DEFINING CREDIT HOURS AND BEST PRACTICES IN ONLINE COURSES
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DEFINING CREDIT HOURS FOR ONLINE COURSES
The University of Arizona defines credit hours for *online classes* in the same manner as they do *face-to-face classes*. The relationship between the number of contact hours and the number of units earned for a particular course format is defined as follows:

Definition of Unit of Credit
The definition of a unit of credit is defined as an hour of work is the equivalent of 50 minutes of class time (often called a contact hour).

Credit hours are required for all courses:
- At least 15 "contact" hours of recitation, lecture, discussion, seminar, or colloquium.
- A minimum of 30 hours of student homework are required for each unit of credit.

University and ABOR policy requires at least 45 hours of work by each student of each unit of credit.

This chart compares the translation of contact hours in from the face-to-face environment to the online environment.

Face-to-Face	*Online*
• Synchronous meetings held in a physical classroom, these sessions are usually not recorded for playback • Attendance is expected to help students keep on track in meeting requirements and deadlines • Interactions with faculty and peers are usually face-to-face, both verbal and nonverbal, spontaneous	• Asynchronous and/or synchronous meetings recorded and distributed in a virtual environment • Students are responsible for accessing content and must be proactive, highly organized and self-disciplined • Interaction with faculty and peers are conducted in electronic environments including discussion forums, emails and private chats/messages allowing for thoughtful, reflective responses

BEST PRACTICES FOR CONTACT IN ONLINE COURSES
WORKFLOW OF AN ONLINE COURSE
Students access the course via the Learning Management System (D2L) either daily or several times a week engaging with the course material by:
- *Reading materials* – physical, electronic, or interactive textbooks, PDF articles, etc.
- *Watching recorded lectures* – by instructor or experts in Panopto or other streaming services (YouTube), etc.
- *Discussing topics* – conversations on discussion boards or on visual discussion forum in VoiceThread, etc.

- **Writing assignments** – essays, written reports in Dropbox or on external sites (Blogs, Wikis, etc.)
- **Presenting content** – oral reports or narrated slides in Panopto, VoiceThread, Adobe Connect, etc.
- **Assessing learning** – demonstration of knowledge through quizzes, exams, test, projects, or reports, etc.
- **Collaborating with peers** – work together to solve problems or create material in online groups via D2L Groups, Adobe Collaborate, Google Docs or Drive, etc.
- **Reviewing peers** – evaluation of other's students' work based upon a rubric or guidelines in VoiceThread or Dropbox, etc.
- **Participating in virtual labs or simulations** – accessing commercial or in-house produced material
- **Communicating with instructor** – one-on-one conversations through online office hours, email, chats, etc.

WHICH OF THESE COUNTS TOWARD CONTACT HOURS VS. HOMEWORK HOURS?

Contact (with others)	Homework (solo)
- Watching recorded lectures - Discussing topics - Presenting content - Collaborating with peers - Reviewing peers - Communicating with instructor	- Reading materials - Writing assignments - Assessing learning - Participating in virtual labs or simulations

BEST PRACTICES FOR CONTACT IN ONLINE COURSES

STUDENT SUCCESS IN ONLINE COURSE

Since students are not directed in person by the instructor or facilitator of the online course, design is an essential element that can lead to success. Below are some ideas to implement in an online course for student success:

- *Important instructions should be displayed in three different places with the course or in communication to the student.*
  - *An example: The accessibility policy could be email to students, displayed in the announcement/news and embedded in the syllabus.*
- *The objectives and/or outcomes of the module should be displayed in a prominent place.*
  - *An example: At the top or side of the module state the following: If you successfully complete this module, you will be able to: (list the outcomes of the module).*
- *List the ways the students will accomplish the learning objectives and demonstrate the learning outcomes.*
  - *An example: Students will be able to describe a concept. They will learn about this concept in a lecture and a reading. They will demonstrate their learning in a discussion form or in a written essay (or both).*
- *Establish a pattern to the flow of the online course and give students a suggested timeframe to completing the pattern.*
  - *An example: The module will open on Sunday at noon, review objectives and activities by Sunday evening, by Tuesday evening complete all readings, watch all lectures and make your first post to the discussion, by Wednesday evening, complete the quiz and by Saturday evening complete your essay and reply to the discussion.*
- *As a standard for all courses have these modules: Overview of Course, Start Here, Course Technology, Assignment Details.*

CLOCK HOUR REQUIREMENTS FOR COURSES

Note: In the following clock hour requirements, the term "instructional time" is synonymous with "in-class" and "direct faculty instruction." Examinations may be included as instructional time. Instructional time applies to courses taught in all modalities, i.e., face-to-face, online, hybrid, etc. The term "student work" means all assignments or other academic activities required to be completed outside of instructional time. Student work may include reading, studying, writing, completing worksheets, research, etc.

ONLINE AND HYBRID COURSES

Online and hybrid courses must meet the same credit hour requirement as face-to-face courses. Faculty teaching online and hybrid courses must account for 13 hours of instructional time and 27 hours of student work for each credit hour. A three credit hour course requires 120 hours of instructional time and student work. Logging on constitutes neither active faculty teaching nor active student learning. Faculty must demonstrate active faculty engagement in online teaching/instructing students. Methods such as discussion boards, chats, etc. can serve as instructional time.

ESTIMATING WORKLOAD FOR OUT-OF-CLASS READING AND WRITING

From Rice University, Center for Teaching Excellence: *How Much Should We Assign? Estimating Out of Class Workload.* https://cte.rice.edu/blogarchive/2016/07/11/workload *Note: this website includes an excellence workload calculator.*

READING
Combining what we know with what we assume allows us to construct the following table of estimated reading rates (with rates about which we are most confident in yellow):

	450 Words	600 Words	750 Words
Survey; No New Concepts (500 wpm)	67 pages per hour	50 pages per hour	40 pages per hour
Survey; Some New Concepts (350 wpm)	47 pages per hour	35 pages per hour	28 pages per hour
Survey; Many New Concepts (250 wpm)	33 pages per hour	25 pages per hour	20 pages per hour
Understand; No New Concepts (250 wpm)	33 pages per hour	25 pages per hour	20 pages per hour
Understand; Some New Concepts (180 wpm)	24 pages per hour	18 pages per hour	14 pages per hour
Understand; Many New Concepts (130 wpm)	17 pages per hour	13 pages per hour	10 pages per hour
Engage; No New Concepts (130 wpm)	17 pages per hour	13 pages per hour	10 pages per hour
Engage; Some New Concepts (90 wpm)	12 pages per hour	9 pages per hour	7 pages per hour
Engage; Many New Concepts (65 wpm)	9 pages per hour	7 pages per hour	5 pages per hour

WRITING

These assumptions allow us to construct the following table of estimated writing rates (with rates about which we are most confident in yellow):

	250 Words (Double Spaced)	500 Words (Single Spaced)
Reflection/Narrative; No Drafting	45 minutes per page	1 hour 30 minutes per page
Reflection/Narrative; Minimal Drafting	1 hour per page	2 hours per page
Reflection/Narrative; Extensive Drafting	1 hour and 15 minutes per page	2 hours and 30 minutes per page
Argument; No Drafting	1 hour and 30 minutes per page	3 hours per page
Argument; Minimal Drafting	2 hours per page	4 hours per page
Argument; Extensive Drafting	2 hours and 30 minutes per page	5 hours per page
Research; No Drafting	3 hours per page	6 hours per page
Research; Minimal Drafting	4 hours per page	8 hours per page
Research; Extensive Drafting	5 hours per page	10 hours per page

ONLINE COURSE DESIGN: TIME ON TASK

By Michael Starenko, February 2017 IN: Innovative Learning Institute: Teaching and Learning Services, Rochester Insitutio of Technology
https://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/tls/course-design/online-courses/time-task
This website provides an excellent discussion to assist faculty determine time-on-task for online courses.