

## Standard Definitions of Contact Time for the Awarding of Academic Credit

Ursuline College adheres to the Code of Federal Regulations ([34 CFR 600.2](#)) definition of a credit hour.

Ursuline College uses a traditional semester calendar of 15 weeks of instruction, as well as, alternate accelerated calendars for individual programs as appropriate.

**Semester Hour of Credit** - 750 minutes/12.5 clock hours per semester of formalized instruction that typically requires students to work at out-of-class assignments an average of twice the amount of time of the formalized instruction (1500 minutes).

In programs in which classroom time varies from the traditional format, such as hybrid and online courses, credit hours will be granted based on completion of course goals equivalent to those existing for classroom-based formats.

Credit hours may be calculated differently for the following types of instructional activities:

1. **Direct Instruction:** Direct Instruction is formalized instruction, conducted on-or off-campus, defined as the time that instructors and students are together in a physical location, and instructors are actively teaching and/or assessing their students.

The instructor bears the primary responsibility for the instructional activity and is directly involved with all students in the class. Students will be expected to work at out-of-class assignments on a regular basis. This out-of-class study shall not be counted as part of the direct instruction hour for credit.

- One hour of credit shall be awarded for a total of 750 minutes of instructional time for a semester calendar.  
[50 minutes per week per credit hour]

2. **Laboratory:** Laboratory instruction is educational activity with students conducting experiments, perfecting skills, or practicing procedures under the direction of a faculty member.

- One hour of credit shall be awarded for a minimum of one double period

in a science laboratory instructional time for a semester calendar (1500 minutes).

[100 minutes per week per credit hour]

3. Clinical Experience: Clinical experience applies to programs during which students are assigned to a program-related agency rather than in on campus facilities. Clinical experiences are planned activities to meet course objectives and outcomes and provide an opportunity to practice acquired skills in a professional environment.

- Credit hours for a clinical experience will be awarded based on the requirements as defined by the individual program's accreditation agency, and board licensing requirements, as applicable.

4. Studio Course: Studio courses are those for which extended periods of concentrated practice are required of the student subsequent to sessions of individualized instruction. Courses in applied music, such as instrument or voice, are an example.

Instructors who teach such courses have primary responsibility for assigning the work activity or skills objectives to the student and personally provide whatever instruction is required. In addition, the instructor periodically assesses the student's progress, and assigns the final grade

- One hour of credit shall be awarded for a minimum of one double period in a studio course for a semester calendar (1500 minutes).

[100 minutes per week per credit hour]

5. Experiential Learning: Experiential learning is on-or off-campus work experience, integrated with academic instruction. Students apply theoretical concepts to practical situations within an occupational field. To assure proper coordination of the experience, the experiential experience is coordinated by a faculty member, who provides the learning goals/objectives, academic activities, and methods of assessment, and assigns the final grade. The faculty member also visits the site once during the semester, if possible. Undergraduate Internship courses are an example of an experiential learning experience.

- One hour of credit shall be awarded for a total of 40 hours worked for a semester calendar.

[160 minutes per week per credit hour]

6. Student Teaching: This application experience is an intensive teaching experience for the candidate (student) to utilize college coursework in an occupational area. The experience is coordinated by a faculty member of the college, who maintains contact with the student and mentor teacher throughout the semester and assigns the course grade to the student after appropriate consultation with the mentor teacher. The candidate is expected to plan lessons and teach independently through the semester.

- One hour of credit shall be awarded for a total of 150 contact hours of experience for a semester calendar.  
[600 minutes per week per credit hour]

7. Field experience/Observation: Observation occurs when candidates (students) participate in an educational experience as observers of mentor teachers. Students will systematically progress from observing and aiding to participating in the actual work activity. Observation hours are coordinated by faculty members who meet weekly with the students about their experiences and provide assessments of students' progress toward the achievement of the objectives of the experience. The experience is coordinated by a faculty member of the college who assists the student in planning the experience and remains in contact with the student and their supervisor at throughout the semester. The faculty member assigns the course grade to the student after appropriate consultation with the employer/supervisor.

- One hour of credit shall be awarded for a total of 150 contact hours of experience for a semester calendar.  
[600 minutes per week per credit hour]

8. Independent Study, Catalog Course Taken Independently, Thesis and Dissertation:

Credit is awarded based on the instructor's determination of meeting content requirements and instructional objectives as stated on the syllabus.

- One hour of credit shall be awarded for a minimum of 4.25 contact hours of direct instruction.  
[17 minutes per week per credit hour]

9. Accelerated Courses: Accelerated courses are defined as any section of an academic course of instruction that does not take place throughout the complete length of a regular academic semester. Credit is determined based on the type of course (instructional activities as defined) offered.

10. Online courses:

Online courses, whether synchronous or asynchronous, have the same course content, objectives, learning outcomes, and requirements as a face-to-face Direct Instruction course.

- a. Online: 80-100% instruction is online
  - i. Synchronous: Courses in which the instructor and students are logged in to the course at the same time using technology.  
Credit is awarded for synchronous learning on the same basis as that for the Direct Instruction hour discussed above.
  - ii. Asynchronous: Courses in which the instruction and learning do not occur for the instructor and students at the same time and place. Students work at their own pace, based on requirement and deadlines as outlined in the syllabus. \*
- b. Hybrid: Online courses that include face to face supplemental instruction. 51-80% instruction is online.
- c. Blended: Face to face courses in which instruction is supplemented by online materials and resources. 20-50% of instruction is online.

\* See Appendix A for the *Contact Time Equivalencies for Online Courses* policy.

## Appendix A: Contact Time Equivalencies for Online Courses

“Instructional time” (also referred to as **direct instruction**) is traditionally defined as the time that instructors and students are together in the classroom, when instructors are actively teaching or assessing their students. HLC uses the Federal definition of credit hours to determine how much instructional time there should be per credit, and requires that institutions adhere to these requirements. A credit hour is 50 minutes of instruction, and for each semester credit that a student receives, there should be 15 credit hours of direct instruction. So, for a typical three credit course, there should be 37.5 clock hours of direct instruction (12.5 hours per credit).

With the advent of online classes, as well as hybrid and web-enhanced classes, the traditional definition of instructional time is not always applicable. Direct instruction may take place outside the traditional classroom setting, and may be synchronous or asynchronous, which means that the instructor and students either are or are not engaged in teaching and learning at the same time. However, the same HLC regulations regarding the amount of direct instruction required still apply. Simply asking students to read or view material or to complete homework assignments *cannot* be counted as instructional time. The instructor and students must be actively interacting with one another.

When direct instruction is asynchronous, the question arises as to how the amount of time spent on online activities corresponds to time spent in the traditional classroom. The chart below lists some common direct instructional activities for online and hybrid classes and some general guidelines for how they can be converted to more traditional measures of instructional time.

Instructional Activity	Description of Activity	Rate of Equivalency for Undergrad	Rate of Equivalency for Grad
Blogs or journaling	Instructor guides students in applying learned concepts or reflecting on learning experiences. Learned concepts to be shared with instructor and/or classmates for analysis, feedback, and assessment.	1 private post = ½ hour direct instruction 1 shared post including reading all classmates' posts = 1 hour of direct instruction	1 private post = ½ hour direct instruction 1 shared post including reading all classmates' posts = 1 hour of direct instruction
Case study	Instructor leads students in performing in-depth analysis utilizing higher-order analytical skills, which relate to course objectives. Analysis is shared with instructor and/or classmates for feedback and assessment.	1 case study analysis and post = 1-2 hours of traditional classroom instruction	1 case study analysis and post = 2-3 hours of traditional classroom instruction (more extensive analysis is expected for graduate students)

**Appendix A:  
Contact Time Equivalencies for Online Courses**

Discussion board	Instructor-guided or mediated threaded discussion that directly relates to course objectives, and which has specified timeframes, expectations for	Initial post – min. 250 words (requires reading all posts) = ½ hour instruction 1 post/reply (requires reading all posts and responding to	Initial post – min 250 words (requires reading all posts and responding to a minimum
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	participation, and thoughtful analysis.	minimum of 3) = 1 hour instruction	of 2 with proper citation of evidence) = 1 hour instruction
Group project	Instructors engage students in a mediated, culminating activity. With faculty guidance, students collaborate via e-mail, chat rooms, discussion boards, and/or face-to-face contact to research, synthesize, and prepare project with instructor receiving periodic updates and providing guidance to group.	1 hour of student collaboration including an update provided to instructor and instructor feedback = 1 hour of direct instruction	1 hour of student collaboration including an update provided to instructor and instructor feedback = 1 hour of direct instruction
Instructor-led or guided research project	Instructor leads students in summative individual project. Student and instructor collaborate via email, chat, discussion board, and/or in person. Instructor provides guidance and feedback.	1 hour of independent work plus an update provided to the instructor and feedback from the instructor = 1 hour of direct instruction	1 hour of independent work plus an update provided to the instructor and feedback from the instructor = 1 hour of direct instruction
One-on-one conferencing	Instructor engages students individually in collaborative, one-on-one synchronous learning experiences; student will need to submit materials for prior review and meet specific participation and feedback expectations.	20 minutes of one-on-one conferencing = 1 hour of traditional classroom instruction (reflects more intensive nature of one-on-one conferencing)	20 minutes of one-on-one conferencing = 1 hour of traditional classroom instruction (reflects more intensive nature of one-on-one conferencing)

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Synchronous online interaction	Any activity in which the instructor and students are logged in to the course at the same time; may incorporate video through the use of webcams (preferable) or be audio only	1 hour of instruction online = 1 hour of traditional classroom instruction	1 hour of instruction online = 1 hour of traditional classroom instruction
Virtual tour	Instructor provides leadership as students (individually or in groups) analyze an activity and prepare a paper or presentation, to be shared in whole or in part with instructor and/or classmates.	Instructor-led 1 hour virtual tour = 1 hour of direct instruction Students do tour without instructor: 1 hour tour plus reflection = 1 hour of direct instruction	Instructor-led 1 hour virtual tour = 1 hour of direct instruction Students do tour without instructor: 1 hour tour plus reflection = 1 hour of direct instruction