

Credit Hours and Instructional Time

Student Credit Hours Policy

Utica University follows the credit hour policy established by the New York State Education Department and the United States Department of Education. Specifically, one credit hour must equate to approximately one hour (50 minutes) of direct instruction plus two hours of student out-of-class work per week over a typical 15-week semester. The total time students spend per credit is a minimum of 2250 min (750 min class time + 1500 min supplementary work) or 37.5 real hours. This standard applies to various instructional formats, including in-person, online (synchronous and asynchronous), and hybrid courses.

Adherence to the credit hour policy is essential for institutions to be eligible for federal student financial aid programs.

Time on Task

As per the New York State Education Department, “Time on task is the total learning time spent by a student in a college course, including instructional time as well as time spent studying and completing course assignments” <https://www.nysed.gov/college-university-evaluation/distance-education-program-policies>.

Instructional Time

On-ground Courses

For on-ground courses, instructional time refers to the time dedicated to direct, faculty-led instruction in the classroom. Instructional time may include scheduled examinations, but not homework or other outside work. Instructional time may not be replaced by the time students are expected to spend on academic work and preparation for the course.

At Utica University, traditional, on-ground classes meet for 14 weeks. Therefore, to fulfill the state and federal credit hour requirements, the University requires that faculty engage in the appropriate amount of instructional time with students during the 15th week of the semester, which is the final exam week. Faculty may schedule seated exams, presentations, or other *classroom-based activities* to meet expectations for instructional time that week.

For courses that meet for fewer than 15 weeks, the hours for both instructional time and supplemental work are proportionately increased to achieve the required number of hours per credit.

When classes are cancelled due to illness, bereavement, or conference travel, faculty should contact the school administrative assistant (and cc the deans) with the date of cancellation, the name of the class, when it meets, and make-up work for students. Examples of make-up activities include other academic activities, including labs, internships, campus lectures or workshops, and practica, as well as other similar activities. These experiences—equivalent

academic activities—may be counted towards faculty-led instructional time. The administrative assistants will keep these on file so that we have a record of meeting minimum instructional time for the course. Keeping a record is important in case there is a student complaint and to show that we meet regulatory requirements. Such records will not be used to challenge academic freedom or to penalize individual faculty members.

Labs

Labs should total a minimum of 2250 min (combination of instruction and supplementary work) per credit hour. Depending on the lab and the amount of outside work, this may impact scheduling time. Here are some examples:

- Without supplementary work, labs scheduled for 3 real hours per week should meet for at least 13 weeks to fulfill NYSED requirement. Labs that are scheduled for 14 weeks, need only be 2 ³/₄ real hours in length.
- With supplementary work, fewer lab sessions may be needed.
- With substantial supplementary work and meeting for at least 13 weeks per semester, consider decreasing length of lab or increasing course credit hours students receive for the lab to better meet expectations for total instruction time.

Distance/Online Courses

While instruction is provided differently in an online or distance environment than in a classroom, the total amount of instructional time and supplemental work must remain the same, as defined by the state and federal credit hour policies. The New York State Department of Education advises, “Rather than try to distinguish between ‘in-class’ and ‘outside-class’ time for students, the faculty member developing and/or teaching the online course should calculate how much time a student doing satisfactory work would take to complete the work of the course”— i.e, calculating the time on task.

Resources are available online to assist faculty in calculating time on task, such as

Louisiana State University: <https://faculty.support.lsu.edu/updates/new-resource-time-on-task-calculator/>

Wake Forest University: <https://cat.wfu.edu/resources/workload2/>

Rochester Institute of Technology: <https://www.rit.edu/teaching/time-task-online-courses>

The Center for Faculty Excellence offers this suggested guideline for determining time on task.

Learning Activity/Assessment	Time-On-Task
Readings – Text – heavy material	25 pages/hour
Readings – Text – average material	35 pages/hour
Readings – Text – light material	50 pages/hour
Readings – PDF	25 pages/hour
Readings – Online Articles	25 pages/hour
Video – 15 minute duration	20 minutes
Video – 30 minute duration	40 minutes
PowerPoint Presentations (20 slides)	1 hour
Conference Call	Duration of call plus 15 minutes
Web Conference	Duration of conference plus 30 minutes
Discussions – original post, three response posts	2 hours
Reaction/Reflection Papers	1 hour per page
Research Papers	4 hours per page
Quiz (10 questions)	1 hour

Procedure for Verifying Compliance with Credit Hour Policy

Utica University’s accreditor, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, requires that its institutions have clear procedures to ensure compliance with the state and federal credit hour policies. Specifically,

- The institution will demonstrate that there is sufficient course content to substantiate the credit hours required for educational programs (through a sampling of course or program review procedures and approval documentation including but not limited to syllabi or course descriptions). This may be best accomplished during a department’s 5-year program review.
- The institution will regularly review and verify the length of educational programs and compliance with credit hour requirements.
- The institution will review its policy, procedures, and/or methodology regularly to ensure that they align with student learning outcomes, academic goals, and strategic priorities, are fair and equitable to students, and take into consideration new methods or sources for learning and alternative assessment methods.

https://www.msche.org/policies-guidelines/?sf_paged=3

Utica University currently verifies compliance by analyzing

- Syllabi elements
- Time-on-task for online courses
- Periodic program reviews
- Curriculum Committee review