SEMESTER CREDIT HOUR POLICY AND COMPLIANCE

Purpose

To define the University's policy on the assignment of semester credit hours and the method by which the University's compliance with credit hour assignment is assured.

Policy

All units of credit awarded will conform to the federal and state guidelines (see appendix). These guidelines require a minimum of 2250 instructional minutes (37.5 seat-hours) per 3 hour class with an additional 4500 minutes (75 hours) of work outside of class. This meets the requirement of 2250 minutes per credit hour.

Further information is in the guidance section below. These guidelines are also in compliance with policies set forth by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education generally follows a semester system with fall and spring semesters consisting of a minimum of 15 weeks, which includes one week for exams. Alternate terms are typically less than 15 weeks but adhere to the policy in terms of meeting time and the amount of work required.

Guidance for Credit Hours

The following provides general guidance on the how the credit hour translates to the particular instruction method. Please note that the credit-hour definition does not specify exact amounts of classroom time versus out-of-class student work — the information below serves as general guidance only.

Lecture and Seminar: Courses with multiple students which meet to engage in various forms of group instruction under the direct supervision of a faculty member. In-class plus out-of-class total 2250 minutes per credit hour, with 1/3 of that total being in-class instructional time (1:2 ratio).

Clinicals: Courses with a focus on experiential learning under the direct supervision of a faculty member wherein the student performs substantive work in a clinical setting. The minimum contact time per credit is three times that of a lecture (3:1 ratio), depending upon the amount of outside work assigned.

Individual Study: Courses of study designed in instances where enrollment has fallen below established standards but under conditions where a student or students require that course be offered in order to progress academically (such as the need for a particular course in order to graduate). The faculty member will work with the student(s) to arrange meeting times which may or may not match the normal course schedule. These courses must match the total amount of work using the examples listed above (2250 total minutes per credit hour). The faculty member is required to keep records of the meeting times and student work assigned so that contact hours can be calculated.

Independent Study: Courses of study in which a faculty member regularly interacts and directs student outcomes with periodic contact. Minimum credit hours are determined based on faculty instructional contact minutes and student outside work time. These courses must match the total amount of work using the examples listed above (2250 total minutes per credit hour). The faculty member is required to keep records of the meeting times and student work assigned so that contact hours can be calculated.

Internship/Practicum/Field Experience: Courses of study where a faculty member regularly directs student outcomes with periodic contact, but the learning environment is off-campus at an approved site. This should involve a site supervisor/preceptor and directed learning outside of a lecture setting. Contact time and outside work requirements must be established and documented and must match the total.

The Curriculum Committee is charged with following the policy on credit hours in their review and approval of all courses and curricula and for determining that the expected student learning for the course meets the credit hour standard. Approved courses are sent to the Registrar's Office for inclusion in the University Catalog. The Registrar's Office reviews the class schedules prior to the start of each semester to ensure that all classes are scheduled for the minimum number of minutes or otherwise notes when course schedules do not match assigned credit hours. Any discrepancies are brought to the attention of the appropriate department for correction or explanation.

Students are encouraged to consider internship opportunities early in their academic planning. Those unsure of their career goals are particularly encouraged to pursue an internship. For more information about internship opportunities contact the Career Services, Bailo Hall, or call 716.286.8530.

Online Courses and Hybrid Courses: See established Niagara University Policy for these courses that are in keeping with the policy articulated here.