Mid-Atlantic Christian University
Academic Affairs Policy #37

SUBJECT: Definition of Credit Hour

DATE: November 9, 2012

REVISED:
NEXT SCHEDULED REVIEW: Even numbered years in February

APPROVED BY BOARD OF TRUSTEES: October 18, 2013

Policy for: Academic Affairs
Procedure for: Faculty
Authorized by: Vice President for Academic Affairs
Issued by: Board of Trustees

I. Purpose

The U.S. Department of Education expects that recognized accrediting commissions require an institution to have a policy that outlines how an institution defines and awards credit hours for courses and programs. The institutional policy should be consistent not only with "commonly accepted practice," but also the following definition of a credit hour:

- **Federal Definition of the Credit Hour.** For purposes of the application of this policy and in accord with federal regulations, 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 for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of and a minimum of two hours out of class student work each week 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.

    (See http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/Credit%20Hours.pdf)

This policy statement also partially addresses "10.7 Policies for awarding credit" of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, *Principles of Accreditation* (2018 edition).

II. Policy

Credit Hour Defined

Semester hours shall be equivalent to the commonly accepted and traditionally defined units of academic measurement in accredited institutions. Academic degree or academic credit-bearing courses are measured by the learning outcomes normally achieved through 45 hours of student work for one semester credit. (One credit/semester hour is 15 hours of academic engagement and 30 hours of preparation.)

This formula is typically referred to as a Carnegie unit and is used by the American Council on Education in its Credit Recommendation Evaluative Criteria.

Student work includes direct or indirect faculty instruction.

- *Academic engagement* for traditional on-campus, face-to-face courses will normally be met by the regular meeting of the course for approximately 15 hours for each credit hour granted. In the case of on-line courses academic engagement may include, but is not limited to, submitting an academic assignment, listening to class lectures or webinars (synchronous or asynchronous), taking an exam, completing an interactive tutorial or computer-assisted instruction, attending a study group that is assigned by the institution, contributing to an academic online discussion, initiating contact with a faculty member to ask a question about the academic subject studied in the course, conducting laboratory work, and completing an externship or internship.

- *Preparation* is typically homework, such as reading and study time, and completing assignments and projects. Therefore, a 3 credit hour course would require 135 hours (45 hours of academic engagement and 90 hours of preparation).

All student work must be documented in the curriculum materials and/or syllabi, including a reasonable approximation of time required for the student to complete the assignments. Evaluation of a student's work must be identified as a grading criterion and weighted appropriately in the determination of a final grade for a course.

III. Procedure

Documenting Credit Hours

Activity	Assignments	Estimated hours for the average student
Academic Engagement	Listening to or reading course lectures: 25 pages per hour	
	Reading additional website documents: 25 pages per hour	
	Audio and video: 22 pages per hour	
	Reading discussion forums and making responses: 1 hour per week	
	Presenting and reading student reports: 1 hour per week	
	Taking quizzes and exams: .5 hours per week	
	TOTAL: should be at least 15 hours per semester multiplied by the number of credit hours for the course	
Preparation (outside of class)	Required textbooks, ordinary reading level: 30 pages per hour	
	Required textbooks, difficult reading level: 25 pages per hour	
	Reaction/reflection papers and book reports: 1 hour per page	
	Case studies: 1 hour per page	
	Research papers: 3 hours per page	
	Study for quizzes and exams:	
	Project, journaling, or other assignments:	
	TOTAL: should be at least 30 hours per semester multiplied by the number of credit hours for the course	
Overall Total	Should be at least 45 hours per credit hour (or 135 hours for a 3 credit course).	

The average adult reading rate is 250 words per minute with 70% comprehension. [Smith, Brenda D. "Breaking Through: College Reading" 7th Ed. Longman, 2004]

Reading for learning (100-200 wpm); reading for comprehension (200-400 wpm); and skimming (400-700 wpm). With an average of 400 words per page, at 200 words per minute a student should read around 30 pages per hour (200 words per minute x 60 = 12,000 words per hour divided by 400 = 30 pages per hour). Therefore, we are using 25-30 pages per hour.

Audiobooks are recommended to be 150-160 words per minute or 22 pages per hour. Reading on Monitor: 180-200 wpm or 27 pages per hour.

Slide presentations are closer to 100 wpm or 15 pages per hour.

Verifying Student Workload

Instructors must verify a student's workload in some manner. One way to document how many hours students are spending to complete a task is to survey students at the end of each semester. This data could be gathered from students with each submitted assignment. In the case of online courses instructors should not rely upon the amount of time a student spends in the learning management system as the only source of verification. (Students could be logged in and not doing any work.)

Faculty (or course developers) will be asked to submit to the department chair or vice president for academic affairs a summary of the computation of work load for each course when it is designed and when the course undergoes regular periodic review. The guidelines in this policy about computation of workload are guidelines and the credentialed faculty member or course developer has freedom to make necessary adjustments based upon his or her professional judgment.

This policy is modified from *B.7. – Guide to Subject Specialists on Determining Credit Hours* by the Accrediting Commission of the Distance Education and Training Council.

IV. Published: *MACU Faculty Handbook*

V. Reason for Revision

VI. Appendices