



Directive 2010-016

March 18, 2010

Re: DEFINITION OF SEMESTER CREDIT HOUR AND LENGTH OF SEMESTER TERM

On March 31, 2008, pursuant to Sec. 4 of Sub. H.B. 2 of the 127th General Assembly as amended by Am. Sub. H.B. 119 for the 127th General Assembly, the chancellor delivered to the General Assembly and the governor a set of recommendations titled ***The Strategic Plan for Higher Education***.

In the Strategic Plan the Chancellor called for a single academic calendar year to increase student transfer and mobility, student success, system-wide efficiencies and cost savings, and integration of the institutions of the University System of Ohio. Recognizing the benefits of a single academic calendar year among the institutions, the Ohio institutions on quarter systems have all adopted plans to convert to semester systems by Fall 2012.

In the course of implementing these conversion plans, issues arose within and among campuses relative to the exact requirements in Ohio for the length of a semester. While Rule 3333-1-04 of the Ohio Administrative Code states an academic semester "should be of 16 weeks duration with no less than 15 weeks devoted to instruction," various interpretations of this rule over many years have led to practical application that varies from a literal reading of the rule.

It was determined to be important for the state to re-examine the published definitions of semester and provide clarity and consistency in support of the conversion effort. Therefore, an ad hoc group was formed to examine the state's existing definition of the duration of a semester.

The ad hoc group had representatives from two-year and four-year Ohio public institutions of higher education going through calendar conversion as well as individuals from institutions presently on semesters. Representatives were leaders from the faculty, academic administration, registrars, and Ohio's articulation and transfer initiatives.

The work of the ad hoc group was performed consistent with the following guidelines:

- An institution's semester calendar will not violate any accreditation regulation, federal guidelines, etc.
- An institution's semester calendar will facilitate the attainment of the University System of Ohio goals, including the transfer process.
- A semester credit hour will mean the same throughout the University System of Ohio

In forming its recommendations, the ad hoc group also took into consideration Volume 3 Chapter One, "Academic Calendar & Payment Periods" of the *2008-2009 Federal Student Aid Handbook*.

The ad hoc group recommended the adoption of the following definitions (see Attachment A for complete document submitted by ad hoc group):

Formalized Instruction

For purposes of this directive, formalized instruction is instruction for which the instructor bears the primary responsibility for delivery, acknowledging that the delivery may take place in a variety of modes.

Semester Credit Hour Definition

One semester credit hour will be awarded for a minimum of 750 minutes of formalized instruction that typically requires students to work at out-of-class assignments an average of twice the amount of time as the amount of formalized instruction (1,500 minutes). It is acknowledged that formalized instruction may take place in a variety of modes.

While awarding semester credit hours typically occurs for instruction delivered in accordance with an institution's standard semester calendar, it may also occur for instruction that may not follow the typical pattern of an institution's standard semester calendar as long as the criteria for awarding such credit is met.

Week of Instructional Time

For purposes of the definition of semester length and academic year, a week of instructional time is any period of seven consecutive days in which at least one day of regularly scheduled instruction, examination, or (after the last day of classes) at least one scheduled day of examinations occurs. For clarification purposes, a semester consisting of 14 calendar weeks of scheduled classes and 1 calendar week of examinations equals a total of 15 weeks of instructional time.

Semester Length Definition

The length of a semester shall consist of no fewer than 15 calendar weeks and no more than 17 calendar weeks of instructional time. The inclusion of breaks or holidays within any particular semester shall be at the discretion of the institution so long as the institution is in compliance with the criteria that defines a week of instructional time, and is in compliance with the criteria for awarding semester credit hours.

Academic Year Length

The academic year shall be at least 30 weeks in length counting periods of time (terms) that begin on the first day of classes and end on the last day of classes or examinations. The 30 week requirement shall be measured exclusive of compressed terms (e.g., summer term).

It is further directed that the *Ohio Board of Regents Operation Manual for Two-Year Campus Programs* be updated with regard to the definition of credit hour, including alternate calculations for other instructional activities listed below, and semester length in a manner that is consistent with this directive (as presented in Attachment B).

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

- Laboratory instruction
- Clinical laboratory instruction
- Directed practice experience
- Practicum experience
- Cooperative work experience

- Field experience
- Observation experience
- Seminar
- Miscellaneous
- Studio experience

It is further directed that staff of the Chancellor prepare and submit amendments to Rule 3333-1-04 of the Ohio Administrative Code consistent with this directive.

With all of Ohio's 13 public universities and 23 community colleges endorsing the new definitions and in response to public comments requesting clarification of the breadth of the amendments in Attachment B, it is the intent that the amendments to the *Ohio Board of Regents Operating Manual for Two-Year Campus Programs* as presented in Attachment B, be followed by all Ohio public institutions of higher education offering two-year academic programs.

I hereby adopt the above definitions for semester credit hour and semester length, as recommended by the ad hoc group, to be used by all University System of Ohio institutions, and hereby amend the *Ohio Board of Regents Operating Manual for Two-Year Campus Programs* as presented in Attachment B. All prior documents, including memoranda, conflicting with a definition adopted herein are hereby superseded.

This Directive will take immediate effect upon signature.



Eric D. Fingerhut
Chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents

mlc

DEFINITION OF SEMESTER CREDIT HOUR AND LENGTH OF SEMESTER TERM

July 24, 2009

An ad hoc group was formed to examine the OBR's existing definition of the duration of a semester. The group recognized that federal financial aid regulations already provide a definition and recommends using that established national guideline. The group also concluded that the current definition of a semester credit rests implicitly on the concept of the credit hour more than on the number of weeks or days in a semester. Consequently, the group reconceived its task as defining the semester credit hour and proceeded using the following guidelines:

- An institution's semester calendar will not violate any accreditation regulations, federal guidelines, etc.
- An institution's semester calendar will facilitate the attainment of The University System of Ohio goals, including the transfer process.
- A semester credit hour will mean the same throughout The University System of Ohio.

Because the credit hour is the basis on which all degrees are awarded and credits are transferred among schools within and outside of Ohio, the definition of the credit hour should be consistent with current practice. At the same time, the definition should be flexible enough to accommodate alternative modes of instruction that may not yet exist. We believe that the following definition achieves both those goals.

Semester Credit Hour Definition

One semester credit hour will be awarded for a minimum of 750 minutes of formalized instruction that typically requires students to work at out-of-class assignments an average of two hours for every hour of formalized instruction. The instructor bears the primary responsibility for formalized instruction, which may be delivered in a variety of modes.

The preliminary review resulted in the above definition of a credit hour of formalized instruction, which will be used by all University System of Ohio institutions. In addition, credit hours may be awarded on a different basis for other types of instructional activities (e.g., labs, clinical, studio, and independent study). General guidelines for awarding credit are already defined in the *Ohio Board of Regents Operating Manual for Two-Year Campus Programs* and are being revised using the new definition of a semester credit hour.

Semester Length Definition

Volume 3 Chapter One, "Academic Calendar & Payment Periods" of the *2008-2009 Federal Student Aid Handbook* defines an academic year as at least 30 weeks of instructional time. The number of weeks of instructional time is based on the period that begins on the first day of

Attachment A

classes in the academic year and ends on the last day of classes or examinations. Semesters and trimesters are generally 14 to 17 weeks long.

This group acknowledges that the above definitions for semesters would be used in adjusting the definitions for quarters.

Concluding Note

The ad hoc group wishes to echo the Ohio Board of Regents' memo of February 4, 2000, defining the length of academic terms. It stresses both the need for flexibility required by new modes of instruction and scheduling and the need for consistency in transferring credit among institutions and equity in awarding subsidy. Ultimately, the responsibility for protecting the academic integrity of curricula, programs, and schedules rests upon the judgment of the chief academic officers of Ohio's colleges and universities within The University System of Ohio.

SEMESTER HOUR CONVERSION AD HOC COMMITTEE – 2009

Dr. David Descutner
Associate Vice Provost for
Undergraduate Education
Dean of University College
Ohio University

Dr. Joe Law
Assistant Vice President for Articulation
and Transfer
Wright State University

Mr. Brad Myers
Registrar
The Ohio State University

Dr. Kristi Nelson
Senior Vice Provost for Academic
Planning
Professor of Art History
University of Cincinnati

Dr. Richard Prystowsky
Vice President for Academic Affairs
Central Ohio Technical College

Mr. Pete Ross
Vice President for Enrollment
Management
Cuyahoga Community College

Mr. Dave Sauter
Registrar
Miami University

Dr. Randy Smith
Vice Provost for Curriculum and
Institutional Relations
The Ohio State University

Dr. Michael Snider
Consultant

Ohio Association of Community
Colleges
Dr. Lori Zakel
Chair and Professor of Communication
and Journalism
TAG Point Person for Communications
Studies
Sinclair Community College

Ohio Board of Regents Staff:

Dr. Paula Compton
Associate Vice Chancellor, Articulation
and Transfer

Dr. Darrell Glenn
Director of Data Management and
Analysis

Ms. Candice Grant
Administrator, Articulation and Transfer

Standard Definitions of Instructional Arrangements and Guidelines for the Awarding of Academic Credit

The number of credits which should be awarded for the completion of courses in associate degree programs is determined by the instructional arrangements as follows:

- (1) *Classroom hour*: ~~A classroom hour is a nominal hour (fifty minutes) of Classroom instruction is formalized instruction, conducted on-or off-campus, in which the teacher presents an educational experience to students, applying any combination of instructional methods.~~

This definition is applicable only when the course organization requires that the instructor bear 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 which, over the length of the course, would normally average two hours of out-of-class study for each hour of formal class activity. This out-of-class study shall not be counted as part of the classroom hour for credit.

~~One credit (quarter or semester) shall be awarded for each classroom hour which is scheduled in the standard week of the quarter or semester.~~

One hour of credit shall be awarded for each 750 minutes of classroom instruction for a semester calendar or for each 500 minutes of classroom instruction for a quarter calendar.

- (2) *Laboratory hour*: ~~A laboratory hour is fifty minutes of Laboratory instruction is educational activity with students conducting experiments, perfecting skills, or practicing procedures under the direction of a faculty member.~~

~~• One credit (quarter or semester) shall be awarded for a minimum of three laboratory hours in a standard week for which little or no out of class study is required. One hour of credit shall be awarded for a total of 2,250 minutes laboratory instructional time for a semester calendar or for 1,500 minutes for a quarter calendar.~~

- ~~One credit (quarter or semester) shall be awarded for a minimum of two laboratory hours in a standard week, if~~ If laboratory instruction is supplemented by out-of-class assignments which would normally average one hour of out-of-class study preparing for or following-up the laboratory experience, then one hour of credit shall be awarded for a total of 1,500 minutes laboratory instructional time for a semester calendar or for 1,000 minutes for a quarter calendar.

- (3) *Clinical laboratory hour*: ~~A clinical laboratory hour~~ Clinical laboratory instruction applies only to

health technology programs. ~~A clinical laboratory consists of a fifty minute period,~~ during which students are assigned to laboratory sections which meet at a health-related agency rather than in on campus laboratory facilities. Clinical laboratory sessions provide a realistic environment for student learning. These laboratory hours should be directly supervised by regular faculty members, full-time or part-time, of the college.

- Credit hours for the clinical laboratory experience will be awarded on the same basis as laboratory hours instruction.

~~(4) Directed practice hour:~~ This definition applies primarily to programs in the health technologies. ~~A directed practice hour consists of sixty minute period,~~ during which the student is assigned to practice experiences under constant supervision at an external agency. The student should receive individual instruction and critique in the performance of a particular function. Adjunct faculty, who may or may not be paid by the college, may be used for the direct supervision of students, and for the delivery of part of the didactic phase of the experience.

The faculty member coordinating the directed practice conducts at least one lecture session each week for participating students, provides the final grade for each student, and visits students at least once a week.

- ~~One (quarter or semester) credit shall be awarded for a minimum of five clock hours of directed practice in a week.~~ One hour of credit shall be awarded for a total of 4,500 minutes of directed practice instructional time for a semester calendar or for 3,000 minutes for a quarter calendar.

~~(5) Practicum hour:~~ ~~A practicum hour is an~~ Practicum instruction is on-or off-campus work experience, integrated with academic instruction. Students concurrently apply theoretical concepts to practical situations within an occupational field. To assure proper coordination of the experience, the practicum is coordinated by a faculty member who visits the student at least once biweekly, provides the final grade, and teaches at least one course on the campus.

Each student who is enrolled in a practicum shall also be enrolled in an on-campus seminar.

- ~~One (quarter or semester) credit shall be awarded for a minimum of seven clock hours per week in a practicum. A maximum of thirteen quarter (or nine semester)~~ A maximum of nine semester credit hours or thirteen quarter credit hours may be earned in practicum, or any combination of practicum cooperative work experience, over the associate degree program. One hour of credit shall be awarded for a total of 6,300 minutes practicum instructional time for a semester calendar or for 4,200 minutes for a quarter calendar.

~~(6) Cooperative work experience:~~ A cooperative work experience is on or off-campus paid employment. It augments formal classroom instruction. The experience is coordinated by a faculty member of the college who visits the job site for a conference with the student and supervisor at least once during the quarter or semester, and assigns the course grade to the student after appropriate consultation with the supervisor/employer.

Each student who is enrolled in cooperative work experience shall also enroll in an on-campus seminar.

- ~~One (quarter or semester) credit shall be awarded for a minimum of ten clock hours (600 min) of cooperative work experience which is scheduled during a week. One hour of credit shall be awarded for a total of 9,000 minutes cooperative work experience instructional time for a semester calendar or for 6,000 minutes for a quarter calendar.~~ A maximum of nine credit hours for a semester calendar or thirteen quarter (or nine semester) credit hours for a quarter calendar may be earned in cooperative work experience, or any combination of cooperative work experience and practicum, over the associate degree program.

(7) *Field experience:* Field experience is planned, paid work activity ~~which~~ that relates to an individual student's occupational objectives. With permission of a faculty advisor, the field experience replaces elective or required courses in a student's associate degree program. The experience is coordinated by a faculty member of the college who assists the student in planning the experience, visits the site of the experience for a conference with the student and his/her supervisor at least once during the quarter or semester and assigns the course grade to the student after appropriate consultation with the employer/supervisor.

- ~~One (quarter or semester) credit shall be awarded for a minimum of twelve clock hours of field experience which is scheduled during a week.~~ A maximum of nine credit hours for a semester calendar or thirteen quarter (or nine semester) credit hours for a quarter calendar may be earned in field experience, or in any combination of field experience, cooperative education experience, and practicum over the associate degree program. One hour of credit shall be awarded for a total of 10,800 minutes field experience instructional time for a semester calendar or for 7,200 minutes for a quarter calendar.

(8) *Observation hour:* ~~An observation hour is an hour during which~~ Observation occurs when students participate in an educational experience as observers of practitioners representative of the occupational area. Students may participate at times in the actual work activity. Observation hours are coordinated by faculty members who receive reports from the students of their observational experiences and provide assessments of students' progress toward the achievement of the objectives of the experience.

- ~~One (quarter or semester) credit shall be awarded for a minimum of fifteen clock hours of observational experience in a week.~~ One hour of credit shall be awarded for a total of 13,500 minutes observation instructional time for a semester calendar or for 9,000 minutes for a quarter calendar.

(9) *Seminar:* A seminar is a less formal educational experience than a classroom/lecture/discussion class. A relatively small number of students engage in discussions directed by a faculty member.

- Credit is awarded for seminar hours on the same basis as that for the classroom hour discussed above.

(10) *Miscellaneous applications courses:* Courses Miscellaneous application 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 and journalism or courses of an independent study nature are examples.

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 total of 6,300 minutes instructional time for miscellaneous applications courses for a semester calendar or for 4,200 minutes for a quarter calendar.

- ~~One semester credit shall be awarded for a minimum of seven scheduled clock hours of such activity per week~~

(11) Studio Course: Studio courses require little or no out-of-class study.

•One hour of credit shall be awarded for a total of 2,250 minutes instructional time for a studio course for a semester calendar or for 1,500 minutes for a quarter calendar.

- If supplemented by out-of-class assignments which would normally average one hour of out-of-class study preparing for or following-up the studio experience, one hour of credit shall be awarded for a total of 1,500 minutes instructional time for a studio course for a semester calendar or for 1,000 minutes for a quarter calendar.

Flexibly Scheduled Courses:

A flexibly scheduled course section is defined as any section of an academic course of instruction that does not take place throughout the complete length of a regular academic term (for example, quarter, semester, or summer academic term). Credit hour awards shall be determined based on the type of course offered using the Flex Schedule optioned outlined in numbers 1-10 in the **Standard Definitions of Instructional Arrangements and Guidelines for the Awarding of Academic Credit.**

Standard Definitions of Instructional Arrangements and Guidelines for the Awarding of Academic Credit

The number of credits which should be awarded for the completion of courses in associate degree programs is determined by the instructional arrangements as follows:

- (1) *Classroom:* Classroom instruction is formalized instruction, conducted on-or off-campus, in which the teacher presents an educational experience to students, applying any combination of instructional methods.

This definition is applicable only when the course organization requires that the instructor bear 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 which, over the length of the course, would normally average two hours of out-of-class study for each hour of formal class activity. This out-of-class study shall not be counted as part of the classroom hour for credit.

One hour of credit shall be awarded for each 750 minutes of classroom instruction for a semester calendar or for each 500 minutes of classroom instruction for a quarter calendar.

- (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 total of 2,250 minutes laboratory instructional time for a semester calendar or for 1,500 minutes for a quarter calendar.
 - If laboratory instruction is supplemented by out-of-class assignments which would normally average one hour of out-of-class study preparing for or following-up the laboratory experience, then one hour of credit shall be awarded for a total of 1,500 minutes laboratory instructional time for a semester calendar or for 1,000 minutes for a quarter calendar.
- (3) *Clinical laboratory:* Clinical laboratory instruction applies only to health technology programs, during which students are assigned to laboratory sections which meet at a health-related agency rather than in on campus laboratory facilities. Clinical laboratory sessions provide a realistic environment for student learning. These laboratory hours should be directly supervised by regular faculty members, full-time or part-time, of the college.
 - Credit hours for the clinical laboratory experience will be awarded on the same basis as laboratory instruction.

Operating Manual for Two-Year Campus Programs

2/2010

- (4) *Directed practice:* This definition applies primarily to programs in the health technologies, during which the student is assigned to practice experiences under constant supervision at an external agency. The student should receive individual instruction and critique in the performance of a particular function. Adjunct faculty, who may or may not be paid by the college, may be used for the direct supervision of students, and for the delivery of part of the didactic phase of the experience.

The faculty member coordinating the directed practice conducts at least one lecture session each week for participating students, provides the final grade for each student, and visits students at least once a week.

- One hour of credit shall be awarded for a total of 4,500 minutes of directed practice instructional time for a semester calendar or for 3,000 minutes for a quarter calendar.

- (5) *Practicum:* Practicum instruction is on-or off-campus work experience, integrated with academic instruction. Students concurrently apply theoretical concepts to practical situations within an occupational field. To assure proper coordination of the experience, the practicum is coordinated by a faculty member who visits the student at least once biweekly, provides the final grade, and teaches at least one course on the campus.

Each student who is enrolled in a practicum shall also be enrolled in an on-campus seminar.

- A maximum of nine semester credit hours or thirteen quarter credit hours may be earned in practicum, or any combination of practicum cooperative work experience, over the associate degree program. One hour of credit shall be awarded for a total of 6,300 minutes practicum instructional time for a semester calendar or for 4,200 minutes for a quarter calendar.

- (6) *Cooperative work experience:* A cooperative work experience is on or off-campus paid employment. It augments formal classroom instruction. The experience is coordinated by a faculty member of the college who visits the job site for a conference with the student and supervisor at least once during the quarter or semester, and assigns the course grade to the student after appropriate consultation with the supervisor/employer.

Each student who is enrolled in cooperative work experience shall also enroll in an on-campus seminar.

- One hour of credit shall be awarded for a total of 9,000 minutes cooperative work experience instructional time for a semester calendar or for 6,000 minutes for a quarter calendar. A maximum of nine credit hours for a semester calendar or thirteen credit hours for a quarter calendar may be earned in cooperative work experience, or any combination

Operating Manual for Two-Year Campus Programs

2/2010

of cooperative work experience and practicum, over the associate degree program.

- (7) *Field experience:* Field experience is planned, paid work activity that relates to an individual student's occupational objectives. With permission of a faculty advisor, the field experience replaces elective or required courses in a student's associate degree program. The experience is coordinated by a faculty member of the college who assists the student in planning the experience, visits the site of the experience for a conference with the student and his/her supervisor at least once during the quarter or semester and assigns the course grade to the student after appropriate consultation with the employer/supervisor.
- A maximum of nine credit hours for a semester calendar or thirteen credit hours for a quarter calendar may be earned in field experience, or in any combination of field experience, cooperative education experience, and practicum over the associate degree program. One hour of credit shall be awarded for a total of 10,800 minutes field experience instructional time for a semester calendar or for 7,200 minutes for a quarter calendar.
- (8) *Observation:* Observation occurs when students participate in an educational experience as observers of practitioners representative of the occupational area. Students may participate at times in the actual work activity. Observation hours are coordinated by faculty members who receive reports from the students of their observational experiences and provide assessments of students' progress toward the achievement of the objectives of the experience.
- One hour of credit shall be awarded for a total of 13,500 minutes observation instructional time for a semester calendar or for 9,000 minutes for a quarter calendar.
- (9) *Seminar:* A seminar is a less formal educational experience than a classroom/lecture/discussion class. A relatively small number of students engage in discussions directed by a faculty member.
- Credit is awarded for seminar hours on the same basis as that for the classroom hour discussed above.
- (10) *Miscellaneous applications courses:* Miscellaneous application 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 and journalism or courses of an independent study nature are examples.

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.

Operating Manual for Two-Year Campus Programs

2/2010

- One hour of credit shall be awarded for a total of 6,300 minutes instructional time for miscellaneous applications courses for a semester calendar or for 4,200 minutes for a quarter calendar.

(11) *Studio Course:* Studio courses require little or no out-of-class study.

- One hour of credit shall be awarded for a total of 2,250 minutes instructional time for a studio course for a semester calendar or for 1,500 minutes for a quarter calendar.
- If supplemented by out-of-class assignments which would normally average one hour of out-of-class study preparing for or following-up the studio experience, one hour of credit shall be awarded for a total of 1,500 minutes instructional time for a studio course for a semester calendar or for 1,000 minutes for a quarter calendar.

Flexibly Scheduled Courses:

A flexibly scheduled course section is defined as any section of an academic course of instruction that does not take place throughout the complete length of a regular academic term (for example, quarter, semester, or summer academic term). Credit hour awards shall be determined based on the type of course offered using the Flex Schedule optioned outlined in numbers 1-10 in the **Standard Definitions of Instructional Arrangements and Guidelines for the Awarding of Academic Credit**.

