

## Syllabus statements on credit hours and course expectations March, 2014

The credit hour is the standard currently used as the measure of academic rigor by universities and accrediting bodies, including the accrediting bodies that oversee Binghamton University. In order to maintain the highest academic standards, to meet our regulatory obligations, and to help students understand the typical demands of our courses, faculty should add to course syllabi a statement detailing expectations so that course standards are conveyed more clearly to students.

This document:

- provides a summary table of course-related work expectations for a 4-cr course in various course configurations
- provides sample statements that can be used or adapted to fit particular courses (depending on course delivery mode, number of credits assigned to the course, and meeting pattern)
- provides information about the way credit hours and related academic expectations are formulated in state, federal, and accreditation regulations

### 1. Summary Table of Course-related Work for a 4-credit Course in Various Current Semester Formats

*Note:* courses offered for 1 credit, 2 credits or 3 credits are adjusted proportionately according to the credit-hour guidelines, which require a total of at least 43-45 hours of course-related work for each academic credit.

Student workload expectation for 4-credit courses	In-class hours (weekly)	Outside-of-class hours (weekly)	Total hours per week
Fall/Spring semester courses meeting 3 hours per week for lecture/discussion (14 weeks)	3	9.5	12.5
Fall/Spring semester courses with additional meeting times (discussion sections, labs or other) (14 weeks)	(varies)	(varies)	12.5
Summer session (5 week) face-to-face courses	10	25	35
Summer session (5 week) online courses	n/a	35	35
Winter session (3 week) face-to-face courses	15	43	58
Winter session (3 week) online courses	n/a	58	58

### 2. Sample syllabus statements

#### a) 4-credit courses

##### **For Fall/Spring semester-long 4-credit courses that meet in the standard 3-day or 2-day meeting patterns:**

This course is a 4-credit course, which means that in addition to the scheduled lectures/discussions, students are expected to do at least 9.5 hours of course-related work each week during the semester. This includes things like: completing assigned readings, participating in lab sessions, studying for tests and examinations, preparing written assignments, completing internship or clinical placement requirements, and other tasks that must be completed to earn credit in the

course.

**For Fall/Spring 4-credit semester-long courses with non-standard meeting times (i.e. not the standard 3-day or 2-day meeting patterns):**

This course is a 4-credit course, which means that students are expected to do at least 12.5 hours of course-related work or activity each week during the semester. This includes scheduled class lecture/discussion meeting times as well as time spent completing assigned readings, studying for tests and examinations, participating in lab sessions, preparing written assignments, and other course-related tasks.

**For Summer session face-to-face courses:**

This course is a 4-credit course, which means that in addition to the scheduled meeting times, students are expected to do at least 25 hours of course-related work each week of the 5-week Summer session. This includes work done completing assigned readings, participating in lab sessions, studying for tests and examinations, preparing written assignments, and other course-related tasks.

**For Summer session fully online courses:**

This course is a 4-credit course, which means that students are expected to do at least 35 hours of course-related work each week of the 5-week Summer session. This includes work done completing assigned readings, studying for tests and examinations, preparing written assignments, and other course-related tasks.

**For Winter session face-to-face courses:**

This course is a 4-credit course, which means that in addition to the scheduled meeting times, students are expected to do at least 43 hours of course-related work outside of class each week during the 3-week Winter session. This includes work done completing assigned readings, studying for tests and examinations, preparing written assignments, and other course-related tasks.

**For Winter session fully online courses:**

This course is a 4-credit course, which means that students are expected to do at least 58 hours of course-related work each week during the 3-week Winter session. This includes work done completing assigned readings, studying for tests and examinations, preparing written assignments, and other course-related tasks.

**b) Sample syllabus statements for 3-credit courses**

**For Fall/Spring 3-credit semester-long courses with non-standard meeting times (i.e. not the standard 3-day or 2-day meeting patterns):**

This course is a 3-credit course, which means that students are expected to do at least 9 - 9.5 hours of course-related work or activity each week during the semester. This includes scheduled class lecture/discussion meeting times as well as time spent completing assigned readings, studying for tests and examinations, participating in lab sessions, preparing written assignments, and other course-related tasks.

**For Winter session fully online courses:**

This course is a 3-credit course, which means that students are expected to do at least 43.5 hours of course-related work each week during the 3-week Winter session. This includes work done completing assigned readings, studying for tests and examinations, preparing written assignments,

and other course-related tasks.

### c) Sample syllabus statements for 2-credit courses

#### **For Fall/Spring 2-credit semester-long courses with non-standard meeting times (i.e. not the standard 3-day or 2-day meeting patterns):**

This course is a 2-credit course, which means that students are expected to do at least 6 - 6.5 hours of course-related work or activity each week during the semester. This includes scheduled class lecture/discussion meeting times as well as time spent completing assigned readings, studying for tests and examinations, participating in lab sessions, preparing written assignments, and other course-related tasks.

#### **For Winter session fully online courses:**

This course is a 2-credit course, which means that students are expected to do at least 29 hours of course-related work each week during the 3-week Winter session. This includes work done completing assigned readings, studying for tests and examinations, preparing written assignments, and other course-related tasks.

## **Relevant Definitions and Policy Statement Summaries**

### **a) United States Department of Education – Credit Hour Definition**

( <http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?rgn=div8&node=34:3.1.3.1.1.1.23.2> )

*The U.S. Department of Education defines a 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 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.

### **b) Middle States Commission on Higher Education**

**Policy** (<http://www.msche.org/documents/CreditHourPolicyRev112012.pdf>)

The Commission recognizes that institutions may use one or both of the options identified in the [US DoE] definition of credit hours when assigning credit hours.

Institutions must provide the following information to the Commission's evaluators at appropriate points of accreditation review so they can verify compliance with the credit hour regulations:

1. Written policies and procedures used to assign credit hours;
2. Evidence and analyses demonstrating that these policies and procedures are consistently applied across programs and courses, regardless of delivery mode or teaching/learning format;
3. An explanation of how the institution's assignment of credit hours conforms to commonly accepted standards of higher education.

**c) New York State Education Department:** ( <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/ocue/50.1.htm> )  
*§ 50.1 Definitions*

(o) Semester hour means a credit, point, or other unit granted for the satisfactory completion of a course which requires at least 15 hours (of 50 minutes each) of instruction and at least 30 hours of supplementary assignments, except as otherwise provided pursuant to section 52.2(c)(4) of this Subchapter. This basic measure shall be adjusted proportionately to translate the value of other academic calendars and formats of study in relation to the credit granted for study during the two semesters that comprise an academic year.