

LANCASTER BIBLE COLLEGE | CAPITAL SEMINARY & GRADUATE SCHOOL  
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS POLICY

TITLE: Course Delivery and Credit Hour Equivalency Policy  
[Updated 10/22/18]

STATEMENT: This policy has been established to define the delivery options for all courses at LBC and their credit hour equivalencies to fulfill both federal and PDE requirements.

LBC CREDIT HOUR DEFINITION:

The credit (or semester) hour is the basic unit of academic credit granted by Lancaster Bible College | Capital Seminary & Graduate School (LBC) for the satisfactory completion of a course. It reflects the Carnegie Unit which has served as the traditional unit of measure in higher education. One semester credit is equivalent to one hour (50 minutes) of faculty instruction time per week for 15 weeks (for a total of no less than 750 minutes or 12.5 hours per credit hour), and a minimum of two hours of student preparation time outside of the classroom each week per credit hour. An equivalent amount of work is required for lectures, laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours. Departments may determine contact time over the minimum requirements as needed.

The credit hour is determined through the actual scheduled contact hours for each course section based on the Carnegie Unit for measuring contact hours: 750 minutes of section meeting time (instructional minutes) for each credit hour. The College defines “contact hours” as the time in which the student is involved in instructional contact with the faculty member(s) teaching a particular section.

**United States Department of Education – Credit Hour 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 Department of Education’s definition is nearly identical to the Carnegie Unit credit hour developed by the Carnegie Foundation for the Enhancement of Teaching (see chart on pg.2).

**Middle States Accreditation**

Lancaster Bible College is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) issued a credit hour policy in August 2012 that requires MSCHE institutions to comply with the U.S. Department of Education’s definition of credit hour.

MSCHE also noted in the statement that institutions must provide this information to the Commission’s evaluators “at appropriate points of accreditation review so they can verify compliance with the credit hour regulations.”

Middle States Documents

1. [MSCHE Credit Hour Policy](#) (2012)
2. [Verification of Compliance with Accreditation-Relevant Federal Regulations](#) (2018)

**Pennsylvania Department of Education**

In accordance with [22 Pa. Code Chapter 31](#) (31.21-31.22), each assigned academic credit equates to 14 hours of classroom instruction, exclusive of Final Examinations and any holidays. A typical semester course meets for 14 weeks (3 credits equals 42 hours of instruction) with a final exam in week 15 (2 hours).

**Association for Biblical Higher Education - Credit Hour**

A unit of measure representing the traditional academic value of learning activities. A semester credit hour represents a minimum of 50 minutes of instruction per week over a 15-week period, supplemented by two hours of preparation for each hour of instruction for the average student; or the equivalent amount of time (37.5 hours) in instructor designated learning activities. A quarter credit hour represents a minimum of 50 minutes of instruction per week over a 10-week period, supplemented by two hours of preparation for each hour of instruction for the average student; or the equivalent amount of time (25 hours) in instructor designated learning activities. A quarter credit hour is equivalent to 2/3 of a semester credit hour. Time for final examinations is outside these specifications. The assignment of credit hours may be based on intended learning outcomes, verified through student achievement, that the institution determines are reasonably equivalent to a credit hour of student work.

[ABHE COA Manual](#), pg. 209

CREDIT HOUR CHART COMPARISON:

3-credit course	Lancaster Bible College	USDE/MSCHE (15 weeks)	PDE (14 weeks)	ABHE	Carnegie
Contact Hours	45 hours (of 50 minutes)	45 hours (of 50 minutes)	42 hours (14x3)	37.5 hours	2,250 minutes
Homework	90 hours	90 hours	84 hours	75 hours	4,500 minutes
<b>Total</b>	<b>127.5 hours</b>	<b>127.5 hours</b>	<b>126 hours</b>	<b>112.5 hours</b>	<b>112.5 hours</b>

COURSE DELIVERY DEFINITIONS:

**Standard On-campus Course**

Unless otherwise noted, traditional courses at LBC at all levels follow the federal standards for a credit hour by requiring the equivalent of one hour per week of in-class faculty-led instruction along with two

hours of learning activities outside of class. Included in the definition of a standard on-campus course would be any course that fulfills the federal standard but within a different time frame than the traditional 15-week semester (summer school, winterim, some graduate seminars, etc.).

### **Supplemented On-campus Course**

A supplemented on-campus course is a course where all required contact hours are fulfilled similar to a standard on-campus course but using additional online components. This course uses a course website within an LBC-approved learning management system to supplement the in-class delivery.

### **Modified On-Campus Course**

A modified on-campus course includes some faculty-led instruction but substitutes additional instructional activities in lieu of in-class instruction. Included in this definition would be independent studies, practicums, internships, TravelLearn, accelerated courses, and courses that include a significant amount of supervised laboratory work or studio time. (This definition does **not** include blended courses that utilize an online component for their classes. See definition below.) Most modified on-campus courses have identical student learning outcomes to those in the equivalent standard on-campus courses which are based upon the Carnegie Unit. The meeting of these outcomes in these modified on-campus courses validates the awarding of comparable credit hours. In addition, the Course Development Worksheet will clearly identify the number of hours spent in instructional activities outside the class to ensure the course meets both the federal standards and PDE's Curricular Credit Policy for each credit hour awarded.

### **Blended Course**

A blended course is a course where a portion of the required contact hours are fulfilled through a combination of faculty-led instruction and online delivery using an LBC-provided learning management system. For undergraduate blended courses, a maximum of one-third of the required contact hours are fulfilled through online delivery. Blended courses have identical student learning outcomes to those in the equivalent standard on-campus courses which are based upon the Carnegie Unit. The meeting of these outcomes in blended courses validates the awarding of comparable credit hours. In addition, the Course Development Worksheet will clearly identify the number of hours spent in instructional activities outside the class to ensure the course meets both the federal standards and PDE's Curricular Credit Policy for each credit hour awarded.

### **Online Course**

An online course is a fully online course where all of the required contact hours are fulfilled through online delivery using an LBC-provided course website. The course syllabus and schedule for an online course will clearly show that academic engagement by the student is taking place on a weekly basis. This engagement may come in the form of viewing/listening to a recorded presentation, completing an assignment, contributing to an online discussion, taking an exam, participating in an interactive lesson, attending a study group, or initiating contact with a faculty member. Online courses have similar if not identical student learning outcomes to those in the equivalent standard on-campus courses which are based upon the Carnegie Unit. The meeting of these outcomes in online courses validates the awarding of comparable credit hours. In addition, the Course Development Blueprint will clearly identify the number of hours spent in instructional activities to ensure the course meets both the federal standards and PDE's Curricular Credit Policy for each credit hour awarded.

## **Credit for Prior Learning**

When assessing prior learning for credit, LBC follows the guidelines of the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL). CAEL guidelines include the standard that “the determination of competence levels and of credit awards must be made by appropriate subject matter and academic experts.” Faculty members and other individuals responsible for assessing prior learning are guided through the process of determining what constitutes college-level learning and the awarding of appropriate credit hours. (See also the Accelerated Undergraduate Degrees Assessing Prior Learning Policies and Procedures Handbook and Assessing Prior Learning Student & Faculty Handbook.)

### PROCEDURES:

The following procedures apply for courses with online components.

#### **1. On-campus Course**

There are no additional procedures for offering courses in this delivery mode beyond what is established by the New Course Approval Policy.

#### **2. Supplemented On-campus Course**

All on-campus courses are provided with a course website in the LBC-approved learning management system by the Office of Digital Learning. This website is managed by the individual instructor and faculty assistant.

#### **3. Blended Course**

A blended course must be approved by the department offering the course and included on the course planning sheets. Blended courses must also be reviewed by the Office of Digital Learning to verify contact hours delivered online have a defined unit of material comparable to classroom activities as required by the 2012 Pennsylvania Department of Education Curricular Credit Policy: Ensuring Quality and Transferability (see below). A Course Development Worksheet must be submitted. For undergraduate courses, contact hours delivered online will be limited to one-third of the total contact hours for the course. Instructors desiring to offer a blended course will work with the Office of Digital Learning to develop the online delivery portion of the course. Blended course instructors must be certified by the Office of Digital Learning to have sufficient training in the use of the learning management system, development of online course materials, and teaching in an online delivery mode.

#### **4. Online Course**

An online course must be approved by the department offering the course and included on the course planning sheets. Courses must also be approved by the Academic Council and the Office of Digital Learning. Online courses must have defined units of material comparable to classroom activities as required by the 2012 Pennsylvania Department of Education Curricular Credit Policy: Ensuring Quality and Transferability (see below). A Course Development Blueprint must be created in collaboration with an instructional designer in the Office of Digital Learning. Instructors desiring to offer an online course will work with the Office of Digital Learning to develop the course. Online course instructors must be certified by the Office of Digital Learning to have sufficient training in the use of the learning management system, design of online course materials, and teaching in an online delivery mode.

PDE CURRICULAR CREDIT POLICY:

All attempts will be made by faculty members and instructional designers to ensure that activities within an online course are equivalent to classroom instruction. The five general areas of classroom activity are compared with the learning activities typically found in an online course in the following chart.

Classroom Activities	Online Course Activities
Audio and Video dissemination of information	Recorded audio/video lectures, visual presentations with audio, interactive learning objects, course notes, web searches
Question and Answer, Information clarification	Forums, chats, journals, email
Peer to peer interaction/discussions	Forums, chats, email, group projects
Practice	Interactive learning objects and exercises
Assessment	Quizzes/tests, research papers, projects

LBC's online courses have the same objectives as their traditional counterparts and are communicated in each unit of study. The activities are directly related to the objectives of the course. The forums, quizzes, journals, and exercises are all measurable for grading purposes. Our courses are facilitated by the faculty member with a consistent and high level of participation. In some of our online courses, the Office of Digital Learning has observed activities within a classroom and recreated a comparable activity.

**Guidance for Developing Equivalent Instructional Activities (established 2007, revised 2012)**

In its 2007 and 2012 Guidance for Developing Equivalent Instructional Activities, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) recognized that alternative formats for instruction are possible and likely, and determined that equivalent instructional modes may substitute for what was traditionally face-to-face instruction. PDE guidance includes the following:

Credit hour equivalencies must be stated for the amount of time that classes do not meet over the course of the term. Syllabi must include instruction mode equivalencies that are mapped to instructional objectives and learning outcomes. Homework is not equivalent to instructional time.

Instructional mode equivalencies include but are not limited to the following activities:

- Field work
- Telecommunication instruction (including the use or reliance upon learning management system software): lectures, web-links, discussion boards, chat room, blogs, on-line quizzes/exams, video conference, email correspondence, conference calls, etc.
- Collaborative group assignments – synchronous and asynchronous
- Demonstrations/Observations – virtual or otherwise

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