

## **Proposed as Policy VII. Academic Affairs – 4.3 Assignment of Credit Hours**

Approved by University Faculty Senate, 5/6/16

Approved by Provost, 5/6/16

Approved by President, 6/17/16

Technical amendment for School of Law calendar, 10/4/16

Impacts curriculum committees, program reviewers, academic calendar

Implementation date: August 15, 2016/catalog for AY 2016-17

Periodic Review Date: No later than June 1, 2019

Responsible Administrator: Provost; deans

Policy Contact: Candace Caraco, Ph.D., Senior Administrator, Office of the Provost, x5243

Required by MSCHE credit hour policy; see also 34 CFR 602.24(f), COMAR 13B.02.02.16

### **1. Purpose**

The University of Baltimore complies with relevant United States Department of Education, Middle States Commission on Higher Education, and State of Maryland regulations pertaining to the assignment of credit hours and credit hours required for degree attainment.

### **2. Policy on credit hours in degrees**

Consistent with COMAR 13B.02.02.16, bachelor's degrees require the successful completion of at least 120 semester credit hours, graduate degrees require at least 30 semester credit hours successfully completed, and doctoral degrees require at least two years of study beyond the master's degree and a dissertation. The juris doctor degree requires the successful completion of the requirements to become a practitioner in law, including a designated number of semester credit hours. Undergraduate and post-baccalaureate certificates require at least 12 semester credit hours, and post-master's and post-JD certificates require at least 12 semester credit hours beyond the master's degree or the JD.

### **3. Policy defining the credit hour**

The University of Baltimore defines a credit hour as COMAR 13B.02.02.16 does:

- a) A minimum of 15 hours, of 50 minutes each of actual class time, exclusive of registration, study days, and holidays;
- b) A minimum of 30 hours, of 50 minutes each of supervised laboratory or studio time, exclusive of registration, study days, and holidays;
- c) A minimum of 45 hours, of 50 minutes each of instructional situations such as practica, internships, and cooperative education placements, when supervision is ensured and learning is documented; or
- d) Instruction delivered by electronic media based on the equivalent outcomes in student learning in §3a-c and may include a combination of telelessons, classroom instruction, student consultation with instructors, and readings, when supervision is ensured and learning is documented.

4. The School of Law follows this definition but may add additional criteria as required by the American Bar Association.
5. Course developers will take into consideration that for each credit hour as defined above, students should engage in approximately two hours of outside study for each class session so that to earn a credit hour, a student has approximately 45 hours of coursework addressing and demonstrating student learning in defined learning outcomes appropriate to the course level, discipline, and content.
6. Equivalent outcomes in student learning for online and hybrid courses, as noted in §3d above, will
  - a. Reflect differences, as appropriate, in delivery method, measurements of student work, type and amount of instructional supervision, academic calendar, degree level, and/or discipline; and
  - b. Be based on expectations for the amount of time students need to complete assigned activities for a particular course, including reading course content, participating in online discussions or e-mailed or posted submissions; and
  - c. Take into consideration the time required of course faculty and students to participate in online discussions and individual student-faculty online interactions.
7. The University of Baltimore follows the standard academic calendar of the University System of Maryland, with a fall and spring semester of approximately 15 weeks. Summer session, intercession, and other terms may be available that approximate the instructional time and out-of-class work offered through a semester-long course or such terms will vary credit hours awarded accordingly and consistent with COMAR 13B.02.02.16.

The School of Law has permission from the University System of Maryland to adapt its calendar so that it may differ from the System calendar so long as its schedule meets the requirements of the American Bar Association for legal education.

## Procedures Addendum to Policy VII-4.3 Assignment of Credit Hours

For scheduling questions, contact the Office of Records and Registration.

For program approval or policy questions, contact the Senior Administrator, Office of the Provost.

For assistance with online learning, contact the Assistant Vice President for Teaching and Learning, Office of the Provost—CELTT.

I. Purpose: State, federal, and accreditation regulations and procedures require every institution to ensure that credit hours are assigned appropriately for every credit-bearing activity. UBalt policy provides flexibility for credit-bearing activities that are not traditional face-to-face, semester-based courses. This document provides guidelines for assigning credit hours for those activities.

### II. General Principles:

1. Federal regulation says, “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

- One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class work for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester of work . . . or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or,
- 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, practice, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.”

Emphasis has been added to the original text to acknowledge that a credit hour does not need to exactly duplicate the definition but to reasonably approximate the work involved (cf. VII-3.5 (3)).

2. **Course and program development processes** follow UBalt shared governance procedures and include assignment of credit hours. Thus, qualified faculty, the registrar, and academic administrators review and approve the assignment of credits. When a course is offered, the faculty member of record is responsible for assuring the credit hour policy is followed.

3. **Credit hour assignments are reviewed periodically** as part of regular program and curriculum review processes and by the registrar on a periodic basis (as part of the scheduling and degree audit processes) to ensure consistency. Should an inconsistency be noted, the registrar works with the appropriate academic department(s) to resolve the issue.

4. Not all classes need to follow a traditional 15-week semester; however, scheduling and assignment of credit will take into consideration the U.S. Department of Education understanding of how its credit hour definition is tied to that for an instructional week for purposes of awarding federal financial aid (see 34 CFR 668.3):

“(1) A week is a consecutive seven-day period; (2) A week of instructional time is any week in which at least one day of regularly scheduled instruction or examinations occurs or, after the last scheduled day of classes for a term or payment period, at least one day of study for final

examinations occurs; and (3) Instructional time does not include any vacation periods, homework, or periods of orientation or counseling.”

5. The Middle States Commission on Higher Education provides the following guidance, which UB follows, from the U.S. Network for Education Information (USNEI) in its “Degree and Credit Guidelines” publication; note that **an “hour” here is defined according to COMAR as 50 instructional minutes (see VII-3.4 for specifics), so “45 hours” is technically 37.5 hours in real (“clock”) time:**

“The actual amount of academic work that goes into a single semester credit hour is often calculated as follows: Source: USNEI

- One lecture, seminar, or 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. For a laboratory course earning 3 credit hours, this formula 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, field work, 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.
- 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.”

6. **When there are questions about the appropriate number of credit hours to assign** and the question falls outside the usual course approval process, departments will work with the appropriate associate dean, the registrar, and the provost’s staff to assure the application of the credit hour policy is consistent with UBalt policy and practice.

### III. Credit Hour Application Guidelines for Specific Examples

- a. Accelerated Courses; Abbreviated Terms – Courses that do not follow a standard semester timeline but follow the same delivery format as courses or sections that do will, for identical courses, have the same content and learning outcomes as a full-semester course and follow the same instructional contact time. Certain courses follow abbreviated terms but offer a proportion of the contact hours and work required of a semester-long course; they also have student learning outcomes

appropriate to the length of the course, and credit hours are adjusted accordingly (e.g., 1.5 credit hours courses offered in 7-week terms).

b. Online instruction (asynchronous) and hybrid instruction

Online courses use UBalt's learning management system and provide faculty guidance for self-directed student learning. Hybrid courses may use synchronous means of electronic instructional contact (e.g., lectures and discussions use online conferencing software), as well as in-person instructional activities or various asynchronous or synchronous online means of academic engagement. For courses with online components, faculty members should clearly articulate to students at the outset of the course what the course expectations are for the types and frequency of online communications, including but not limited to homework assignments and examinations (e.g., posting comments on reading, participating in online discussion of a topic, participation in group work). Are there particular materials students need to access? Are online tutorials required? Required one-on-one communication with just the faculty member? (Just logging into a course is not participation.)

Time for structured faculty interaction and student preparation during each instructional week, as well as student learning outcomes and assignments that assess student learning, can be used to determine how the course meets the number of credit hours assigned to it.

Related policies and regulations: See the policy, VII-3.5(3d) and (6). Online programs are to follow principles of good practice as outlined in the Code of Maryland regulations (COMAR) [13B.02.03.22C](#).

c. Clinical Placement – see above #5

Law School clinical placements follow the American Bar Association Standard 301 for minimum requirements. All clinics have two components, a class component and supervised clinical work; however, some divide this work into two courses with a combined total of 6 credits and some include both components together in one 6-credit course.

Counseling psychology students in the graduate program engage in clinical placements, and industrial-organizational psychology students have practica that better fit the category of field placements; for the latter, guidelines for internships/externships/field placements are followed.

For clinical placements in the graduate counseling psychology certificate program, students engage in at least 100 hours of on-site clinical work for a 3-credit course. In addition, there is a class component.

- d. Independent Study – The Middle States Commission on Higher Education provides the following guidance in “Guidance: Degrees and Credits”: “One independent study (including thesis or dissertation research) hour is calculated similarly to practice credit hours (see “Semester credit hour” [see above #5]). Source: USNEI

Federal guidelines include:

“For the purposes of direct assessment programs . . . independent study occurs when a student follows a course of study with predefined objectives but 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. Source: 34 CFR 668.10”

Instructional time, substantive online correspondence, and the amount of time required to produce the work products are all elements that can be used to assess the appropriate credit hour assignment.

- e. Internship/Externship/Field Experience – see above, #5, for programs other than law

See UBalt Policy VII-5.5 Internship Guidelines – School of Law.

Attorney practice and judicial externships have a class component and at least 130 hours at the externship. Advanced externships have at least 140 hours at the externship and additional assignments for faculty review.

- f. Laboratory –see above #5; equivalent amounts of instructional time, student effort, faculty guidance, and student work products may be used to assess the credit hours to be awarded if the course does not meet on a semester schedule.
- g. Lecture/seminar/discussion – see above, #5; equivalent amounts of instructional time, student effort, faculty guidance, and student work products may be used to assess the credit hours to be awarded if the course does not meet on a semester schedule

- h. Courses taken outside the U.S.

- i. Enrolled students and faculty work with the Director of the Office of International Services to identify the courses and programs to be undertaken by the student who will engage in study at an institution in another country. Prior approval from the appropriate academic area is required. The academic area in question and the registrar’s staff determine the credit hour equivalencies based on UBalt policies and all pertinent regulations.

- ii. Applicants for admission to undergraduate and graduate degree programs who have attended an institution(s) outside of the US generally must arrange for their academic records to be evaluated by a US credential evaluation service. Policies documented in the academic catalogs explain the process of transfer of credit, including transcript evaluation and translation requirements.
  - iii. Global Field Studies– see above #5 for “practice credit hour.” UBalt global field studies courses may include a variety of activities. The credits to be awarded are determined by UBalt policy and these guidelines.
  - iv. Any kind of independent study abroad program requires pre-approval from the academic program in which the student is enrolled. The approval process includes approval of the structure of the study to be done. If credit is to be earned through a foreign institution, the guidelines in h(i) above apply, as well as the guidelines for internships generally.
- i. Research/Thesis/Dissertation – see Independent Study