

**Title:** Determination of Credit Hours for Courses and Programs

**Policy Abstract:** This policy addresses determining the awarding of academic credit for courses in compliance with SACS-COC policy “Credit Hours” and Federal regulations.

**Responsible Office:** Academic Affairs

**Official:** The Provost

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**Applies to:** Faculty and the awarding of academic credit for courses, contracts, internships, teaching experiences

**Effective Date:** 1 February 2014

**Revision Dates:**

**Introduction and Background:** The College has been consistent in determining the amount of credit awarded for academic experiences since its adoption of the unit as its standard for academic credit in 1968. A unit is the equivalent of four semester-hours. The procedure for determining credit has been under the purview of the Faculty and the amount of credit for courses has been published in the *College Catalog* and recorded on student transcripts. The official transcript contains a guide for translating units of credit to conventional semester-hours and quarter-hours, and the *College Catalog* publishes the formula for converting semester-hour and quarter-hour course credit to units under “Transfer Credit, Coursework at Other Institutions” (page 31).

**Purpose:** The policy is to ensure integrity and consistency in awarding academic credit for courses at the College and for compliance with SACS-COC *Principles of Accreditation* Comprehensive Standard 3.4.6 (practices for awarding credit) and Federal Requirement 4.9 (definition of credit hours).

**Applicable Regulations:**

SACS-COC *Principles of Accreditation*, Comprehensive Standard 3.4.6 – Practices for Awarding Credit

SACS-COC *Principles of Accreditation*, Federal Requirement 4.9 – Definition of Credit Hour

**Policy Statement:** In accordance with the Federal Definition of the Credit Hour as cited in the SACS-COC policy statement on credit hours (<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/Credit%20Hours.pdf>) a full unit course during the fall and spring terms will meet for approximately 14 weeks, on either a two, three, or five day a week schedule, with a minimum of 2 hours and 40 minutes to a maximum of 5 hours of direct instruction. That time is augmented by “laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work” leading to the equivalent of not less than one hour direct instruction and two hours of out of class work for the equivalent of each semester hour credit awarded.

**Details:** Courses approved by the Faculty as part of the curriculum must be approved with a designated unit value as determined by the criteria in the policy statement above. Proposed courses will be first vetted by the elected Faculty Committee on Curriculum and Standards and then forwarded to the Faculty-at-Large for a vote.

Exploration term projects will be equal to at least 180 hours of work and carry one full unit of credit. Project proposals will show “Evidence of at least 45 hours per week or the equivalent in academic rigor of one unit credit” as outlined in the Exploration Term Project approval checklist. The department chairs and a Committee of the College, the Exploration term and Contract Learning Committee, will be responsible for approving the academic component of each Exploration term project, including both those appearing in the Exploration Term Bulletin and those individually designed.

Contracts for independent study may carry 0.5 or 1 full unit credit as determined by the sponsoring faculty member, as outlined in the *College Catalog* under “Individualized Study, Contract Learning,” and approved by the Contract Learning Committee. Other half-unit or quarter-unit credit courses may be determined by the academic departments on the basis of the amount of work required relative to a full-unit course credit, not upon seat-time.

**Definitions** from SACS-COC, “Credit Hours Policy Statement,” <http://www.sacscoc.org/subchg/policy/CreditHours.pdf>

**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.

## **References**

Academic Contract for Individualized Study, <http://www.bsc.edu/academics/exp-con/contract.cfm>

*Birmingham-Southern College Catalog*, <http://www.bsc.edu/academics/catalog/index.cfm>

Exploration Term Project Proposal, <https://intranet.bsc.edu/provost/Faculty%20forms.htm>

SACS-COC, "Credit Hours Policy Statement,"

<http://www.sacscoc.org/subchg/policy/CreditHours.pdf>

SACS-COC, *Principles of Accreditation*, 2012,

<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2012PrinciplesOfAcreditation.pdf>