Title: Determination of Credit Hours for Courses

Policy Abstract: This policy addresses determining the awarding of academic credit for courses in compliance with the SACSCOC Credit Hours Policy Statement and Federal Regulations.

Responsible Office: Provost’s Office
Official: Provost
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Applies to: Faculty and the awarding of academic credit for courses, contracts, internships, teaching experiences

Effective Date: February 1, 2014

Revision Date(s): January 20, 2019; August 11, 2023

Introduction and Background: Birmingham-Southern College adopted the unit as its standard for academic credit in 1968. A unit is the equivalent of four-semester hours or six-quarter hours. Explanations of the unit system and the amount of credit awarded for specific courses are recorded in the College Catalog and on student transcripts. Determining the amount of credit awarded for courses and individual learning contracts falls under the purview of the faculty.

Purpose: The policy ensures integrity and consistency in awarding academic credit for courses at the College and compliance with SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation.

Definitions: The basic measure of academic credit at Birmingham-Southern College is the “unit,” which reflects time spent in the classroom, lab, field, and/or studio, and time for completing course-related assignments. A unit is the equivalent of four semester hours or six quarter hours. Each one-unit course requires a minimum of 180 academic hours (a minimum of 150 clock hours or 9,000 minutes) of estimated student work.

Per federal regulations, a credit hour is equivalent to a minimum of one hour in-class (defined as at least 50 minutes of instruction) and a minimum of two hours outside of class for a period of fifteen weeks, or the equivalent of a minimum of 2,250 minutes per credit hour, or 9,000 minutes minimum for a unit (four credit hours).

Applicable Regulations:
SACSCOC Policy on Credit Hours
SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation Standards (2018):
  Standard 9.2 Program Length
  Standard 10.4 Academic Governance
  Standard 10.7 Policies for Awarding Credit
  Standard 10.8 Evaluating and Awarding Academic Credit
  Standard 10.9 Cooperative Academic Arrangements
Details: All courses or projects awarded credit are subject to review by the appropriate faculty committee or qualified personnel. While course lengths and meeting times vary, all courses, internships, or projects awarded credit require an appropriate minimum amount of time to fulfill the designated amount of credit (e.g., 1 unit equals 9,000 minutes of work). Fall and spring terms are thirteen weeks; January term is four weeks; summer terms run four to eight weeks.

The Curriculum and Standards Committee reviews courses offered during the fall, spring, or summer terms. The Contract Learning Committee reviews for-credit individualized student learning contracts for all terms. The Exploration Term and Study Travel committee reviews projects awarded credit during the January Exploration Term. Credit equivalence for on-line or hybrid courses follows the same procedure as for face-to-face courses.

In all cases, faculty instructors complete the Academic Course Credit Verification Form that indicates the equivalence of 9,000 minutes of work for the course (150 clock hours or the equivalent of 180 academic hours). Transfer and transient courses are converted into units and overseen by the Degree Audit Specialist, the Provost, Division Chairs, and program coordinators.

References:
BSC College Catalogs, BSC College Catalogs
Contract Learning & January Exploration Term Proposal Forms: Forms (bsc.edu)
Course Credit Verification Form, Academic Course Credit Verification Form (requires login to Curriculum and Standards Moodle Page, Curriculum-and-Standards-Committee: Forms for New Course/Major/Minor and Changes to Existing Course/Major/Minor (bsc.edu))
SACSCOC, Principles of Accreditation 2018, 2018PrinciplesOfAcreditation.pdf (sacscoc.org)
SACSCOC, Credit Hour Statement Policy Institutional Degrees and Credits (sacscoc.org)