

Credit Hour Policy

Point Park University complies with Federal (US DOE) and Middle States Commission of Higher Education (MSCHE) regulations regarding degree and credit hours. Point Park University undergraduate degrees require the satisfactory completion of a minimum of 120 semester credit hours, and at least 40 semester credit hours are in general education. All graduate degrees require at least 30 semester credit hours. Associates degrees require at least 60 semester credit hours.

Point Park operates on an academic year divided into two semesters (fall and spring) of approximately 15 weeks in length. Summer sessions, as well as some eight-week sessions offered throughout the year comply with the established University credit policy.

One semester credit is equivalent to one hour of faculty face-to-face instruction time per week for 15 weeks and a minimum of two hours of student preparation time outside of the classroom each week per credit hour. Different modes of instruction will meet instructional hour requirements by following the Equivalent Instructional Activity policy in this document.

The University also follows the U.S. Department of Education definition of credit hour “an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidenced of student achievement.” The University established the following guidelines that are in concert with the U.S. DOE as well as MSCHE: one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours out of class student work for approximately 15 weeks (or equivalency over different time periods).

Specifically, the University follows the established curricular credit regulations of the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE): 22 Pa. Code Chapter 31, 31.21-31.22. One semester credit is defined as 14 hours of classroom instruction. A three-credit semester based course would need to meet for 42 hours of classroom instruction throughout the semester. In addition, PDE requires that hours of classroom instruction cannot be calculated to include exams. Therefore, a typical semester course meets for 14 weeks (3 credits equals 42 hours of instruction) with a final exam in week 15 (2 hours).

PDE’s curricular credit policy allows for determining activities that are the equivalent of classroom instruction. Definitions of Point Park University’s formats and modalities of instruction appear below:

Lecture: One lecture, seminar, or discussion credit hour represents 1 hour per week of scheduled class/seminar time and 2 hours of student preparation time. Most lecture and seminar courses are awarded 3 credit hours.

Lecture, Seminar, and Discussion: Classroom /Faculty Instructor and Outside Work				
Semester credits	Minimum instructional time/week	Student preparation time/week	Total minimum instruction time/14 weeks	2 hour final exam in 15 th week
1 credit	1 hour	2 hours	14 hours	16 hours
2 credits	2 hours	3 hours	28 hours	30 hours
3 credits	3 hours	4 hours	42 hours	44 hours
4 credits	4 hours	5 hours	56 hours	58 hours

Laboratory: One laboratory credit hour represents 1-2 hours per week of scheduled supervised laboratory work and 2 hours of student preparation time.

Laboratory: Classroom /Faculty Instructor and Outside Work				
Semester credits	Minimum instructional time/week	Student preparation time/week	Total minimum instruction time/14 weeks	2 hour final exam in 15 th week
1 credit	1-2 hours	2 hours	14-28 hours	16-30 hours
2 credits	2-3 hours	3 hours	28-42 hours	30-44 hours

Practicum: A practicum provides students with the opportunity to practice and enhance skills that they have acquired in previous courses. One practicum hour is equivalent to approximately 3-4 hours of internally-supervised and unsupervised work per week for 15 weeks. A 3-credit practicum is at minimum 150 hours of internally-supervised and unsupervised work in 15 weeks.

Education Practica: (follows PDE guidelines)

- Student Teaching Practicum: Twelve credit hours of supervised student teaching, representing 3 lecture hours and 30 classroom hours each week for 15 weeks.
- Instructional Studies Practicum: Six credit hours of supervised instruction, representing 3 lecture hours and 18 classroom hours each week for 15 weeks.

Studio: One practice credit hour represents 3 hours per week of supervised and independent practice. (Dance students experience a minimum of one daily technique class of 90 minutes in length, as required by the National Association of Schools of Dance.)

Studio: Classroom /Faculty Instructor and Outside Work				
Semester credits	Minimum instructional time/ week	Student independent practice/week	Total minimum instruction time/14 weeks	2 hour final exam in 15 th week
1 credit	1-1.5 hours	1.5-2hrs	14-21 hours	16-23 hours
2 credits	2-3hours	3-4 hours	28-42 hours	30-44 hours
3 credits	3-4.5 hours	4.5-6 hours	42-63 hours	44-65 hours

Internship: Internships are determined by negotiation between the supervising faculty and the work supervisor at the cooperating site, both of whom must judge and certify different aspects of student’s work and completion of agreed upon outcomes and assessment of those outcomes. Three credits is equivalent to a minimum 150-200 hours of work. Students should verify their department’s required hours of work with their faculty supervisor. In order to receive credit, students must register for an Internship course prior to the start date of their internship. Credit will be awarded for the internship only during the term in which the internship is completed.

Experiential Learning: Credit for experiential learning may be granted to individuals who submit evidence of learning equivalent to University level course objectives/learning outcomes. Considered evidence may include portfolios, summaries of learning experiences, letters from supervisors and/or other materials that clearly illustrate achievement of each course learning outcome. A student must have completed a minimum of six credits at Point Park before a faculty evaluation for experiential learning can be processed. Students may earn up to 18 undergraduate credits in experiential learning. These credits do NOT fulfill the University residency requirement.

Independent Study: Independent studies from 1-4 credits are offered if a comparable course is not available on campus or at another institution. Students must secure a faculty supervisor and obtain permission from a department chair before registering for an independent study. Students must illustrate achievement of the independent study course objectives/learning outcomes in order to receive credit. The student must interact with the faculty member on a regular and substantive basis to assure progress within the course.

Online: The University follows the definition of Distance Education/Distance Learning consistent with HEOA, PDE and Middle States standards and guidelines for all distance learning degree or certificate programs: online courses at Point Park will be delivered 100% online. Online courses satisfy the PDE guidelines for “equivalent instruction” outlined in PA Code 31.21: see Equivalent Instructional Activity (EIA) below.

Hybrid: Hybrid courses are a combination of face-to-face and distance learning methods. The University guidelines recommend that at least 40% and no more than 70% of instructional hours be delivered online. Hybrid courses must utilize the University’s EIA policy (see below).

Equivalent Instructional Activity (EIA): EIAs must be part of the course design when the format for instructional meeting hours are less than the Pennsylvania Department of Education requirement of 42 hours plus 2 hours of final examination time.

All Equivalent Instructional Activities must be included on the syllabus and should indicate the expected number of hours of class meeting time provided through this alternative instructional methodology. The syllabus should also include a specific description of each EIA.

The Center for Teaching Excellence provides guidelines to faculty for the use in designing Equivalent Instructional Activities that meet the requirements of providing interaction with the student and the sharing of that interaction to the benefit of the entire class.

Guidance for Developing Equivalent Instructional Activities (established 2007, revised 2012)

With the advent of distance learning, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) recognizes that alternative formats for instruction are possible and likely, and as such, has determined that “equivalent” instructional modes may substitute for what was traditionally face-to-face instruction.

Credit hour equivalencies must be stated for the amount of time that classes do not meet over the course of the term. Syllabi must include instruction mode equivalencies that are mapped to instructional objectives and learning outcomes. Homework is not equivalent to instructional time.

Instructional mode equivalencies include but are not limited to the following activities:

- Field work
- Telecommunication instruction (including the use or reliance upon Blackboard software): lectures, web-links, discussion boards, chat room, blogs, on-line quizzes/exams, video conference, email correspondence, conference calls, etc.
- Collaborative group assignments – synchronous and asynchronous
- Demonstrations/Observations – virtual or otherwise

Credit Hour Review: The Office of the University Registrar regularly audits scheduled course offerings to ensure compliance with credit hour requirements through its process for scheduling each semester. Faculty on the Curriculum Committee and Faculty Assembly review each new course and ensure that credit hours are in compliance before voting for approval of these new courses. The Office of Academic and Student Affairs reviews all new courses in order to ensure compliance with credit hours and course learning outcomes before awarding final approval of courses. Changes in curriculum are noted in the University Catalog (updated each July/August), website, and PointWeb (Student Registration Portal).