

## Credit Hour Policy

The University of Scranton complies with Federal (US DOE) and Middle States Commission of Higher Education (MSCHE) regulations regarding degree and credit hour requirements, and other commonly accepted practices in higher education. The University of Scranton undergraduate degrees require the satisfactory completion of at least 120 semester credit hours, of which at least 63 credit hours satisfy, but are not exclusive to, fulfillment of general education requirements. Associates degrees require at least 60 semester credit hours, which includes a minimum of 20 credit hours of general education. All master's degrees require at least 30 semester credit hours beyond the baccalaureate level. The number of credit hours for doctoral and other degrees beyond a master's degree are determined by the faculty and reflect the recommendations, expectations, or requirements of professional associations, accreditations, or national learned societies, as approved via the University curriculum process.

The University's academic calendar includes an academic year divided into two semesters (fall and spring). Each is approximately 15 weeks in length. Accelerated sessions, such as Intersession and Summer, are variable in length and comply with the established University credit policy. Each term has defined shorter parts-of-term.

The University of Scranton uses a variety of course delivery methods to promulgate the curriculum. Credit hour standards must be satisfied regardless of the course delivery method.

The University of Scranton defines a credit hour pursuant to federal guidelines. As defined by regulation (34 CFR 600.2), a credit hour is: "An amount of student work defined by an institution, as approved by the institution's accrediting agency or State approval agency, that is consistent with commonly accepted practice in postsecondary education. and that:

- 1) reasonably approximates not less than (i) One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of 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 period of time; or (ii) At least an equivalent amount of work as required in (1) of this definition 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; and
- 2) permits an institution, in determining the amount of work associated with a credit hour, to take into account a variety of delivery methods, measurements of student work, academic calendars, disciplines, and degree levels.

The University also complies with the established curricular credit regulations of the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE): 22 Pa. Code Chapter 31, 31.21-31.22. One semester credit is defined as 14 hours of classroom instruction, exclusive of registration, final examinations and holidays.

### ***Credit Hour Standard by Course Type***

The University of Scranton measures credit hours using the Carnegie unit; a credit hour is expected to be a reasonable approximation of a minimum amount of student work in accordance with the Carnegie unit. PDE's curricular credit policy allows for determining activities that are the equivalent of classroom instruction. Definitions of The University of Scranton's course types appear below. For purposes of the definitions below, 50 Carnegie minutes equals 1 hour.

**Lecture:** courses with multiple students that meet to engage in various forms of group instruction under the direct supervision of a University faculty member. One lecture credit hour represents 1 hour of scheduled class time and a minimum of 2 hours of student out of class work per week. Lecture courses offered in-person during regular terms are typically offered in accordance with the University’s standard block schedule.

**Lecture Hours Per Credit**

Credits Awarded	Minimum Contact Time Per Week (excluding final exams)	Minimum Contact Time Per Week in Carnegie Hour Minutes (excluding final exams)	Minimum Out of Class Student Work/week	Total Instruction Time for a Standard Semester <sup>1</sup> (excluding final exams)	Minimum Total Instruction Time for a Standard Semester in Carnegie Hour Minutes (including final exams)
1	1 hour	50 minutes	100 minutes	14 hours	<b>820 minutes</b> [i.e., 700 minutes of teaching + 120 minutes of final exams]
2	2 hours	100 minutes	200 minutes	28 hours	<b>1520 minutes</b> [i.e., 1400 minutes of teaching + 120 minutes of final exams]
3	3 hours	150 minutes	300 minutes	42 hours	<b>2220 minutes</b> [i.e., 2100 minutes of teaching + 120 minutes of final exams]
4	4 hours	200 minutes	400 minutes	56 hours	<b>2920 minutes</b> [i.e., 2800 minutes of teaching + 120 minutes of final exams]

**Laboratory:** courses with a focus on experimental learning under the direct supervision of a University faculty member wherein the student performs substantive work in a laboratory setting. One laboratory credit hour represents a minimum of 1 hour of scheduled supervised laboratory work and a minimum of 2 hours of student out of class work per week.

**Practicum:** courses that provide students with the opportunity to practice and enhance skills that they have acquired in previous coursework. Practicum coursework may include a mix of didactic, group supervision and on-the-job hours. One practicum credit hour is equivalent to approximately 3 or more hours of coursework and related activities per week.

**Education Practica (Student Teaching):** coursework that includes supervised student teaching representing 3 lecture hours and at least 30 classroom hours per week.

**Internships, Clinical/Field Experience, Residencies, Externships:** courses developed for independent learning or experience involving directed and/or self-directed and often off-site

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<sup>1</sup>Standard semester at The University of Scranton is 14 weeks of direct teaching plus 2 literal hours (120 minutes) of final exams. The University considers the “one hour of direct faculty instruction” within the Carnegie unit to be 50 minutes, rather than a literal 60 minutes per hour.

learning. The content and learning outcomes are determined by the supervising faculty and the work supervisor at the cooperating site, both of whom must judge and certify different aspects of student's work and completion of agreed upon outcomes and assessment of those outcomes. One credit hour is equivalent to approximately 14 or more hours of coursework and related activities.

**Seminar:** highly focused courses that occur under the direct supervision of a University faculty member. Content may include student presentations and discussions of reports based on literature, practice, problems, or research (e.g. capstone course). Contact time for seminar courses is comparable in scope, content, academic rigor as courses offered in a lecture format. Student out of class work expectations are the same as lecture courses.

**Credit for Prior Learning:** credit for demonstrated college-level equivalencies gained through learning experiences outside of the college classroom may be granted to individuals who submit evidence of learning equivalent to University level course objectives/learning outcomes. Considered evidence may include portfolios of relevant work and military experiences, summaries of learning experiences, letters from supervisors, CLEP, Excelsior College Examination, ACE-approved credit, portfolio credit, and PONSI credit and/or other materials that clearly illustrate achievement of each course learning outcome. Credit for prior learning must be comparable in scope, content, academic rigor and student study time as courses offered in a lecture format. Review of student requests and decision to award credit is made by the faculty within the respective academic program/department, using methods that assure the experience is appropriate and equivalent to content and learning outcomes for specific coursework and standards of educational rigor. Individual academic programs may have additional requirements to determine eligibility of prior learning and/or life experience within the program of study.

**Independent Study/Reader/Research:** courses of study in which a University faculty member directs student outcomes with periodic contact. Students must illustrate achievement of the independent study, reader and/or research course objectives/learning outcomes in order to receive credit. The student must interact with the faculty member on a regular and substantive<sup>2</sup> basis to assure progress within the course. Contact time for independent studies, readers and research is comparable in scope, content, academic rigor as courses offered in a lecture format. Student out of class work expectations are the same as lecture courses.

**Accelerated and Condensed Courses:** courses offered in length that is less than a traditional semester. These courses offer the same semester credit hours as traditional semester-length classes. Within the shortened timeframe, accelerated courses must meet the minimum contact hour requirements as courses offered in a lecture format. Student out of class work expectations are the same as lecture courses.

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<sup>2</sup>In September 2020, the U.S. Department of Education issued the following definition of regular and substantive interaction. For purposes of this definition, substantive interaction is engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and also includes at least two of the following:

- i. Providing direct instruction
- ii. Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework;
- iii. Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;
- iv. Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or
- v. Other instructional activities approved by the institution's or program's accrediting agency.

### **Practices to Determine Amount and Level of Course Credit**

The faculty is responsible for the curriculum. Credit values for courses are determined at the department level based upon faculty expertise, instructional delivery method, course objectives, and learning outcomes. When creating a course, a faculty member should be prepared to demonstrate or show how they created the credit hour assignment that is identified in the syllabus. Upon departmental approval, the course undergoes additional evaluation as it moves through the curricular approval process. This includes review by each college-level curriculum committee to ensure that the course type, delivery method(s), learning outcomes, credit and contact hours are compliant with University policy. Additionally, faculty on the Curriculum Committees and the Faculty Senate review each new course to ensure that its course type, delivery method(s), learning outcomes, credit and contact hours are compliant with University policy before voting for approval of these new courses. The Office of the Provost reviews all curricular proposals to ensure compliance with credit/contact hours and course learning outcomes before awarding final approval of courses. Changes in curriculum are noted in the University Catalog (updated each July/August) and on the University website.

Approved courses are sent to the Registrar's Office for inclusion in the Schedule of Classes. The Office of the Registrar regularly audits scheduled course offerings to ensure compliance with credit and contact hour requirements through its process for scheduling each semester. Discrepancies are brought to the attention of the appropriate departments and deans for correction.

### **Transfer Credit and Articulation Agreements**

The University's Transfer Credit policy and procedure outline requirements and practices regarding the standards, eligibility, and decision process for review and award of academic credit from other higher education institutions, and for determining eligibility for the awarding of credit for other experiences, including prior learning and military service.

In addition, the University maintains articulation agreements with other higher education institutions for the awarding of credit for selected academic programs. A list of these institutions is available on the University's Consumer Information web site. Details about programs of study included in the scope of these agreements is available from the Office of Admissions.