

GUIDELINES FOR FULFILLING THE CREDIT HOUR POLICY AT OBU

Oklahoma Baptist University (OBU) has provided educational opportunities of high quality for more than a century. It is within this tradition of excellence that the faculty of OBU seeks to frame a statement on the standards for granting credit hours to students in a wide variety of formats and through a broad range of instructional activities.

This document is designed to explain the fundamental framework of instructional design with which OBU has historically operated. It also seeks to provide guidelines to ensure future instructional design meets the same high standards for student engagement, while simultaneously meeting the requirements of the US Department of Education.

No part of this document should be perceived to constrain faculty creativity in instructional design. Technology evolves rapidly and new forms of instruction may arise that this document does not anticipate. The faculty have the ultimate responsibility for instructional design to ensure that the opportunity for student learning is reasonably facilitated through any means that academic credit is offered.

DISCUSSION OF REQUIREMENTS:

A significant challenge facing higher education is how to translate traditional education forms into contemporary application. Innovative delivery modalities, creative assignments, and new pathways for academic research have converged to facilitate opportunities for higher education in ways only imagined a few decades ago. The regulation of the Credit Hour is one means to ensure new instructional techniques and delivery modality maintain a continuity of quality with historical standards.

Based on the common practice of higher education in an American context, credits hours have been assigned with approximately 1 Carnegie Unit (50 minutes) per week per credit hour. Also, the common rule of thumb for instructional activities outside of class has been that about two times that amount of work (100 minutes per credit) per week would be necessary to meet the learning goals of a college level course in that format. Since a nominal semester is 15 weeks, this results in approximately 2250 minutes of total student engagement per credit hour.

The Credit Hour Policy approved by the faculty in Fall '15 specifies at least 2250 minutes of instructional activity per credit hour for any course in any format. Faculty are not responsible for ensuring students actually complete that amount of work, or for making precise calculations regarding the exact amount of time the instructional activities of a course will require for any particular student. Such an undertaking would be impossible. Satisfactory completion of the course educational goals, which will be indicated by the course grade, will provide evidence of the students' engagement in instructional activities.

The faculty of OBU are responsible for ensuring present courses provide opportunity for student learning comparable or exceeding historical expectations for college level courses. This is not an exact science. The guidelines below outline what the parameters faculty should consider in making a good faith effort to facilitate student learning in continuity with OBU's tradition of high academic quality.

FACULTY RESPONSIBILITY:

In accordance with the Faculty Handbook, the Curriculum Committee (comprised of faculty) has responsibility to oversee approval of new courses and programs that represent expectations for student learning consistent with the high standards of OBU. Individual faculty who are assigned to a particular course have the responsibility to ensure that courses fulfill the educational purposes for those courses approved by the Curriculum Committee.

Due to the wide range of possible instructional activities and the variation of required effort within the same type of activity, the faculty of OBU have not established formal guidelines for time equivalences for student activities such as pages read or written, calculations, online discussion boards, or any other activities. The individual faculty is ultimately responsible for ensuring his or her syllabus reflects the appropriate amount of student engagement to fulfill the stated course objectives or student learning outcomes.

Since a page of Puritan theology takes more time to read than a page of many contemporary novels, the faculty assigned to a particular course have responsibility and freedom to determine what constitutes an adequate amount of reading for a course instead of abiding by wooden rules for conversion from pages to minutes. Because each student learns at a different rate that may change over her course of study or may be dependent upon state of health or degree of focus, faculty have responsibility and freedom to make assignments based on reasonable expectations of an "average" student instead of trying to measure the time required by students for particular assignments.

Specific faculty responsibilities:

1. Faculty have the responsibility to design courses that include college level educational goals consistent with the course descriptions approved by the Curriculum Committee.
2. Based on their experience as instructors and students, faculty have the responsibility to assign instructional activities that provide students sufficient opportunity to fulfill the course's college level educational goals.
3. Faculty have the responsibility to present students with a syllabus that outlines the educational goals of the course and the assigned instructional activities.
4. Faculty have the responsibility to be able to explain how the assigned instructional activities in the syllabus reflect at least 2250 minutes per credit hour

of total engagement by the average student who participates fully in all required course activities.

5. Faculty have the responsibility to ensure a copy of each course syllabus is provided to their dean, in accordance with the Faculty Handbook.
6. Faculty have the responsibility, subject to the provisions of the Faculty Handbook, to conduct their courses consistently with the syllabus.

Faculty responsibilities do NOT include:

1. Faculty are not responsible to perform empirical research regarding actual time required by students to complete assignments.
2. Faculty are not responsible to document exact amounts of time required for each instructional activity, whether those assignments are specifically outlined in the syllabus (e.g., reading assignments) or whether they are assumed (e.g., study time).

No statement in this document should be considered to supersede or modify the duties outlined within the Faculty Handbook or any other official policy.

DEFINITIONS:

I. Direct Faculty Instruction:

Direct Faculty Instruction includes activities related to the academic purposes of the course that are guided by a qualified instructor who has academic responsibility for the content of the course. Examples of such activities include but are not limited to: lectures, instructor facilitated discussions (including online), exams, meetings between the student and instructor, observation of a task performed by a skilled practitioner, and formative or summative feedback from the instructor.

II. Instructional Activities:

Instructional Activities includes all activities that in some reasonable manner support the educational purpose of the course. This includes Direct Faculty Instruction and other activities explicitly assigned or reasonably expected for successful completion of the course objectives or student learning outcomes.

Some examples of instructional activities include but are not limited to: reading, writing, research, editing, interviews, practice of a skill, memorization, study, reflection, rehearsal, discussion, conference attendance, calculation, project creation or design, presentation. Purely passive activities such as travel to a destination do not constitute an instructional activity. For example: The flight to a study tour does not constitute an instructional activity unless combined with meaningful participation in an activity that supports the educational purpose of the course.

EXPLANATION OF FULFILLMENT FOR PARTICULAR TYPES OF COURSE:

The following pages outline the typical application of the Credit Hour policy at OBU. These examples and explanations should not be presumed to reduce faculty flexibility in course design. Consistent with the provisions of the Faculty Handbook, instructors may adjust the balance between direct instruction and other learning activities as fits the nature of the course content and the needs of the learners provided the total instructional activities are expected to equate to at least 2250 minutes of total instructional activity per credit hour.

Meeting-Based On-Campus Courses

The nominal semester is 15 weeks at OBU. Most classes at OBU will meet for 50 minutes each week per credit hour for direct faculty instruction. Students will be assigned approximately 100 minutes of other instructional activities per credit hour.

Compressed On-Campus Courses

Courses that meet for fewer than 15 weeks will require approximately the same volume of instructional activities per credit hour as full semester courses, and no fewer than 2250 minutes per credit hour. The course objectives or student learning outcomes of compressed courses should be consistent with those used for full semester courses.

Online Courses

Courses offered primarily through various online media will require approximately the same workload per credit hour and pursue essentially similar course objectives or student learning outcomes to a comparable meeting-based on-campus course. There should be at least 2250 minutes of instructional activity per credit hour, which may be divided between direct faculty instruction and other instructional activities in a manner that meets the needs of the students. Additionally, online courses should include the opportunity for substantial faculty engagement, which may take the form of discussion boards, taking examinations, viewing or listening to audiovisual presentations, chats, feedback on assignments, exchange of e-mails, or any other activities that engage the student with the instructor during the course. This substantial faculty engagement must include dynamic interaction with the current student population; it may not consist entirely of existing audiovisual materials. The act of logging on, in itself, does not demonstrate active faculty engagement with students.

Hybrid Courses

Courses offered in a blended format, with significant online and on-campus components, will require approximately the same total workload per credit hour and pursue essentially equivalent course objectives or student learning outcomes of a

similar meeting-based on-campus course. There should be at least 2250 minutes of instructional activity per credit hour, which may be divided between direct faculty instruction and other instructional activities in a manner that meets the needs of the students.

Laboratory Courses

Laboratory courses that meet for a nominal 15-week semester will normally meet approximately 100 minutes per week with approximately 50 minutes of other instructional activities per credit hour. Laboratory courses that meet for fewer than 15 weeks will require an approximate total of instructional activities of at least 2250 minutes per credit hour, which may be divided in a manner that meets the needs of students and fulfills student learning outcomes or course objectives essentially the same as those of a full semester laboratory course.

Clinical and Practica Courses

Clinical and Practica courses will require at least 2250 minutes of instructional activity in practical or preparatory activities per credit hour. Since these courses are intended to gain active learning by doing or directly observing tasks, normally about one half (1/2) of the minimum total student engagement should be direct engagement in practical activities.

Studio Courses

Studio courses that meet for a nominal 15-week semester will normally meet approximately 100 minutes per week with approximately 50 minutes of out of class instructional work per credit hour. Studio courses that meet for fewer than 15 weeks will require an approximate total of instructional activity of at least 2250 minutes per credit hour, which may be divided in a manner that meets the needs of students and fulfills student learning outcomes or course objectives essentially the same as those of a full semester studio course.

Music Lessons

Music lessons will normally meet approximately 30 minutes per week per credit hour during a nominal 15-week semester. Students will be expected to practice at least (and likely more than) 120 minutes per 30 minutes of lesson. Music lessons with fewer meetings may balance direct instruction and individual practice in a manner that meets the needs of the learner and fulfills the minimum time of expected instructional activity of 2250 minutes per credit hour.

Music Ensemble

Music ensembles will normally require a total time commitment of rehearsal, performance, individual practice time, and other instructional activities directly related to the ensemble not less than approximately 2250 minutes per credit hour.

Internships

Credit for paid or unpaid internships may be granted, subject to applicable regulations and guidelines of the US Department of Labor. For each credit hour of an internship, the student is expected to engage in at least 37.5 hrs (2250 mins) of activities related to the internship. Instructional activities may include supervised work activities, individual study and preparation, or other tasks directly related to the academic purpose of the internship.

Independent Study or Thesis Courses

Courses that are designed to facilitate independent student learning under the supervision of a faculty (to include special research projects, thesis courses, or other similar courses) must require at least 2250 minutes of instructional activity per credit hour. Such activities may include meetings with an instructor, reading, writing, research, practical activities, presentations, or other activities related to the approved course objectives or student learning outcomes.

Study Abroad/Study Tour/Go Center-Sponsored Activities

Courses that include significant travel or service components must require at least 2250 minutes of total student engagement in instructional activities per credit hour. Instructional activities may include cultural engagement, observation, reflection assignments, discussions, research, presentations, community service, or other activities related to the academic purpose of the course. Travel time that does not include active instruction does not constitute a learning activity. Instructional activities required prior to or after travel may be included in the total amount provided they are completed prior to the awarding of credit.

Non-Credit Courses

Courses that are required for degree completion but for which no credit is granted will include instructional activities that support the stated course objectives or student learning outcomes of the course.

Other Courses

Opportunities may arise for learning to occur in formats not specifically addressed by one of the categories in this document. They may be conducted in accordance with existing university policy provided they require at least 2250 minutes of student engagement in instructional activity per credit hour.