

# Credit hour policy

Southwest University of Visual Arts credit hour policy is as follows:

## Introduction and Context

In accordance with Department of Education regulations 75 FR 66832 which includes a federal definition of a credit hour and the Higher Learning Commission [hlcommission.org](http://hlcommission.org) requirements, Southwest University of Visual Arts established the following Credit Hour Policy standards. Federal credit hour definition 34 CFR 600.2 is as follows: 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:

- (1) 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 the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or
- (2) 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, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

[Note – a standard 50 minute instructional hour satisfies “one hour of classroom time”. The federal credit hour definition alone is not sufficient to provide guidance for the full range of Southwest University of Visual Arts curricular offerings. Therefore, this document outlines a broad policy statement and supporting guidance for how the policy applies to a range of modes of instruction and course delivery formats.

Southwest University of Visual Arts credit hour policy and the additional guidance we provide is flexible enough to accommodate the full range of instructional formats we offer as a single discipline University of Art and Design. Formats include traditional face-to-face instruction, web-based instruction, flipped formats, workshop and Independent/Directed learning instruction. Formats range from traditional didactic formats in a flipped classroom, experiential learning classroom, labs, studio classroom, seminar and discussions, independent/directed study, internships, credit for students in supervised research, and other experiential instruction formats.

The policy and guidance recognizes that all for-credit instructional offerings at Southwest will have an instructor of record who meets the minimum qualification standards, who takes responsibility for the learning experience, and who has regular and substantive interaction with students, as appropriate for the course format and mode of delivery.

Formats and modes of instruction are evolving and this credit hour policy is intended to provide enough flexibility to serve the University as circumstances change and new formats emerge, while also providing sufficient structure to establish academic standards and communicate to all stakeholders how the credit hour standards are met. Southwest University of Visual Arts Definition of Credit Hour – Policy and Application Statement.

It is important that every student familiarize himself or herself with the credit hour policy stated below. Please seek advice from Student Services whenever you have any questions. At Southwest University of Visual Arts, there are two standard 15-week fall and spring semesters, which begin in August or September and end in May. The summer term consists of courses offered in two five-week sessions or one 10-week session. The credit hour policy accommodates instruction in all of the semester, term and session lengths.

## **Credit Hour Policy**

Southwest University of Visual Arts follows the federal credit hour definition: one hour (i.e. 50 minutes) of classroom or direct faculty/qualified instructor instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks.

Alternatively, a credit hour will be defined as the learning that takes place in at least 45 hours of learning activities in a 15 week period which include time in lectures or class meetings, studios, laboratories, examinations, presentations, preparation, reading, studying, hands-on experiences, and other learning activities; or a demonstration by the student of learning equivalent to that established as the expected product of such a period of study.

In all cases, learning in for-credit courses, a qualified Instructor guides learning and each course regardless of the structure includes regular and substantive student-instructor interaction.

## **Guidance for Application of the Credit Hour Policy**

The credit hour assignment for a course and the student learning outcomes are set at the time a course is established and is overseen by the University Academic Leadership team and approved by the Chief Academic Officer. The credit hour assignment is a feature of the course development and is maintained across all offerings of the course. All course proposals must include information that supports approval of the assigned credit hours. As the Faculty deliver the courses, departments and their instructors are expected to maintain the appropriate learning activities for students for the given number of credit hours.

The 45-hour-per-credit standard SUVA uses is flexible enough to create effective-learning within a standard 15-week semester offering or with sessions of a shorter length offered during the summer term. It also provides a definition of a credit hour in cases where there is more student-instructor interaction and less out-of-classroom learning time than in the standard Carnegie unit definition, such as studio courses during the freshman and sophomore years.

The 45-hour-per-credit standard is flexible enough to apply to all formats of instruction; it works for formats that are different from traditional "seat time" and do not readily fit within the traditional credit hour definition. Such formats include flipped/blended instruction and other emerging modes of instruction. SUVA also applies this credit hour policy to independent/directed study, internships, studio and lab courses, research study, and other forms of for-credit, experiential learning.

SUVA's standards require that all courses have stated learning outcomes or objectives. SUVA standards require established learning objectives as an integral part of the course approval process. Learning outcomes serve as a basis to determine if the amount of learning is consistent across different formats and modes of instruction. SUVA integrates the credit hour policy when a student earns credit based on a demonstration of learning equivalent to the expected product of a period of study corresponding to a time-based credit hour assignment.

The requirement for regular and substantive student-instructor interaction sets a quality standard for Southwest University of Visual Arts' instruction and recognizes the centrality of faculty and other qualified instructors in the student learning experience. The requirement for regular and substantive student-instructor interaction is a feature that is preserved across all formats of instruction; the way that requirement is met will differ across different course formats and modes of instruction.

A traditionally formatted three-credit course will typically include three 50-minute class meetings of instructors and students weekly over the 15-week semester including 2 hours of outside work for each hour the student spends in class. In a blended or flipped course format, substantive interaction may take the form of instructor-guided problem solving or discussion formats. Independent/directed study, research, studio and performing art, internships, clinical placements, other workplace experiences, and other experiential learning will all have distinctive levels of regular and substantive instructor interaction consistent with higher education standards. There is no single comprehensive definition for regular and substantive studentinstructor interaction, but is established as a part of the course framework.

SUVA communicates the credit hour standard for the course, and the way that each academic department achieves the credit hour standard, as part of the course syllabus or equivalent documentation. Departments continue to be responsible for the consistent application of the credit hour, credit hour policy, and for ensuring that they maintain a stated credit hour standard as courses and instructors and mode of instruction or course formats change.

## **Accountability and Federal Compliance**

Universities are subject to external review of their credit hour policy, consistent with the federal credit hour definition, and how it is applied. The oversight process at Southwest University of Visual Arts includes a review of the credit hour policy and a scan of all course descriptions provided in the course catalog (at Southwest University of Visual Arts) for alignment with the credit hour policy. For detailed information about the Higher Learning Commission Standards regarding the credit hour policy and how they maintain accountability please visit [hlcommission.org](http://hlcommission.org).

## **Exclusions - Correspondence Courses and Competency-Based Education**

Southwest University of Visual Arts does not currently have authorization by Higher Learning Commission to offer some alternative forms of instruction that are not covered by this credit hour policy.