



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER EL PASO

Operating Policy and Procedure

HSCEP OP: 59.09, Definition and Calculation of Credit Hours

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso (TTUHSC El Paso) Operating Policy and Procedure (HSCEP OP) is to provide a general definition of a credit hour and practices for determining the amount and level of credit awarded for courses at TTUHSC El Paso.

REVIEW: This HSCEP OP will be reviewed by June 1 of every odd-numbered year (ONY) by the vice president for academic affairs or designee, with recommendations for revision submitted to the president or designee by July 15.

POLICY/PROCEDURE:

I. Background

TTUHSC El Paso has policies and procedures that conform to accepted practices for defining a credit hour and determining the amount and level of credit awarded for courses, regardless of format or mode of delivery.

II. Definition of a Credit Hour

Each TTUHSC El Paso academic school determines the amount of credit awarded for undergraduate and graduate courses based on the unit of the semester credit hour in accordance with federal and state rules and accreditation guidelines:

A. In [34 CFR 600.2](#), the United States Department of Education defines a credit hour for federal programs as follows:

1. 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:
 - a. 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 10 to 12 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 in paragraph (a) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution, including laboratory work, internships, clinical work, practica, studio work, independent study, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.
 - c. In the case of a program subject to the clock-to-credit-hour conversion requirements, institutions must determine the credit hours to be awarded for coursework under those requirements. [See 34 CFR 600.2 *Definition of Clock Hour* and [34 CFR 668.8](#) (k) and (l).]

2. A credit hour for federal purposes is an institutionally established equivalency that

reasonably approximates some minimum amount of student work reflective of the amount of work expected in a Carnegie unit. In determining the amount of work the institution's learning outcomes will entail, as under current practice, the institution may take into consideration alternative delivery methods, measurements of student work, academic calendars, disciplines, and degree levels.

- a. TTUHSC El Paso also applies the rule of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) in the definition of the standard credit hour. According to [Title 19, Texas Administrative Code, §4.6](#), the semester is defined as 15 weeks of instruction (45 contact hours) plus a week for final examinations.
- b. To ensure quality of student learning, every course is assumed to involve a significant amount of non-contact hour time for out-of-class student learning and reflection. Semester credit hours, therefore, are based on contact hours. Assuming a lecture format, the traditional three-hour semester credit-hour course, for example, contains 45 to 48 contact hours.
- c. Courses taught in shortened timeframes are expected to have the same number of contact hours as courses taught in a 15-week semester.
- d. Courses taught in a non-traditional way (e.g. online or through a shortened, intensive format) may meet an alternative standard but only if the course has been reviewed and approved through a formal, institutional faculty review process that evaluates the course and its learning outcomes and determines that the course does, in fact, have equivalent learning outcomes to a comparable, traditionally delivered course.

III. Faculty Role in Determining the Amount and Level of Credit

Each academic school is responsible for establishing a formal faculty review process to ensure that the amount and level of credit awarded for the school's undergraduate and graduate courses is compatible with sound academic practice in the given field. The Academic Council reviews changes and updates in course credit hours made by each school.

IV. Calculation of Credit Hours

- A. Each TTUHSC El Paso school determines the amount of credit awarded for undergraduate and/or graduate courses based on the unit of the semester credit hour and in accordance with federal and state regulations, as outlined in paragraph II.A.2 of this operating policy. In addition, professional programs are required to meet the standards of professional accrediting organizations, as described below.
- B. The Paul L. Foster School of Medicine determines the amount of credit awarded for courses in accordance with the accreditation standards of the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME), which is the accrediting body for medical education programs in the United States and Canada. The LCME defines program length and academic credit in terms of weeks of instruction, rather than semester hours, requiring a minimum of 130 weeks of instruction for educational programs leading to the M.D. degree (Functions and Structure of a Medical School, Element 6.8).
- C. The Woody L. Hunt School of Dental Medicine determines the amount of credit awarded for courses in accordance with the accreditation standards of the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) which is the accrediting body for dental education programs in the United States and Canada. The CODA defines program length and academic credit in terms of weeks of instruction, rather than semester hours, requiring an equivalent of four years of instruction for educational programs leading to the D.M.D. degree (Standard 2-3).