CSU Curricular Guidelines to Determining Credit Hours for Online Courses

Statement on Credit Hours: Credit hours awarded must be determined by sound practice regardless of course delivery method. In accordance with federal law and SACSCOC standard 10.7, online courses should adhere to the following:

The number of contact hours for courses that meet face-to-face with an instructor is defined by the number of hours spent in classroom; typically 15 hours (1 hour per meeting for 15 weeks) in the classroom is required for one college credit. As noted by the Federal Definition of a Credit Hour, 1 contact hour is typically matched by 2 or more out of class hours. Contact hours in synchronous online environments may be recorded in the same manner as for traditional classes.

However, contact hours in **asynchronous** learning environments are more difficult to monitor. Therefore, the definition of contact hours in asynchronous learning environments at CSU is based on the following guidelines:

a. The course syllabus should clearly document that the course covers the same amount of material or course content that would normally be expected if the class were a traditional campus-based course. Clear documentation includes the course objectives,, the course topics, and the stated expectations for readings, projects, and other assignments as well as the stated learning outcomes. It is the responsibility of departmental faculty teaching in an asynchronous environment to determine if the course content delivered in an asynchronous environment is of sufficient scope and rigor to ensure the amount of material delivered is comparable to the same campus-based course.
b. During the planning and development of an asynchronous learning environment, faculty should estimate the time a typical student will take interacting with the course content. This should be equivalent to the number of contact hours normally expected in a campus-based course, and should be documented in the course syllabus. Hours for completing homework assignments, working on projects, studying for examinations, etc., should be considered outside the contact hour requirements for the course. A rubric has been developed and should be used as a guideline for instructional design for asynchronous courses.
c. Faculty are encouraged to determine class attendance by the evaluation of student participation in scheduled online discussions, required interaction with the faculty as well as other classmates, and the timely submission of class assignments rather than simply by the number of logins provided in the statistics measured by the course management system. Quality and quantity of work will demonstrate the rigor and time on task assignments necessary to equal those of the traditional course delivery.

Statement on Equivalence: Courses taught in the web-based format must be equivalent to the same courses taught in the traditional format.

a. Courses developed specifically for online delivery must be approved through the Undergraduate or Graduate Curriculum process in the same way as new traditional courses.

b. The processes and procedures for offering web-based courses are the same as all other CSU courses.

c. Departments offering courses in web-based format should be prepared to document that the courses have student-learning outcomes that are equivalent to those for courses taught in the traditional format. The rubric will provide guidelines to assist in the documentation of those requirements.

CSU Rubric for Asynchronous Online Credit Hour Estimates

In asynchronous learning environments, the traditional face-to-face contact time is redefined as the time a typical student spends interacting with course content. This definition excludes student work traditionally done outside of class such as homework, studying, reading, and writing papers.

When faculty plan and develop asynchronous courses, whether fully online or blended, they must account for 15 hours of contact time, as defined above, for each credit hour. They must also account for a minimum of as much as two hours of additional student work per credit hour, or 30 hours, for a total of 45 hours per term for each class. The following rubric can be used to estimate asynchronous contact hours in absence of data.

Faculty should also consider using Rice University's Course Workload Estimator, available at https://cte.rice.edu/workload.

Interaction with Course Content	Time on Task	Examples
Technical Setups	10 minutes per item	Software Downloads and Installations, Computer Preparations, Orientation to Course Management Items
Reading		Textbooks and Reference Materials, Online and Traditional (approx. 750 words per page, with drawings and photos)
• Survey		Reading to survey main ideas; may skim text.
No New Concepts	40 pp. per hour	Text contains familiar words and ideas
Some New Concepts	28 pp. per hour	Text contains some unfamiliar words and ideas
Many New Concepts	20 pp. per hour	Text contains many unfamiliar words and ideas
• Understand		Reading to understand the meaning of each sentence.
No New Concepts	20 pp. per hour	Text contains familiar words and ideas
Some New Concepts	14 pp. per hour	Text contains some unfamiliar words and ideas
Many New Concepts	10 pp. per hour	Text contains many unfamiliar words and ideas
• Engage		Reading while also working problems, drawing inferences, questioning, and evaluating.
No New Concepts	10 pp. per hour	Text contains familiar words and ideas

Some New Concepts	7 pp. per hour	Text contains some unfamiliar words and ideas
Many New Concepts	5 pp. per hour	Text contains many unfamiliar words and ideas
Writing		Longer reflection/narrative, argumentative, or research (250 words per page)
• Reflection/Narrative Writing	1 hour per page	Little planning or critical engagement with content.
• Argumentative Writing	2 ¼ hours per page	Detailed planning and critical engagement with content, but no outside research.
• Research Writing	4 ½ hours per page	Detailed planning, critical engagement with content, outside research
Discussion Posts - Initial	30 minutes per post	Time to prepare and write post
Discussion Posts – Reading and Replies	1 hour	Time to read other posts and respond to 1 to 3 posts
Video	Length of video	Instructor lectures, brief YouTube videos, demonstrations
Lecture Capture	Length of lecture	Staged or classroom capture
Audio	Length of audio	Music, medical, history, speeches, radio, audio lectures
Simulation and Gaming	Length of simulation	Virtual laboratories, hands-on learning, mock criminal trials, virtual field trips
Practice Problems (not homework)	20 minutes each	Math, computer science, case studies
Outside Online Short Training Courses	Length of short course	Government training courses, e.g. FEMA
Quizzes	1 – 1 ½ hours	Dependent on number of questions and format
Exams	1 – 3 hours	Midterm and final exams may be longer

Rubric Revised by Curriculum Committee, Fall 2021