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Credit Hour Policy

Type

Academic (relates to academic affairs generally, faculty and/or student affairs)

I. Rationale

This policy generally defines credit hours as well as specific credit hour requirements for degree programs. Baylor College of Medicine (BCM) is a private, health-sciences university composed of four schools offering graduate level programs in the health sciences. Because each school has unique programs featuring differing methods of instruction, this policy is intended to offer guidance on how academic credit is awarded. In addition, the policy provides overall guidance on the number of credits required for each BCM degree.

II. Stakeholders Affected by this Policy

This policy applies to all BCM schools, students, and academic units.

III. Definitions

Semester credit hour unit is defined in accordance with the Federal Definition of the Semester Credit Hour, which states:

A semester credit hour is 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:

1. *Not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours out of class student work each week 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 outlined in item 1 above 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.*

IV. Policy

- A. BCM adopts the federal definition of semester credit hour unit. Where applicable, calculations to derive alternative unit equivalency to semester credit hours are detailed in the procedures.
- B. All BCM academic programs must meet the following credit hour requirements for a degree:
 1. Masters degrees must contain a minimum of 30 semester credit hours and Doctoral degrees must contain a minimum of 60 semester credit hours.
 2. At least one-third of credits toward a graduate or professional degree must be earned at BCM.

3. Each school's methodology for awarding credit is set out below. The number of credit hours assigned reflects the amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes, the amount of time spent in class, and the amount of outside preparatory work expected for the class.
- C. BCM offers noncredit coursework in select degree programs.

V. Responsibilities

Each school's Curriculum Committee, composed of qualified faculty, is responsible for approving courses, credits, and faculty of record to teach and grade courses. Each academic unit is responsible for its committee's adherence to this policy.

VI. Procedures for Implementation and Review

The Curriculum Committee from each respective school approves and assigns credit hours to courses using the following equivalencies.

A. School of Medicine.

1. The Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) accredits the M.D. program and defines the program length in terms of weeks of instruction. The LCME requires that a program of medical education leading to the M.D. degree include at least 130 weeks of instruction. The School of Medicine program length exceeds 130 weeks as evidenced by the degree plans and credit requirements specific to each School of Medicine class year, which are published in the School of Medicine Handbook as well as the Office of the Registrar's website. The School of Medicine defines program length based on LCME requirements and calculates equivalency to semester credit hours as follows:
 - a. The number of semester credit hours assigned to a course quantitatively reflects the modes of instruction and the amount of time spent in each class. The curriculum is a full-time, four-year program consisting of a minimum of 139 weeks of contiguous instruction, resulting in a requirement of 79.25 semester credit hours (63 weeks) of Foundational Sciences Courses, 16.0 semester credits (16 weeks) of electives, and a minimum of 65.5 semester credit hours (60 weeks) of Clinical Sciences instruction. Some credits are earned in courses (i.e. CABS and DDASH) that occur concurrently with clinical rotations. While the students are excused from their clinical rotations to attend these required courses, they are expected to continue to contribute at least 40 hours/week to the clinical rotations.
 - b. For didactic courses and Foundational Sciences electives, credit is awarded on the basis of 16 hours of in-class instruction in a 19-to-25 week semester, which represents one semester credit hour. For each direct contact hour with faculty, a student is expected to exert a minimum of 2 hours of class preparation time and independent study. For core clinical sciences courses, clinical sciences electives, and research activity, students earn one semester credit hour for each 40 contact hours of clinical service/research activity. The Liaison Committee for Medical Education, which is jointly sponsored by the Association of American Medical Colleges and the Council on Medical Education of the American Medical Association, monitors the curriculum and program length of BCM.
2. The Curriculum Committee follows these guidelines when approving new courses and revising current courses.

- The M.D. program requires a minimum of 139 weeks of instruction, including completion of all coursework on the applicable degree plan. Specific credits required for each year are outlined in the “Tools” section of the policy.
- For the M.D. portion of the degree, students in the M.D./Ph.D., M.D./M.P.H, M.D./M.B.A, and M.D./J.D. dual degree programs are required to complete a minimum of 135 weeks of instruction including completion of all coursework on the applicable degree plan. The “Tools” section of this policy outlines the credit requirements and degree plans specific to each class year.

School of Medicine: Number of Contact Hours Equal to 1 Credit Hour		
<i>Type of Instruction</i>	<i>Foundational Sciences Courses, Foundational Sciences Electives</i>	<i>Clinical Sciences Courses, Clinical Sciences Electives, and Research Activity</i>
Contact Hours	16	40
Semester Credit Hours	1	1

B. Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences.

- A term unit of credit is equal to one hour of lecture, seminar, or small-group discussion time per week, or three hours of laboratory research activity per week. One term credit hour is equivalent to 0.5 semester credit hours. If the calculation of credit hours using the convention specified above is a non-integral number, the credit hours will be rounded to the closest integer.
- The PhD degree requires satisfactory completion of a minimum of 180 term credit hours, which is equivalent to 90 semester credit hours. Of these required 180 term credit hours, a minimum of 60 term credit hours (equivalent to 30 semester credit hours) must be obtained through course work. This work includes Special Projects, Research Rotation, Seminar and Readings and other courses. The “Tools” section of this policy outlines the credit requirements and degree plans specific to each class year.
- If a student is enrolled as a Ph.D. student and is unable to complete the requirements for the Ph.D. degree, candidacy for the terminal Master of Science degree may be considered. The Clinical Scientist Training Program accepts students having an MD degree who seek the Master of Science degree. To be eligible to apply for a master’s degree, a student must have completed a minimum of 84 term credit hours, equivalent to 42 semester credit hours of course work, as well as all Program curricular requirements.

Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences: Number of Contact Hours Equal to 1 Credit Hour		
<i>Type of Instruction</i>	<i>Lecture/Seminar/Small Group</i>	<i>Practical Coursework/Research Activity</i>
Contact Hours	8	24
Term Credit Hours	1	1
Semester Credit Hours	0.5	0.5

C. School of Health Professions.

1. Across all programs in the School of Health Professions, a semester credit hour is the academic unit used. Semester credit hour assignment is an institutionally established equivalency determined as follows:
 - a. Academic credit awarded in semester hours. One hour serves as the base unit for awarding academic credit. The program will monitor reasonable equivalency for one semester hour across all courses.
 - b. Time spent in student instruction and learning. This time will receive the following academic credit:
 - 1) One semester credit hour of classroom learning = 15 hours of classroom instruction and a minimum of 2 hours of out-of-class student work per hour of classroom instruction.
 - 2) One semester credit hour of laboratory learning = 30 hours of laboratory learning and a minimum of 1 hour of out-of-class student work per hour of laboratory learning.
 - 3) One semester credit hour of distance learning or research = 45 hours of learning activities considering both time spent online and student work off-line.
 - 4) One semester credit hour of clinical learning = 100 hours of clinical time.
 - c. Activities with multiple learning models. Credit hour assignment for courses using a combination of learning modalities will follow the above criteria in a combined summative fashion.
2. The Doctor of Nursing Practice program requires the successful completion of a minimum of 132 semester credit hours beyond the baccalaureate degree.
3. The Master of Science in Genetic Counseling program requires a minimum of 65 semester credit hours for completion.
4. The Master of Science in Orthotics and Prosthetics program requires a minimum of 126 semester credit hours for completion.
5. The Master of Science in Physician Assistant program requires a minimum of 136 semester credit hours for completion.
6. Section VIII of this policy outlines the credit requirements and degree plans specific to each class year.

School of Health Professions: Number of Contact Hours Equal to 1 Semester Credit Hour				
<i>Type of Instruction</i>	<i>Lecture</i>	<i>Laboratory</i>	<i>Distance Learning or Research</i>	<i>Clinical</i>
Contact Hours	15	30	45	100
Semester Credit Hours	1	1	1	1

D. National School of Tropical Medicine.

1. The National School of Tropical Medicine offers some coursework for continuing professional development, not for academic credit.

E. Schedule for Review and Update.

1. The institution identifies the minimum number of credit hours required for degrees at each level by utilizing standards and best practices derived from state/national standards, program specific accrediting bodies, peer group data, and comparative analysis to current programs.
2. This policy will be reviewed every two years and may be updated sooner if necessary to mirror changes to school curriculum or to comply with applicable accreditation standards and best practices published by accrediting authorities (see Section X, below).

VII. Stakeholder Compliance

Each BCM student must accumulate the requisite number of contact hours as specified by each school, academic unit, and type of instruction described in this policy to earn sufficient credit hours to complete a given degree program.

VIII. Tools

- [For credit requirements specific to class year, please consult the Office of the Registrar Website \(see "Credits Required for Graduation"\).](#)
- [Student Handbooks](#)

IX. Related Policies

- [23.1.05 - Acceptance of Transfer Credit Policy](#)

X. Applicable Laws, Regulations & Standards

- [ACGME Common Program Requirements](#)
- [LCME Standards: Functions and Structure of a Medical School](#)
- [SACSCOC Accreditation Standards](#)
 - SACSCOC Comprehensive Standard 2.7.1: Program Length
 - SACSCOC Comprehensive Standard 3.4.6: Practices for Awarding Credit
 - SACSCOC Federal Requirement 4.9: Definition of Credit Hour
- [Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant, Inc. \(ARC-PA\)](#)
- [Council on Accreditation \(COA\) of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs](#)
- [American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene \(ASTMH\)](#)
- [Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Programs \(CAAHEP\)](#)
- [National Commission on Prosthetic and Orthotic Education \(NCOPE\)](#)
- [Accrediting Council for Continuing Medical Education \(ACCME\)](#)
- [Accreditation Council for Genetic Counseling \(ACGC\)](#)