

## Procedures for Assigning Credit Hours at Virginia Wesleyan University

Defining credit hour and credit measures of different course types: Credit hour is the unit by which Virginia Wesleyan University measures its course work. The number of credit hours assigned to a course reflects the learning outcomes expected, the mode of instruction, the contact hours (or amount of time spent in class), and the amount of outside preparatory work expected for the class.

Virginia Wesleyan University defines the credit hour in accordance with federal policy, which mandates that all institutions comply with the definition of the credit hour as set forth in Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations. Section 602.2 specifies:

“[A] a credit hour is 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 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.“

A typical face-to-face 4-credit course at VWU meets for either 3 (with a fourth hour “enhanced”) or 4 hours (150-200 minutes of contact hours) per week for approximately 15 weeks (one semester). Each course requires 9 (enhanced courses) or 8 hours, respectively, of out-of-class student work per week. During Summer Sessions and Winter Session, four-credit face to face courses meet for fewer than 15 weeks: Summer Sessions are 12, 7, or 4 weeks, and Winter Session is 3 weeks.

Online courses meet for 7.5 weeks and are either 3 or 4 credit hours, in accordance with best practices for the particular subject matter.

By a combination of contact hours and out-of-class work, courses in each session require the same total number of hours—the combined time spent on direct face-to-face instruction, preparation for class, homework, laboratory work, field work, or other tasks—as an equivalent credit-hour course offered in the typical 15-week semester.

Credit measures for 8 typical types of courses. Using the 15-week semester, the semester credit hour (as defined in the Federal Regulation above), and 50 minutes in direct face-to-face instruction as a contact hour, credit for VWU course offerings are measured under the following guidelines.

### **Face-to-face Lecture and Seminar Courses (4 credit hours)**

In courses with a lecture mode of instruction, sections are typically scheduled to meet weekly over the entire semester for either 3 or 4 hours per week.

4 contact hours per week: Students are expected to spend a minimum of 8 hours outside of the classroom each week, 2 hours outside of class for every hour spent in class. Thus a total of 12 hours per week times 15 weeks brings the total to at least 180 hours per semester.

3 contact hours per week: Students are expected to spend a minimum of 9 hours outside of the classroom each week. This equates to 2 hours spent outside of class for each hour spent in class (total of 6 hours),

plus an additional 3 hours of work for the enhanced hour. The grand total (3 hours in class plus 9 hours out of class) equates to 12 hours per week, or 180 hours per semester.

#### **Hybrid or Online Courses (3 or 4 credit hours)**

At VWU, a hybrid course is defined as 30% or more of instructional time online, and an online course is 75% or more of instructional time online. The credit hours awarded for distance learning options must be reasonably equivalent to the standards outlined for face-to-face courses of combined classroom instruction and outside student work per credit hour for a 15-week semester. Distance learning options carry additional requirements for Educational Programs Commission approval to ensure not only the appropriate award of credit but also that these options conform to core principles established in VWU's face-to-face courses: small classes that engage students in active learning, to foster learning that is both intellectually challenging and student driven. 4-credit hour courses would comprise the equivalent of 180 hours of instructional time plus outside work, and 3-credit hour courses would comprise the total of 135 hours of instructional time plus outside work.

#### **Laboratory Science Courses (4 credit hours, including 1 credit hour lab and 3 credit hours lecture)**

In courses with a laboratory mode of instruction, the laboratory portion is typically 1 credit hour, and meets for 3 contact hours per week for a 15 week semester. The lecture portion (3 credit hours) meets 3 contact hours per week and students are expected to spend 6 hours outside of the classroom engaged in learning.

#### **Internships (variable credit hours)**

At VWU, academic internships are program-specific course approved through the same process as traditional courses. The awarding of credit for internship courses includes specified hours of work experience (for 4 credit hours this minimum is 130 hours of work experience), combined with additional course requirements such that the total is reasonably equivalent to the standards outlined for traditional courses. Faculty create syllabi for their internship courses, and supervise the internship to ensure that students meet work experience contact hours and other requirements. Faculty maintain contact with on-site supervisors to monitor progress, and evaluate student performance and award final grades.

#### **Applied Music “Private Study” courses (2 credit hour)**

Applied Music “private study” (instrumental, voice, piano/organ, guitar, composition) courses are typically 2 credit hours, earned by 1 contact hour in class with at least 5 additional hours of practice or other study time out of class over a 15 week semester.

#### **Guided Study or Independent Study (typically 4 credit hours)**

Guided and independent study courses allow qualified individual students to pursue independent research and other types of study, working with a faculty member. Credit hours associated with this type of instruction will be assigned depending upon the amount of activity associated with the course, faculty supervision and/or meetings, and students outside learning activities. In general, 1 semester hour of credit is awarded for the combination of 45 hours of student work, including all of these forms of activity.

#### **Pre-professional Education Field Experience courses: Practicums and Student Teaching (1 credit hour; 8 credit hours)**

Field experiences allow for observation, participation, and practica both on and off campus. Credit for such field experiences is determined in accordance with recommendations of specific accrediting bodies or applicable state regulation.

#### **Activity Courses (1 credit hour):**

Activity courses, such as Physical Education, measure credit largely in terms of contact hours in which students are directly engaged in the activity. Typically such courses require 3 contact hours a week for a 1 credit hour course.

Policy Review. The Vice President for Academic Affairs, in consultation with the Academic Council and Registrar, is responsible for maintaining the currency of the content of this policy, incorporating any changes that occur in the course of the administration of Academic Affairs. The VPAA will review the policy every five years, corresponding to interim and decennial accreditation review.

*Revised and approved by Maynard H. Schaus, VPAA October 20, 2021*  
*Approved by Timothy G. O'Rourke, VPAA/Dean August 5, 2015*