Policy Type: Instruction  
Policy Title: Credit Hours/Credit Equivalents  
Policy Number: IN-04

Purpose:

Washington community and technical college boards of trustees and administrators, with the assistance of the faculty, have statutory authority to establish the course of study for community and technical colleges and to publish catalogs and bulletins that describe the conditions under which college programs may be utilized by students (see RCW 28B.50.140(11)).

The Washington State Board of Community & Technical Colleges has a corresponding authority to set minimum standards “with respect to the content of the curriculums and other educational and training programs, and the requirements for degrees and certificates awarded by the colleges” (see RCW 28B.50.090(7)(c)). To meet this responsibility, the SBCTC has established the basis for determining the credit value or credit equivalent that may be assigned to any course or instructional activity offered by a college (see RCW 28B.50.090(7)(e)).

Scope:

Determining Credit Values and Credit Equivalents

Course credit hours are determined by the type of instructor contact hours and the ratio of those hours to the number of weeks in a quarter. “Credit hours” are defined as the unit by which an institution measures its course work. The number of credit hours assigned to a course is defined by the number of hours per week in class and the number of hours per week in out of class preparation.

Total Contact Hours for a Quarter

- The total number of contact hours per week (one hour period = one contact hour) that a class normally meets.
- The one-hour includes a 5-10 minute break between periods. Classes scheduled in block mode may count the hours between the start and finish (Example: 8 a.m. to 12 noon = 4 hours; 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. = 1 hour).

Definitions:

Credit Values and Credit Equivalents

The following titles, definitions, and credit ratios are used in calculating credit values. The length of a quarter may vary between 10 and 12 weeks. Each college must use the length of quarter closest to their average (exception for summer quarter). No additional credit equivalents may be generated by adjusting the length of a quarter. If transcript credits are used in recording student performance, the same credit value must be used for reporting.
Credit ratios for the three basic categories of instruction are:

**Lecture / Discussion - 1:1**

- One (1) hour of lecture or classroom discussion per week and approximately two (2) additional hours of out-of-class assignments per classroom contact hour earns one (1) credit hour. For example, a five (5) credit course would equal five (5) classroom hours per week plus substantial out-of-class assignments and study time.
- The mode is direct teacher instruction. Content shall be primarily theory or applied theory, with the majority of classroom contact hours devoted to presentation of new material. Practice and mastery of that material is accomplished primarily outside the classroom or through companion laboratory/clinic classes. Instruction may be a mix of direct and indirect teacher instruction, but the majority is direct.

**Applied Learning / Laboratory - 2:1**

- Two (2) hours of laboratory work per week and approximately one additional hour for out-of-class assignments earns one (1) credit hour.
- Contact hours are devoted primarily to practice, mastery, clarification and application of material and may include presentation of new theoretical material. Instruction may be a combination of direct and indirect teacher instruction, but the majority of the instruction is indirect.

**Work Site - 3:1**

- Three (3) hours of work per week under the intermittent supervision of the instructor or under the direction of professional practitioners earns one (1) credit hour.
- In the case of work site educational experiences, the learning activity must be based on a written agreement with the participating training provider. A one-hour-per-week seminar or discussion group activity is required.

**Other - 5:1**

- Contact hours in which minimal supervision is provided or required for work-related activities. This mode includes internships and community involvement projects.
- One credit is generated by five weekly contact hours of instruction. In this case, work site experiences have no related seminar or discussion activity.

NOTE: Credit equivalents are computed from contact hour fields only for course sections not assigned a credit value.

Exceptions are noted in the quarterly schedule (some classes are not scheduled in the usual college class periods.)
Credit loads are defined under three categories as:

- **Full-time credit load** - A full-time student credit load is generally defined as twelve (12) or more credit hours. However, students who are enrolled under government-sponsored programs (e.g., financial aid, veterans, social security) should check with the appropriate agency’s financial services office for specific credit load requirements.

- **Part-time credit loads** - A three-quarter load is defined as nine (9) to eleven (11) credit hours; a half-time load is six (6) to eight (8) credit hours, and a less-than-half-time load is five (5) or fewer credit hours.

- **Overload** - To enroll in more than eighteen (18) credit hours, a student must have a 3.0 cumulative grade-point average. Students requesting permission to enroll in an overload may appeal to the vice president of student services if they do not meet this GPA requirement.

**Specific Authority:**

RCW 28B.50.140(11) - Boards of trustees — Powers and duties

RCW 28B.50.090(7)(c) - College board — Powers and duties

RCW 28B.50.090(7)(e) - College board — Powers and duties

**Law Implemented:**

**History of Policy or Procedure**

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Reviewed by: Chris Johnson, Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness

President’s Staff Sponsor: Chris Johnson, Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness