



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA


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Item FR - 4.9

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Definition of Credit Hours

The institution has policies and procedures for determining the credit hours awarded for courses and programs that conform to commonly accepted practices in higher education and to Commission policy. **(Federal Requirement 4.9)**

Judgment

☒ Compliant ☐ Non-Compliant ☐ Not Applicable

Narrative

The University of South Carolina Columbia (USCC) has policies and procedures for determining the number and level of credit hours awarded for courses and programs. These policies and procedures conform to commonly accepted practices in higher education and to Commission policy, regardless of format or mode of delivery. The credit value of each course is determined by the amount of engaged learning time per week for one semester, as defined in USC system Policy ACAF 2.03.

Definition of Credit Hours and Types of Credit

The University adheres to the federal IPEDS definition of a credit hour, as per ACAF 2.03. The ACAF 2.03 policy also delineates the varying types of courses that award academic credit, the awarding of which remains consistent across delivery modes. Online courses are required to be designed so that contact time is equal to, and the content of equal quality as, the same courses offered via traditional face-to-face delivery. (See Checklist for Distance Courses; also, syllabi for traditional SLIS 402, online SLIS 402.)

Beyond the traditional fixed credit courses, other course types include variable credit courses, independent study/special topics courses, internship/clinical/experiential learning courses, and laboratory courses. USCC uses the following definitions.

- Variable credit course: Course with a credit hour value expressed in a range. Course can be taken more than once until the unit-determined maximum number of credit hours for the course has been earned.
- Independent study course: Fixed credit course that enables individualized, in-depth study of an area of academic interest not adequately covered by the regular course structure.
- Special topics course: Fixed credit course within a given discipline that has variable content and title, and may be taken multiple times.
- Internship/clinical/experiential learning course: Course in which students meet program-specific learning outcomes and course objectives in an applied environment. They are offered for a range of credits, and include a formal mechanism for evaluating the achievement of objectives.
- Laboratory: Fixed credit course that provides hands-on application of course content or learning objective. Students are expected to spend at least two hours in lab for every one credit hour earned.

Process for Determining the Credit Hours Awarded

When new courses are developed, faculty members consider the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) when determining the course content, the contact hours, and the course credits. The USCC Faculty Senate Curricula and Courses Committee evaluates all new undergraduate course proposals. The two Graduate Council curriculum committees (1. Sciences, Mathematics, and Related Professional Programs; 2. Humanities, Social Sciences, Education, and Related Professional Programs) evaluate all new graduate course proposals. As part of the course approval process, a syllabus must be submitted and approved, and must include a list of SLOs as mandated in the graduate and undergraduate template syllabi available at the Academic Programs Syllabus Guidelines website. After the curriculum committees have approved the new courses, the faculty governance bodies give final approval. Through this process, both the curriculum committees and the faculty governance bodies help ensure that the proposed credit hours are appropriate for the SLOs and engaged learning time.

The standard credit hour to clock hour conversion is based on the IPEDS Credit Hour Definition and the IPEDS Clock Hour Definition. This credit value of each USCC course is referenced in the Undergraduate University Bulletin (p. 164) and Graduate University Bulletin.

Table: Credit Hour/Clock Hour/Carnegie Unit Conversion

Credit Hours	Clock Hours	Carnegie Units (minutes)
1	14	700
2	28	1400
3	42	2100
4	56	2800


Course Schedules

At USCC, Fall and Spring semester courses are offered in the following formats: full term (16 weeks), first 8 weeks, and second 8 weeks. Summer courses are offered in one of eight formats, ranging from one week to twelve weeks:

- Summer Session A - 1 week (2nd week of May)
- Summer Session B - 3 weeks (weeks 2, 3 and 4 of May)
- Summer Session C - 6 weeks (2nd week of May through 2nd week of June)
- Summer Session D - 12 weeks (2nd week of May through end of July)
- Summer Session E - 4 weeks (end of May through 3rd week of June)
- Summer Session F - 8 weeks (2nd week of June through end of July)
- Summer Session G - 6 weeks (end of June through 1st week of August)
- Summer Session H - 4 weeks (weeks 2, 3 and 4 of July)

The Spring 2017 Course Schedule illustrates the format of the class, term, day, time, course credit value and other pertinent information. The online dynamic term class schedule shows start time, end time, meeting dates, and credit value for each course.

Sources

 ACAF 2.03 Schedule Details