

CREDIT HOURS

POLICY

Ridgewater College credit hours are assigned to conform to commonly accepted practices in higher education. College credit hour assignment complies with the requirements for seeking and participating in the Title IV federal financial aid and the accreditation requirements of the Higher Learning Commission. This policy is limited to courses, or assessments, that result in the award of college credit as defined by the federal Department of Education. The policy does not apply to non-credit Customized Training courses.

[Minnesota State Board Procedure 3.36.1](#) – Academic Programs defines a credit hour as:

1. 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:
 - a. One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time, such as in distance learning environments; or
 - b. At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1.a.) of this definition 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.
2. Or, for a program that is subject to a clock/credit hour conversion, the lesser of
 - a. Clock hours in the credit-hour program divided by 37.5 clock hours of instruction, or
 - b. Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system approved credit hour.

Alternative Modes of Delivery

Alternative modes of delivery refers to any course that is provided through modes other than the traditional face-to-face (FTF) model of one hour per week per each credit hour. This includes, but is not limited to:

1. Accelerated. Courses with the same seat time as the traditional FTF model but in a more compressed time than a traditional semester length. May be termed *late start* or *early end*.
2. Hybrid. For courses with reduced seat time and the remainder of the instructional time provided through distance or correspondence education. These courses have the same outcomes as traditional FTF courses.
3. Distance. For course where instructors interact with students completely through distance delivery. *Federal Definition of Distance/Correspondence Education*: Distance education/course means education that uses one or more of the following technologies (i) to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor; and (ii) to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, synchronously or asynchronously. The technologies used by include: (i) the internet; (ii) one-way and two-way transmission through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; (iii) audio conferencing; or (iv) videocassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMS, if the videocassettes, DVDs or CD-ROMs are used in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in clauses (i) through (iii).

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Correspondence education/course means (1) Education provided through one or more courses by an institution under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor. (2) Interaction between the instructor and student is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student. (3) Correspondence courses are typically self-paced. (4) Correspondence education is not distance education.

4. Independent/Directed Study. Courses with similar hours as a traditional course per credit with specified learning outcomes.
5. Internships/Practica. Courses with similar hours as a traditional course per credit with specific identified learning outcomes.
6. Clinical Rotations. Educational experiences that meet the same minimum hours as a traditional course per credit with specified learning outcomes. Time frames may be dictated by an accrediting agency.
7. Studio. Educational experiences defined as 2 hours of contact time per credit with additional time spent outside of class to complete projects and/or assignments. Defined outcomes are equivalent to a traditional FTF class.
8. Credit for Prior Learning. Credits assigned after demonstration that course outcomes have been completed and documented. Refer to [Minnesota State Board Policy 3.35](#).

History:

01.23.17 Proposed; 02.27.17 Adopted

12.21.20 Proposed; Reviewed and Revised for Equity Compliance

05.18.21 Revised

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PROCEDURE

1. After review and recommendations of the college's curriculum committee, the Academic Affairs and Standards Committee (AASC), Ridgewater College administration is accountable for assigning credit hours that correspond to the quantity of work reasonably expected to be required in order to achieve course learning outcomes.
 - a. Individual courses will be approved based on learning outcomes that meet the federal definitions of an approved credit.
 - b. All common courses are required to have comparable learning outcomes and assessment of learning that will demonstrate equivalency of the learning expectations. This is achieved through a common standard for course outlines which is managed through Academic Affairs and is published on the college website.
 - c. All faculty teaching the same course are expected to address, at minimum, the learning outcomes outlined in the common course outline, regardless of mode of delivery.
 - d. Shop or lab classes are assigned to include two hours of student contact time for each credit and include expectations of learning outside of the scheduled lab that complies with the federal credit hour definition.
2. Changes in schedules for assigned college classes require approval of college academic administration and will be reflected in the current student information system.

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