Credit-Hour-Policy.pdf>.

Course Types, Class Delivery Methods, and Relationship to Section Codes; Delivery Methods and Class Definitions – document available on the Curriculum Committee website.

Continuing Education Unit Procedure – available on the NWIC Policies and Procedures website at <http://www.nwic.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Continuing-Education-Unit-Procedure.pdf>.

#### 405.7 REVIEW DATE

This policy will be reviewed every three (3) years.