



### **Policy Contents**

- Semester/Credit Hour Policy and Compliance
- Background
- Credit Hour Policy
- Credit Hour Requirements
- Policy Procedures

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Responsible Officer: Vice President of Academic Affairs

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## **SEMESTER/CREDIT HOUR POLICY AND COMPLIANCE**

The University of Valley Forge (UVF) complies with Federal (U.S. Department of Education) and Middle States Commission of Higher Education (MSCHE) and Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) regulations related to degree requirements and credit hours. UVF bachelor's degrees require the successful completion of at least 120 semester credit hours. All graduate degrees require a minimum of 30 semester credit hours.

UVF's academic year is separated into fall, spring and summer semesters. Fall and spring are approximately 15 weeks in length. There are accelerated courses that range in length from one week to seven weeks. The University Credit Hour Policy is binding for all formats, including traditional semester-length classes, as well as the accelerated and summer formats. All new courses will have a credit hour calculation worksheet completed as part of the approval process.

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## **BACKGROUND**

The U.S. Department of Education, at 34 CFR Section 600.2, 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 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 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."

The Pennsylvania regulation states, in part, "A semester credit hour represents a unit of curricular material that normally can be taught in a minimum of 14 hours of classroom instruction, plus appropriate outside preparation or the equivalent as determined by the faculty. A quarter credit hour represents a unit of curricular material that normally can be taught in a minimum of 10 hours or classroom instruction, plus appropriate outside preparation or the equivalent as determined by the faculty." 22 Pa. Code Section 31.21(b).

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education, in its Credit Hour Policy, effective August 23, 2013, requires institutions to verify compliance with Credit Hour regulations.

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## UNIVERSITY OF VALLEY FORGE CREDIT HOUR POLICY

The University of Valley Forge has adopted the Credit Hour as the unit measure of instruction for awarding credit.

At UVF, a credit hour is equivalent to one hour of classroom instruction (50 minutes) with a normal expectation of two hours of outside study for each class session. Typically, a three-semester credit hour course meeting for 45 total hours over 15 weeks requires 90 total hours of out of class academic engagement. UVF adheres to the Federal standard of a total expectation of 45 total learning hours (15 hours for every 1 credit earned) in a semester regardless of format or delivery.

The faculty 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 student learning outcomes. Existing courses will be evaluated for adherence to the federal credit hour regulation during the periodic program review. Proposed new courses will be reviewed by the Academic Affairs Committee (AAC) and recommended for approval or denial.

The AAC is charged with following the UVF Credit Hour Policy in its review and approval of all courses and curricula and for certifying that the expected student learning for the course meets the credit hour standard.

The following provides general guidance on how the credit hour translates to the particular instruction method. Note, however, that the credit hour definition does not dictate particular amounts of classroom time versus out of class student work - the information below serves as general guidance only.

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## UNIVERSITY OF VALLEY FORGE CREDIT HOUR REQUIREMENTS

### Method of attributing credits per course:

Undergraduate/Graduate credits are assigned per semester as follows:

<b>Lecture/ Seminar / Seated Courses</b>	3 credits, 1 hour of classroom instruction and two hours of outside study per credit (45 total hours per credit with 90 total hours of out of class academic engagement equaling 135 total hours for three credits) over 15 week format
<b>Online courses (Both 15- week and 7- week)</b>	3 credits must equal approximately 135 total hours for course, 45 hours per credit hour
<b>Lab</b>	1 credit, 2-4 hours per week (depending on the program) with 2 or more hours of student prep time per week over 15 week format
<b>Guided Independent Study</b>	Credits vary; contact hours will vary based upon program and or program requirements and will meet minimum credit hour requirements
<b>Internship/ Practicum</b>	1-4 credits, 45-120 field experience hours per credit
<b>Student Teaching</b>	12 credits per semester, 640 hours of total student teaching. 15 weeks, 8 hours per day/5 days per week

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## **POLICY PROCEDURES**

1. During the periodic program review, a sampling of courses offered in the program will be reviewed by the program faculty and program director/ department chair for evidence of compliance with the semester/credit hour definitions as set forth by Pennsylvania state regulations and the U.S. Department of Education. Information indicating such compliance will be provided to the Vice President of Academic Affairs.
2. Courses which appear to be out of compliance will be evaluated and immediate measures will be taken to rectify the discrepancies. New courses or significant curriculum changes will normally be evaluated as part of the work of the Academic Affairs Committee.
3. The University Catalog shall serve as the official University publication providing information on credits assigned to each University course.
4. Records of credits assigned for each course will be maintained in the University's administrative database.