

Memo To: All UH-Downtown/PS Holders
From: Dr. Loren J. Blanchard, President
Subject: Semester Credit Hours and Course Level Policy

UH-Downtown/PS 03.A.30
Issue No. 5
Effective Date: 3/21/2025
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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. This Policy Statement establishes the University of Houston-Downtown's definitions of "semester credit hour" (SCH) and level for its courses and other academic activities, including laboratory work, internships, practicums, studio work, and any other academic work leading to the awarding of SCHs via face-to-face, experiential, and distance learning. This definition is derived from definitions of "Carnegie unit" and "semester credit hour" used extensively throughout higher education institutions and the federal government, and it is guided by the [Credit Hour policy of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges](#) as well as [Texas Administrative Code Title 19 Rule 4.6](#).

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1. Classroom Instruction: includes the traditional classroom, a supervised lab, private instruction, or any similar instructional engagement in which an instructor has synchronous contact with one or more students.
- 2.2. Course Level: Refers to the distinction between undergraduate lower (1000 & 2000) and upper level (3000 & 4000) courses. Graduate courses correspond to 5000- and 6000-levels. As course numbers increase in level, the prerequisites, learning outcomes, assignment complexity, and/or other indicators should likewise capture increasing breadth and/or depth of knowledge, skills, and competencies.
- 2.3. Direct Instruction: Actively facilitated by an instructor or field supervisor to serve educational purposes, including, for example, classroom instruction, online lectures/instruction, video conferencing, video presentations, chat rooms, discussion boards, group or team-based activities, face-to-face and online tests/quizzes, virtual labs, directly supervised field experiences, and online content modules.

- 2.4. Semester Credit Hour (SCH): An amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that reasonably approximates one hour of classroom or direct instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately 15 weeks, or the equivalent amount of work during terms of differing length ([Code of Federal Regulations § 600.2 Definitions](#)).
- 2.4.1. Credit hours for seminars and lectures are based on a reasonable approximation of instruction and out-of-class student work, such that a 3 SCH course would require 3 hours of instruction and 6 hours of out-of-class student work each week for 15 weeks.
- 2.4.2. Other types of courses (e.g. studios, labs, independent study) should follow a similar model for determining credit hours based on instruction and out-of-class work.
- 2.4.3. Hour: One instructional hour is 60 minutes, of which 50 minutes must be direct instruction ([Texas Administrative Code Title 22 Rule 511.11](#)).
- 2.5. Term: There are three terms defined by the University calendar: Spring, Summer, and Fall. Sessions exist/occur within and are bound by a Term.

3. POLICY

- 3.1. All courses offering academic credit must meet university-determined academic standards of rigor, quality, and application of learning outcomes, regardless of length or contact hours.
- 3.2. Undergraduate students should not carry more courses in any term than would allow them to earn more than one SCH per week over the course of a term, per [Texas Administrative Code Title 19 Rule 4.6](#). The statute states that institutions may have written exceptions, including the non-exhaustive list below:
 - 3.2.1. No UHD undergraduate student may enroll in more than 18 SCH during the Spring (excluding Winter session) or Fall Term (“semester”) without approval of their Dean or designee.

- 3.2.1.A. No UHD undergraduate student may enroll in more than 9 SCHs during a Half-Term Session (“8WK”) within the Spring or Fall Terms without approval of their Dean or designee.
- 3.2.2. No UHD graduate student may enroll in more than 12 SCH during the Spring or Fall Term (“semester”) without approval of their Dean or designee.
 - 3.2.2.A. No UHD graduate student may enroll in more than 6 SCHs during a Half-Term Session (“8WK”) within the Spring or Fall Terms without approval of their Dean or designee.
- 3.2.3. No UHD student may enroll in more than 3 SCHs during the May “Mini Session” without approval of their Dean or designee.
- 3.2.4. No UHD undergraduate student may enroll in more than 4 SCHs during the Winter “Mini Session” without approval of their Dean or designee.
- 3.2.5. No UHD graduate student may enroll in more than 3 SCHs during the Winter “Mini Session” without approval of their Dean or designee.
- 3.2.6. No UHD student may enroll in more than 6 SCH during a single Summer Session and may not take more than 12 SCHs during the Summer Term (excluding May Mini Session) without approval of their Dean or designee.
- 3.3. All courses are identified by a prefix (subject area) followed by a class number, where the first digit indicates the level, the second digit indicates the number of SCHs, and the last two digits ensure that the course has a unique number.

4. PROCEDURES

- 4.1. Students seeking to receive academic credit for recognized course work from other accredited institutions of higher education must follow processes in [PS 03.A.10 - Acceptance of Transfer Credit](#).
- 4.2. Students seeking to receive academic credit awarded for any experience or achievement outside of recognized course work from accredited institutions such as standardized equivalency exams or any other university-approved assessment processes must follow procedures identified in [PS 03.A.11 - Credit by Approved College Credit Equivalencies](#).

- 4.3. The Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost must approve any exception to the provisions of this policy.
 - 4.3.1. Any UHD credit-bearing activities that may require alternate measures for SCHs or that are offered outside of published terms and must be approved by the Office of the Provost prior to commencement of the activities unless governed by specific processes in other UHD policies.
- 4.4. The University Curriculum Committee (UCC) receives, reviews, and makes recommendations pertaining to every course and program offered for academic credit by the University (See [PS 03.A.12 - Changes to Curricula, Courses, Programs, and Credentials](#)). The UCC evaluates courses to ensure that the proposed course level is appropriate, in light of the definition in 2.3 above.
- 4.5. The Registrar is responsible for ensuring that scheduled courses fulfill the requirements of this policy.

5. REVIEW PROCESS

Responsible Party (Reviewer): Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs & Provost

Review Period: Every five years by May 31.

Signed original on file in Human Resources.

6. POLICY HISTORY

Issue #1: 12/15/2004

Issue #2: 02/29/2012

Issue #3: 05/28/2013

Issue #4: 09/01/2023

Issue #5: 03/21/2025 (this issue)

7. REFERENCES

[Texas Administrative Code Title 19 Rule 4.6](#)

[Texas Administrative Code Title 22 Rule 511.11](#)

[Code of Federal Regulations § 600.2 Definitions](#)

[SACSCOC Credit Hours Policy Statement](#)

[PS 03.A.10 - Acceptance of Transfer Credit](#)

[PS 03.A.11 - Credit by Approved College Credit Equivalencies](#)

[PS 03.A.12 - Changes to Curricula, Courses, Programs, and Credentials](#)

8. EXHIBITS

There are no exhibits associated with this PS.