

CAROLINAS COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

ACADEMIC

SUBJECT: COURSE CREDIT HOURS AND NUMBERING

REVIEWER(S): Provost*
Dean of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management

POLICY

The course credit hours and numbering policy provides a framework to ensure courses at Carolinas College follow a logical semester credit-hour and numbering system. A process is in place to ensure that adequate instructional time is scheduled to allow students to meet established learning outcomes, as well as the content and rigor align with the level assigned to the course. The policy applies equally to all courses, regardless of mode of instruction and applies to all credit granted at the college, whether through programs on-campus or at off-campus instructional sites.

PROCEDURE

A. Credit and Contact Hours

1. Contact hours or time on task is the total learning time spent by a student in any course including direct instructional time and the estimated time needed to study and complete course assignments (e.g., studying, reading, writing, research, individual and group projects). Regardless of the delivery method (traditional, face-to-face, web-enhanced, online, hybrid), the amount of learning time in any course should meet federal guidelines for the definition of a credit hour. A credit hour is defined as a total of 45 hours of contact or work for one semester credit. This can be further defined as the equivalent of one (1) hour of direct instruction and an estimated two (2) hours of student work and/or study outside of class per week, times 15 weeks for a traditional course.
2. The guidelines outlined in Appendix A may be used to estimate contact hours (student engagement) for courses and/or to establish instructional equivalencies for hybrid and online content delivery.
3. Instructional activities for non-credit programs are summarized using only the number of contact hours in a course.
4. The credit value of courses is expressed in semester credit hours. A semester credit hour is based on at least 50 minutes of instruction.
5. One semester credit hour is equivalent to one of the following online, hybrid, or face-to-face instructional experiences:
 - 45 Didactic contact hours (15 hours of direct instruction plus an estimated 30 hours of student work and/or study time outside of class) over term length.
 - 45 Laboratory/Clinical contact hours over term length (instruction provided by college faculty, generally at designated times).
 - 90 Practicum or supervised practice contact hours over term length (instruction generally provided by clinical staff or instructors; coordination of instructional activities provided by college faculty)
 - The same total contact hours will be assured regardless of the term length
6. Semester credit hour calculations ending in 0.90 or greater are rounded up to the nearest whole number. Any other credit hour calculations are rounded down to the nearest whole number. The academic and curriculum committee may approve exceptions to rounding guidelines in rare circumstances, such as when the credit calculation for a portion of the course is less than 1.0.

B. Course Numbering

1. The numbering system for all courses is consistent across programs.
2. Courses taken for continuing education or not-for-credit are designated as less than 100-level (e.g., 001).

3. Lower-division courses primarily for students in diploma or associate degree programs or certificate programs focused on educating entry-level professionals are designated as 100-299.
 - Courses generally taken as part of the first year of study or as prerequisites for advanced courses are designated as 100-level courses.
 - Courses typically taken during the second year or that require 100-level course prerequisites are generally designated as 200-level courses.
4. Upper-division courses for students in the advanced portion of an undergraduate program leading to a baccalaureate degree are designated as 300-499.
 - Courses that likely have 100- or 200-level course prerequisites are generally designated as 300-level courses.
 - Courses that have 300-level course prerequisites are generally designated as 400-level courses.

C. Course Prefixes

Prefixes used in course numbers clearly delineate three categories of courses, as follows:

- Courses that fall into a specific general education discipline that are denoted with a prefix appropriate to the discipline (e.g., PSY, ENG, and BIO).
- Program-specific healthcare courses are considered applied coursework and are denoted with a prefix appropriate to the healthcare discipline (e.g., MLS, NUR, RAD, RTT, and RTP).
- Special studies classes are those not categorized as general education, and which may be either applied in nature (*HLC prefix) or interdisciplinary in nature (IDS prefix).

D. Course Summary Information Approval and Review Process

1. For all courses, the course syllabus should clearly document the course objectives, the course topics, and the stated expectations for readings, projects, and other assignments as well as the stated learning outcomes. It is the responsibility of faculty and program chairs to determine if the course content is of sufficient scope and rigor to ensure the amount of instruction is adequate to meet the established learning outcomes and adheres to the established credit hour and course numbering definitions.
2. As a part of the curriculum approval process, the academic and curriculum committee evaluates courses for credit and numbering. Necessary documentation when defining credit hours and course numbering includes course syllabi and class schedules. Syllabi include information outlining the expected amount of work the course requires for the designated credit hours as well as the level of performance and learning expected of students.
3. When curriculum revisions or additions are proposed, a completed Course Summary Form is presented and includes course summary information (title, prefix, number, catalog description, scheduled offerings), total and online contact hours and calculations of credit hours and distance education designations.
4. Upon approval, the completed Course Summary Form is maintained by the director of student records and information management. Program chairs review Course Summary Forms prior to the finalization of the course schedule for the upcoming semester. In addition, program chairs review course syllabi each semester to ensure alignment between outlined course requirements and defined course contact and credit hours.

E. The Course Credit Hours and Numbering policy and procedure will be reviewed bi-annually.

REFERENCES

Related Policies to Consult:

Carolinas College: ACADEMIC - Curriculum and Academic Program Approval

Related Form(s) Credit Summary Form

Related 2024 SACSCOC Standard(s):

9.2 Program length

9.3 General education requirements

Appendix A

The following guidelines may be used to estimate contact hours or time on task and/or to determine instructional equivalencies for hybrid or online delivery.

- A. Time to complete outside student work (studying, homework, reading, and writing) or supplemental/optional exercises can be estimated by faculty by any of the following methods:
 - Use of experience or knowledge to estimate the time and effort needed by the typical student to engage successfully in each of the learning activities (experiential)
 - Determine how long it takes faculty to complete a task and multiply it by a factor of 3 or 4 to determine student time on task (proxy)
 - Survey the students to determine the average time for task completion for future course planning (survey)
 - Use the [Workload Estimator](#) found on the Teaching Learning and Technology page which calculates time on task.
- B. If historical usage data differ from estimates, they may be used, when possible, to help inform estimates of the time it would take for the typical student to interact with course content and requirements.
- C. Table 1 below may be consulted to determine the didactic contact hour calculations by term length for 1-credit and 3- credit courses. The hours per week will vary, depending upon the length (in weeks) of the course. Credit hour calculations can be carried out using the Credit Hour Spreadsheet, found on the Teaching Learning and Technology page to inform the completion of the Course summary form.

Table 1: shows the total contact hours (didactic instruction plus work/study time) per course (for 1-cr and 3-cr courses) and the breakdown (for 1-cr the different term subsequent weekly and 3-cr courses) for lengths

Term length (weeks)	Total contact hours (per course)		Contact hours (per week)	
	1-credit hour	3-credit hour	1 credit hour	3 credit hour
15	45	135	3	9
14	45	135	3.2	9.64
12	45	135	3.75	11.25
7	45	135	6.43	19.3
6	45	135	7.5	22.5