



Determining Course Time Equivalency for Asynchronous Instruction, Accelerated Format, Course by Arrangements, Independent Study Courses	1-002 Academic Affairs
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1.0 DEFINITIONS

- 1.01 Contact Hours: Quantifies the amount of regular and substantive interaction between students and their instructors.
- 1.02 Non-Contact Hours: Quantifies the amount of out-of-class student work, study time, and homework.

2.0 PURPOSE

- 2.01 The Higher Learning Commission requires institutions to determine contact and non-contact time equivalences for distance education courses and document how credit hours for distance courses are determined.

3.0 POLICY

- 3.01 Oklahoma Panhandle State University operates on an academic year that consists of a Fall 16-week and Spring 16-week semester. The university also offers 8-week courses during the Fall and Spring semesters. Summer sessions include 7-week or 4-week courses. Courses offered during Fall, Spring, and Summer can range from 1 – 5 credit hours.
- 3.02 Online courses must be designed to have students invest in the same number of clock hours as an in-person course, even though they won't have the seat time of contact hours.
- 3.03 Just like synchronous courses, asynchronous courses must involve substantive and sustained interaction with the instructor to count as a functional equivalent of contact time.
- 3.04 For asynchronous online courses or courses with asynchronous sessions (e.g., hybrid), faculty must distinguish between contact hours and non-contact hours in their course syllabi.
- 3.05 Accelerated format courses (e.g., 4-weeks; 7-weeks; and 8-weeks), course by arrangements, independent study courses, problems courses, and other similar courses must be designed to have students invest in the same number of contact and non-contact hours as a 16-week course, contain sufficient content for students to meet the course outcomes, must have regular and substantive interaction, and must use the same or

similar key assessments as traditional courses. These courses receive higher scrutiny from the Department of Education, and thus, from the Office of Vice-President of Academic and Student Affairs.

4.0 EXPECTATIONS OF COURSE WORK HOURS

4.01 The amount of time that should be offered within a course per week will vary with the length of the course.

4.02 For a 16-week course, the calculation is suggested as follows:

Course Credit	Contact Hours	Non-Contact Hours	Total Hours Per Week	Total Hours Over 16-Weeks
1	1	2	3	48
2	2	4	6	96
3	3	6	9	144
4	4	8	12	192
5	5	10	15	240

4.03 For an 8-week course, the calculation is suggested as follows:

Course Credit	Contact Hours	Non-Contact Hours	Total Hours Per Week	Total Hours Over 8-Weeks
1	2	4	6	48
2	4	8	12	96
3	6	12	18	144
4	8	16	24	192
5	10	20	30	240

4.04 For a 7-week course, the calculation is suggested as follows:

Course Credit	Contact Hours	Non-Contact Hours	Total Hours Per Week	Total Hours Over 7-Weeks
1	~3	~4	~7	~48
2	~6	~8	~14	~96
3	~9	~12	~21	~144
4	~12	~15	~27	~192
5	~14	~20	~34	~240

4.05 For a 4-week course, the calculation is suggested as follows:

Course Credit	Contact Hours	Non-Contact Hours	Total Hours Per Week	Total Hours Over 4-Weeks
1	4	8	12	48
2	8	16	24	96
3	12	24	36	144
4	15	33	48	192

5	20	40	60	240
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5.0 SUGGESTIONS AND EXAMPLES FOR DETERMINING EQUIVALENCIES FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION COURSES

Table 1. Examples of In-Person Learning Activities Modified for Asynchronous Learning

On-Campus Activity	Asynchronous Equivalent
▪ Lecture	▪ Instructor’s commentary on the readings, with links to illustrative images, (video media or text)
▪ Small-Group Work	▪ Participation in the discussion area
▪ Experiential Learning	▪ Online labs, interviews, activities within the community of the learner, online field trips
▪ Class Discussion	▪ Asynchronous forum where instructor expands upon the lecture, answers questions, and facilitates student interaction

Table 2. Examples of Time to Complete Task for Asynchronous Learning Activities/Assessments

Task	Time
Viewing Three, 15-minute Lectures (Text or Video) With Web Links	1 hour
Reading Assignments	1 hour
Analysis of Readings	2 hours
Quiz	1 hour
Posting to discussion (original post responding to students)	1 hour
Small Group Project Meetings (Web Conferencing or Other)	2 hours
Work on research paper	2 hours
Writing assignment	2 hours
Perform a speech	2 hours
Create a podcast	2 hours
Interactive web-based simulation	2 hours

Source: Turner, T. (2005)

Table 3. Examples of Contact Hours versus Non-Contact Hours for Online Synchronous and Asynchronous Learning

	Contact Hours	Non-Contact Hours
Online Synchronous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Live class meetings via Zoom ▪ Live required office hours ▪ Guided live student study groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Online study groups ▪ Live editing student group projects ▪
Asynchronous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recorded video lectures by instructor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discussion board ▪ Readings

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recorded video lectures by guest expert ▪ Interviews with an expert ▪ Faculty mediated online discussion forums ▪ Moderated video viewing/discussions ▪ Required communication with faculty | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Homework assignments ▪ Videos of non-OPSU recordings (e.g., TED Talk, PBS special, etc.) ▪ Student blogs ▪ Canvas quizzes ▪ Essay assignments ▪ Literature reviews |
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6.0 ASYNCHRONOUS COURSES: CALCULATING STUDENT TIME

6.01 OPSU recommends the following three ways to help calculate how long students will spend on time on task:

- a. The Experiential Method: Faculty use their experience to estimate the time and effort needed by the typical student to successfully complete each of the learning activities in the class. Ex. Based on my class last semester, it should take students about an hour to complete the activity (McDaniel, 2011).
- b. The Proxy Method: The instructor or course calculates how long it would take someone familiar with the material and assignment, like themselves or a TA, and multiplies it by some factor. Ex. Faculty takes one hour to complete an assignment X, the student should take 3x as long (Carnegie Mellon University, 2013).
- c. The Survey Method: Faculty survey students following various assignments to poll how long it took them to complete a given activity and use this data to design future activities and courses. Ex. Student poll data indicated 50% of the students finished the assignment in one hour, with the other majority falling within one standard deviation of the mean (Carnegie Mellon University, 2013).

1. Carnegie Mellon University (2013). Solve a teaching problem: Assign a reasonable amount of work. Retrieved September 27, 2019.
2. McDaniel, E.A. (2011). Level of student effort should replace contact time in course design. *Journal of Information Technology Education*, 10(10).
3. Turner, T. (2005). Student workload in the online course. *Educator's Voice*, 6(3).

7.0 COMPLIANCE

7.01 The Department Chairs and Deans, or by his/her designee. are responsible for ensuring that courses scheduled by their departments and colleges comply with Carnegie Units.

7.02 Any exceptions to the calculated seat time for a course must be approved by the appropriate academic Dean, Vice-President of Academic and Student Affairs, and the Registrar.

- 7.03 The Office of Academic and Student Affairs will check the final draft of the schedule each term prior to student registration identifying any courses not meeting the required amount of Carnegie Units. Identified courses will be shared with the Office of the Registrar, Department Chairs, and Deans.
- 7.04 If a course is identified as not meeting the required number of units, the Office of Academic and Student Affairs will:
- a. Request the Office of the Registrar make the necessary Carnegie Unit adjustments; and
 - b. Notify the Department Chairs and Deans that action to correct the course has been taken.

Policy History

Latest Revision:

First Adopted: December 2023

Revision History: