



Policy Name:	Credit Unit & Program Length
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Approving Authority:	Northwest Leadership Team
Responsible Office:	Provost
Category:	Enrollment and Academics

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define credit unit calculations, explain course length, and outline how tuition and fee rates are established at the University.

Policy

Northwest Missouri State University (Northwest) follows all guidelines and policies concerning credits, program length and tuition as established by the Higher Learning Commission and the Missouri Coordinating Board of Higher Education.

Credits and Course Length

Course credit is awarded in semester hours as recorded on the academic transcript. The fall and spring semesters shall consist of no fewer than 15 calendar weeks and no more than 17 calendar weeks of instructional time. The summer session consists of three blocks of four-week sessions (some combined to make 8 or 12 week sessions), as well as two, seven-week online professional sessions and one, 14-week session. Course delivery consists of traditional on-ground, online, as well as the blended format which allows for reduced in-class instructional contact plus an online component. In addition, programs may be offered in a competency-based format with a credit-based delivery mode within traditional terms.

Northwest calculates credit hours by semester based on the standard Carnegie unit. The semester credit hour is the unit of measure used to determine college-credit coursework. A credit hour will be awarded for a minimum of 750 minutes of formalized instruction that typically requires students to work on out-of-class assignments at an average of twice the amount of time as the amount of formalized instruction (1,500 minutes). It is acknowledged that formalized instruction may take place in a variety of modes. Thus, a unit of credit equates to three hours of student work per week (1-hour lecture plus 2-hours of out of class work OR 2/3 hours of lab/activity) for 15-17 weeks.

Lecture courses are considered to be 50-60 minutes of lecture class time and two hours per week of out-of-class work. For the typical three-unit class, a student spends approximately three hours per week in class and should be prepared to complete six hours of work per week of outside of class work. A unit of a laboratory/activity course is equal to two/three hours per week. In order to earn credit time, students must also meet institutional and state learning outcomes at a satisfactory level.

Northwest meets and/or exceeds the minimum course length requirement set by the Federal Student Aid Program (FSA) regulations. At Northwest, one credit hour is granted for 750 minutes of contact lecture time. Credits at Northwest are awarded based on the number of minutes a lecture class meets per week as well as the student successfully meeting the stated learning outcomes. One credit is awarded for each 50-minute session for a 15-17- week semester or 750 minutes per credit. Labs must meet additional instructional time, as required by state regulations. Northwest three-credit-hour

courses exceed the minimum class time required and meet 50-minutes for three-day courses, 75 minutes for two-day courses and 150 minutes for one day courses for a minimum of 2250 minutes per semester. These standards are adhered to when developing class schedules each semester.

The foundation for online/blended courses is to ensure that students are meeting the same learning outcomes as those delivered in traditional on-ground coursework. This includes competency-based programs that are all established on the credit-based premise. For an online, blended, or competency-based program course, the credit hour standard is met where the course meets one of the following criteria:

- 1) The course covers the same material in the same depth as the on-campus version of the course and students spend comparable amounts of time in achieving the course objectives.
- 2) The course has been evaluated by the university for content and rigor, and the university has approved and documented the credit to be awarded. The process for doing so is as follows:
 - a) Faculty follow the process for curriculum proposals and complete the Teaching Online course.
 - b) The course proposal must include information about the estimated work time needed for students to satisfactorily complete assignments, incorporate a measured student outcome within the first week of the course offering to help verify all students are enrolled and engaged in the learning process, and propose an instructional platform that significantly engages the student weekly in some manner that is instructor-initiated.
 - c) The Faculty Curriculum Committee will consider each course proposal to determine whether the material, depth, and learning outcome reasonably approximate those required to satisfy requirements for credit hours.
 - d) Northwest utilizes the following sessions to provide students with a variety of program lengths – all program lengths are aligned with Title IV requirements.
- 3) Fall and Spring semesters: variation of 16, 10, eight and four -week sessions (depending on subject matter and program)
- 4) Summer: typically, three four-week sessions or a combination of eight and twelve week sessions

The following link contains a list of degree programs and certificates offered by Northwest:

<https://www.nwmissouri.edu/academics/majors.htm>

The Missouri Department of Higher Education has established a statewide articulation agreement and a common course library that guarantees 42 general education hours to transfer to any Missouri public or private institution in the state which has signed on to the agreement, including Northwest. The 42-Hour General Education Core also fulfills all lower-division requirements for transfer.

Tuition

Northwest's tuition and fee rates are established by the Board of Regents and are adopted each year. Tuition and fees are posted on the university's website. Some courses have an additional course fee, also approved by the Board of Regents.