



# **NORTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURAL AND TECHNICAL STATE UNIVERSITY**

SEC. II—COURSES 6.0

## **COURSE CREDIT HOUR**

UNIT POLICY—ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

### **I. Federal Definition of the Credit Hour**

For the purpose of the application of this policy and consistent with federal regulations and the Credit Hours Policy Statement of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' Commission on Colleges (SACS), 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:

- A. Not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours 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
- B. At least an equivalent amount of work as required, as outlined in item (1) above 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.

## **II. Credit Hour Policy**

### **A. Application of the Credit Hour Policy**

The credit hour definition in Section I and this policy applies to all courses at all levels (undergraduate, graduate, and professional) that award academic credit (i.e., any course that appears on an official transcript issued by the University) regardless of the mode of delivery including, but not limited to, self-paced, online, hybrid, lecture, seminar, practica, studio, and laboratory. Academic units are responsible for ensuring that credit hours are awarded only for work that meets the requirements set forth in this policy.

The expectation of contact time inside the classroom and student effort outside the classroom is the same for all course delivery formats whether fully online, hybrid face-to-face/electronic delivery courses, or courses delivered in more traditional lecture, seminar, and laboratory formats. Courses that have less structured classroom schedules, such as research courses, independent studies, internships, practica, studio work or other academic work leading to the award of credit hours, at a minimum, should clearly state learning objectives, expected outcomes, and workload expectations that meet the standards in the credit hour definition in Section I.

### **B. Campus Processes**

#### **1. Academic Calendar**

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University adheres to the Carnegie unit for contact time (750 minutes for each credit awarded) per University of North Carolina Policy 400.1.6. The President of the University's Faculty Senate chairs the Calendar Committee that prepares and recommends the annual Academic Calendar for approval by the Chancellor no less than 18 months in advance of the planned academic year. The Academic Calendar must have a minimum of 750 minutes/semester of instruction per credit hour. The standard meeting times for courses are a 50-minute, Monday-Wednesday-Friday schedule and a 75-minute, Tuesday-Thursday schedule. For the standard 3-credit hour course, 2250 minutes of instruction are required (including scheduled examinations). Courses with non-standard meeting times must also be scheduled to have the minimum 750 minutes/semester of instruction per credit hour. The calendar is planned with a minimum of 75 class days per semester, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays, for a minimum of 150 class days per academic year per University of North Carolina Policy 400.1.6.

The Vice Provost for Research, Graduate Programs and Extended Learning prepares and recommends the summer school calendar for approval by the Chancellor. Scheduling of the summer sessions follows the same 750 minute contact requirement for each credit hour set out in University of North Carolina Policy 400.1.6. The shorter summer sessions require longer weekly meeting times.

The University's Registrar maintains the official Academic Calendar on the University's website: <http://www.ncat.edu/registrar-office/academic-calendar/index.html>.

## 2. Curriculum Review

The curriculum committees or administrative boards of each school or college at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University are charged with following the policy on credit hours in their review and approval of all courses and for certifying that the expected student learning for a course meets the credit hour standard. The determination of credit hours is made by examination of the contact time as well the course's assignments, evaluation mechanisms, and student learning outcomes (SLOs) when a new course or a revision to an existing course is proposed.

Guidance on the ratio of contact time to credit:

- Lecture, discussion, or seminar formats: one contact hour equals one credit hour (1:1 ratio)
- Completely self-contained laboratories (i.e., no outside work required): three contact hours equal one credit hour (3:1 ratio)
- Laboratories requiring outside preparation: two contact hours equal one credit hour (2:1 ratio)
  - Laboratories are where students practice an application and/or explore a concept presented in a lecture. In a laboratory, all students are following a similar set of instructions; thus requiring less minute-to-minute attention by the faculty member.
- Studios and research: two contact hours equal one credit hour (2:1 ratio)
  - Studios and research courses are where students engage in creative or artistic activities which are new and unique and not directed by a lecture class. Because studio activities are not instruction based, they require more minute-to-minute attention by the faculty to engage individual students and guide them toward their goals.
- Online courses must demonstrate an equivalent amount of work and equivalent SLOs required of the same faculty:student engagement time and SLOs that define the contact hour:credit hour ratios for the different types of courses defined above. For online courses, examples of equivalent work would include, but not be limited to, active faculty engagement with students such as in discussion boards, taking examinations, listening/looking at audiovisual presentations, reviewing linked web sites, reviewing lectures, chats or any other items that engage the student with the instructor online. The act of logging on, in itself, does not demonstrate active faculty engagement with students.
- Hybrid courses (i.e., courses that blend face-to-face interaction such as in-class discussions, live lectures, etc. with typically web-based educational

technologies): Credit hour value of the contact hours of hybrid courses will be calculated on the basis of the contact hour:credit hour ratio conventions given above for lecture, discussion, seminar format courses, self-contained laboratories, laboratories requiring outside preparation, and online classes on the basis of their relative contribution to the hybrid course and the equivalency of work and SLOs in a traditional setting.

- Internships, field work, and practica should use the following ratio ranges as a guide:
  - “1/4 time” internships, field work, or practica: 9 to 10 contact hours equal 3 credit hours (3 - 3.33:1 ratio)
  - “1/2 time” internships, field work, or practica: 18 to 20 contact hours equal 6 credit hours (3 - 3.33:1 ratio)

### **3. Training of Class Schedulers**

The Office of the Registrar requires training for class scheduling before granting access to any faculty or staff approved by any administrative or academic unit for scheduling classes. Those faculty and staff members who create the semester and summer session schedules have an important role in maintaining credit hour standards. The training that the Registrar’s Office provides emphasizes the standard time periods for classes.

Approved by the Chancellor

Date this new policy is effective: Upon approval

First approved: May 4, 2015

Revised: