Computation of Credit Hours

Functional Lead: Provost
Division: ASD
Responsible Office: Registrar

Reference: (a) Principle 9.2 SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation
           (b) Resource Manual for the Principles of Accreditation

1. Purpose. This policy provides Marine Corps University (MCU) guidance for the computation of contact hours and semester credit hours to be awarded for courses.

2. Policy

    a. Credit Hours. All credits toward the University's master's degrees are earned through instruction offered by the University. Marine Corps University does not accept transfer credit from any institution. In order to serve students in the most consistent way possible, standardization is required in the computation of credit hours. To this end, MCU uses the federal definition of a credit hour as follows:

        (1) Not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours 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 amount of time, or

        (2) At least an equivalent amount of work as required outlined in item (a) above for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practice, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

    b. Contact Hours. The contact hour is the basic unit of attendance. Credit hours are computed using contact hours. The calculation of contact hours depends on the type of coursework/method of delivery as follows:

        (1) Direct faculty instruction (e.g., lectures, seminars, films, exams, staff rides, and field studies): One hour of scheduled direct faculty instruction equals one contact hour [1:1]. One hour of scheduled direct faculty instruction requires a minimum of two hours of scheduled student preparation. Preparation time can include reading, written assignments, reflection and the like. Scheduled preparation time is not required for staff rides and field studies; however, program directors may schedule preparation time for staff rides and field studies if deemed necessary.

        (2) Experiential learning activities (e.g., student decision exercises, war games, and practical or planning exercises): Two hours of scheduled experiential learning equals one contact hour [2:1]. Program directors may, but are not required, to schedule student preparation time for experiential learning activities.

   (3) Directed research projects for which credit is calculated (e.g., the Master of Military Studies (MMS) paper at the Command and Staff College) will be scheduled. Three hours of scheduled research/mentoring time equals one contact hour [3:1].

   (4) Travel, social events, administrative duties, and non-credit blocks of instruction do not count as contact hours.

   c. Computation of Credit Hours. Semester credit hours will be computed by dividing contact hours by 15, rounded to the nearest whole number using common rules for rounding. For example, if the number of seminar/lecture hours for a given course totals 40, this would equate to three credit hours (40 / 15 = 2.67 = 3.0 credit hours). Likewise, a 40-hour practical application exercise would equate to one credit hour (40 / 2 / 15 = 1.33 = 1 credit hour). Finally, 40 hours of directed research/mentoring would also equate to one credit hour (40 / 3 / 15 = 0.89 = 1 credit hour).

3. Procedure

   a. Program directors will calculate and brief course credit hours at the applicable Curriculum Review Board. The MCU Registrar will use the approved credit hours as the basis for student transcripts.

   b. Validating report. Each officer residential educational program will use the Credit Hour Report (CHR) in order to submit an annual report of its contact hour and semester credit hour breakdown for the current Academic Year to the MCU Registrar NLT 15 April for EWS and 15 May for degree granting programs.

   c. If needed to address any issues or inconsistencies across the University, the Director, Academic Support Division will convene a panel to review all submissions and make recommendations for resolution to the Provost.

   d. Once approved, the Registrar will maintain records of the CHR to ensure the transcript generated for each of the MCU colleges and schools reflects the total number of semester credit hours, rounded to the nearest 1.0 credit hour, as reflected in the report.

Related Policies and Forms
Sample Computation of Credit Hours

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Enclosure (10)