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MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 30, 2022

TO: Deans, Department Chairs, School Directors and Faculty

FROM: Michele Hawkins, Interim Provost and
Vice President for Academic Affairs 

SUBJECT: Policy and Procedures: Definitions of a Credit Hour
(Supersedes all prior memoranda and policies)

BACKGROUND: The United States Department of Education as well as the University's regional accrediting agency, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools-Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), requires institutions of higher education to define the credit they will award for student work, and accrediting agencies are required to review the institution's policies and procedures for determining and applying its credit hour policies. Per the [SACSCOC Credit Hours Policy Statement](#):

"...a credit hour is 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

1. Not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours 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 amount of time, or
2. At least an equivalent amount of work as required outlined in item 1 above 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."

At Florida Atlantic University, and at most institutions of higher education, it has been the common understanding that students will complete a minimum of two hours of course work outside of the classroom for every one hour of credit in the classroom.

The United States Department of Education provides guidance on the definition of a credit hour for institutions and accrediting bodies for programs at for-profit, non-profit, and public institutions of higher education. To comply with this regulation, institutions are required to define the credit they will award for student work, and accrediting agencies are required to review the institution's policies and procedures for determining and applying its credit hour policies.

PURPOSE: Academic credit has provided the basis for measuring the amount of engaged learning time expected of a typical student enrolled not only in the traditional classroom settings but also in laboratories, internships, studios, clinical, field work and other experimental learning and in eLearning education. Credit hours are the common currency for academic credit used by students and universities to calculate, record, interpret the number of credits students earn to fulfill degree, certificate, and other similar academic requirements. The credit hour unit is used to measure student course work, and is founded on the important concept of student achievement and learning outcomes. The value of a credit hour can be determined by contact time, the education experience, and out-of-class preparation by the student.

Definition: A credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement, for the various modes of instruction offered at Florida Atlantic University, in accordance with the following guidelines:

1. For traditionally delivered courses, not less than one (1) hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction each week for fifteen (15) weeks per Fall or Spring semester, and a minimum of two (2) hours of out-of-class student work for each credit hour. Equivalent time and effort is required for enrollment periods which may be offered over a shortened time frame.
2. The equivalent amount of work outlined in item 1 above for online and hybrid courses, laboratory courses, internships, clinical practice, field work, studio work, and other academic work leading to award of credit. These course offerings must demonstrate substantive faculty interaction of equivalent time and effort as traditionally delivered in-person coursework. Substantive faculty academic interaction includes, but is not limited to:
 - providing direct instruction, including video presentations;
 - assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework;
 - providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;
 - participating in an interactive tutorial, webinar, or other interactive computer-assisted instruction;
 - leading group or team-based activities;
 - facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or
 - other instructional activities approved by the institution's or program's accrediting agency.

3. The credit for courses in professional degree programs will be determined in accord with the appropriate accrediting agency. For example, the Charles E. Schmidt College of Medicine determines successful accomplishment of course objectives in accordance with the accreditation standards of the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME).
4. In determining the amount of coursework to achieve learning competencies and outcomes, the university will take into account and consideration alternative delivery methods, measurements of student work, academic calendars, discipline, and degree levels.

PROCEDURES:

1. Faculty develop the syllabi for each of their courses, following the Provost's Guidelines for Course Syllabi and any additional guidelines provided by the department/school and college, and the credit hour guidelines in this memorandum.
 - a. The course syllabus must document not less than one hour (50 Minutes) of direct instruction each week for fifteen weeks per semester for each credit hour. Courses meeting during shorter enrollment periods must document the equivalent direct instruction time. Online and hybrid courses, laboratory courses, internships, clinical practice, field work, studio work, and other academic work leading to award of credit must document weekly equivalent instructional activities to demonstrate the effort needed to achieve the course learning outcomes. Additional information on determining equivalent instructional time based upon activities can be found at [Hours of Instructional Activity](#)
 - b. The course syllabus must document an average of not less than two hours of out-of-class assignments each week for fifteen weeks per semester, or adjusted equivalent for other delivery modes, for each credit hour. Out-of-class assignments may include readings, research, homework assignments, research papers, interactive tutorials, study groups, or other activities appropriate for the course.
2. Each semester, the chair/director will certify to the Dean that the syllabi being used that semester follow the Provost's Guidelines for Course Syllabi and the definition of a credit hour policy outlined in this memorandum.
3. College Curriculum Committees, and the University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee and Graduate Curriculum Committee, will review new and revised courses for conformity to these guidelines and commonly accepted practices in higher education.

cc: Russell Ivy, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs