

CREDIT HOUR POLICY

1. Course Unit Value

Unit value for course offerings is governed by [Academic Senate Regulation \(SR\) 760](#), which states: “The value of a course in units shall be reckoned at the rate of one unit for three hours’ work per week per term on the part of a student, or the equivalent.” The UC Merced Academic Senate defines “work” to include class contact time as well as time spent outside of class studying and doing research or other assignments, while “equivalent” acknowledges that workload may vary from week to week over the course of a term.

Since SR 760 does not distinguish between in-class hours (i.e., “contact hours”) and time required of students outside of class (i.e., “non-contact hours”), UGC and GRC simply utilize the following valuation: one unit equals 45 hours of work per term. Schools and Graduate Groups are responsible for submitting course request forms (CRFs) that include specific tabulation of the average hourly distribution of work per week used to determine unit value and course outlines supporting this tabulation, applying the following guidelines:

a. *Contact Hours*

The number of in-class hours in lecture, seminar, discussion, field, laboratory, tutorial, and/or studio. These hours may also establish classroom needs.

b. *Non-contact Hours*

The number of hours that students must dedicate outside of the classroom in support of each in-class element, based on the instructor’s assessment of required activities (i.e., assignments, fieldwork, laboratory work, performance, practice, preparation for exams, reading, research, and writing) and specified learning objectives for the course.

c. *Variable Units*

Courses that are listed for variable units must specify how unit value will be assigned. Distribution of workload (i.e., contact and non-contact hours) should be clearly delineated for each unit value offered.

d. *Courses Cross-listed Between Schools*

The instructor is responsible for ensuring that the value and distribution of total course workload is identical for courses that are cross-listed between schools.

e. *Hybrid and Online Courses*

Faculty who wish to teach a course in which face-to-face contact with the instructor represents less than one-third of the total hours of required work per week must justify the substitution and the CRF should indicate that the course has a web-based instructional format. Thus, faculty who wish to teach an online course have to answer a number of questions (available on the Senate website) to assess how they will deliver a UC quality course and whether the course will preserve student-instructor interaction and not decrease student accountability or otherwise negatively affect learning. In addition to replying to these questions, instructors should carefully consider how much time they expect a student will need to work each week to complete requirements for the course, taking into account changed

CREDIT HOUR POLICY

formats, in setting the required estimate of student work. Senate Regulation 760 applies for courses delivered through “distance technologies”.

The UCM Senate recognizes that the specific distribution of workload equating to course unit value will vary based on course pedagogy. In particular, non-contact hours may differ for various types of lectures, seminars, field courses, laboratory courses, discussion sections, tutorials, or studios. For example, a three-hour lecture or seminar course without a laboratory or discussion section may require either an additional six or an additional nine hours of non-contact hours depending upon required assignments, readings, and exams. Thus, such a course may be either 3 or 4 units. Similarly, the laboratory or discussion component of a course may require no non-contact time or may require non-contact time equivalent to the in-class hours for that portion of the course. Therefore, the workload tabulation on the CRF must clearly indicate the distribution of hours expected for each element of the course.