

Definition of a Credit Hour

The College District's definition of a credit hour is in agreement with that of the federal definition of credit hour as defined below.

A credit hour is 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 15 weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to 12 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 item 1, above, 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.

The College District believes this definition to be flexible and sufficient to address various modes of delivery for instruction and is completely consistent with innovative practices such as online education, competency-based credit, and other academic activities. Credit hours may be assigned to courses for an amount of work represented by verifiable student achievement of the College District's established learning outcomes.

Purpose of Defining Credit Hour

A credit hour is a unit of measure that gives value to the level of instruction, academic rigor, and time requirements for a course taken at an educational institution. At its most basic, a credit hour is a proxy measure of a quantity of student learning while also serving as a standard measure of faculty workloads, costs of instruction, and rates of educational efficiencies.

Application of Definition

The College District shall apply this definition of credit hour to its programs and coursework in order to conform to commonly accepted practice in higher education as evaluated by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

All courses offered by the College District for degrees or certificates are authorized by the State of Texas Academic Course Guide Manual for academic courses and the Workforce Education Course Manual for vocational/technical courses. Both manuals provide course descriptions and identify the number of semester credit hours that may be awarded for each course.

The College District Curriculum Committee has an established process for approval of new courses, course or program modification, and new program proposals to ensure that courses and programs provide the appropriate amount and level of credit.

Credit by Non-Traditional Means

The College District may award academic credit **by nontraditional** means, through external credit by examination – The College Level Examination Program (CLEP), Advanced Placement Program (AP), Military Credit (ACE) and through the process of Prior Learning Assessment (PLA).

The PLA process is used to evaluate and validate demonstrated college-level learning acquired outside of traditional coursework. Credit may be awarded through approved assessment methods, including internal credit by examination, licensure or certification, occupational experience, occupational-specific credentials, non-credit learning, or other approved pathways. The awarding of credit through Prior Learning Assessment shall be based upon the recommendation of appropriately qualified faculty and approval through established College District procedures. Credit awarded through Prior Learning Assessment shall be based on documented evidence that the student has achieved learning outcomes comparable to those required in the equivalent College District course or program.

The Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs or designee shall develop procedures for the implementation and administration of Prior Learning Assessment. Information regarding credit by nontraditional means, shall be published in the College District Catalog. Additional procedures, requirements, approved assessment methods, eligibility criteria, and operational processes for Prior Learning Assessment shall be maintained in the College District's Prior Learning Assessment Guidelines and Procedures Manual.