

## **Sweet Briar College Institutional Credit Hour Definition**

As part of its review of an institution seeking initial or continuing accreditation, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) conducts reviews of an institution's assignment of credit hours. Academic credit has provided the basis for measuring the amount of engaged learning time expected of a typical student enrolled not only in traditional classroom settings but also laboratories, studios, internships and other experiential learning, and distance and correspondence education. Students, institutions, employers, and others rely on the common currency of academic credit to support a wide range of activities, including the transfer of students from one institution to another. For several decades, the federal government has relied on credits as a measure of student academic engagement as a basis of awarding financial aid.

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to institutions and evaluation committees on the Commission's expectations regarding credits and to set forth the federal regulations regarding the award of credit.

**Federal Definition of the Credit Hour.** For purposes of the application of this policy and in accord with federal regulations, 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

1. Not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours 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 amount of time, or
2. At least an equivalent amount of work as required outlined in item 1 above 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.

An institution is responsible for determining the credit hours awarded for coursework in its programs in accordance with the definition of a credit hour for Federal program purposes. The definition does provide some flexibility for institutions in determining the appropriate amount of credit hours for student coursework.

**Institutional Definition of the Credit Hour.** Sweet Briar College defines a credit hour and awards credit in accordance with the federal definition of a credit hour.

Generally, all courses, with the exception of some senior capstone seminars, meet a minimum of 50 minutes of scheduled class time per week for each credit hour over the course of a 15-week semester. Senior seminars which are 300- or 400-level courses requiring more independent work and participation by the student meet for a minimum of 40 minutes of scheduled class time per week for each credit hour over a 15-week semester. Generally, one

semester hour of credit represents a total of three hours per week of in-class and out-of-class work.

Other Important Resources:

“SACSCOC Credit Hours Policy Statement”

“Federal Requirement 4.9”