SOUTH DAKOTA BOARD OF REGENTS

Policy Manual

SUBJECT: Definition and Assignment of Credit Hours

NUMBER: 2.4.3

A. PURPOSE

This policy defines credit hours and the methodology used in the assignment of credit hours by the Regental Institutions. This policy is designed to ensure compliance with both federal regulations and the accrediting institution requirements. Federal law will supersede this policy where federal law differs.

B. DEFINITIONS

1. **Contact Hour:** Defined as a measure that represents an hour of scheduled instruction given to students. The Board of Regents requires that for every credit hour, one (1) hour of contact shall be assigned to a course (e.g., a typical three (3) credit hour course, fifteen (15) weeks = forty-five (45) contact hours).
2. **Credit Hour[1]:** Under Federal Law, defined as
   - **a.** One (1) hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two (2) hours of out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen (15) weeks for one (1) semester or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or
   - **b.** At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (a) 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.
3. **Delivery Method:** Defined as the mode for which a course has been configured to deliver the course content (e.g., Face-to-Face, Online Asynchronous, etc.).
4. **Institution Accreditation:** Holding accreditation from one (1) of the following regional accrediting bodies, unless otherwise specified: Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), Higher Learning Commission (HLC), Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), and WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC).
5. **Instructional Method:** Defined as a methodology used to present course content which arranges student learning toward desired course outcomes (e.g., Lecture, Discussion, Lab, etc.).

[1] Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Title 34, Part 600.2

6. **Regental Institution:** Defined as one of the six (6) public universities: Black Hills State University, Dakota State University, Northern State University, South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, South Dakota State University, and the University of South Dakota.

C. POLICY STATEMENTS

1. A credit hour is a unit by which an institution measures its coursework. Federal Law[2] permits an institution to determine the amount of work associated with a credit hour, to consider a variety of delivery methods, instructional methods, measurements of student work, educational experience, outside classroom activity/preparation, disciplines, and degree levels.
2. BOR Policy 2.1.1 shall provide governance on the required calendar ensuring instructional time is established to meet credit hour and contact hour requirements.
3. Credit hours are used to convey the length of a program of study.

D. CREDIT HOUR ACCEPTED STANDARDS

The following are generally accepted standards in higher education as it relates to credit hour requirements[3,4]. In general, an equivalent of forty-five (45) hours of work by a typical student is required for each credit hour.

1. At least fifteen (15) contact hours of recitation, lecture, discussion, seminar, or similar experience, as well as a minimum of thirty (30) hours of student homework is required for each credit hour;
2. Laboratory courses with few outside requirements require a minimum of forty-five (45) contact hours for each credit hour;
3. Laboratory courses with moderate out-of-class preparation require a minimum of thirty (30) contact hours for each credit hour;
4. Studio courses must involve at least thirty (30) contact hours and at least fifteen (15) hours of homework for each credit hour;
5. Internships/practica/field experiences must require a minimum of forty-five (45) clock hours of work for each credit hour;
6. Music instruction and specialized types of music performance offerings must conform to the requirement for accreditation of the National Association of Schools of Music;
7. Workshops must involve a minimum of forty-five (45) hours for each credit hour, including a minimum of fifteen (15) contact hours, with the balance of the requirement completed as students fulfill related assignments; and
8. Credit hours for courses delivered using online (distance), hybrid, and other nontraditional modes are assigned based on competencies or learning outcomes that are acquired through

[2] Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Title 34, Part 600.2
[3] HLC Policy on Assignment of Credits
[4] HLC Assumed Practices

coursework and are equivalent to those of students in a traditional classroom setting.

E. AWARDING OF CREDIT

Each Regental institution must demonstrate that credit hours assigned to the course and awarded to each successful completer are appropriate for the course and for the program. Most commonly, this is demonstrated by documenting that students completing the course have acquired equivalent levels of knowledge, skills, or competencies to those acquired by students in comparable programs of study. Each Regental institution shall have a practice documented to review and audit courses ensuring they meet the institution's accreditor standards.

FORMS / APPENDICES:

None

SOURCE:

BOR June 2011; BOR August 2023; October 2023 (Clerical).