



**UMBC CREDIT HOUR POLICY**  
**UMBC Policy #III-6.10.01**

**I. POLICY STATEMENT**

This policy articulates the standards for assignment and application of credit hours to all courses and programs of study at UMBC regardless of degree level, teaching and learning formats, and mode of instruction.

**II. PURPOSE FOR POLICY**

Consistent with the U.S. Department of Education, as defined in the Federal Register 34 CFR §600.2 [for purposes of Federal programs and provisions related to accrediting agencies’ assessment of institutions’ determinations of credit hours or other measure of student work] and 602.24(f) [for purposes of title IV student financial assistance programs]), the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, and the Code of Maryland Regulations (13B.02.02.16), this policy articulates the standards for assignment and application of credit hours to all courses and programs of study at UMBC.

**III. APPLICABILITY AND IMPACT STATEMENT**

This policy addresses the assignment and application of credit hours to all courses and programs of study at UMBC regardless of degree level, teaching and learning formats, and mode of instruction.

**IV. CONTACTS**

Questions regarding the consistent application of UMBC’s credit hour policy can be directed to:

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Contact</b>	<b>Telephone</b>	<b>Email</b>
Policy Clarification Questions	Beth Wells, Assistant Vice Provost for Academic Affairs	410-455-8907	<a href="mailto:bwells@umbc.edu">bwells@umbc.edu</a>
Technical Implementation Questions	Pamela Hawley, Acting University Registrar	410-455-2832	<a href="mailto:mcinnis@umbc.edu">mcinnis@umbc.edu</a>

**V. UNIVERSITY POLICY**

**A) BACKGROUND:**

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - CREDIT HOUR DEFINITION**

For federal purposes, a credit hour is defined by the U.S. Department of Education 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.”

U.S. Department of Education Guidance to Institutions and Accrediting Agencies Regarding a Credit Hour as Defined in the Final Regulations Published on October 29, 2010 further stipulates flexibilities such as the concept of “seat time” and the minimum standard for student work per credit hour that an institution may require.

### **B) UMBC CREDIT HOUR POLICY**

For purposes of assigning credit hours, UMBC adheres to the Carnegie unit of measure defined by the U.S. Department of Education (Section V.A.). As a degree granting institution in Maryland, UMBC further complies with the standards outlined by the Maryland Higher Education Commission Code of Maryland Regulations (13B.02.02.16). Based on the federal and state definitions, UMBC shall award 1 credit hour for:

- 1) A minimum of 15 hours, of 50 minutes each of actual class time, exclusive of registration, study days, and holidays;
- 2) A minimum of 30 hours, of 50 minutes each of supervised laboratory or studio time, exclusive of registration, study days, and holidays;
- 3) A minimum of 45 hours, of 50 minutes each of instructional situations such as practica, internships, and cooperative education placements, when supervision is ensured and learning is documented; or
- 4) Instruction delivered by electronic media based on the equivalent outcomes in student learning in Section V.B.1., may include a combination of tele-lessons, classroom instruction, student consultation with instructors, and readings, when supervision is ensured and learning is documented.

### **C) APPLICATION OF THE UMBC CREDIT HOUR POLICY**

The UMBC Credit Hour Policy is applied across all courses and programs of study regardless of degree level, teaching and learning formats, and mode of instruction as described next:

#### **1) NEW COURSE AND ACADEMIC PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT**

The [Undergraduate Council](#) (UGC) and the [Graduate Council](#) (GC) are two university committees established in the UMBC [Plan of Organization](#). The UGC and the GC provide important functions (i.e., quality assurance, quality improvement, and accountability of the credit hour policy) in relation to the review and approval of new courses and academic programs.

While faculty and program administrators are responsible for the development of curriculum as well as the assignment of credit hours, all courses and programs (new and/or revised) must be submitted to the UGC or GC for final review and approval. All courses and programs that gain the approval of the UGC or GC are submitted to the Registrar's Office for inclusion in the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs and the Schedule of Classes.

To further ensure the consistent application of credit hours, the Registrar's Office adheres to the Academic Calendar (Section V.C.2.), and standard and non-standard meeting patterns (Section V.C.3.), as it implements established course components (Section V.C.4.), from term-to-term, across all modes of instruction including distance education courses (Section V.D.). The Registrar's Office also conducts a periodic review (Section V.C.5.), to monitor for consistencies in credit hour assignment.

## **2) ACADEMIC CALENDAR**

UMBC follows a common academic calendar as established by the University System of Maryland, Board of Regents. As such, UMBC has two standard semesters (fall and spring) which are 15 weeks in length excluding designated university closings and exam periods, a three-to-four week winter term, and a 12-week summer term with abbreviated sessions that vary in length from 4 weeks to 12 weeks. Other variations are approved on a case-by-case basis by the committee on Non-Standard Tuition and/or Administrative Arrangements.

The UMBC Academic Calendar is available at: <http://registrar.umbc.edu/academic-calendar/pdf-calendars/>

## **3) STANDARD AND NON-STANDARD MEETING PATTERNS**

Standard meeting patterns (i.e., MWF, TuTh), have been established based on the minimum requirements outlined in the UMBC Credit Hour Policy (Section V.B.).

Standard meeting patterns are maintained in the scheduling system by the Registrar's Office and assigned to individual classes by departmental scheduling coordinators. Guidelines regarding standard meeting patterns are available at: Classroom Scheduling Principles and Standard Class Meeting Patterns.

In instances where standard meeting patterns are not assigned, (i.e., practica, internships, field studies, research, independent study), faculty and program administrators will determine the appropriate amount of instructional time as well as out of class student work requirements as outlined in the UMBC Credit Hour Policy (Section V.B.).

## **4) COURSE COMPONENTS**

Course components (i.e., Lecture, Seminar, Discussion, Laboratory, Clinical, Practica, Internships, Field Studies, Research, Independent Study, and Thesis Research) are maintained in the scheduling system by the Registrar's Office for purposes of applying standard meeting patterns where appropriate.

General guidelines regarding the assignment of credit hours by course component is available on the Registrar's Office website at: <http://registrar.umbc.edu/course-component-and-credit-hour-guidelines/>

**5) PERIODIC REVIEW**

The Registrar's Office conducts a periodic review to monitor for consistencies in credit hour assignments. When discrepancies are noted, the Registrar's Office coordinates with the appropriate academic department to resolve.

**D) DISTANCE EDUCATION (ONLINE/HYBRID COURSES)**

For purposes of assigning credit hours to distance education courses (online/hybrid), UMBC adheres to the UMBC Credit Hour Policy (Section V.B.) and Application of the UMBC Credit Hour Policy (Section V.C.) regardless of the mode of instruction.

As a Middle States guideline, "Programs delivered through either distance education or correspondence education modalities— whether by the Internet, television, video-conferencing, or other means—should meet academic and learning support standards, appropriate to the type of delivery, comparable to those offered in more traditional formats within higher education. Student learning objectives and outcomes should be consistent across comparable offerings, regardless of where or how they are provided" (Standard 13, p.58).

**VI. DEFINITIONS**

<p><b>Graduate Council (GC)</b></p>	<p>UMBC and University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) have a joint Graduate School that is referred to as the University of Maryland Graduate School, Baltimore. The Graduate Faculty is joint between the two campuses and is governed by a Joint Graduate Council. The Graduate Council (GC) shall consist of the Deans as ex officio voting member(s), the Associate Deans as ex officio non – voting members, 6 members elected from and by the graduate faculty at UMBC, 6 members elected from and by the graduate faculty at UMB, one graduate student from each campus chosen by the Graduate Student Association, two members appointed by the President of UMB and two members appointed by the President of UMBC.</p> <p>The Deans of the UMBC and UMB Graduate Schools serve as presiding officers of the Joint Graduate Council with voice and vote, alternating leadership with each meeting of the Council. The Joint Graduate Council will be represented ex officio in the UMBC Faculty Senate by a liaison selected by the Graduate Council from among the UMBC members. The liaison shall bring before the Faculty Senate all recommendations relating to the functions of the Council.</p> <p>Sources:  <a href="#">Graduate Council</a>  <a href="#">UMBC Plan of Organization</a></p>
<p><b>Hybrid Courses</b></p>	<p>Hybrid courses blend in-person and online learning. Most hybrid courses reduce the number of in-class meetings by replacing some in-person classes with online, out-of-class, or interactive learning activities.</p>

	<p>Hybrid courses do not follow the standard meeting patterns due to less face-to-face time and more self-directed learning. Faculty who teach hybrid courses are responsible for establishing and publishing a regular in-person meeting pattern, so that students know when they are expected to attend class on campus. Faculty are also responsible for determining the percentage of instructional time that should be moved from the classroom to online.</p> <p>Source: <a href="http://www.umbc.edu/winter/hybrid">http://www.umbc.edu/winter/hybrid</a></p>
<p><b>Instructional Time</b></p>	<p>Instructional time may be based on a variety of educational activities which might include regularly scheduled learning sessions, faculty-guided independent study, consultations with a faculty mentor, development of an academic action plan addressed to the competencies identified by the institution, or, in combination with any of the foregoing, assessments.</p> <p>Source: MSCHE  <a href="http://www.msche.org/documents/Degree-and-Credit-Guidelines-062209-FINAL[1].pdf">http://www.msche.org/documents/Degree-and-Credit-Guidelines-062209-FINAL[1].pdf</a></p> <p>The United States Department of Education defines the relationship of a credit hour to a week of instructional time (CFR 668.3(b)(2) for purposes of an educational program as follows:</p> <p>In general, a week of instructional time is any seven-day period in which at least one day of regularly scheduled instruction or examination occurs, exclusive of vacation time, homework, or periods of counseling or orientation.</p> <p>In any seven-day period, a student is expected to be academically engaged through, for example, classroom attendance, examinations, practica, laboratory work, internships, and supervised studio work.</p> <p>In the case of distance education, academic engagement would include, but is not limited to, completing an academic assignment; taking an exam, participating in an interactive tutorial; participating in an instructor assigned study group; contributing to an academic online discussion; initiating contact with a faculty member to ask a question about the academic subject studied in the course, etc.</p> <p>Merely logging into the electronic classroom does not constitute academic engagement.</p> <p>Source: US Department of Education:  <a href="http://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/reg/hearulemaking/2009/credit.html">http://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/reg/hearulemaking/2009/credit.html</a></p>
<p><b>Online Courses</b></p>	<p>Online courses use Blackboard (UMBC's learning management system) and emphasize self-directed independent student learning. Online courses eliminate in-person class meetings entirely and move all learning experiences online, using web-based, multi-media resources, commercial software, and</p>

	<p>automatically evaluated assessments with guided instructor feedback.</p> <p>Source: <a href="http://www.umbc.edu/winter/hybrid">http://www.umbc.edu/winter/hybrid</a></p>
<b>Plan of Organization</b>	<p>In compliance with the Board of Regents Policy on shared governance in the USM (BOR I-6.00), the UMBC Plan of Organization provides formal structures for appropriate collaboration and communication between and among administration, faculty, staff, and students so that the academic community may discharge its functions with respect to educational policy and other pertinent affairs, and to represent those within the academic community who are not otherwise represented by an exclusive bargaining agent to the UMBC Administration, the University System of Maryland Administration, and the Board of Regents of the University System of Maryland.</p> <p>Source: <a href="#">UMBC Plan of Organization</a></p>
<b>Undergraduate Council (UGC)</b>	<p>Membership on the UGC includes eight faculty members; three students; two professional (exempt) staff members from an office responsible to the Provost; and the Provost, ex officio.</p> <p>The Chair of the Undergraduate Council is elected from among the faculty members of the committee and sit as an ex officio member of the Faculty Senate with voice but not vote unless otherwise entitled to vote.</p> <p>Source: <a href="#">UMBC Plan of Organization</a></p>

**VII. APPROVAL AND PROCEDURES: Not Applicable**

**VIII. DOCUMENTATION: Not Applicable**

**IX. RESTRICTIONS AND EXCLUSIONS: None**

**X. RELATED ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES: None**

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**Administrator Use Only**

**Policy Number: III-6.10.01**

**Policy Section: Academic Affairs**

**Responsible Administrator: Vice Provost, Academic Affairs**

**Responsible Office: Academic Affairs**

**Approved by President: May 2016**