

Guidelines for Assuring Instructional Time – Muskingum University (Aug2022)

Overview

Each credit hour of instruction provided to students is composed of a standard amount of time in compliance with standards set by the federal government and state education authorities. The Federal Regulations 34 CFR 600.2 defines a credit hour for Federal programs, including the Federal student financial assistance programs, 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.*

Academic Calendar

The academic calendar is constructed to be in compliance with the federal definition for credit hour and semester length. The Muskingum University undergraduate academic calendar is constructed with a 15-week semester, composed of 14 weeks of instruction and the 15th week for final assessments and examinations. Instructors must follow the scheduled class meetings each week in order to meet the above federal expectations. This means that classes meet during the final assessment period, whether or not a final examination is scheduled.

Online or distance learning courses at Muskingum may follow a condensed semester or summer sessions schedule; however, they must provide an equivalent amount of instructional time.

Determining Time-On-Task

The total learning time spent by a student in a college course includes instructional time as well as time spent studying and completing course assignments (e.g., reading, research, writing, individual and group projects, exam preparations, etc.). Together, instructional time and course assignments constitute “time-on-task.” Regardless of the type of course

(e.g., lecture, seminar, practicum, online or in-class) or the particular learning activities employed, the amount of learning time in any college course must meet the federal requirements. This standard ensures consistency across courses and institutions regarding the instruction provided using the credit hour system.

Syllabus Construction

Instructors should estimate the time needed to complete each of the learning activities, readings, assignments, and assessments over the course of the semester to ensure sufficient time-on-task. In designing asynchronous online courses, it may not be useful to differentiate between in-class and outside-class time; however, the total learning time must be equivalent to in-person courses. Online course design must include both instructional activities and applied practice, reading, and student preparation time. It is not sufficient for online courses to exist entirely of publisher content or self-paced student learning; instead, instructional activities include faculty-student and student-student interactions and a high level of communication, feedback, and active learning.

Online resources, such as those published by the University of Kentucky (<https://www.uky.edu/elearning/time-task>), provide helpful tables for estimating time for completion of various instructional tasks.

Communicating Expectations

Instructors should inform students of the time-on-task expectations for each course based on credit hours assigned. A syllabus statement provides helpful guidance to students.

- a) Sample syllabus statement for a 3-credit face-to-face course:

This course requires 45 hours of instruction and will meet during each scheduled class time and during the time specified for final assessments and examinations. Assignments, projects, and test preparation will be completed outside of class. Students should expect to spend an average of 6 hours per week on this course outside of class meeting times, for a total of 9 hours per week.

- b) Sample syllabus statement for an asynchronous 3-credit online course:

This is a web-based course which will provide instruction and opportunities for practice and assessment. The instructional components will require approximately 45 hours and will consist of activities such as completion of readings, viewing PowerPoint and video presentations, or posting to discussion boards. In addition, students will complete assignments, projects, and study for and take examinations. Students should expect to spend an average of 9 hours per week on this course.