

TITLE: CREDIT HOUR POLICY

PURPOSE: As required by Middle States, to verify compliance with Federal Regulations requiring an effective review and evaluation of the reliability and accuracy of the assignment of credit hours.

REVISION HISTORY: New

PERSONS AFFECTED: Academic Administrators and Faculty of the College

BACKGROUND:

Federal Regulations

The credit hour is defined by the U.S. Department of Education as a basic institutional measure of the level of instruction and academic rigor that establishes eligibility for federal funding.¹ Both within and between institutions, consistency in credit hour determinations has implications for the transferability of credit and for demonstrating that all courses and programs—regardless of teaching and learning formats or delivery mode—are of sufficient academic rigor, content, and depth.

The U.S. Department of Education defines “credit hour” as:

“...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 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 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, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.”

The Carnegie unit, represented in point (1) above, has served as the traditional unit of measure, but the Department also recognizes that institutions are developing other measures of educational content and credit equivalency.

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education, in its Credit Hour Policy, effective August 23, 2013, requires institutions to verify compliance with Credit Hour regulations.

<http://www.msche.org/documents/CreditHourPolicy.PDF>

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education provides guidelines to remind institutions of their responsibility to meet all Federal, state, and other relevant policies, regulations, and requirements governing credit hours. These guidelines can be found online at the following web address:

[http://www.msche.org/documents/Degree-and-Credit-Guidelines-062209-FINAL\[1\].pdf](http://www.msche.org/documents/Degree-and-Credit-Guidelines-062209-FINAL[1].pdf)

¹ U.S. Department of Education Office of Post-Secondary Education, “Guidance to Institutions and Accrediting Agencies Regarding a Credit Hour as Defined in the Final Regulations Published on October 29, 2010.”

Credit Hour Definition for Online Courses

Although government agencies set reasonable and suitable expectations for time spent earning credits, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education “considers assessment evidence to be the most compelling evidence that an institution’s academic offerings are of appropriate academic content, breadth, length, and rigor.”

<http://www.msche.org/documents/CreditHourPolicy.PDF>

In accordance with the U.S. Department of Education, in any seven-day period, a student is expected to be academically engaged through, for example, classroom attendance, examinations, practica, laboratory work, internships, and supervised studio work. In the case of distance education and correspondence education, academic engagement would include, but not be limited to, submitting an academic assignment; taking an exam, an interactive tutorial, or computer-assisted instruction; attending a study group that was assigned by the institution; contributing to an academic online discussion; and initiating contact with a faculty member to ask a question about the academic subject studied in the course. **Merely logging into the electronic classroom does not constitute academic engagement.** Source: U.S. Department of Education CH-A5, 2.22.2013.

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/reg/hearulemaking/2009/credit.html>

POLICY:

La Roche College assigns credit hours in ways that are consistent with U.S. Department of Education credit hour regulations by adopting the “credit hour” as the unit measure of instruction for awarding credit, based on the Carnegie Unit system:

Semester Hours Awarded	Required Direct Instruction “seat time”	Required Out-of-Class Homework
1	15	30
2	30	60
3	45	90
4	60	120
5	75	150

- One lecture (taught) or seminar (discussion) credit hour represents 1 hour per week of scheduled class/seminar time and 2 hours of student preparation time. Most lecture and seminar courses are awarded 3 credit hours. Over an entire semester, this formula represents at least 45 hours of class time and 90 hours of student preparation.
- One laboratory credit hour represents 1 hour per week of lecture or discussion time plus 1-2 hours per week of scheduled supervised or independent laboratory work, and 2 hours of student preparation time. Most laboratory courses are awarded up to 4 credit hours. This calculation represents at least 45 hours of class time, between 45 and 90 hours of laboratory time, and 90 hours of student preparation per semester.
- One practice credit hour (supervised clinical rounds, visual or performing art studio, supervised student teaching, fieldwork, etc.) represents 3-4 hours per week of supervised and /or independent practice. This in turn represents between 45 and 60 hours of work per semester. Blocks of 3 practice credit hours, which equate to a studio or practice course, represent between 135 and 180 total hours of academic work per semester.

- One independent study (thesis or dissertation research) hour is calculated similarly to practice credit hours.
- Internship or apprenticeship credit hours are determined by negotiation between the supervising faculty and the work supervisor at the cooperating site, both of whom must judge and certify different aspects of the student's work. The credit formula is similar to that for practice credit.

LA ROCHE CLASS MEETING TIMES IN HOURS – 3 CREDIT COURSES

	8 week session		16 week session	
	<u>1 day per week</u>	<u>N/A</u>	<u>1 day per week</u>	<u>2 days per week</u>
# Class Meetings per semester per 3-credit course	8		15	30
Hours per class meeting time	4		3	1.5
Total hours	<u>32**</u>		<u>45</u>	<u>45</u>

****Accelerated Courses** must meet the same semester credit hours as traditional semester-length classes. Within the shortened time frame, accelerated classes must supplement face-to-face contact with the one or more of the following:

- Lecture/discussion/chat sessions delivered synchronously directly by the instructor via Blackboard, Skype, etc.
- Required and faculty-involved asynchronous interaction via discussion boards, blogs, wikis, other appropriate social media, etc. in Blackboard or other means.
- Proctored tests/exams or student evaluation tasks delivered through Blackboard.
- Assignments (reading, writing, video, experiential/field work, service learning, laboratory work, studio work, supervised or independent practice, etc.) that exceed assignments required for a face-to-face course.

Departments must document, through their course syllabi, how accelerated courses will meet the minimum semester credit hour requirement. Faculty will complete a [Credit Hour Compliance form](#) and submit to the department secretary along with corresponding course syllabus prior to each semester the course is taught.

Online Courses

In accordance with Middle States recognition of assessment evidence as the most compelling evidence for measuring level of instruction and academic rigor, all online courses must be designed to include the content and meet the outcomes and level of rigor that would be expected to be covered in a course that meets face-to-face according to the La Roche Credit Hour Policy. Faculty will complete a [Credit Hour Compliance form](#) and submit to the department secretary along with corresponding course syllabus prior to each semester the course is taught.

Regular Review

Department Chairs are responsible for conducting a regular review of courses within their departments to ensure that all courses are in compliance with the credit-hour policy. This review is conducted across all schools, disciplines, and course levels, and modes of instruction.

The Core and Curriculum Committees of the Senate review and approve all new courses, according to procedures established and published in the Faculty Handbook.

An annual review by Department Chairs ensures that course continue to meet the established student learning outcomes, with the results documented in the online assessment tool, WEAVE.

Registrar to regularly audit the semester schedules to ensure that on-campus classes comply with established credit-hour requirements.

DEFINITIONS:

Course Methods

La Roche College has adopted the following course method definitions:

IN CLASSROOM:	<i>Note: For Financial Aid purposes, PHEAA defines classroom instruction to include faculty instruction within a laboratory, shop or hospital clinical setting.” to exclude “...videotaped courses used in the home setting, correspondence courses, or on-line courses.” PHEAA considers hybrid courses as distance learning courses. Source: PHEAA Distance Education Supplement 2012-2013.</i>
Lecture	Courses delivered face-to-face, including those that use web-based technology to supplement what is essentially a face-to-face course. This includes the use of Blackboard to post syllabus and assignments.
Lab	Students carry out experiments requiring special laboratory equipment and facilities.
Studio	Students develop technical or creative skills such as painting, music, drama, or design.
Clinical/Student Teaching	Students develop professional skills by actual practice involving patients or students. Typically conducted at approved off-site locations.
Independent Study/Directed Research	A course of study with predefined objectives where the student works with a faculty member to decide how the student is going to meet those objectives. The student and faculty member agree on what the student will do (e.g., required readings, research, and work products), how the student’s work will be evaluated, and on what the relative timeframe for completion of the work will be. The student must interact with the faculty member on a regular and substantive basis to assure progress within the course or program. <i>Source: 34 CFR 668.10</i>
Internship	Determined by negotiation between the supervising faculty and the work supervisor at the cooperating site, both of whom must judge and certify different aspects of the student’s work. <i>Source: USNEI Typically conducted off-site.</i>

ONLINE:	<i>Note: For financial aid purposes PHEAA defines online course as those where 51% or more of the instruction meets the definition of an online class below:</i>
Online	Asynchronous online instruction delivered to a group of students or an individual student, without any face-to-face meeting requirement.
Online Hybrid	Blended classes with some face-to-face component, but MORE than 50% of instruction is delivered asynchronously online.

Academic Rigor

Teaching, learning, and assessment which promotes student growth in knowledge of the discipline and the ability to analyze, synthesize, and critically evaluate the content under study.

Asynchronous

A student-centered teaching method that uses online learning resources to facilitate information sharing outside the constraints of time and place among a network of people.

Web-Facilitated

Course that uses Web-based technology to supplement what is essentially a face-to-face course.

AUTHORITY: The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Academic Dean delegates the authority to implement and oversee this policy to the Registrar.

CONTINUOUS RENEWAL: This policy will be reviewed two years from its effective date to determine its effectiveness and appropriateness; or sooner to reflect substantive change.