

SAS Policies and Procedures on Credit Hours and Standards of Rigor

Undergraduate instruction in the School of Arts and Sciences in New Brunswick is overseen by the unit's over 40 academic departments and programs, the SAS Office of Undergraduate Education, the SAS Curriculum Committee, the Core Requirements Committee, and the SAS Assessment Committee pursuant to the provisions in University policy #10.1.

Each [SAS department](#), either as a committee of the whole, or through a undergraduate curriculum committee, reviews proposals for new courses; modifications in existing courses including changes in mode of delivery or credits; major, minor, and certificate requirements; and any experiential for-credit learning experiences such as labs, independent studies, internships, and study abroad programs. Departments are also engaged in on-going review of the scope, rigor, and effectiveness of its offerings through annual reporting on embedded assessments of student learning outcomes in its curriculum. These department committees, or the Undergraduate Director in consultation with appropriate faculty, also make decisions about the equivalency of courses presented for transfer credits. Department review is guided by disciplinary best-practices at fellow AAU institutions; [University policy #10.2](#), and credit hour policies codified in the [New Jersey Administrative Code Title 9A](#) and by [Middle States Commission on Higher Education](#) (implementing U.S. Department of Education policy.)

Department proposals for new courses; modifications in existing courses including changes in mode of delivery or credits; major, minor, and certificate requirements; and any experiential for-credit learning experiences such as internships and study abroad programs are then submitted to a School-wide elected and appointed Curriculum Committee (see [SAS Bylaws](#)) using a recently developed in-house [online submission system](#). Departments are required to submit full syllabi and assessment plans which are reviewed closely by the committee which then makes recommendations to the full faculty at end-of-the semester meetings. Guided by best-practices at fellow AAU institutions; University policy #10.2; and credit hour policies codified in the New Jersey Administrative Code Title 9A and by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (implementing U.S. Department of Education policy), the Curriculum Committee is particularly attentive to issues of consistency in expectations and rigor across the wide-range of disciplines within SAS. Departments provide annual reports to the SAS Assessment Committee which include descriptions of modifications made in light of assessment results, consistent with expectations regarding workload and rigor.

The SAS Curriculum Committee has developed specific policies for the implementation of these standards across venues and modes of delivery. In May 2005, the faculty approved the Curriculum Committee's guidelines and procedures for review of courses offered in the compressed [Winter Session](#) format recommending the creation of 1.5 and 2 credit courses, but allowing 3 credit courses when a both a regular term and winter session term syllabus are submitted for comparison and results from common or comparable exams are submitted to the Curriculum Committee for review every three years. At the May 2013 meeting, the faculty approved a similar Curriculum Committee policy for [Online and Hybrid](#) courses including again a three-year review requirement.

Additional assurance of consistent and ongoing adherence to University and government regulations on credit-hours, and SAS's cross-discipline standards of rigor, is provided by the Core Requirements Committee. All courses from SAS and from all other Rutgers units seeking certification as meeting Core Curriculum learning goals are reviewed by the cross-school elected and appointed faculty Core Requirements Committee (see [SAS Bylaws](#)). Since this committee only reviews courses approved by the offering school's Curriculum Committee, it is not formally charged with making credit hour determinations. However, as the only New Brunswick committee that reviews undergraduate courses from across the schools, and as responsible for insuring the effectiveness of the Core Curriculum through monitoring the results of embedded assessment of the Core student learning goals, the Core Requirements Committee provides an important forum for flagging any inconsistencies in the application of credit hour policies across the undergraduate program in New Brunswick.

[RUTGERS POLICY](#)

10.2.4 UNITS OF CREDIT

- A. The course credit shall be the academic currency to be used in all schools and colleges of Rutgers University in measuring a student's progress towards a degree and shall be the official unit of record.
- B. The number of credits granted a student for any course in Rutgers University shall be determined by the college, school, or Faculty authorizing the course. The credit value of a course shall be assigned on the basis of the estimated amount of time a median student can be expected to devote to the course, at the rate of three hours a week per credit, including time in class, in laboratory, in conference with the teacher, or in reading, writing and preparing for class.
- C. Within Rutgers University, students matriculated in one school or college who register with the approval of the school or college of matriculation for a course offered by another school, college, or Faculty shall receive the credits assigned to that course by the school, college, or Faculty offering it.

[New Jersey Administrative Code Title 9A](#)

Sub-Chapter 1: 9A:1-1.2

"Semester credit hour" means 50 minutes of face-to-face class activity each week for 15 weeks (or the equivalent attained by scheduling more minutes of face-to-face class activity per week for fewer weeks in the semester) in one semester complemented by at least 100 minutes each week of laboratory or outside assignments (or the equivalent thereof for semesters of different length).

Sub-Chapter 2: 9A:1-2.1

- (c) A semester credit hour shall not be counted on an hour-for-hour basis for library, independent-study, laboratory, or physical education activities. No more than one semester credit hour shall be granted for an experience compressed into one week's time or less unless prior approval is obtained from the Commission in consultation with the Presidents' Council. A semester credit hour is not required to be counted on an hour-for-hour basis for distance learning or blended (or hybrid) learning.
- (d) Credit courses offered by a college in conjunction with or under contract with a noncollegiate organization shall meet the same requirements the college applies to its own courses with respect to quality, course content, class attendance and participation, student evaluation, etc. The standards presented at N.J.A.C. 9A:1-6.3, dealing with off-campus sites at which credit courses are offered by a college in conjunction with or under contract with a noncollegiate organization, shall apply to such courses offered at the principal campus.
- (e) The rigor of all credit-bearing courses shall be substantially the same, regardless of the type of educational delivery mode ("distance learning," "blended (or hybrid) learning" or "traditional face-to-face learning"), as demonstrated by the institution through various forms of evidence. Such evidence shall include, but shall not be limited to, at least two of the following: syllabi, documented faculty interaction with students, learning outcomes, documented units of curricular material and other documentation which objectively demonstrates the amount of time and/or the level of rigor necessary to complete coursework. Institutions of higher education offering or proposing to offer a course solely through only one educational delivery mode may demonstrate the rigor of the course through comparisons with the above forms of evidence for similar courses offered by institutions accredited by the Middle States Association.

[Middle States Commission on Higher Education,](#)

Credit Hour Policy Effective August 23, 2012, Rev. October 30, 2012

Definition

The U.S. Department of Education defines "credit hour" as:

"...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 for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve 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 paragraph (1) 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 U.S. Department of Education establishes the credit hour as the basis for measuring an institution's eligibility for federal funding. The Carnegie unit, represented in point (1) above, has served as the traditional unit of measure, but the Department also recognizes that institutions are developing other measures of educational content and credit equivalency. The purpose of the credit hour policy is to ensure that credit hour measures are reasonably equivalent regardless of how institutions award credit hours to courses and programs in various modes of instruction and teaching and learning

FAS faculty-approved resolution on Winter Session, May 2005.

Please note: the language is being kept the same as in the resolution, but these policies now apply to SAS.

A. FAS will continue to permit the offering of courses of more than 2 credits in Winter Session.

B. The following requirements will apply to all FAS courses considered for offering in Winter Session.

B1. FAS continues to recommend the creation of 1.5- and 2-credit courses as most suitable for offering in the compressed time frame of Winter Session.

B2. Any courses offered by FAS during Winter Session will have different course numbers than any corresponding courses given during the regular term, since the Winter Session version is by its nature different from a regular-term course. It is recommended that the "Supplement Code" be explored as a means of this achieving distinctive designation.

B3. FAS requests University funding of research on the evaluation of learning outcomes for winter term courses relative to learning outcomes for comparable regular term courses.

C. The following requirements will apply to FAS courses of more than 2 credits considered or approved for offering in Winter Session.

C1. Instructors of such FAS-approved Winter Session courses will be required to have appropriate prior teaching experience. Departments will be required to provide evidence of that experience to the FAS Dean's Office each year before that Office approves the course for offering in the upcoming Winter term.

C2. When such regular term courses are presented for initial approval of the FAS Curriculum Committee for Winter Session offering (under a new number), both a regular term syllabus and a winter term syllabus will be presented, with the differences highlighted. The department would clarify how the quality of the course is maintained. Differences in instructional methods and assignments would normally be expected; e.g., fewer pages of reading over winter session, with corresponding increases in other work.

C3. Any such regular term courses approved by the FAS Curriculum Committee for Winter Session offering will be subject to review by the Committee every 3 years. Objective evaluations, e.g. of performance on common or comparable examinations or papers, would be included where possible. Common or comparable exams would be required.

Given the timing of Winter Session advertising, SAS will forward such course proposals to Winter Session to be listed as being offered pending faculty approval, if this approval has not been previously obtained. The basic academic concerns are the compressed time period and resulting need for care in the type and manner of instruction that must be given and it is those concerns which need to be resolved to the committee's satisfaction in order for a course to be approved or re-approved.

SAS faculty-approved resolution on Online/Hybrid Courses Proposals, May 7, 2013

Over the past several years, the SAS Curriculum Committee has been asked to consider a number of proposed new courses to be offered in online or hybrid format, as well as (in some cases) adaptations of existing courses to those formats. All new courses regardless of format come to the Committee and then the SAS Faculty for review, but there has been no requirement for the consideration of the adaptation of existing courses. There have been concerns (here and nationwide) about the quality of such courses, especially those which are fully online. Given our other experiences with new modes of delivery - for example, the extremely condensed time format of Winter session courses - the Committee has discussed over the course of the past several years what would best ensure the quality of such courses for our students. The Committee passed unanimously the recommendations below (at its meeting on April 2, 2013) and presented them for a vote of the faculty on May 7, 2013 where they were approved.

The following requirements will apply to SAS undergraduate courses offered for credit in a fully online or hybrid format. Fully online refers to those courses with a severely limited number of possible in-person meetings, including exams; hybrid refers to those courses with a significant portion of meetings online, roughly 1/3 to 1/2.

Completely new online or hybrid courses will come to the SAS Curriculum Committee and then to the full faculty for approval, as is the case for all new courses. The information required in the proposal of such courses, in addition to the usual requirements as for traditional-format courses, will include the items below.

Online or hybrid versions of existing SAS courses will come to the SAS Curriculum Committee for approval, but will not require a vote of the full faculty, similar to the procedure for Winter Session courses. The information required in the proposal of such courses will include syllabi for both the traditional version and the online or hybrid version, and the url of the web site for the for the online or hybrid version, if available, as well as the items below.

After at most 3 years of offering, a report on comparative assessment will be provided to the SAS Assessment Committee, including access to the web site for the course, a departmental evaluation of the success of the format, and information on any changes to course.

Online/hybrid issues to be addressed in course proposals.

- A. Description of pedagogical reasons for an online/hybrid version of the course and its appropriateness. Comparison with the traditional format of this or similar courses, and identification of which elements substitute for what, spelled out.
- B. Limits on class size, and expectations of demands on course instructors, clearly spelled out and justified.
- C. Qualifications of the student target audience and prerequisites clearly spelled out and justified.
- D. Qualifications of the instructor(s) for online instruction clearly spelled out.
- E. Numbers of hours and timing of required student online involvement clearly spelled out, as well as all other expectations of what students must do and when.
- F. Rubric for evaluation of student online participation spelled out.
- G. Measures for ensuring academic integrity, and specifically identity integrity, for the course. (For examples, testing issues need to be addressed in courses that involve exams.)