

Washtenaw Community College

Guidelines for Determination of Credit Hours and Contact Hours

Updated May 2, 2024

Introductions and Definitions:

In accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations (34 CFR), Institutions of higher education are required to define and follow an institutional policy on credit hours and contact hours.

The Federal Definition of a Unit of Credit (taken in part from 34 CFR section 600.2 and 600.24 of the Higher Education Opportunity Act) is:

Credit hour: Except as provided in 34 CFR 668.8(k) and (l), 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 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.

Washtenaw Community College applies the following definitions:

A credit hour gives value to an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement of those outcomes. A credit hour requires a minimum of one “hour” of direct faculty instruction and two hours of out- of-class student work each week for the equivalent of fifteen weeks. WCC meets or exceeds the requirement for the Carnegie Collegiate Student Hour for contact time (750 minutes per term for each credit awarded) by scheduling a “55 minute hour.”

Distance Learning (DL) courses and Mixed Mode (MM) courses, in addition to face-to-face courses, require the same number of contact hours of regular and substantive interactions between faculty and students. Mixed mode courses are, by default, distributed 50/50 between online virtual instruction and/or class activities and face-to-face instruction and/or class activities.

All section instructors for DL and MM courses are required to follow the guidelines of the Master Course Site maintained by WCC's CiTL (Center for Interactive Teaching and Learning).

Furthermore, courses taught in a compressed format follow the same credit hour/contact hour distribution as face-to-face courses offered in a 15-week format. Compressed courses (offered in variations of 12-weeks, 10-weeks, 7 ½ weeks, 6 weeks, etc.) all meet for the same number of hours of regular and substantive contact between faculty and students. When the frequency of meetings is reduced, the length of meetings is correspondingly increased. All section instructors for compressed format courses are required to follow the guidelines of the Course Master Syllabus providing instruction on all student learning outcomes and course objectives.

All online courses are developed by a faculty lead who works with both a course designer and a quality assurance specialist from CiTL. After the course is developed, it receives further review from the faculty-led OLAT committee (Online Learning Advisory Team). Once a course goes through this rigorous development process, other faculty may teach the course, but are required to follow the Master Course Site maintained by CiTL.

Washtenaw Community College defines substantive interactions with students as contacts including but not limited to lecture, discussion, demonstration, dialogue, discussion boards (DL and MM classes), activities, asking and answering questions, providing feedback, behavioral modeling, brainstorming, clinical activities, lab activities performed under the supervision of an instructor, group activities and discussions, panel discussions, practice exercises, quizzes and tests, role playing, and simulation.

Washtenaw Community College defines regular interactions as being consistent and frequent during the duration of the course. For DL and MM classes, instructional workload, communication and presence is equivalent to face-to-face courses as further detailed in the CiTL Online and Blended Teaching Requirements.

Definition of contact hours based on instruction type designation

Lecture: Instruction is focused on theory, ideas, concepts or principles and may be delivered in a variety of modes. This form of instruction generally requires out-of-class preparation prior to class as well as follow-up assignments. It represents instructor-led activities such as lecture, discussion, demonstration or activity.

Designation	Credit Hour	Contact Hours	Student Out of Class Preparation ¹
Lecture	1	15	30

Many academic experiences are integral to courses or programs because they allow students to practice and apply their learning in laboratory, studio, simulation or workplace. Each of these requires additional contact hours to earn a credit hour.

Science Laboratory describes a class in which all students are practicing an application of a scientific or technical nature that extends their knowledge beyond what has already been delivered in the lecture class or is based on discovery of concepts in an experiential lab setting. Content in a lab is based on theory or content from an associated course or is meant to allow the student to discover concepts but does not simply duplicate the material from the associated course. Knowledge extensions include original experiments, as well as observations of scientific phenomena such as anatomical specimens or chemical reactions. A lab is instruction-based and requires minute-to-minute responsibility for faculty members to interact with individual students as well as small groups of students. The role of faculty in the lab is individual and small-group instruction in techniques and procedures; scientific reasoning; and safety.

Designation	Credit Hour	Minimum Contact Hours	Student Out of Class Preparation ¹
Science Lab	1	45	varies

Activity, Lab, Studio or Simulation/Clinical Lab describe a class in which all students are practicing an application of a technical nature that, for the most part, has already been delivered in the lecture class. Content in a lab is based on theory or content from an associated course. The faculty member is fully engaged with students as they practice on technical material, machinery or simulation activities. The faculty member engages individual students in an exercise- oriented activity to provide a complete learning experience.

Designation	Credit Hour	Minimum Contact Hours	Student Out of Class Preparation ¹
Activity, Lab, Studio, Simulation	1	30	varies

¹ Out of Class Preparation is provided as an estimate and guideline for students when considering various types of classes.

Clinical Experience means direct care experiences with patients, clients or a simulation thereof, which offer students the opportunity to integrate, apply, and refine specific skills which are based on theoretical concepts and scientific principles. Clinical hours involve a student working in a health-related or other professional setting under the supervision of a designated practicing professional. The WCC faculty member serves as the instructor of record, approves the work activities and goals, and evaluates the outcomes. The instructor also assigns a grade upon review of the completion of the assignments.

Designation	Credit Hour	Minimum Contact Hours	Student Out of Class Preparation ¹
Clinical Experience	1	37	varies

Practicum, Internship means activities including hands-on supervised work experience done by a student either as part of or in conjunction with an academic class as an educational strategy to attain the class objectives or career goals. Students usually work in an agency or other professional setting under the supervision of a designated practicing professional (the supervisor). A faculty member, usually the class instructor, monitors the work, and uses the established objectives and evaluation metrics to evaluate the outcomes and assigns a final grade.

Designation	Credit Hour	Minimum Contact Hours	Student Out of Class Preparation ¹
Practicum, Internship	1	120*	varies

**The department/program defines the credit hour/contact hour ratio according to the type of work required of students to meet the outcomes for those courses.*

¹ Out of Class Preparation is provided as an estimate and guideline for students when considering various types of classes.



Washtenaw Community College

Blended Instruction: Policy Defining Allocation of Online and On-Campus Instructional Time

Preamble:

Blended Learning at Washtenaw Community College, which is identified as MM (Mixed-Mode) on the schedule and in the section status reports, is defined as *online learning virtual instruction with an on-campus face-to-face classroom component*. All courses that this policy refers to have been developed by WCC's Distance/Online Learning Department – The Center for interactive Teaching & Learning (CiTL), or formerly the Center for Instructional Design & Technology (CIDT). Therefore, all courses must adhere to the Letter of Agreement, "Developing and Teaching Online Courses," for the purpose of maintaining the integrity of a single Master Course site, which has been approved by the dean, CiTL and the Faculty Review Committee (OLAT).

The purpose of this document is to define the policy and procedures for determining the acceptable amount of online instruction versus on-campus face-to-face instruction for blended classes; the procedure for instructing an unbalanced percentage of online and classroom-based instruction; and the policy for all instructors accepting the assignment to teach a blended section.

Definitions:

Equivalency – The percentage of online instructional time versus face to face-to-face instructional time.

Instruction – the act of teaching or disseminating relevant course content and information.

Class Activity – providing students with opportunities to deepen their learning based on new information presented during instruction.

Homework – an assignment given to students to be completed outside of the regular on-campus classroom hours or equivalent contact hours.

Faculty Leader – The full-time faculty member that is assigned as the Lead Instructor for the online or blended course.

Section Instructor – A Full-time or Part-time instructor who accepts the assignment to teach the blended course section.

Policy:

All new and previously approved Washtenaw Community College Blended (MM) courses shall be, by default, 50% online virtual instruction and/or class activities and 50% on-campus face-to-face instruction and/or class activities. Homework is not included in these percentages, as it is an expectation that students are completing this work above and beyond the standard classroom equivalent time.

The Faculty Leader may choose, due to curriculum, assessment or instructional needs, to modify the percentage of online versus face-to-face instructional time.

Process for modifying the 50/50 policy:

If the Faculty Leader elects to modify the percentage, they must:

1. Provide a short executive summary stating the need for the request, using the CiTL template.
2. Obtain and complete a CiTL Blended Instruction Curriculum Map which:
 - a. Outlines the objectives and outcomes for the online components of the class.
 - b. Separately outlines the outcomes and objectives for the face-to-face components of the class.
 - c. Identifies and details the number of face-to-face sessions needed to meet the objectives and outcomes of the face-to-face components.
 - d. Outlines and substantiates the number of hours for each face-to-face session required to meet the objectives and outcomes for the face-to-face components.
3. Present and have the CiTL Blended Instruction Curriculum Map approved by the dean and CiTL Executive Director (for the purpose of course management).
4. Verify with CiTL that the course is designed to meet the needs of the CiTL Blended Instruction Curriculum Map, and if not:
 - a. Work with an assigned CiTL Instructional Designer to modify the course, syllabus and schedule to meet the needs identified in CiTL Blended Instruction Curriculum Map.
 - i. This work will be completed outside of a CiTL Course Development Contract. There is no compensation unless this is a scheduled new development blended course.
 - b. CiTL communicates the approval notice to the dean and Faculty Leader upon completion of the updated Blended Master Course Site.

Guiding principles that must be followed:

1. The CiTL Blended Instruction Curriculum Map must be completed and approved by the dean ***prior to the beginning of student registration for the semester that the blended section will be offered.***
 - a. It is recommended that faculty begin the process of developing a new curriculum map 3-months prior to registration opening to ensure that CiTL has the staff to support the faculty's needs. A minimum of one month is required to complete the curriculum mapping process.
2. Required dates, times and hours **must** be in the WCC website section notes before registration opens for students to register.
 - a. Required dates, times and hours for on-campus face-to-face instruction must reflect when the face-to-face objectives are listed in the curriculum map. Example: If the curriculum map identifies face-to-face objectives in weeks 1, 4, 7, 10 and 15, the on-campus schedule must reflect these on-campus meetings.
 - b. The specific dates and times must be sent to Gloria Eccleston @ geccleston@wccnet.edu or CiTL@wccnet.edu
3. Once the class begins, the dates cannot be modified without written student consent.
 - a. If approved by the students, the dean must be informed in writing.
 - b. For those students that cannot commit to the new date(s), fair and reasonable accommodations must be made by the faculty.
4. All Section Instructors are required to follow the guidelines of the Master Course Site and the Blended Instruction Master Course Curriculum Map. However, the Faculty Leader selects the appropriate dates and times which aligns with the face-to-face objectives in the Blended Curriculum Map.
 - a. Dates, times and hours **must** be clearly specified in the WCC website section notes before registration begins.
 - b. Section Instructors may not deviate from the agreed upon equivalency of online and face-to-face instruction.
5. Any, and all subsequent modifications to the online and face-to-face time requirements must follow this policy, with the same approval process.