

**Academic Standards, Regulations and Admissions Committee**

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**Response to Charge S- 2101**

**November 19, 2021**

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| **Charge Number** | S-2101 |
| **Title** | **Review of University Policy 10.2.4 - Units of Credit** |
| **Description** |  |

*Proposed Charge: Determine the current viability of University Policy 10.2.4 - Units of Credit and propose changes as appropriate to make the definition consistent with its use in current practice. Respond by November 2021.*

**Background:**

ASRAC Committee members sought to identify and understand the determination of a unit of credit in relation to units of time at Rutgers University. We drew upon the student, faculty and staff experiences of our committee along with the credit hour policies codified in the New Jersey Administrative Code Title 9A and by Middle States Commission on Higher Education (implementing U.S. Department of Education policy.) The following link has the language about the definition of a credit from the state - <https://sasoue.rutgers.edu/docman-docs/policies/857-new-standards-of-rigor/file>. As stipulated by NJ Administrative Code Title 9A:

(a) "Semester credit hour" means 150 minutes of academic work each week for 15 weeks in one semester, which is typically accomplished by 50 minutes of face-to-face class activity each week complemented by at least 100 minutes each week of laboratory or outside assignments (or the equivalent thereof for semesters of different length) but may also be accomplished through an equivalent amount of academic work as established by an institution, which may include additional class time, laboratory work, internships, practical studio work, and other forms of academic work.

(b) A semester credit hour shall not be counted on an hour-for-hour basis for library, independent-study, laboratory, or physical education activities. A semester credit hour is not required to be counted on an hour-for-hour basis for distance learning or blended (or hybrid) learning.

(c) Credit courses offered by a college in conjunction with or under contract with a noncollegiate organization shall meet the same requirements the college applies to its own courses with respect to quality, course content, class attendance and participation, student evaluation, etc. The standards presented at N.J.A.C. 9A:1-6.3, dealing with off-campus sites at which credit courses are offered by a college in conjunction with or under contract with a noncollegiate organization, shall apply to such courses offered at the principal campus. (e) The rigor of all college credit-bearing courses shall be substantially the same, regardless of the type of educational delivery mode, as demonstrated by the institution through various forms of evidence. Such evidence shall include, but not be limited to, at least two of the following: syllabi, documented faculty interaction with students, learning outcomes, documented units of curricular material, and other documentation which objectively demonstrates the amount of time and/or the level of rigor necessary to complete the coursework.

Federal Guidelines available at [http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/pdf/2010-26531.pdf](https://nam02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fedocket.access.gpo.gov%2F2010%2Fpdf%2F2010-26531.pdf&data=04%7C01%7Clufoster%40business.rutgers.edu%7C72f25a6ba6114accd97408d9bf4bcb52%7Cb92d2b234d35447093ff69aca6632ffe%7C1%7C0%7C637751154524170177%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=1ZdEmxDHorPXVJrOOuWtsl2tpVAyfhLOXVF5ZEHD564%3D&reserved=0)), nothing in the regulations prevents an institution from defining a credit hour using other metrics or measures of student progress and learning outcomes for academic and other non-Federal purposes, so long as it is also awarding Federal student aid using the credit hour definition in the regulations. An institution may have courses measured in Federal credit hours and also in institutional credit hours. Use of the Federal credit hour definition is only required for Federal program purposes, for example, determining enrollment status in order to determine Federal student aid eligibility for a student. However, we believe the definition is flexible enough to meet institutional needs as well as Federal needs.

We reached out to the University Registrar, Kelley Sokolowski, who recommended we include Academic Scheduling for a group discussion on how Rutgers determines and implements units of credits for each Rutgers course. A meeting was held on December 7, 2021 with Rutgers University Vice Chancellor Paul Hammond and Associate Director, Amy Brainard from Scheduling and some key Registrar staff professionals, Registrar, Betsy Feliciano-Berrios, Assistant Registrars Mylene Tenorio, Daniel Villanueva, and Nidia Carreira, along with Professor Robert Boikess, who had posited the Charge.

It was necessary to bring Scheduling and the Registrar as part of this discussion because the scheduling office is responsible for assigning credit based on contact hours and adherence to the standards put forth by the state of New Jersey (<https://sasoue.rutgers.edu/docman-docs/policies/857-new-standards-of-rigor/file>.)

The Scheduling office works closely with the University Registrar to ensure units of credit are being calculated properly.

Associate Director of Scheduling, Amy Brainard explained that all Rutgers University campuses operate on a series of [standard course periods](https://scheduling.rutgers.edu/scheduling/class-scheduling/standard-course-periods-fall-2021) with most courses running for 50 minutes per credit in classroom, with exceptions such as double periods and labs that last for more than 80 minutes. Additionally, she defined the class types that are examined by Scheduling based on the characteristics of the course as lecture, seminar, recitation, laboratory, discussion, independent study, and special topics.

**Discussion/Considerations:**

As outlined in the University Policy 10.2.4 Units of Credit, as stipulated below, students are only required to do 3 hours of contact hours to achieve course completion. Dr Boikess pointed out this is incongruent with what the Scheduling Office is doing in practice with their policy.

As per the University Policy 10.2.4 Units of Credit, as stipulated: “The number of credits granted a student for any course in Rutgers University shall be determined by the college, school, or Faculty authorizing the course. The credit value of a course shall be assigned on the basis of the estimated amount of time a median student can be expected to devote to the course, at the rate of three hours a week per credit, including time in class, in laboratory, in conference with the teacher, or in reading, writing and preparing for class.”

Amy Brainard shared the guidelines that Rutgers adheres to from University of Michigan’s regional accreditor, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), concerning credit-hour definitions regardless of course modality. “The current federal [definition for a credit hour](https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CFR-2011-title34-vol3/CFR-2011-title34-vol3-sec600-2) calls for students to be completing approximately 45 hours of student work per credit, total (e.g., 1 hour of class; 2-3 hours outside preparation; over 15 weeks). However, it is generally accepted that *50 minutes or more* constitutes an “hour” for these purposes. It is generally accepted that 50-60 minutes is equivalent to one hour in determining the credit hour standard. In addition, it is expected that students complete 2 to 3 hours of additional time in independent preparation (readings, papers, etc.) for each hour of class time spent in most types of courses. “ [**https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dNVwyukt3br7wXifLWS6rTM3JIufULpB\_KNmyOKXJtE/edit?usp=sharing**](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dNVwyukt3br7wXifLWS6rTM3JIufULpB_KNmyOKXJtE/edit?usp=sharing)

Registrar Betsy Feliciano-Berrios shared a pdf that has 800 minutes per a one credit class as posted on each transcript back cover.

ASRAC committee members reviewed and analyzed the detailed report outlined by the U.S. Department of Education along with Units of Credit policy10.2.4. The Committee recognizes that the

variability with out of class work demands by specific academic courses will fluctuate. Thus, the University Policy 10.2.4 should be updated to be consistent with the actual practices of the Academic Scheduling Office.

This policy, as it stands implies erroneously that three hours per week is sufficient. ASRAC is satisfied based on discussions with Scheduling and Registrar that the execution of the Units of Credit policy is being handled properly but an amended version of the university policy is required to reflect the proper usage.

**Recommendations**

ASRAC recommends that the Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs amend the University policy Units of Credit 10.2.4, so that is aligned with our current practice that assigns credits based on contact hours, type of course, and departmental and school recommendations.

**Robert A. Schwartz, Chair, ASRAC roschwar@rutgers.edu**

**201-566-5949**

**Co- Chair Lucille Foster, ASRAC** [**lufoster@rutgers.edu**](mailto:lufoster@rutgers.edu)

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Links**:** **<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dNVwyukt3br7wXifLWS6rTM3JIufULpB_KNmyOKXJtE/edit?usp=sharing>**

[10.2.4 - current.pdf](file:///C:\\Users\\lufoster\\Downloads\\10.2.4%20-%20current.pdf)