

Definition of a Credit Hour

Federal regulation defines a credit hour as an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutional established equivalence that reasonably approximates not less than:

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 amount of time; or

At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (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.

The Maine Community College System defines a credit hour in the following manner, consistent with the federal regulation cited above and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education Policy 111 (Policy on Credits and Degrees):

Units of Credit

1. One semester credit hour for each fifteen hours of classroom contact plus thirty hours of outside preparation or the equivalent; or
2. One semester credit hour for each thirty hours of laboratory work plus necessary outside preparation or its equivalent, normally expected to be fifteen hours; or
3. One semester credit hour for not fewer than forty-five hours of shop instruction (contact hours) or the equivalent.

For calculating “quarter” hours into “semester” hours, the general practice is to equate two semester credit hours with three quarter credit hours.