



SOUTHERN ARKANSAS UNIVERSITY TECH POLICY FOR CREDIT HOUR AND PROGRAM LENGTH

CREDIT HOUR POLICY

Southern Arkansas University Tech operates under a semester credit hour system of approximately 15 weeks each semester in the academic year, or its equivalent in the summer session. This policy aims both to codify the College's requirement of course contact hours and keep it in compliance with Federal, State, and accrediting agency guidelines. The policy applies to all courses.

All SAU Tech credit-bearing courses, regardless of format, are developed, scheduled, and conducted in compliance with federal regulation defining the credit hour.

Definition of Credit Hour

Southern Arkansas University Tech follows the Federal Government's Credit Hour definition:

An amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutional established equivalence that reasonably approximates no less than:

1. One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of student work out of the classroom each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester hour of credit; or
2. At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph one (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practicum, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of a credit hour.

Credit Hour Calculation

The minimum amount of time required for one credit hour is calculated using 50 minutes as the recognized length of a classroom "hour." One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction per semester (50 minutes x 15 weeks / 60) equals 12.5 hours of classroom or direct faculty instruction. Two hours of student out-of-classroom work per semester (2 x 50 minutes x 15 weeks / 60) equals 25 hours of out-of-class student work. Twelve and a half hours of classroom or direct faculty instruction plus 25 hours of out-of-class work per semester equals 37.5 hours. Therefore, one credit hour equals 37.5 clock hours of instruction/student work per 15 week semester. All credit-bearing courses, regardless of format, shall be calculated accordingly.



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Credit Hour Procedures for Course Formats

1. Credit-bearing classroom and laboratory courses in all formats— weekday, weekend, evening, compressed, etc.—reflect the credit-hour definition established by federal regulation.
2. Credit-bearing online courses require student participation in instructor-led asynchronous or synchronous online learning activities equivalent to the federal regulation defining the credit hour. Approval and oversight of online courses which includes course content and credit hour approval is accomplished through the Curriculum. Online courses shall be defined as a formal educational process in which the primary instructional interaction occurs when student and instructor are not in the same physical location.
3. Credit-bearing hybrid and blended courses involving a combination of in-person and online participation require a combination of in-person faculty instruction and online, instructor-led, asynchronous or synchronous learning activities equivalent to the federal regulation of defining the credit hour. A Hybrid course shall be defined as any class in which all scheduled class sessions are not conducted by means in which student and instructor are in the same physical location with some class sessions conducted online. Blended courses are defined as those courses meeting a full in-class schedule with supplemental online coursework.
4. Other credit-bearing instructional formats such as laboratory work, internships, practicum, independent study, and other academic work require at least the equivalent amount of classroom and/or direct faculty instruction and student work as defined above and reflect the credit-hour definition established by federal regulation.
5. Credit hours assigned to a course will reflect the amount of work required to earn those credits. A credit hour is expected to be a reasonable approximation of a minimum amount of student work in a Carnegie unit in accordance with commonly accepted practice in higher education.
6. A course offered in fewer than 15 weeks shall contain the same total hours – contact hours, preparation time, content, and requirements – as the same course offered in the standard 15-week semester.
7. Regardless of mode of instruction, courses should be consistent in terms of purpose, scope, quality, assessment, and expected learning outcomes with other courses with the same course code, number, and title.



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Special Procedures for Online and Hybrid Courses

Fully online and hybrid courses shall be developed and offered following consultation with the program faculty and the vice chancellor for academics.

Fully online and hybrid class content and credit hour assignment shall be approved by the Curriculum Committee and the Internet Course Curriculum Committee.

Fully online and hybrid courses shall be so identified in the official schedule of classes.

Ownership of materials, faculty compensation, copyright issues, and the use of revenue derived from the creation and production of hybrid and distance education courses, including software, or other media products shall be in accordance with the college policy on intellectual property.

Fully online and hybrid courses shall be consistent in terms of purpose, scope, quality, assessment and expected learning outcomes with other classes bearing the same course code, number, and title and shall meet all the standards set forth in the credit hour policy.

Students enrolled in fully online and hybrid courses shall have the same rights and access to advisement, grievances, or other key academic rights and services, and shall not be excused from the academic responsibilities expected of all students.

Academic programs in which fifty percent or more of the coursework is delivered online shall meet the requirements related to distance education programs as established by the Higher Learning Commission.

Process for Application and Review of Credit Hour Policy

The Vice Chancellor for Academics and the College Curriculum Committee (and the Internet Course Curriculum Committee for online and hybrid courses) will review and approve all new course development for conformance with the expectations of the credit hour policy specified above. The Vice Chancellor for Academics will periodically audit and review the credit hours and student workload in all courses and other instructional formats for conformance with the expectations specified above following the approved Arkansas Department of Higher Education calendar for program review.



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PROGRAM LENGTH

Southern Arkansas University Tech follows a semester calendar and offers programs at the certificate and associate degree levels. Program length requirements are set based on the requirements mandated by Arkansas Department of Higher Education as follows:

Degree/Certificate Type	Total Credit Hours
Certificate of Proficiency	7-15
Technical Certificate	16-45
Associate of Arts	60
Associate of Science	60-66
Associate of Science in Business	62
Associate of Applied Science	60-72

For most associate degree programs, full-time students (15 semester hours) will require four to six semesters to complete their degree requirements.