



SACS Home

Committees

Compliance Table

Quality Enhancement Plan

Supporting Document Index

- Alphabetical
- By Standard

Focused Report



SEARCH

USC THIS SITE

Comprehensive Standard 3.4.6

The institution employs sound and acceptable practices for determining the amount and level of credit awarded for courses, regardless of format or mode of delivery.

Judgment: Compliant

Response:

The University of South Carolina (USC) adheres to sound practices in determining the amount and level of credit awarded for courses, regardless of format or mode of delivery. The credit value of each course is determined by the amount of formal instructional time per week for one semester. USC follows the definition of a credit hour identified by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education, as spelled out in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System Glossary:

CREDIT HOUR: A unit of measure representing an hour (50 minutes) of instruction over a 15-week period in a semester... It is applied toward the total number of hours needed for completing the requirements of a degree, diploma, certificate, or other formal award.

As described in the [section on course credits in the Academic Bulletin](#), at least 700 minutes of instruction (and at least twice that for laboratory time) can be expected per credit hour. The policy [ACAF 2.03](#), "Creation and Revision of Academic Courses" echoes the bulletin policy in its description of the course credit:

1. Contact Hours: Each single course credit requires a minimum of 700 minutes or 14 hours of continuous and ongoing instructional time. Additionally, a minimum of five consecutive calendar days of continuous instruction is required per credit. This time excludes breaks and final exams. A minimum of three weeks of continuous instruction is required for a three credit course.
2. Standard academic year course sessions average 14 weeks in length. Summer I and Summer II sessions are each five weeks in duration.
3. Any variation from the above is considered a Non-Standard Session and must be approved each semester by the department chair of the offering unit, the campus/college/school dean in consultation with the Registrar of the appropriate campus.

These regulations apply regardless of course level.

Course development normally begins in a department or unit of a campus, college, or school. Decisions regarding the number of credit hours and level of the proposed course are made at the departmental level according to the nature of the course, and the requirements of the major program for which it is being designed.

Lower division undergraduate courses (100-200 level) are introductory courses taken during the freshman and sophomore year. Upper division undergraduate courses (300-400 level) are typically taken during the junior and senior years. Advanced undergraduate/entry level graduate courses (500-600 level courses) may be taken by advanced undergraduates or graduate students unless prohibited by specific campus regulations. Course syllabi must have clearly distinguished requirements for undergraduate credit and graduate credit. Graduate students are expected to perform at a higher level with additional graduate level requirements. Undergraduate students may not enroll in graduate courses (700 level and above), and at this level may not be taught in the same classroom as those at a lower level (e.g., 400/700 courses). Professional degree courses are required as part of the professional degree curriculum taught in the professional schools. Only students who have been admitted into the professional school may enroll in these courses.

When a course is created, it is also identified by the proposing unit as either a fixed credit course or a variable credit course. Credit courses may possibly be taken more than once, until the maximum number of credit hours has been earned, as defined by the proposing unit and recorded in the appropriate online University Academic Bulletin (undergraduate, graduate, or professional school).

After they pass the departmental level, course proposals are vetted by the college, school, or campus academic affairs official, and relevant committee(s), prior to review by the appropriate faculty governance body, as required by campus-specific procedures. On the Columbia campus, at the faculty governance level, course proposals are reviewed first by the relevant curriculum committee. For all undergraduate courses, this is the [Curricula and Courses Committee](#) of the Faculty Senate. For graduate courses, there are [two separate curriculum committees](#) for the Sciences and the Humanities. For courses on the regional campuses, the relevant committee is the [System Affairs Committee](#).

After curricular action at the committee level, the proposal proceeds to either the full Faculty Senate (Columbia undergraduate courses), the Graduate Council (Columbia graduate courses), or the Regional Campus Faculty Senate (regional courses). Minutes of these meetings over the preceding decade offer evidence of course review and faculty approval for [Columbia undergraduate courses](#), [graduate courses](#), and [regional campus courses](#).

Additional levels of approval, monitoring, and/or assessment are required for distance education, contract, special topic, experimental, off-campus, schedule exception, non-standard session, independent study, internship, practical learning, and professional development courses. [ACAF 2.03](#) details the definitions of various types of academic course formats, off-campus locations, and modes of delivery. This policy also indicates that all course syllabi must include a time allocation framework, and

that all distance education courses must include a statement about the estimated instructional time commitment for students. The **Graduate Council Manual** also indicates that a Technology-Assisted Instruction Delivery Proposal (TIP) request to offer a new course by distance education should include within the proposal a course syllabus and demonstrate that students will receive the same rigor of course content and level of instruction, including comparable instructional time, as in face-to-face traditional courses. USC collects data on courses taught 25-49%, and 50% or more, at off-campus locations. A continually updated list of **courses approved for distance delivery** is maintained by the Academic Programs office. ACAF 2.03 specifies that programs monitor this list and cross-reference it with their own programs, to determine when their program crosses the 25%, 50%, or 100% distance delivery threshold.

Supporting Documentation:

Description	Source
Academic Credit Policies	
Course and Academic Credit Policies	http://bulletin.sc.edu/content.php?catoid=10&navoid=1779
ACAF 2.03 Course Definitions	http://ipr.sc.edu/pdf/policies/acaf203.pdf#CrseDef
Graduate Council Manual	http://ipr.sc.edu/pdf/GradCouncilManual.pdf#DistEd
Committees on Course Proposals	
Curricula and Courses Committee	http://ipr.sc.edu/pdf/FacultyManualColumbia.pdf#Curricula
Graduate-Level Course Committees	http://ipr.sc.edu/pdf/GradCouncilManual.pdf#CurricComm
System Affairs Committee	http://ipr.sc.edu/pdf/FacultySenateRegCamp.pdf#SysAffairs
Council Minutes	
Faculty Senate Minutes – Columbia	http://www.sc.edu/faculty/meetings.shtml
Graduate Council Minutes	http://gradschool.sc.edu/gradcouncil/minutes/
Regional Campus Minutes	http://saeu.sc.edu/RCFS/minutes.html
Distance Education Courses	
Distance Delivery Course List	http://www.sc.edu/provost/forms/ApprovedDistanceEdCourses.pdf

RETURN TO TOP

USC LINKS:

DIRECTORY

MAP

EVENTS

VIP

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