

Policy Title: **CREDIT HOURS**

Fox Valley Technical College believes in maintaining a learning environment that demonstrates compliance with commonly accepted educational practices while also awarding educational credits in a manner that meets Department of Education regulations and the expectations of the Higher Learning Commission.

**Department of Education Credit Hour Definition (34 CFR 600.2)**

"A credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally-established equivalency 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;
- Or at least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other activities as established by an institution, including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work and other academic work leading toward the awarding of credit hours."

**Higher Learning Commission Credit Hour Policy Language (FDCR.A.10.020)**

"An institution shall be able to equate its learning experiences with semester or quarter credit hours using practices common to institutions of higher education, to justify the lengths of its programs in comparison to similar programs found in accredited institutions of higher education, and to justify any program-specific tuition in terms of program costs, program length, and program objectives. Affiliated institutions shall notify the Commission of any significant changes in the relationships among credits, program length, and tuition.

**Assignment of Credit Hours.** The institution's assignment and award of credit hours shall conform to commonly accepted practices in higher education. Those institutions seeking, or participating in, Title IV federal financial aid, shall demonstrate that they have policies determining the credit hours awarded to courses and programs in keeping with commonly-accepted practices and with the federal definition of the credit hour, as reproduced herein for reference only, and that institutions also have procedures that result in an appropriate awarding of institutional credit in conformity with the policies established by the institution."

**FVTC Credit Hour Definition**

The assignment of a single student credit hour is equivalent to the amount of work defined by the course learning outcomes and verified through student assessments, approximating no less than one hour (50 minutes) of direct faculty instruction accompanied by a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student effort per meeting. All delivery formats will demonstrate equivalent standards, rigor, student outcomes, and substance. A chart outlining credit hour definitions is provided: [Credit Hour Definitions Table](#).

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Depending on calendar construction, meeting time may be condensed or extended within an appropriate period that fulfills the credit hour and student effort requirements. Regardless of the duration of the class, an equivalent amount of instruction and student effort that leads to the specified learning outcomes is expected. Examples of equivalent instruction and student effort hours is provided: [Scheduling Examples – Instruction and Student Effort Hours](#).

### **Student Effort Definition**

Student effort is defined as the amount of time a student must dedicate outside of class in order to successfully demonstrate achievement of the course competencies, employability essentials, and program outcomes. Faculty use their experience to estimate the time and effort needed by the typical student to engage successfully in each of the learning activities in a particular field, course, and program. This estimation of student effort hours is documented in course syllabi.

### **Delivery Code Definition**

Delivery Codes identify the method in which a course is delivered. FVTC recognizes three delivery methods for course work:

- **Traditional:** A course that meets in person 100% of the time. Coursework may be supplemented using course management software and other technologies.
- **Online:** A course that delivers 100% of the content online. Online courses have no face-to-face meetings or campus attendance requirements.
- **Hybrid:** A course that blends online and face-to-face delivery. A significant proportion of the content is delivered online and has a reduced number of required meetings. Courses that have limited meeting requirements (1 or more) fall into this category. In addition, courses that are offered using virtual classroom technology are included in this category.

All courses will reflect the same amount of class and student effort hours regardless of method of delivery.

### **WTCS Semester Duration Definition**

An 18 week semester will be the base term for computation recognizing that the delivery of courses may vary from time to time and district to district ([WTCS Program Curriculum Approval Manual – Page 9, October 2021](#)).

Comparable student effort in WTCS offerings will generate a comparable credit on a statewide basis. No course in the WTCS may be offered for more than 5 credits for a single course ([WTCS Course Approval Manual – Page 30, January 2022](#)).

### **FVTC Semester Duration Definition**

An 18-week semester will be the base term for computation of weekly course hours for a term, recognizing that the delivery of courses may vary from time to time and semester to semester. Course credit hours will be reflected in course syllabi in alignment with this policy and reflective of any necessary adaptations based on semester duration.

Comparable student effort is expected in all FVTC offerings regardless of delivery format.

### **Auditing of Course Credit Hours**

The monitoring of course credit hours and delivery is included in the Program Vitality review cycle. Additionally, credit hours are reviewed during course/curriculum modifications. Finally, periodic evaluation of credit hours is completed instructional leadership in each Division as deemed necessary by the Division Dean.

*Adopted: 05/09/2023*

*Reviewed:*

*Revised:*