



**POLICY TITLE**

*Credit and Clock Hours for Courses and Programs*

**POLICY NUMBER**

*1-4265*

<b>Responsible Office:</b> <i>Academics and Workforce Development</i>	<b>Effective Date:</b> <i>12/18/2023</i>
<b>Responsible Official:</b> <i>Provost/Vice Chancellor for Workforce and Student Development</i>	<b>Last Reviewed Date:</b> <i>11/15/2023</i>
<b>Policy Classification:</b> <i>Academics, Workforce and Student Development</i>	<b>Origination Date:</b> <i>10/12/2014</i>

**I. POLICY STATEMENT**

Credit hours awarded by Baton Rouge Community College (BRCC) for successful completion of courses and programs align with the federal definition of Credit Hour, the Credit Hour Policy of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), and the Louisiana Board of Regents’ definition of undergraduate degrees and certificates. Clock hours for courses and programs align with the federal definition of Clock Hour. BRCC recognizes the need for flexibility required by circumstances, by new modes of instruction, and by scheduling, and the need for consistency in transferring and awarding credit among institutions.

**II. POLICY RATIONALE AND SCOPE**

The purpose of this policy is to inform all BRCC stakeholders of how (a) a credit and clock hours are defined, (b) the credit hours, lecture hours, lab or other academic activities, and instructional contact (clock) hours for a course are determined, (c) different types of programs or awards are defined, and (d) credit and clock hours are established for the programs/award levels BRCC is authorized to confer. The policy applies to all educational courses and programs, however delivered and wherever offered.

**III. POLICY AUDIENCE**

The audience for this policy includes all BRCC students, faculty, staff, and administration.

#### IV. POLICY COMPLIANCE

Maintenance of SACSCOC accreditation and certification by the United States Department of Education (USDE) requires compliance with the SACSCOC standard on policies for awarding credit, with the SACSCOC policy on Credit Hours, and with the Department of Education's definition of credit and clock hours promulgated in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). The consequences of non-compliance range from sanctions to loss of accreditation (SACSCOC), and from placement on provisional certification to discontinued participation in any Title IV, Higher Education Act (HEA) Program (USDE).

#### V. POLICY DEFINITIONS

**Credit Hour:** As defined in the Code of Federal Regulations (34 CFR §600.2), and the SACSCOC Credit Hour Policy, a credit hour is an amount of student work that is consistent with commonly accepted practice in postsecondary education and that

- (1) Reasonably approximates not less than
  - i. 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 period of time, or
  - ii. At least an equivalent amount of work as described in item (i) above for other academic activities, including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours; and
- (2) Permits BRCC in determining the amount of work associated with a credit hour, to allow for a variety of delivery methods, measurements of student work, academic calendars, disciplines, and degree and award levels.

**Instructional Contact or Clock Hours:** As defined in the Code of Federal Regulations (34 CFR §600.2), a clock hour is

- (1) A period of time consisting of -
  - i. A 50- to 60-minute class, lecture, or recitation in a 60-minute period;
  - ii. A 50- to 60-minute faculty-supervised laboratory, shop training, or internship in a 60-minute period;
  - iii. Sixty minutes of preparation in a correspondence course; or
  - iv. In distance education, 50 to 60 minutes in a 60-minute period of attendance in -
    - A. A synchronous or asynchronous class, lecture, or recitation where there is opportunity for direct interaction between the instructor and students; or
    - B. An asynchronous learning activity involving academic engagement in which the student interacts with technology that can monitor and document the amount of time that the student participates in the activity.
- (2) A clock hour in a distance education program does not meet the requirements of this definition if it does not meet all accrediting agency and State requirements or if it exceeds an agency's or State's restrictions on the number of clock hours in a program that may be offered through distance education.

- (3) An institution must be capable of monitoring a student's attendance in 50 out of 60 minutes for each clock hour under this definition.

Instructional Contact or Clock Hours for courses and programs delivered via traditional face-to-face instruction represent the total hours of classroom or direct faculty instruction (Clock Hours, 1.i) plus the hours for other academic activities (Clock Hours, 1.ii).

Instructional Contact or Clock Hours for courses and programs delivered via hybrid instruction (50 - 99% of content delivery and student engagement via distance education technologies, with the balance via traditional face-to-face engagement) represent the total hours of attendance featuring the opportunity for direct interaction between a student and the instructor and direct interaction with technology (Clock Hours, 1.iv) plus classroom or direct faculty instruction (Clock Hours, 1.i) and hours for other faculty-supervised academic activities (Clock Hours, 1.ii).

Instructional Contact or Clock Hours for courses and programs delivered entirely via distance education instruction (100% content delivery and student engagement via distance education technologies) represent the total hours of attendance during opportunities for direct interaction between a student and the instructor and direct interaction with technology (Clock Hours, 1.iv).

Note that courses taught via hybrid or online modalities are initially approved for traditional face-to-face instruction, have been reviewed and approved through a formal BRCC faculty review process, and have the same learning outcomes as traditionally delivered courses. Faculty are to be available to students for the same amount of time for all delivery modes.

**Semester Length:** Fall and Spring semesters are to have no fewer than 14 weeks and no more than 16 weeks. Courses taught in a special term or shortened time frame are expected to have the same number of contact hours as courses taught in a normal semester.

**Career and Technical Certificate (CTC):** An applied skills program (6-18 semester credit hours) that provides specific, meaningful technical skills relative to employment readiness. The CTC includes a demonstrated alignment with, and a process whereby a student's competencies are verified against, a set of pre-determined standards which lead to and/or prepare an individual to test for an industry-based certification (IBC), state licensure, or state-recognized certification awarded by an independent, third party that is recognized by business and industry and/or the State of Louisiana. At least half of the CTC requirements should be distinctive from other credentials. The CTC is not designed for transfer to an academic degree program.

**Certificate of Technical Studies (CTS):** An applied technical program (16-33 semester credit hours) to provide a student with a broad technical competency in a specific area or field. The CTS is not designed for transfer into an academic degree program.

**Technical Diploma (TD):** An applied, technical program (45-60 semester credit hours) usually formed by combining multiple CTSs and/or CTCs. TD programs are not designed for transfer to an academic degree program.

Certificate of Applied Science (CAS): A more academically oriented offering (usually 25-45 semester credit hours) created by combining a CTS with a limited general education component (at least 9 SCH). At a minimum, the general education component should be fully transferrable into an undergraduate academic degree program.

Certificate of General Studies (CGS): A more academically oriented offering designed to provide students with a broad foundation of fundamental academic skills, primarily for personal growth or as preparation for further collegiate study. The CGS framework allows students an opportunity to tailor their courses to meet admission or pre-requisite requirements of a transfer institution. The 30-hour curriculum consists of eight general education courses (24 semester credit hours) and two elective courses.

Associate of Applied Science (AAS): An applied degree program, with a limited general education core component, primarily designed to prepare students for immediate employment or career entry. AAS degrees can be formed by combining a TD with 15 semester credit hours of required general education or can be a distinct curriculum. All general education coursework must meet SACSCOC requirements. If technical coursework required of the degree is intended for transfer to a university, this coursework must meet appropriate SACSCOC requirements. The standard number of credits required for an AAS is 60, though in some circumstances (e.g., accreditation or certification requirements) the 60-credit limit may be exceeded. Exceptions to the standard number of credits must be approved by the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS); the Board of Regents will periodically review both the number of credit hours required and approved exceptions to the 60-hour standard.

Associate of Arts (AA): An academic degree program with a significant general education core, designed primarily to serve as preparatory education for transfer to a related baccalaureate program. All coursework must meet SACSCOC requirements. The standard number of credits required for an AA is 60, though in some circumstances (e.g., accreditation or certification requirements) the 60-credit limit may be exceeded. Exceptions to the standard number of credits must be approved by the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS); the Board of Regents will periodically review both the number of credit hours required and approved exceptions to the 60-hour standard.

Associate of Science (AS): An academic degree program with a significant general education core, designed primarily to serve as preparatory education for transfer to a related baccalaureate program. All coursework must meet SACSCOC requirements. The standard number of credits required for an AS is 60, though in some circumstances (e.g., accreditation or certification requirements) the 60-credit limit may be exceeded. Exceptions to the standard number of credits must be approved by the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS); the Board of Regents will periodically review both the number of credit hours required and approved exceptions to the 60-hour standard.

Louisiana Transfer Associate (AALT or ASLT): An Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree that follows a prescribed curriculum (providing both structure and flexibility) and assures transfer of the 60 semester credit hours in the degree plus credit for completion of the Board of Regents' required general education block at any public university.

## **VI. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES**

### **Determining Credit Hours for Courses**

Development of a new course is based on delivery of the course via traditional face-to-face instruction. When assigning credit hours for a course, the assessment measures and assignments must be considered in addition to the contact time with the instructor. Consider the total hours that an average student (one who completes a course with a middle to lower percentage score that is awarded a letter grade of "C") may need to achieve the stated learning outcomes for the course using the assessment measures identified for determining student success. Consistent with the definition of a credit hour, for successful completion of a course that consists of instructor-delivered content (lecture only) that meets once per week for a 50- to 60-minute period per week for 15 weeks, a student earns one (1) credit hour. An average student is expected to be able to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes for the course by attending all lectures and spending a minimum of two (2) hours studying and completing assignments outside of the classroom for every hour of classroom instruction per week. The instructional time for the course is approximately 15 hours; the student is expected to commit to a total minimum of 45 hours to achieve the learning outcomes.

For a course with "other academic activities as established by the institution" such as laboratory, art studio, clinical or practical sessions, a portion of the student learning – that associated with skills – takes place in the classroom, clinical setting, or internship where the student may receive feedback from the instructor upon performance of the skill. Consistent with the definition of a credit hour for this type of educational experience, students spend longer periods of time with the instructor (or preceptor, as appropriate) than in a lecture environment because learning and mastering skills requiring equipment or supervision are not available to the student at home or in a study area. Students are still expected to spend some time outside of the instructional environment preparing for class and studying for exams. For example, a student in a laboratory course that meets once per week, three hours per week for 15 weeks – a total of 45 instructional contact hours – earns one (1) credit hour. For the laboratory course, assuming that the course includes introductory instruction and discussion time, an average student is expected to spend approximately two hours per week outside of the learning environment preparing assignments and studying for exams for achieving the learning outcomes.

The minimum length for an academic course is determined by accounting for the combined total for lecture hours and the hours for other academic activities (see Credit Hour and Clock Hour definitions) required for students to demonstrate the intended learning outcomes, verified by evidence of student achievement of the outcomes.

### **Determining Award Levels for Programs**

The award level for a program is determined by the College's Mission to be the preferred provider of talent for a global marketplace, the needs of the greater Baton Rouge Community

College service area, and the level of education and experience students need to enter the workforce. Consisting of one or more specific college-level credit courses to be completed by students, an academic program is an educational construct with specific outcomes for students to transfer to a four-year institution for additional study, to engage in learning for personal interest, or gain the knowledge, skills, and abilities that permit direct entry into the workforce. Credit hours for programs at each award level are based on the nature of the program and the expected student outcomes and meet the credit hours as defined by the Board of Regents for associate degrees, technical diplomas, and certificates. Programs at all award levels are expected to emphasize both depth and breadth of student learning and challenge students to integrate knowledge and develop skills of analysis and inquiry.

## **VII. POLICY RELATED INFORMATION**

Code of Federal Regulations Title 34, Subtitle B, Chapter VI, §600.2, Definitions  
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges: 2018 Principles of Accreditation, Standard 10.7, Policies for awarding credit, and Credit Hour Policy  
Louisiana's Board of Regents Academic Affairs Policy 2.15, Definition of Undergraduate/Graduate Certificates and Undergraduate Degrees

## **VIII. POLICY EXCEPTION**

Compliance with this policy is not required but is strongly encouraged for developing and delivering BRCC's non-credit courses and programs. Alignment of non-credit offerings with for-credit courses and programs and compliance of non-credit offerings with this policy facilitates the awarding of credit to students via an assessment of their prior learning.

## **IX. POLICY HISTORY AND REVIEW CYCLE**

This new policy replaces and incorporates content from two Academic Affairs Policies (1-4270, Credit Hours for Courses and Programs: Definitions and Guidelines, and 1-4260, Minimum Length for Academic Courses and includes updates from the United States Department of Education (Code of Federal Regulations Title 34), SACSCOC, and Board of Regents' policies. This policy is to be reviewed and revised, as needed, within three years of the effective date (below, when signed by BRCC's Chancellor).

## **X. POLICY URL**

This policy may be accessed on the BRCC website at [www.mybrcc.edu](http://www.mybrcc.edu).

**XI. POLICY APPROVAL - SIGNATURE, NAME, TITLE, AND DATE OF OFFICIAL**



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Willie E. Smith, Sr., Ed.D.  
Chancellor

12/18/2023

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Date  
*Effective Date of Policy*