



## Academic Standards, Regulations and Admissions Committee

### Response to Charge S- 2101

February 22, 2022

**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, Section B - Units of Credit and propose changes as appropriate to make the definition consistent with its use in current practice.*

#### **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. To be specific, Section B of University Policy 10.2.4 states as follows: “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 the class.” The current federal [definition for a credit hour](#) calls for students to complete approximately 45 hours of student work per credit, total (e.g., 1 hour of class; 2-3 hours outside preparation; over 15 weeks).

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 utilizes 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.”

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(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.”

(d) “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 which are available at <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/pdf/2010-26531.pdf>, indicate that “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 as well as Federal needs.

We reached out to the University Registrar, Kelley Sokolowski, who recommended we include the Office of 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, Director Amy Brainard of Office of Academic 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.

Each school is responsible for assigning credit to the courses that they offer. The Office of Academic Scheduling and the Registrar guide the schools and create the schedule. Assigning credit is 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/filehttps://sasoue.rutgers.edu/docman-docs/policies/857-new-standards-of-rigor/file.>)

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

The Director of Academic Scheduling Amy Brainard explained that Rutgers University has a set of [standard course periods](#) with many standard lecture-based courses running for 55 minutes per classroom credit. Additionally, she delineated the course modes offered by each School are based on the characteristics of the course, including lecture, seminar, recitation, laboratory, discussion, independent

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study, etc. These criteria are based on the standards at Rutgers set by the School and faculty interpretation of University Policy 10.2.4.

### **Discussion/Considerations:**

The Academic Scheduling Office assigns the courses into classrooms based on the time and room requests from the academic departments who are, by extension, the representatives of their School.

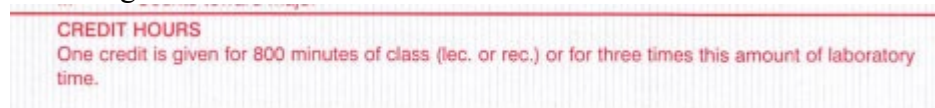
As per the University Policy 10.2.4 Units of Credit, as stipulated: “The number of credits granted a student for any course in Rutgers University shall be determined by the college, school, or Faculty authorizing the course.” What is under discussion is the erroneous assumption implied by the following item that three contact hours will meet the intended requirements for course completion of three credits. “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.”

The current federal [definition for a credit hour](#) 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 *50-60 minutes* constitutes an “academic hour” for these purposes. 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. “ [The University of Michigan School of Information Credit Hour Policy](#) is included here for comparison.

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dNVwyukt3br7wXifLWS6rTM3JlufULpB\\_KNmyOKXJtE/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dNVwyukt3br7wXifLWS6rTM3JlufULpB_KNmyOKXJtE/edit?usp=sharing)

The Rutgers Newark Registrar Betsy Feliciano-Berrios provided a pdf that each official transcript states the following:



ASRAC members reviewed and analyzed the detailed report outlined by the U.S. Department of Education along with Units of Credit policy 10.2.4. 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 Office of Academic Scheduling Office & Registrar. This policy (section B of University Policy 10.2.4) implies erroneously that three credits are equivalent to three hours of class per week. The Office of Academic Scheduling implements the guidelines set by NJ and Federal; the Registrar office represents Rutgers and its policies.

ASRAC is satisfied based on discussions with the Office of Academic 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 actual practice.

### **Recommendation**

#### **Be it Resolved:**

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The University Senate recommends that the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs review the University Policy Units of Credit 10.2.4, Section B, to ensure that it is aligned with the University's current practice of assigning contact hours along with additional hours of outside work per course credit.

Respectfully submitted,

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Links:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dNVwyukt3br7wXifLWS6rTM3JlufULpB\\_KNmyOKXJtE/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dNVwyukt3br7wXifLWS6rTM3JlufULpB_KNmyOKXJtE/edit?usp=sharing)

[10.2.4 - current.pdf](#)