

Southern Vermont College
Semester Credit Hour Policy and Guidelines

The credit hour is the unit of measure for an institution's course work and forms the bases on which degrees are awarded. This policy is designed to create a workable definition of the semester credit hour based on commonly accepted practices in higher education as well as federal regulation*. In addition, this policy provides guidelines for determining semester credit hours for a variety of innovative and alternative modes of instruction that Southern Vermont College (SVC) provides, in particular the laboratory learning environment that is a key component of its 4x4 curriculum.

Southern Vermont College Semester Credit Hour

Traditionally, a semester credit hour is granted for the completion of the equivalent of one 50-minute session of classroom lecture (1 class hour) and two hours of outside the classroom academic study per week for 15 weeks. A typical 3.0 credit hour course would meet for three 50-minute sessions per week for 15 weeks for a total of 45 sessions.

While SVC uses the traditional definition as the basis for its semester credit hour SVC courses incorporate laboratory learning within each class session allowing students to engage in hands-on learning and social interaction rather than relying solely on lectures. Therefore, SVC courses blend lecture style learning with laboratory learning utilizing longer class sessions and are 4.0 semester credit hours rather than the typical 3.0. SVC also recognizes that academic activity takes place in a variety of ways inside and outside the classroom. Therefore, the equivalent of one credit hour may also be earned through mandatory study groups, independent study, or online learning.

Traditional Semester Credit Hour			Southern Vermont College Semester Credit Hour		
Mode of Learning	One Semester Credit Hour	Example Course Meeting Time	Mode of Learning	One Semester Credit Hour	Example Course Meeting Time
Lecture, seminar, discussion	15 sessions of 50 minutes; and 2 hours of outside study per session	A 3.0 credit course would meet three times per week for 50-minute sessions = 2 hrs 30 mins / wk	Lecture, seminar, discussion combined with laboratory learning	15 sessions of 55 minutes or equivalent; and 2 hours of outside study per session	A 4.0 credit course would meet three times per week for 75-minute sessions = 3 hrs 45 mins / wk
Laboratory, workshop, group studio	15 sessions of 150 minutes; and limited outside study per session	A 1.0 credit lab course would meet once per week for 150-minutes = 2 hrs 30 mins / wk	Lecture (Lecture portion of Lab Science Course)	15 sessions of 50 minutes or equivalent; and 2 hours of outside study per session	A 3.0 credit course would meet two times per week for 75-minute sessions = 2 hrs 30 mins / wk
			Laboratory (Laboratory portion of Lab Science Crse)	15 sessions of 150 minutes or equivalent; and limited outside study per session	A 1.0 credit Lab would meet two times per week for 75-minute sessions = 2 hrs 30 mins / wk

*Federal Definition of the Credit Hour

As an accreditor recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE) is obliged to follow federal law and regulations pertinent to that recognition.

Federal regulation defines a credit hour as an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutional established equivalence that reasonably approximates not less than –

(1) 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 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, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

Source: NEASC/CIHE Policy on Credits and Degrees (http://cihe.neasc.org/downloads/POLICIES/Pp111_PolicyOnCreditsAndDegrees.pdf)