

**UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH  
SCHOOL OF NURSING  
ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AFFECTING THE  
SCHOOL OF NURSING**

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**TITLE OF POLICY:** CREDIT HOUR DEFINITION BY FEDERAL REGULATION

**ORIGINAL DATE:** November 2016

**LAST REVIEW/REVISION DATE:** April 2017

**POLICY:** The School of Nursing, consistent with the University of Pittsburgh, follows the policy establishing the Credit Hour as the unit measure of instruction for awarding credit, in compliance with the Federal (U.S. Department of Education) and Middle States Commission of Higher Education and Pennsylvania Department of Education regulations pertaining to degree requirements and credit hours.

- Schools are responsible to ensure that all courses comply with the credit hour policy, including new courses as part of the school's new course development and approval process. The Office of the Registrar will include approved courses in the catalog, and further reviews the class schedules prior to the start of each semester to ensure that all classes are scheduled for the minimum number of minutes corresponding to the credits assigned. Existing courses are reviewed periodically by the faculty and dean's office as part of our assessment of student learning.
- A semester credit hour is most typically awarded for an activity that consists of 50 minutes of classroom instruction with an expectation of two hours of outside study for each hour of time in class per week for the semester.
- The University of Pittsburgh's academic year consists of fall and spring semesters with an optional summer semester. Fall and spring semesters are traditionally 14 weeks in length with an additional week for finals.
- During summer semester, an academic period may consist of four, six, twelve or fifteen weeks, with class time divided proportionally to satisfy the definition of a credit hour.
- The expectation for student effort is the same in all formats of a course whether they be fully online, hybrid, self-paced, or one delivered in lecture or seminar format.
- Academic units are responsible for ensuring that credit hours are awarded only for work that meets the requirements outlined in this policy. The University of Pittsburgh complies with Federal (U.S. Department of Education) and Middle States Commission of Higher Education and Pennsylvania Department of Education regulations pertaining to degree requirements and credit hours. [http://www.msche.org/documents/Degree-and-Credit-Guidelines-062209-FINAL\[1\].pdf](http://www.msche.org/documents/Degree-and-Credit-Guidelines-062209-FINAL[1].pdf) <http://cfo.pitt.edu/policies/documents/policy09-04-15.web.pdf>

**PROCEDURE:**

- Courses that have less structured classroom schedules, such as research seminars, laboratories, independent studies, internships, practica, studio work, or any other academic work leading to the award of credit hours should state clearly learning objectives, expected outcomes, and workload expectations.
- For lecture, seminar or discussion focused courses, one (1) credit represents 50 minutes per week of scheduled class/seminar time and two (2) hours of student preparation time. For the typical 3-credit course this is equivalent to 45 hours of class time and 90 hours of student preparation across the term.
- One laboratory credit represents 1 hour of lecture or discussion per week plus 1 to 2 hours of scheduled supervised or independent laboratory work and 2 hours of student preparation time. For a 3-credit laboratory course this represents at least 45 hours of class time, between 45 and 90 hours of laboratory time and 90 hours of student preparation per semester.
- One clinical credit represents 3 to 4 hours of supervised practice per week. For a 3-credit clinical course this is 135 to 180 hours of supervised clinical across the term.
  - Associate degrees require the successful completion of 60 semester credit hours.
  - Undergraduate degrees require the successful completion of 120 semester credit hours.
  - Master's degrees require the successful completion of a minimum of 30 semester credit hours
  - The number of semester credit hours for a degree beyond a first professional or master's degree shall be determined by the faculty and further reviewed and approved in accordance with the University's Guidelines for the Review of Academic Planning Proposals as well as the Regulations Governing Graduate Study.