



OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

Policy on Credit Hours

Columbia uses credit hours to measure the amount of work required in order to complete its courses. Each unit of credit represents at least three hours of work per week for approximately 15 weeks. This standard complies with the regulatory requirements of the federal and New York State governments and with the accreditation requirements of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

Students normally spend at least 50 minutes per week in class for each credit they receive and are expected to devote at least another two hours to studying for their course outside of the classroom. Schools may modify the ratio between the students' work in and outside the classroom as long as the total expectation is at least three hours. For example, it may be appropriate to reduce the time spent in the classroom when a school awards credit for internships, field work or clerkships when those activities require a substantial commitment of time. Classroom hours include time spent in lecture courses, colloquia, seminars, laboratory sections, discussion sections and studios.

Columbia uses a comparable standard in assigning credits to its on-line courses where students may progress through the lectures and other class activities at their own pace. For each credit, they are expected to spend a minimum of approximately 45 hours over the term, either in fulfillment of the on-line requirements of the course, or in reading and completing other assignments for the course.

The University has delegated to the deans of the individual schools the responsibility for ensuring that all of the courses comply with its credit hour policies. Each school has a curriculum committee (often known as its Committee on Instruction or Curriculum Committee) whose approval is required for every new program and every course it offers. As part of its evaluation of new programs and courses, the curriculum committee assesses whether it complies with this policy. Faculty must obtain the approval of the appropriate curriculum committee in order to modify the time commitments they expect of their students.