



Policy on Credit Hours and Class Time

Most classes at Villa Maria College meet 2-3 times per week for fifteen weeks. Lecture courses meet for 3 hours per week and studio courses meet for 5 hours per week, with a classroom hour defined as 50 minutes according to Carnegie standards. One credit laboratory courses meet for 2 hours per week. A small number of courses meet for 8 weeks, but still fulfill the 37.5 required total hours per credit hour. Hybrid courses meet for 15 weeks and online courses meet for either 8 weeks or 15 weeks, and both also fulfill the 37.5 total hours of student work per credit hour.

All courses and degree programs at the College comply with both state and federal guidelines for awarding college credit.

Section 50.1 (o) of the New York State Commissioner of Education Regulations:

(o) Semester hour means a credit, point, or other unit granted for the satisfactory completion of a course which requires at least 15 hours (of 50 minutes each) of instruction and at least 30 hours of supplementary assignments, except as otherwise provided pursuant to section 52.2(c)(4) of this Subchapter. This basic measure shall be adjusted proportionately to translate the value of other academic calendars and formats of study in relation to the credit granted for study during the two semesters that comprise an academic year.

U.S. Department of Education similarly defines "credit hour" as:

"...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:

(1) one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work 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 in paragraph (1) 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."



A college education requires investment of a student's time both in and out of class. Every credit hour at Villa Maria College is equivalent to minimum of 37.5 hours of combined work in and out of the classroom. A typical lecture or seminar course of three credits equals three hours (of 50 minutes each) of class per week for fifteen weeks. Students should expect to spend at least two hours (of 50 minutes each) outside of the classroom studying for every hour inside the classroom; for a three credit course, six hours a week or more of out-of-class work is expected. A studio or laboratory class generally requires more time in the studio or lab though no more credits are accumulated. Students should expect to spend only one hour of outside work for every two hours of studio or laboratory.

In select upper-level courses, students meet in class for less time than they generally would for the credits earned. This arrangement is made to allow them the extra individual time they need to complete intensive program capstone projects and to meet regularly on an individual basis with program faculty members. In independent study courses and courses by contract, students generally meet with faculty members for 1-2 hours per week and spend the rest of the needed course time engaged in guided individual work and learning.

In hybrid classes, which blend face-to-face with online instruction, students meet in class for a portion of the time expected in a traditional class, and complete the rest of the meeting time engaged in online instruction, while still fulfilling the expected out-of-class work hours. In fully online courses, students devote the same amount of total hours to the class as they would in the traditional face-to-face format, but the hours are spent in a mixture of online instruction and additional individual work.

Application of this Policy

Villa Maria College generally follows a semester system with fall and spring semesters consisting of a minimum of 15 weeks, which includes one week for exams. Summer terms are typically less than 15 weeks but adhere to the policy in terms of meeting time and the amount of work required. Terms for certain academic programs (for example, compressed schedules) have been adjusted but nonetheless adhere to the policy in terms of the amount of work required.

The faculty and program administrators are responsible for developing, maintaining and evaluating the curriculum within an academic program, although the Board of Trustees or their representative retain final control and approval of the curriculum. Assignment of credit hours for courses are determined within the program based on faculty expertise and course learning objectives. Existing courses will be evaluated for adherence to the federal credit hour regulation using an annual audit. New courses will, upon review and approval at the program level, be reviewed by Curriculum Committee and recommended for approval or denial.



The Curriculum Committee is charged with following the policy on credit hours in their review and approval of all courses and curricula and for certifying that the expected student learning for the course meets the credit hour standard.

Approved courses are sent to the Registrar's Office for inclusion in the College Catalog. The Registrar's Office reviews the class schedules prior to the start of each semester to ensure that all classes are scheduled for the minimum number of minutes corresponding to the credits assigned, or otherwise notes when course schedules do not match assigned credit hours. Any discrepancies are brought to the attention of the appropriate department for correction or explanation.

Periodic Review of this Policy

To review periodically the application of its policies and procedures for credit hour assignment, on an annual basis, all courses offered at the college will be reviewed by the program faculty for evidence of compliance with the semester /credit hour definitions as set forth by New York State and the U.S. Department of Education. Information indicating such compliance will be provided to the division Dean and/or the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Lastly, such results will be shared with the Registrar to ensure ongoing compliance of assignment of credit hours to courses.

The policy on Credit Hours and Class Time is also found in the College Catalog under Academic Information> Information and Policies about College Credits, Academic Progress, and Registration and is reviewed on an annual basis by the Vice President for Academic Affairs. This occurs prior to the completion and publication of each year's College Catalog.