

# Procedure for Determining Course Time Equivalency for Asynchronous Instruction

## Purpose

Due to Federal regulations promulgated by the US Department of Education, the Higher Learning Commission requires institutions to document how they determine in-class and out-of-class time equivalencies for distance courses and therefore document how credit hours for distance courses are determined. (Creighton.edu)

The Higher Learning Commission provides guidance on how Cameron University assigns student credit hours:

## Assignment of Credit Hours

The institution's assignment and awarding of credit hours shall conform to commonly accepted practices in higher education. Those institutions seeking, or participating in, Title IV federal financial aid, shall demonstrate that they have policies determining the credit hours awarded to courses and programs in keeping with commonly-accepted practices and with the federal definition of the credit hour, as reproduced herein for reference only, and that institutions also have procedures that result in an appropriate awarding of institutional credit in conformity with the policies established by the institution.

***Federal Credit Hour Definition:** 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 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 activities as established by an institution, including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading toward to the award of credit hours. 34CFR 600.2 (11/1/2010) -- (hlcommission.org)*

## Calculations

One academic credit hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction is equivalent to 50 minutes per week over a regular 16-week semester, for a total of 800 minutes per credit hour of direct faculty instruction. For a 3-credit course, this equates to 150 minutes per week over a regular 16-week semester, or 2,400 minutes total for direct faculty instruction. Students are assumed also to complete, generally, two hours of outside-of-class work for every academic credit hour they take.

Time allocations for asynchronous instructional and student learning activities should utilize similar credit-hour time calculations as traditional face-to-face courses, and as defined by the established standards and requirements for each academic unit (department or school). Estimate examples of time allocations for asynchronous instructional activities are listed below.

## **Estimated Example Time Allocations for Asynchronous Instruction and Student Learning**

These equivalencies represent minimum requirements.

***Figure 1. Course Time Equivalencies for Asynchronous Instruction***

<b>Credit Hours*</b>	<b>Direct Instruction</b>	<b>Total Minutes/# of Meeting Times</b>	<b>Study Hours**</b>	<b>Total Hours/Week</b>
1	800/16	0.8 hours	2 hours	2.8 hours/week
2	1600/32	1.7 hours	4 hours	5.7 hours/week
3	2400/48	2.5 hours	6 hours	8.5 hours/week
4	3200/64	3.3 hours	8 hours	11.3 hours/week
5	4000/80	4.2 hours	10 hours	14.2 hours/week

*\*16-week Semester*

*\*\*Study Time = Equated to 2 hours per week, per credit hour*

With regard to course time equivalencies, there is some variation within certain subjects, laboratory arrangements, etc.

### **Recommendations for Determining Time Equivalencies for Distance Education Courses**

It is recommended that each instructor allocate an estimated time to complete each assignment and assessment within each module of the online course. The estimated time per week should equal the Total Hours/Week in **Figure 1. Course Time Equivalencies for Asynchronous Instruction.**

Appendix A, titled **Suggestions and Examples for Determining Time Equivalencies for Distance Education Courses** provides instructors resources for calculating allocations. With regard to time equivalencies, there will be differences in content, context, learner preparation and environment. These example calculations are recommendations; individual instructors will make decisions regarding specific curriculum and instruction decisions.

## Appendix A. Suggestions and Examples for Determining Time Equivalencies for Distance Education Courses

*Figure A1. Examples of on-campus learning activities modified for online learning*

ON-CAMPUS ACTIVITIES	ONLINE VERSION
<b>LECTURE</b>	Instructor’s commentary on the readings, with links to illustrative images, (video media or text)
<b>SMALL-GROUP WORK</b>	Participation in the discussion area
<b>EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES</b>	Online labs, interviews, activities within the community of the learner, online field trips
<b>CLASS DISCUSSION</b>	Asynchronous forum where instructor expands upon the lecture, answers questions, and facilitates student interaction

*Figure A2. Examples of learning activities/assessments for 16-week, 3-credit online courses*

TASK	TIME
<b>VIEWING THREE, 15-MINUTE LECTURES (TEXT OR VIDEO) WITH WEB LINKS</b>	1 hour
<b>READING ASSIGNMENTS</b>	1 hour
<b>ANALYSIS OF READINGS</b>	2 hours
<b>QUIZ</b>	1 hour
<b>POSTING TO DISCUSSIONS (ORIGINAL POST, RESPONDING TO CLASSMATES)</b>	2 hours
<b>SMALL GROUP PROJECT MEETINGS (WEB CONFERENCING OR OTHER)</b>	1 hour
<b>WORK ON FINAL RESEARCH PAPER</b>	2 hours
<b>WRITING ASSIGNMENT</b>	2 hours
<b>PERFORM A SPEECH</b>	2 hours
<b>CREATE A PODCAST</b>	2 hours
<b>INTERACTIVE WEB-BASED LAB SIMULATIONS</b>	2 hours

Turner, T. (2005)

**Calculating student time** (three ways to help calculating how long students will spend on task):

- The Experiential Method
  - Faculty use their experience to estimate the time and effort needed by the typical student to successfully complete each of the learning activities in the class. *Ex. Based on my class last semester, it should take students about an hour to complete the activity.* (McDaniel, 2011).
- The Proxy Method
  - The instructor or course calculates how long it would take someone familiar with the material and assignment, like themselves or a TA, and multiplies it by some factor. *Ex. Faculty takes one hour to complete an assignment X, the student should take 3x as long.* (Carnegie Mellon University, 2013).

- **Survey Method**

- Faculty survey students following various assignments to poll how long it took them to complete a given activity, and use this data to design future activities and courses. *Ex. Student poll data indicated 50% of the students finished the assignment in one hour, with the other majority falling within one standard deviation of the mean.* (Carnegie Mellon University, 2013).

Carnegie Mellon University (2013). Solve a teaching problem: Assign a reasonable amount of work. Retrieved September 27, 2019.

McDaniel, E.A. (2011). Level of student effort should replace contact time in course design. *Journal of Information Technology Education, 10*(10).

Turner, T. (2005). Student workload in the online course. *Educator's Voice, 6*(3).

### **Communication, English and Foreign Languages Department Example**

16-week Online Course: 3 credit hour course = 8.5 hours/week of student engagement.

#### **Week 1**

Reading and Analysis: 3 hours

Case Study Video: 1 hour

Discussion Board Work: 1 hour

Assignment: 3.5 hours

*(perform a speech, edit a document, research, produce a podcast, layout a page)*

### **Education Department Example**

Hybrid Course: 1.5 hours F2F/week

3 credit hour course = 8.5 hours/week of combined seat time/online learning equivalent.

#### **Week 1**

F2F session: 1.5 hours

Reading x 3 chapters: 1.5 hours

Discussion Board x 1: 1 hour

Flipgrid x 1: 1 hour

Assignment: 3.5 hours

*(develop lesson, teach lesson, video lesson, reflect on lesson)*

### **Sports and Exercise Science Example**

16-week Online Course: 3 credit hours = 8.5 hours/week of student engagement.

#### **Week 1**

Readings, Ch. 1 & 2: 3 hours

Lectures & Presentations: 0.5 hour

Literacy Assignments: 0.5 hour

Individual Project: 3.5 hours

Assessment: 1 hour