

Academic Credit Hour Policy

I. Definitions

Academic credit has provided the basis for measuring the amount of engaged learning time expected of a typical student enrolled not only in traditional classroom settings but also laboratories, studios, internships and other experiential learning, and distance and correspondence education. Students, institutions, employers, and others rely on the common currency of academic credit to support a wide range of activities, including the transfer of students from one institution to another. For several decades, the federal government has relied on credits as a measure of student academic engagement as a basis of awarding financial aid. In accordance with federal regulations, a credit hour is an amount of work directed by institutional established equivalencies, represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement (Southern Association of Colleges Commission on Colleges, *Credit Hour Policy*, 2012).

II. Scope

This policy and procedure provides for the establishment, review, and awarding of academic credit hours at Samford University. The procedures below are those applied to the more commonly used credit situations at Samford. This includes the standard 15-week instructional format, accelerated instructional format, non-classroom based learning experiences, and online course delivery experiences.

III. Criteria for Establishment of a Credit Hour

The Samford University definition of a credit hour formalizes compliance with federal and accreditation expectations and helps to provide consistency throughout the University. Samford follows the Carnegie unit of measure for assigning credits to its undergraduate and graduate academic courses. One semester credit is equivalent to a minimum of 1 hour in-class (defined as 50 minutes of instruction) and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work per week.

Example Minimum Standards for Total Direct Faculty Instruction and Student Preparation for Lecture / Seminar Classes:

Credits	Direct Faculty Instruction*	Student Preparation (out of class)	Total Minutes per Semester
1	12.5 hours	25 hours	37.5 hours
2	25 hours	50 hours	75 hours
3	37.5 hours	75 hours	112.5 hours
4	50 hours	100 hours	150 hours

*An equivalent amount of work is required in courses and academic activities where class time is not the primary mode of learning, such as online and hybrid courses, laboratory work, independent study, internships, practica, studio work, etc. Credits will be awarded on the basis of documented learning objectives, expected learning outcomes, and student workload expectations within a specified period of academically engaged time. Academic units are responsible for ensuring and documenting that credit hours are awarded only for work that meets the requirements outlined in this policy. Instructors of record for a course are also encouraged to state the expected out-of-class student work in their course syllabus.

For the standard 15 week term (plus an addition week for final exams), the following weekly determinations are used:

- **Lecture/Seminar Classes:** A unit of credit equates to three hours of student work per week (1 hour in-class or direct instruction plus a minimum of 2 hours of out-of-class).
- **Laboratory/Experiential Classes:** A unit of credit equates to 3 hours per week of direct instruction in a laboratory/experiential setting, and 1-3 hours of out-of-class student work per unit of credit. The latter range allows for discipline and student level differentiation.
- **Laboratory/Experiential Classes (School of The Arts):** A unit of credit equates to 4 hours of student work per week (1-3 hours in-class or direct instruction in a laboratory/experiential setting plus a minimum of 1-3 hours of out-of-class). The range allows for discipline and student level differentiation.
- **Studio Classes (School of The Arts):** A unit of credit equates to 6 hours of student work per week (2 hours in-class or direct instruction plus a minimum of 4 hours of out-of-class).
- **Ensemble/Production Classes (School of The Arts):** A unit of credit equates to 6 hours of student work per week (3-6 hours in-class or direct instruction plus a minimum of 1 hour of out-of-class). Irregular scheduling may occur, but total hours will meet minimum requirements. Zero credit may be awarded for Ensemble or Production Classes beyond degree requirements.
- **Applied (Private) Studio (School of The Arts):** A unit of credit equates to a minimum of 3 hours of student practice per week, plus the necessary individual instruction. 1 credit receives a 30-minute private lesson, 2 credits receive a 45-minute private lesson, and 3 credits receive an hour private lesson. All applied students also participate in weekly performance seminars; students studying a secondary area are encouraged, but not required, to attend seminars for that area.
- **Clinical Courses (College of Health Sciences):** Clinical credit hours are assigned in accordance with practice standards and requirements of accrediting bodies or licensing agencies. A unit of credit equates to a minimum of 3 hours of student work/clinical per week. Programs/disciplines may require more than 3 hours of student work/clinical per week for a unit of credit.

For courses meeting fewer than 15 weeks, the credit hours awarded for a given course or academic experience must be reasonably equivalent to the standard of 3 hours combined direct instruction and student work per credit hour for a 15-week term.

For independent study and experiential learning courses, the credit hours applicable for a given course or academic experience must be reasonably equivalent to the standard of 3 hours combined direct instruction and student work per week, per credit hour, for a 15-week term. Specific independent study and experiential guidelines and forms are provided at the school/college from which the course is being taken. Guidelines at the college/school may include the number of independent studies (or credits) and experiential learning opportunities permitted per student for a single degree, required student grade point average (GPA), and which course numbers are assigned as independent study.