

Credit Hour and Contact Hour Guidelines

University of Colorado Denver | Anschutz Medical Campus

Effective March 2021

As the needs of our students evolve, the University of Colorado Denver | Anschutz Medical Campus continues to innovate in our curriculum delivery to provide high-quality teaching and learning that students need in order to be successful, both in their education and in their lives.

These guidelines are intended to serve as a framework and resource in support of:

- Developing, delivering and innovating curriculum and courses
- Establishing CU Denver | CU Anschutz guidelines that align with state and federal guidelines
- Assisting schools and colleges in their responsibilities to assign and oversee credit and contact hours
- Meeting accreditation requirements for our campuses
- Defining minimum expectations for credit and contact hours in course components

Guideline Exception Requests

In order to provide maximum flexibility in recognition of the range of instructional activities across our two campuses and the ways in which instructional activities change and evolve, requests may be made through the relevant Dean to the Provost for exceptions to these guidelines.

School/College Oversight

Schools/Colleges and their programs have the responsibility to define, approve, implement, oversee and monitor credit and contact hours, and the minimum expectations of student and faculty in all course components. Schools and colleges ensure that syllabi and/or special processing forms are used for all courses.

Table of Contents:

[Definitions](#)

[Guidelines by Course Component for Lectures](#)

[Guidelines by Course Components in Which Credit is Primarily Assigned Based on Contact Time for Faculty-led or Faculty-directed Instruction](#)

[Guidelines for Course Components Which May Involve Less Contact Time for Faculty-led or Faculty-directed Instruction and the Academic Program Defines the Number of Credits Awarded](#)

[Course Scheduling Notes](#)

[Instructional Modalities/Modes of Instruction](#)

[State and Federal Governing Guidelines for Credit and Contact Hours](#)

[Term Structure at University of Colorado Denver | Anschutz Medical Campus](#)

Definitions

***Course Component** describes the course types currently programmed in the University of Colorado Student Information System (CU-SIS) and the selectable course options that schools and colleges utilize when building courses. It describes the type of class offered: the part or modules of a course that work together to define the entire course structure. The course components included in this document are those used at CU Denver and/or CU Anschutz.*

***Instructional Contact Time** encompasses direct and indirect instruction of students by faculty. The course components utilized for instruction are described below in sections A and B.*

Out-of-Class Student Work describes minimum guidelines regarding the amount of time students can expect to engage in course activities that occur outside of scheduled class times. This can include reading and studying materials presented in a lecture course, as well as activities such as experiential, research, creative or written work undertaken by a student to meet or exceed the expectations, learning objectives and rigor of the academic program.

Credit Hour includes a combination of instructional contact time and out-of-class student work.

A. Guidelines by Course Component for Lectures

The following provides general definitions and guidance on how the credit hour translates to the course components utilized by the University of Colorado Denver | Anschutz Medical Campus.

Note, the information below serves as general guidance only, and the definitions do not dictate particular amounts of classroom time versus out-of-class student work.

Lecture: Faculty member responsible for delivery and discussion of learning material and related instructional activities. Minimum instructional contact time per credit is noted below.

*Credits Awarded	Minimum Instructional Contact time/week	Minimum Instructional Contact time/15wks	Minimum Out of Class Student Work/week	Minimum Out of Class Student Work/15wks	Total Instructional contact time & out of class student work
1	50 mins.	750 mins.	100 mins.	1500 mins.	2250 mins. (37.5 hours)
2	100 mins.	1500 mins.	200 mins.	3000 mins.	4500 mins. (75 hours)
3	150 mins.	2250 mins.	300 mins.	4500 mins.	6750 mins. (112.5 hours)
4	200 mins.	3000 mins.	400 mins.	6000 mins.	9000 mins. (150 hours)

*Examples are calculated with respect to contact time and out-of-class student work.

B. Guidelines for Course Components in Which Credit is Primarily Assigned Based on Contact Time for Faculty-led or Faculty-directed Instruction

Clinicals (CLN) Participation, including observation, in patient/client and patient/client-related services that are an integral part of student learning experiences within an academic program. Clinical instruction can occur within, or outside of, an institutional setting, and involves students observing or working with patients/clients who receive professional services from either the student and/or a clinical preceptor who may be a faculty member and/or a professional in the field. The minimum instructional contact time per credit is typically two-times that of a lecture (2:1 ratio).

Field Studies (FLD): Courses of study involving instructional activities conducted by the faculty and designed to supplement and/or extend an individual course or classroom experience. The minimum instructional contact time per credit is typically two times that of a lecture (2:1 ratio).

Laboratory (LAB): Instructional activities designed and overseen by a faculty member which require student participation, experimentation, observation, or practice. This includes clinical simulation laboratories. The minimum instructional contact time per credit is typically two-times that of a lecture (2:1 ratio).

Main Lab Section (MLB): Stand-alone labs involving instructional activities designed and overseen by a faculty member which require student participation, experimentation, observation, clinical simulation, or practice. The minimum instructional contact time per credit is typically two-times that of a lecture (2:1 ratio).

Recitation (REC): A course or section of a larger course, designed for group discussion or student recitation. The minimum instructional contact time per credit is equal to that of a lecture (1:1).

Seminar (SEM): Highly focused course that may include student presentations and discussions of reports based on literature, practice, problems, or research (e.g. capstone course). The minimum instructional contact time per credit is equal to that of a lecture (1:1).

Studio (STU): Courses with a focus on hands-on learning under the direct supervision of a faculty member wherein the student works to develop technical or creative skills respective to the area of study (e.g. architecture, music, visual arts, etc.). The minimum instructional contact time per credit is typically 1.5 times that of a lecture (1.5:1 ratio).

Workshops: Courses with a focus on experiential learning under the direct supervision of a faculty member wherein the student performs substantive work in a workshop setting to develop technical or creative skills using the facilities and equipment respective to the area of study. The minimum instructional contact time per credit is equal to that of a lecture (1:1).

C. Guidelines for Course Components Which May Involve Less Contact Time for Faculty-led or Faculty-directed Instruction and the Academic Program Defines the Number of Credits Awarded

These course components may involve less direct faculty involvement and more independent work by the student as compared to those listed in sections A and B. These courses may include a student working with a faculty member in a highly focused or specialized project. The amount of assigned credit is based on the program's determination of the effort required by a student to achieve the designated learning outcomes. In making this determination the academic unit/program should consider multiple factors including: (i) the knowledge and/or experience gained; (ii) the scope and level of the following activities; experiential and/or hands-on and/or research and/or creative and/or written work; and (iii) the hours involved to achieve learning outcomes.

Dissertation (DIS): A dissertation, an original investigation showing mature scholarship and critical judgment, demonstrating knowledge of research tools and methods, required for graduation at the Doctoral degree level.

Independent Studies (IND): Course of study where a student is formally enrolled during a period of research or independent study instruction in which the faculty interacts and directs student projects or other required activities with minimal associated direction.

Internship (INT): Course of study involving placement at an approved business, organization, industry or clinical environment that offers degree seeking students professional-level experience and responsibility. Applied and supervised field-based learning experience where students gain practical experience following a negotiated and/or directed plan of study.

Research (RSC): Student projects or other required activities with minimal faculty associated direction where a student is formally enrolled during a period of research.

Thesis (THE): A thesis which may be research or expository, critical or creative work, required for graduation with a Master's degree.

Practicum (PRA): Practical student work under the supervision of a faculty member or under supervision of a professional in the student's field and regular consultation with faculty member.

Other (OTH): Non-standard course offerings, such as Honors, Independent Research, Capstones, etc. that do not match the description of any other component type. If there is a course that meets outside of the standard contact time and outside student work requirements this must be established and documented.

Course Scheduling Notes

Courses can be offered at a shortened, accelerated pace, in which the credit hours assigned are the same as standard semester courses. These courses must meet the total amount of instructional and student work time as the examples above, even if delivered within an accelerated time frame. Variable length sessions (e.g. 5-week or 8-week) can be created as needed.

Note on Fractional Credit Hours: Courses may be created and offered in increments of half credits (e.g. 1.5 credits). Fractional credit courses are typically part of a course sequence and taught progressively in special sessions within a term. For example, two fractional courses may be offered in back-to-back sessions within a given semester. Minimum required contact hours must be prorated accordingly for fractional credit courses (e.g. 1.5 credits or 22.5 contact hours = 1,125 contact mins. + 2,250 mins. out-of-class work). For academic and administrative purposes, fractional credits are calculated and treated at their assigned value. They are not rounded in credit totals for graduation or degree requirements, tuition calculations, enrollment status and verification, participation eligibility, etc.

Note on Continuing Education Units: Continuing Education Units are measured as one tenth of an hour of instruction per hour. (1 hour of instruction = .1 CEU)

Instructional Modalities/Modes of Instruction

Course instruction can be provided in a number of various delivery modalities and still equate to the same learning outcomes and credit hour assignment provided for the course. The Department of Education offers the following definition of distance education as a guideline for electronic instructional delivery:

U.S. Department of Education, Distance Education Definition (34CFR 600.2):**

Distance education means education that uses one or more technologies listed in paragraphs (1)(i) through (1)(iv) of this definition to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor or instructors, and to support regular and substantive interaction between the student and the instructor or instructors, either synchronously or asynchronously.

(1) The technologies that may be used to offer distance education include –

- (i) The internet;*
- (ii) One-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices;*
- (iii) Audio conferencing; or*

- (iv) *Other media used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1)(i) through (1)(iii) of this definition.*

** U.S. Department of Education, *Distance Education Definition Current proposed language, May 2019*

University of Colorado Denver | Anschutz Medical Campus Instructional Modalities

In-Person Courses: Courses offered primarily in face-to-face sessions with a pre-determined meeting pattern that contain direct interaction with a faculty member. Contact time is assessed using the guidance in Course Component Sections A and B.

Hybrid Courses: Courses offered primarily in a blended format with 1 or more on-site face-to-face class sessions and at least one or more online sessions, both containing interaction with a faculty member. Contact time is assessed using both the in-person definition (for the in-person portion) and online definition below (for the online portion).

Online Courses: Courses offered asynchronously, mostly online without any face-to-face meetings. Contact time is satisfied by several means including instruction or interaction with a faculty member, interactive tutorials, discussions and class projects that engage peers and are overseen by faculty.

Remote Courses: Courses offered primarily via Zoom or similar technology with a pre-determined meeting pattern that contains direct interaction with a faculty member. Contact time is assessed using the in-person definition.

State and Federal Governing Guidelines for Credit and Contact Hours

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education and the U.S. Department of Education have guidelines about credit hour assignments and/or definitions. Those are as follows:

Colorado Commission on Higher Education:

[Colorado Commission on Higher Education Full-Time Equivalent \(FTE\) Reporting Guidelines and Procedures, April 2019](#)

To establish a statewide approach for reporting FTE student enrollment, CCHE and IHEs have established criteria for assigning credit hour values to courses, since 1985. Those values are continued as these updated guidelines reflect. This section identifies the typical relationship between base contact hours, credit hours and types of faculty involvement.

- *Base Contact Hour: The faculty Base Contact Hour represents a standard measurement of consumption of faculty resources by students. It consists of the number of scheduled minutes of instructional activity involving direct contact of faculty with students in a given term utilizing a particular method of instruction.*

The standard measurement for a faculty Base Contact Hour except for the instructional activities listed in Table II is:

- *Semester System Term: One Base Contact Hour = a minimum of 750 minutes. This translates to a minimum of fifteen 50-minute hours per semester.*
- *Quarter System Term: One Base Contact Hour = a minimum of 500 minutes. This translates to a minimum of ten 50-minute hours per quarter.*

Please note: Table II references specific instructional activities for which the institution is required to define the assigned credit hours. All are referenced in the sections below for *Credit Hour Guidelines by Type of Course Instruction* and *Credit Hour Guidelines by Type of Instructional Activity*.

U.S. Department of Education, Credit Hour definition (34CFR 600.2):

. . . a credit hour is an amount of student work defined by an institution, as approved by the institution's accrediting agency or state approval agency, that is consistent with commonly accepted practice in postsecondary education and that—

(1) Reasonably approximates not less than—

(i) 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 trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different period of time; or

(ii) At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1)(i) 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.; and

(2) Permits 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.

Term Structure at University of Colorado Denver | Anschutz Medical Campus

The University of Colorado Denver | Anschutz Medical Campus follows a semester term system with a standard-based academic calendar for the purposes of Title IV financial aid delivery. Semesters typically include 15 weeks of instruction, in addition to one finals week and one break week in the Fall and Spring semesters. Summer sessions are typically less than 15-weeks, but adhere to the policy in terms of contact hours and the amount of work required. Sessions within the semester term may also be scheduled for certain academic programs (for example, variable length sessions) that have a shorter number of weeks.