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**Listserv Summary: Credit Hours on Faculty-Led Programs**

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**February 2016**

An inquiry was made to how different institutions calculate credit or faculty hours for faculty-led education abroad programs.

**Summary of Responses**

There were 14 respondents to this inquiry, some of whom gave specific policies for how faculty-led credit hours are calculated at their institutions. These include:

<b>Standard Policy</b>	<b>Faculty-Led Policy</b>
1 credit hour = 37.5 50-minute “hours” of student engagement (12.5 hours of direct faculty contact; 25 hours of student work outside of class)	Online, compressed format, education abroad, and other non-traditional classes: the 37.5 hours per credit hour should be met but distribution between direct instructor contact and outside work can vary.
4-credit classes require each course to include 180 “student engagement” hours. This consists of the actual classroom work and any prep, studying, exams, etc. that the student does.	One-week programs at our overseas sites do not meet this standard, which is impossible in only 5 days of classes. We are revamping the curriculum for these courses to bring them into compliance, which requires some significant pre and post work.
1-credit hour must have 15 “contact hours.” One credit hour: 50-60 minutes of lecture; or 110-120 minutes of field experience.	During the application process, faculty members must provide a detailed schedule that includes pre-travel, on-site, and post-travel contact hours to add up to 45 contact hours for a 3-credit course. In addition, faculty must demonstrate that their beginning and end dates provide for 90 hours of study time.
3-credit hours normally require 45 contact hours. One hour of field experience counts as half-hour of classroom instruction.	It is standard practice to reduce the number of classroom contact hours required for credit when the learning is taking place abroad. The usual calculation is to reduce the normal number of contact hours by 20%. If 3 semester credit hours normally require 45 contact hours, then $(45) \times 80\% = 36$ (the number of contact hours required for a study abroad program that carries 3 semester credit hours).

No information given	During a faculty-led trip, we allocate a maximum of 15 contact hours for the week of the trip, since that would be a full time course load. Other course contact hours occur before and after the trip.
For courses on campus our standard is 750 minutes of class time per semester hour of credit. Then there is the expectation of at least twice that amount of work outside of class.	The notion of class time and outside of class time get kind of fuzzy for the study abroad trips so our rule there is one semester hour of credit for each week of class. For ten days we would limit the class to 2 semester hours.
Our policy across the board is that classroom contacts (on campus or abroad) are counted as is.	Field trip hours in study abroad are counted as contact hours at 1/2 the time used. So an 8-hour field trip is 4 contact hours. We think this tends to undercount a bit but it is very defensive on quality control grounds.
Not described	12.5 formal instruction contact hours per 1 credit hour + 25 hours per 1 credit hour of other forms of guided student learning experiences. Contact hour = instruction from a designated and approved by faculty or staff member, or designated and approved guest speaker. Each program has unique design and pedagogy, and demands in the location; therefore this instruction is not limited to time spent in a classroom or in online instruction. Generally, no more than 2.5 credit hours are acceptable for each 7 days of program travel.
1 credit hour = 12.5 hours of direct contact (in-class, online, or remote site) and at least 25 hrs of outside student work.	No current policy at institution; hard-pressed to say any faculty-led programs at many institutions would meet qualifications (75-hrs of student work outside of class in one week is not possible).
35 instructional hours (of 60 minutes) for a 3-credit course.	Non-lecture instructional contact hours (e.g. field trips or site visits) may be counted toward the required number of instructional contact hours if the faculty program leader satisfactorily explains how these activities contribute to the learning objectives of the course(s) at a 2:1 ratio (2 hours of field trip time = 1 instructional contact hour).  2-credit study abroad programs must be at least 19 days in duration, minimum of 14

	<p>instructional days; minimum of 14 days in-country.</p> <p>Six credit study abroad programs must be at minimum 31 days in duration, have a minimum of 23 instructional days, and a minimum of 23 days in-country.</p>
37.5 contact hours per credit.	Faculty-led study abroad courses are designated as field trip experiences. Contact hours may include classroom time, lectures, field trips/excursions, group learning activities, program specific orientation meetings, research, service learning, community projects, volunteer time, other academic activities, and cultural activities conducted prior to, during, and/or after the in-country program dates.
3-credit course requires a minimum of 45 contact hours (50 minutes = one hour).	Same requirements- 45 contact hours for a 3-credit course. Field trips, if essential to the course, are computed based on laboratory classes.

**Other comments and considerations mentioned include:**

The accreditation agencies are tasked with assuring that institutions comply with the federal regulations related to what constitutes a credit hour. SACSCOC’s credit hour policy is here: <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/Credit%20Hours.pdf>. Accrediting agencies are under increasing pressure from the feds to take a harder look at this.

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The calculation of credit hours is easy to see in a standard lecture class. Where it gets tricky is with online, compressed format, and other non-traditional classes, where the total hours of engagement should be met but where the distribution between direct instructor contact and outside student work can vary. This is where we can expect some scrutiny in responding to Federal Requirement 4.9 (The institution has policies and procedures for determining the credit hours awarded for courses and programs that conform to commonly accepted practices in higher education and to Commission policy.) every 5 years.

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We need to be able to show that the approval process for faculty-led short-term study abroad programs considers the validity of the credit hours awarded in keeping with our policy in the FPPM. We don’t want to be overly prescriptive, but we want to give it due attention.

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My understanding is that some of our winter term compressed on campus courses were determined (by an accreditation site visit -- Higher Learning Commission) to be deficient when compared to full semester courses. Since there are a lot of winter term study abroad/away programs, those are being reviewed, as is my guidelines for credit hours in the winter and summer term compressed programs.

I have had to make a case that in study abroad there are not 40 hour weeks to use, but rather, 7 days a week, and more than 8 hours in a day, that can include learning experiences. Further, we do not recommend a lot of "in seat" learning or typical writing and reading assignments during travel. The pre and post travel time can be used more effectively for those purposes.

### **Resources and Policies:**

Policy example- one Study Abroad Office philosophy:

- Study abroad programs and courses must maintain academic rigor to justify the issuance of credit.
- Study abroad provides students with extraordinary opportunities for experiential, high impact learning, and personal growth. Most of this takes place outside a traditional classroom or online setting.
- Curriculum, content, pedagogy and syllabi are adjusted when being delivered in an off-campus location, abroad or away.
- It is counterproductive for students abroad to spend most of their time abroad reading long assignments or writing extensive papers, although this may be done in preparation or post-travel.
- Study abroad is an investment for students in terms of money and time. We encourage this investment by planning programs that are academically rigorous, culturally immersive, and designed to offer the maximum number of credit hours.
- The Study Abroad Office collaborates with the academic department and division on each program to ensure understanding and compliance.
- Basic risk management and/or orientation activities are not counted as contact hours.
- Formal assignments (readings, papers, tests, projects) should be weighted no less than 50% of the expectations for an equivalent course on campus.
- Other student learning experiences do not necessarily involve instruction by a designated and approved instructor. Experiences must be relevant and directly related to the student learning outcomes, preferably to the global learning outcomes as identified by the AAC&U rubrics.
  - o Experiences may include (but are not limited to) field trips, site visits, daily or weekend excursions, cultural immersion activities, orientations that include more than the basic level of risk management training or

preparation, service-learning, studio or studio-type opportunities, directed homestay activities, internship or internship-like opportunities, practicum, out of class assignments (individual or group), cultural interventions, and language or culture immersion activities.

- These experiences must involve all students in the program with an equivalent level of involvement.
- Transportation time generally does not count toward contact hours unless all students are included, and it is designed to provide cultural interventions, contact hour instruction, or guided preparation or reflection.
- The expectation is that alternative delivery modes will maintain standards of educational integrity and demonstrate a degree of engagement consistent with the intent of standard federal and OBOR credit hour requirements.

Policy examples from The Ohio State University:

- <https://oia.osu.edu/faculty-resident-directors.html>
- <https://oia.osu.edu/faculty-resident-directors/credit-allocation-guidelines.html>
- [https://oia.osu.edu/pdf/ASC\\_CreditAllocationGuidelinesforEducationAbroadPrograms.pdf](https://oia.osu.edu/pdf/ASC_CreditAllocationGuidelinesforEducationAbroadPrograms.pdf)
- <https://oia.osu.edu/pdf/GlobalMay.pdf>
- Resident Directors handbook  
<https://oia.osu.edu/pdf/ResidentDirectorHandbook.pdf>