



## **Awarding Credit/Definition of Credit Hour**

### **Policy No. 2.09**

#### **I. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to define what is meant by the term credit hour and to set forth the criteria and process for determining academic credit. The U.S. Department of Education regulations governing credit hours and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) policy statement on the credit hour undergird Tennessee State University's (TSU) policy regarding the awarding of academic credit irrespective the location or mode of delivery to include traditional face-to-face courses, distance education courses, and courses offered in a shortened session or at an off-campus instructional site. This policy is applicable to all levels of courses (undergraduate and graduate) and all types of courses such as clinical experience independent study, internship, laboratory, practicum, seminar, student teaching, studio, study abroad, and research.

#### **II. Policy Statement**

Tennessee State University adheres to the US Department of Education Regulation 34 CFR 600.2 and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Credit Hours Policy Statement requirements in defining the credit hour as a unit of educational accomplishment or measure represented by learning outcomes. According to Federal Regulations, a credit hour is defined as follows:

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 academic activities as established by the institution, including laboratory work, internships, practicum, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

#### **III. Responsibility**

Similar to faculty at other institutions of higher education, faculty at Tennessee State University have responsibility for the curriculum. Oversight of program content, quality, effectiveness, and the assignment of the amount of credit to be awarded reside with the faculty, in accordance with University, College and departmental policies. Departmental and other University curriculum committees that approve new courses and programs thoroughly examine the proposal which includes justification of credit to be awarded.

Institutionally established criteria reflect professional standards and include some or all the following:

- discipline-specific best practices;
- purpose and goals of the course;
- intellectual/learning outcomes;
- content and topics;
- major assignments;
- assessment methods;
- class level: lower or upper division undergraduate, undergraduate/graduate combined, graduate (master and/or doctoral).
- course type: lecture, lab, clinical, studio, study abroad, internship, field placement, independent study, thesis, or dissertation;
- course delivery method: on-ground , hybrid, online (synchronous, asynchronous, or combined)
- articulation and transferability of credit to other institutions; and
- other factors as appropriate.

As stated in the Federal Regulations, one semester credit reasonably approximates the learning outcomes expected from one hour of direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student academic engagement each week for 15 weeks. Courses offered in alternative calendars and course types require an equivalent amount of faculty and student engagement and learning outcomes.

#### **IV. Criteria and Process for Determining Credit for Programs**

- A. Departmental faculty and other faculty curriculum committees determine the quantity of credits for courses and programs in accordance with commonly accepted discipline-specific best practices for undergraduate and graduate degree credentials and with policies of the TSU Board of Trustees, Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC), and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.
- B. Faculty develop courses and programs and provide justification for proposed credit amounts. Departmental, College, and University faculty committees conduct rigorous reviews of course and program proposals, including justifications for credit to be awarded. Internally, these groups along with the Vice President of Academic Affairs are also responsible for final approval of proposals. Final acceptance of a proposal by each appropriate review committee denotes the review and acceptance of the proposed number of credits.

#### **V. External Review**

Once a proposal has been routed through the internal process, the University, along with THEC, initiates an external program review. Accreditation and program reviewers assess TSU programs of study in accordance with discipline-specific best practices, including credit awarded for courses. TSU provides its policy and procedure for awarding of credit in compliance with SACSCOC standards and Federal Regulations.

**Adopted: Fall 2015, Updated December 2020**