

Assignment of Credit Hours

MidAmerica Nazarene University

At MidAmerica Nazarene University (MNU), the assignment of credit hours conforms to commonly accepted practices in higher education. The credit hour serves as the fundamental unit of measurement for academic achievement and awarding of federal financial aid. Academic credit is the recognition of attendance or performance in an instructional activity (course) that can be applied towards the requirements of an MNU degree or academic certificate. MNU credit may be awarded for courses that are transferred in, for competencies demonstrated through examination, or for knowledge and skills acquired through life and work experience, but such credit is always accounted for as prior completion of work in a particular discipline.

Definitions

Credit Hour Definition

MidAmerica Nazarene University uses the Federal definition of a credit hour (see 34 CFR 600.2):

A credit hour is an amount of student work 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 the equivalent amount of work over a different period 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.

The Federal definition also allows “... *an institution, in determining the amount of work associated with a credit hour, to take into account a variety of delivery methods, measurements of student work, academic calendars, disciplines, and degree levels.*”

Online (Distance) Education Courses

The federal definition of online education (known as distance education) is also found in 34 CFR 600.2 as follows:

Education that uses [the internet or similar technology] to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor or instructors and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor or instructors, either synchronously or asynchronously.

Further, substantive interaction is defined as:

engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and also includes at least two of the following—

1. Providing direct instruction;
2. Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework;
3. Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;
4. Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or
5. Other instructional activities approved by the institution's or program's accrediting agency.

And regular interaction is defined as:

An institution ensures regular interaction between a student and an instructor or instructors by, prior to the student's completion of a course or competency—

1. Providing the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and scheduled basis commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency; and
2. Monitoring the student's academic engagement and success and ensuring that an instructor is responsible for promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student when needed on the basis of such monitoring, or upon request by the student.

At MNU, “regular interaction” provided by instructors in distance education courses will, at a minimum, include substantive interaction, as defined above, at least once each week of instruction.

Awarding of Credit

The actual award of credit shall be by registration on an official transcript by the MNU registrar based solely upon student performance in classes documented in the course catalog of MNU. Integrity in the awarding of academic credit is assured both through the process by which courses are added to the university catalog and the process for regularly reviewing existing courses. The academic unit submitting a new course proposal provides a description of the intended learning outcomes for the course and a justification for the amount of credit requested for the course. The University Curriculum Committee will review submitted course proposals for adherence to this policy. Once a course has been approved, course change proposals submitted to the University Curriculum Committee may also be reviewed for appropriateness of assigned credit. The academic unit is responsible for maintaining credit-hour worksheets for courses it offers in the catalog and assuring that a current worksheet has been submitted to the Academic Affairs office in the first semester the course is taught and each time the course undergoes regular content/quality review. Each course modality (in-person, hybrid, online, distance-virtual) and course length combination taught requires a separate credit-hour worksheet.

Credit Hour Assignments for Various Course Types

- For full-term courses that follow the fall and spring academic calendar, the amount of direct faculty instruction conforms to paragraph (1) of the credit hour definition above.
- Accelerated courses (shorter than full-term) must conform to paragraph (1) of the definition but will need to demonstrate an equivalent amount of student work to regular full-term courses through a credit-hour worksheet.
- Hybrid and online courses (synchronous or asynchronous) will need to demonstrate an equivalent amount of student work to regular full-term in-person courses through a credit-hour worksheet. These courses must also adhere to the requirements for regular and substantive interaction above.
- Practicums and internships include minimal direct faculty instruction (~ 5 hours/course) but should account for a minimum of 40 hours of documented student work per credit hour.
- One hour of credit for laboratory, studio, clinical, and studio sections may be awarded for sessions between 90 and 180 minutes long per week for 15 weeks depending on the amount of outside preparation required of students.
- Directed study and independent study courses should account for 45 hours of student work and faculty engagement per credit hour. A credit-hour worksheet is required to be submitted with the directed/independent study form.