

DEFINITION OF "CREDIT HOUR" - THE CARNEGIE UNIT: HOW TO CALCULATE STUDENT CONTACT HOURS

A "CREDIT HOUR" is the unit of measuring educational CREDIT, usually based on the number of classroom hours per week throughout a term.

Students are awarded credit for classes on the basis of the Carnegie unit. This defines a semester unit of credit as equal to a minimum of three hours of work per week for a semester. California's Title V code, section 55002, also defines student credit in this way.

While the length of a semester may vary, the Carnegie definition is based upon a minimum length of 16 weeks. Thus, a unit of credit equates to three hours of student work per week (1 hour lecture plus 2 hours of homework or 3 hours of lab) for 16 weeks. In certain circumstances, it is possible to have more hours, but not less. The LASC College Catalog lists the total class hours required per semester.

Lecture Classes

For a lecture class, one unit is considered to be one hour of lecture class time and two hours per week of homework. For the typical three-unit class, a student spends three hours per week in class and should do six hours per week of homework. The total semester hours are calculated by multiplying the weekly hours by 16.

Laboratory Classes

For a laboratory class, the hours per week are considered to be all in class with no outside assignments. Thus, one unit is three hours per week of laboratory time.

By Arrangement Lab Hours

Where a course includes by arrangement lab hours, these generally take the place of the hours assigned to homework, since the student is required to use supervised college facilities to do assignments related to homework. An example might be a 3-unit lecture course which requires the student also to work two hours per week in the computer lab. There would be only four hours per week of additional homework required.

Examples:

Course Type	Unit Value	Lecture Hours per		Lab Hours per		By Arrangement Hours per		Homework Hours per	
		Week	Sem	Week	Sem	Week	Sem	Week	Sem
LECTURE ONLY COURSES; HOMEWORK REQUIRED									
Lecture	1 unit	1	16					2	32
Lecture	2 units	2	32					4	64
Lecture	3 units	3	48					6	96
LABORATORY ONLY COURSES; NO HOMEWORK OR OTHER OUTSIDE WORK									
Lab	1 unit	3	48						
Lab	0.5 unit	1.5	24						
COURSES WITH BY ARRANGEMENT LAB HOURS; HOMEWORK REQUIRED TO MAKE UP THE DIFFERENCE									
Lecture (w/ by arr.)	1 unit	1	16			2	32		
Lecture (w/ by arr.)	1 unit	1	16			1	16	1	16
Lab (all by arr.)	1 unit					3	48		
Lecture (w/ by arr.)	3 units	3	48			2	32	4	64
Lecture	1.5 units	1.5	24			2	32	1	16

Short Courses

Short courses are prorated so they contain the same number of hours as if the course were scheduled for a full semester. To maintain the integrity of the instructional program, care must be taken when scheduling short courses so that there is adequate time for students to complete homework assignments or by arrangement laboratory assignments.