



Policy: Institutional Credit Hour Policy	Applicability:
Policy Owner: Office of the President	Approved By: Office of the President
Effective Date: July 1, 2012	Last Reviewed: November 7, 2022
Next Review: November 7, 2023	Contact:

PURPOSE: The purpose of the credit hour policy is to provide a definition of a credit hour that is in alignment with the U.S. Department of Education guidelines.

POLICY STATEMENT: Meharry Medical College operates on a semester system, with additional sessions offered between semesters, and during the summer. Standard courses offered during the semester in degree programs use contact hours that have been designed around the (Carnegie like) standard for a 3-unit class over a 15-18 week semester. This unit is known by the familiar term, "semester credit hour," and is the primary academic measure by which progress toward a degree is gauged at Meharry. It is recognized that such a unit measures only a part, albeit a major part, of a composite learning experience, based upon formally structured and informal interactions among faculty and students.

The Meharry Medical College follows the guidelines in compliance with the U.S. Department of Education's definition of credit hours as relates to credit hours for assigning credit to all courses taught in the Graduate and Professional Schools, including pre-clinical, clinical, laboratory, rotation, internship/externship, and elective coursework. The number of credits assigned to a course quantitatively reflects the modes of instruction and the amount of time spent in contact with students. 1 credit hour is worth 15-18 contact hours per course.

No degree credit is earned by a student for "D" or "F" grades received in graduate/professional level courses. Such courses must be repeated for a passing grade if they are to be counted as credit toward a graduate degree. However, grades of "D" or "F" are a permanent part of the record and are used in the calculation of the grade point average. In courses graded on a Pass/Fail basis, the receipt of a pass denotes credit.

The credit hour policy applies equally to Meharry courses of varying credits, duration, and modes of instruction, regardless of format or mode of delivery. One unit of credit in lecture, seminar, and discussion work should approximate one hour of direct faculty instruction and a **minimum** of two hours of out-of-class student work per week through one 15-18 week semester. Alternately, if the time is wholly occupied with either the seminar, field, clinical or laboratory work, or internships/externships, service learning, directed study or intensive semester (e.g., summer courses offered in shorter form) a **minimum** of 45 hours of student work is expected for each unit of credit.

Note that there may be other and/or future modes of instruction to which this alternate satisfaction of the credit hour requirement may apply. Additionally, where classroom work is



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supplemented by systematic outside reading, experiment or research under the direction of the instructor, a reduction may be made in the actual field, clinical, laboratory, internship/externship or classroom time as seems appropriate to the instructor with the approval of the pertinent department and/or School curriculum committee.

DEFINITIONS:

Credit Hour: Specifically, and consistent in accordance and applicable with all U.S. Department of Education Program Integrity rules published October 29, 2010, Meharry Medical College defines a credit hour as: an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates not less than:

1. One hour or more 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 the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; **or**
2. At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, clerkships, internships/externships, practica, preclinical, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

PROCEDURE: The School Curriculum Committees (with the assistance of the Office of the Registrar) determine the amount of coursework credit that will be assigned to each course based on the guidelines of the U.S. Department of Education.

The responsibility of the Curriculum Committees is to direct the curriculum for the education of students and oversee the curriculum development for programs. The Curriculum Committees determine the content, credit, level, and sequencing of courses, and regularly monitors the effectiveness of teaching. The Curriculum Committees of each School follows these guidelines when approving new courses and revising current courses.

The School of Graduate Studies and Research is an exception to this definition in that a student must be registered for a minimum of 9 hours to be designated as a full-time student. The normal course load for a full-time student during any semester (fall or spring) is considered to range from 9-12 credit hours which will include all residential courses for credit, noncredit or audit courses and approved courses taken at other institutions. Any load less than 9 credit hours must be approved by the dean of the graduate school.



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For traditional **seminars, service learning, and temporary** courses, a 1 credit hour class meets at least 120 minutes per week over the course of the semester.

Laboratory Classes: typically meet at least 240 minutes or more per week for 1 credit hour.

Clerkship/Clinical Experiences: are defined as “a part of the program that allows for observation, participation, studies of individual patients or clients, individual field work, and practicums in direct patient care settings.” Credit for clinical experiences is determined in accordance with recommendations of their specific accrediting bodies or applicable state regulations.

Professional Practice: is defined as “one or more credit-generating, academic/career related, non-salaried work experiences”. Professional Practice work sites are located on the Meharry Medical College campus with government and other institutions and organizations outside the College campus. At least one full-time five-day week of professional practice or the equivalent over a longer period of time will be required for one credit hour. Depending on specific curriculum, programs may require more than one week in order to award one credit hour.

Short Term Courses: Half-semester courses, summer session courses, and other courses offered over a different period of time will require the same amount of classroom and out of class work per credit hour as required of semester-long courses with that work distributed over the shorter period of time.

Workshops and Contract Courses: Credit bearing courses offered for special populations by special arrangement will meet regular academic credit hour standards.

Thesis/Dissertation and Independent Study: will represent a minimum of three hours of student work per week throughout the course of the semester or the equivalent work distributed over a different period of time.

Activity supervised as a group (laboratory, service/outreach, practicum, or workshop)

A semester credit hour is awarded for the equivalent of fifteen periods of such activity, where each activity period is 150 minutes or more in duration with little or no outside preparation expected. Forty-five 50-minute sessions of such activity would also normally earn one semester credit hour. Where such activity involves substantial outside preparation by the student, the equivalent of fifteen periods of 100 minutes duration each will earn one semester credit hour.

Supervised individual activity (independent study, board review, tutorial):



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One credit for independent study (defined as study given initial guidance, criticism, review and final evaluation of student performance by a faculty member) will be awarded for the equivalent of forty-five 50-minute sessions of student academic activity.

All definitions and standards will apply equally to all courses offered.

Periodic Compliance Review of Credit Hour Policy

Each department should conduct an initial comprehensive review of the credit hour assignment of approximately no less than 25% of its courses every year. This ensures that all courses are reviewed by the pertinent department faculty and/or School's curriculum committee at periodic intervals. Whereas each School should determine how best to organize and conduct its initial review, some common themes should be observed.

EXHIBITS: None.