GUIDELINES FOR ONLINE CREDIT HOUR EQUIVALENCY

Southern Illinois University Carbondale follows the United States Department of Education's definition of a credit hour (34 CFR 600.2), which is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement. The credit hour policy applies equally to courses of varied duration and modes of instruction.

Credit hour equivalency for online coursework is determined by a student's total time on task, which includes time spent learning, studying, and completing assignments. In a typical face-to-face course, one semester credit hour represents 12.5 hours of instruction plus 30 hours of student preparation outside of class. In an online format, instructional time and student preparation time are combined to represent the student's total time on task (42.5 hours).

Student Engagement

Credits	Time on Task per Week	Total Time on Task Per semester
1	170 minutes (2.8 hours)	2,550 minutes (42.5 hours)
2	340 minutes (5.7 hours)	5,100 minutes (85 hours)
3	510 minutes (8.5 hours)	7,650 minutes (127.5 hours)
4	680 minutes (11.3 hours)	10,200 minutes (170 hours)
5	850 minutes (14.2 hours)	12,750 minutes (212.5 hours)
6	1,020 minutes (17 hours)	15,300 minutes (255 hours)

Applications of the credit hour policy to online courses may be broken down into three main activity categories: (1) laboratory activities, (2) readings, or (3) independent research and writing.

Activity	Example	Estimated Time Weekly
Labs	Experiential and online applications of course content	1.5 hours
Readings	Independent and scheduled readings Reading times are dependent on the readers prior knowledge of the content and experiences	2 hours
Research & Writing	Original paper, project, or portfolio commensurate with face-face course time	2 hours

Student learning outcomes (SLO) and assessments are identical for face-to-face and online courses. The course must be equal in content and level of difficulty as the face-to-face course (Vai & Sosulski, 2011). Learning tasks in online courses must make best use of online technologies and pedagogies. A few examples of online learning tasks and estimated time-to-completion rates are presented here.

Potential Task	Estimated Time Weekly
View 4 (15 minute) recorded lectures, take notes, and explore web resources	2 hours
Post a short reflective response to a task (written, oral, or video)	1 hours
Apply calculations to a set of problems in the discipline	2 hours
Conduct a field experiment or interviews in the community	1-3 hours
Participate in an online field trip	1 hour
Read 1 journal article (20 pages) or book chapter with new concepts	2 hours
Complete online quiz to check for understanding	1 hour
Post layered discussions (response to posts and response to peers)	30 minutes
Create or develop a project to demonstrate acquired knowledge and skills	1-5 hours
Participate in small group meetings (web-conference or asynchronous)	1 hour
Write, edit, or conduct research	1.5 hours

Faculty Engagement

Instructor responsibilities in online courses are similar to those in typical face-to-face or independent study courses. Thus, in addition to course development and preparation, faculty provide formative feedback and summative evaluation of student work. A comparison of face-to-face and online course activities are as follows:

Face-to-Face	Online Versions
Lecture	Recorded lectures and interactive presentations
Small-group work	Participation in online discussions, post video commentaries
Experiential learning activities	Arrange online labs, interviews, field trips, or view student videos
Class discussions	Asynchronous forum where instructor expands on lecture, answers questions, and facilitates student interactions
Feedback on assignments	Written or verbal comments, web-conferences, rubrics, grades, etc.

In determining the time on task for an online course, the New York State Education Department (2013) recommends that the faculty member consider the following items:

- The student learning outcomes and aligned assessments
- The list of topics in the course outline or syllabus; required readings and related materials
- Statements in course materials informing students of the time and/or effort they are expected to devote to the course or individual parts of it
- A listing of the pedagogical tools to be used in the online course, how each will be used, and the expectations for participation (e.g., in an online discussion, how many substantive postings will be required of a student for each week or unit?)

Guidelines adapted from: Rochester Institute of Technology, TIME ON TASK website at: https://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/tls/course-design/online-courses/time-task