

CONTACT HOUR RATIOS

Note: The CDHE (Colorado Department of Higher Education, formerly Colorado Commission on Higher Education) definition for a base contact hour is 750 minutes of section meeting time. CDHE has minimum guidelines expressing the minimum number of weekly contact hours expected to receive 1 credit. This varies depending upon the instruction type (e.g., lecture, lab). For example, a 3 credit hour lecture course would need to meet the equivalent of three 50-minute blocks each week (for a total of 2,250 minutes per semester.) Although CDHE historically provided more detailed information on contact hours, their website now links to an Approved Policy revised May 3, 2001 that provides the following definition for a Contact Hour: “A contact hour is a programmed class period of not less than 50 minutes nor more than 60 minutes. Generally, in lecture situations one contact hour equals one student credit and in laboratory situations 2-3 contact hours equal one student credit.” Minimum contact ratio guidelines listed below are based off of previous CCHE documents and Colorado State University’s Institutional Research information.

Course Type	Description	Code	Notes	Minimum Guidelines for Weekly Contact Hours Expected to Receive 1 Credit
	<i>Note: More course Types on next page</i>			
Clinical	Participation in client and client-related services that are an integral part of an academic program. Clinical instruction occurs in or outside an institutional setting and involves work with clients who receive professional services from students serving under direct supervision of a faculty member and/or approved member of the agency staff.	CLI	Course maximum enrollments may vary according to accreditation standards, pedagogical limitations, level of offering, availability of clinical sites, etc.	2.0 Hours = 1 credit (2:1) Contact Ratio
Directed Study	Faculty and student negotiate an individualized plan of study.	DST	A Directed Study is not to replace an existing course. If a course is offered on an individualized basis the faculty and student complete a Non-Scheduled course form.	0.75 Hour = 1 credit (.75:1) Contact Ratio
Dissertation	Credit enrolled for formal period of work on doctoral dissertation.	DIS	Course number designation is 799.	0.75 Hour = 1 credit (.75:1) Contact Ratio
Field Instruction	Instructional activities conducted by the faculty and designed to supplement and/or extend an individual course or classroom experience.	FLD		2.5 Hours = 1 credit (2.5:1) Contact Ratio
Internship	Applied and supervised field-based learning experience where students gain practical experience following a negotiated and/or directed plan of study.	INT	Student may or may not be paid for Internship.	3.0 Hours = 1 credit (3:1) Contact Ratio

Clarifications

- The contact hour ratio is the number of instructor contact hours required per credit hour.
 - A standard 3-credit lecture course has a 1:1 ratio so the instructor is expected to meet with students 3 hours/week (this could be 3 times/week for 1 hour, 2 times/week for 1.5 hours, or once a week for 3 hours)
 - A 3-credit clinical course has a 2:1 ratio, so the instructor is expected to directly supervise students for 6 hours/week.
- A “clock hour” of class time is defined as 50 minutes. So three contact hours is *really* 150 minutes (2.5 hours actual time). This allows for passing periods and allows for class periods of 50 minutes if 3 times/week, 75 minutes if twice per week or 2.5 hours if once per week.
- Don’t confuse contact hours with actual student/faculty work hours! The credit hour system is built on the assumption that students spend 3 hours of total work on a class for each credit hour the course is worth. The total work hours do not change regardless of the instructor contact hour ratio:
 - For a standard, 3-credit course with a 1:1 contact hour ratio the total student work hours should be 9 (3 hours of “in class” time and 6 hours of “out of class/self-directed study and assignment preparation” time)
 - For a three credit internship with a 3:1 contact hour ration, the student should be spending 9 hours per work actively engaged in the internship activities (the in-class/out-of-class distinction is irrelevant).

For faculty, the work hours are assumed to track student hours for standard lecture courses. Chairs should feel free to adjust workloads accordingly to accommodate actual work times.

- For a standard, 3-credit course with a 1:1 contact hour ratio the total faculty work hours is assumed to be roughly 9 (3 hours of “in class” time and 6 hours of “out of class” preparation/office hours/grading time). *However, student loads and assignment types affect time required for grading/office hours; number of courses (vs. sections of the same course) affect preparation time, etc.*
- For an internship where the student spends all their contact time with an off-site supervisor, instructor

Lab	Instructional activities conducted by the faculty which require student participation, experimentation, observation, or practice.	LAB	Course maximum enrollments may vary according to accreditation standards, pedagogical limitations, level of offering, availability of laboratory stations, equipment, etc.	2.0 Hours = 1 credit (2:1) Contact Ratio
Lecture	Faculty member responsible for delivery and discussion of learning material and related instructional activities.	LEC	Course maximum enrollments may vary by level, discipline, classroom availability, course delivery format (online), etc.	1.0 Hour = 1 credit (1:1) Contact Ratio
Physical Educ./ Recreation	Participation in or the performance of some form of physical activity. Knowledge associated with the proper performance of the activity is presented.	PER	Course maximum enrollments may vary by level of instruction, type of activity, safety considerations, availability of facilities, etc.	2.0 Hours = 1 credit (2:1) Contact Ratio
Practicum	Practical student work under the supervision of a faculty member or under supervision of a professional in the student's field and regular consultation with faculty member.	PRA		2.0 Hours = 1 credit (2:1) Contact Ratio
Private Music Instruction	Formal presentation in a one-to-one relationship between student and instructor.	PMI		0.50 Hour = 1 credit (.50:1) Contact Ratio
Recitation/ Discussion	A course, or a section of a larger course, designed for group discussion or student recitation/discussion.	REC		1.0 = 1 credit (1:1) Contact Ratio
Research	Credit formally enrolled for during period of research instruction in pursuit of a graduate degree (e.g., doctoral proposal research).	RES		0.75 = 1 credit (.75:1) Contact Ratio
Seminar	A highly focused course that may include student presentations and discussions of reports based on literature, practice, problems, or research (e.g., a capstone course)	SEM	Typically at the upper division or graduate level.	1.0 = 1 credit (1:1) Contact Ratio
Student Classroom Observation	Teacher candidates observe, participate in, analyze, and reflect on issues in education.	SCO		2.0 Hours = 1 credit (2:1) Contact Ratio
Student Teaching	Faculty supervised learning experience in which student applies knowledge gained in the teacher education program to a classroom setting.	SST		2.5 = 1 credit (2.5:1) Contact Ratio
Studio	Lab-type activities conducted by faculty (e.g., music ensembles, art studio, etc.)	STO		2.0 = 1 credit (2:1) Contact Ratio
Thesis	Credit enrolled for formal period of work on thesis.	THS		0.75 = 1 credit (.75:1) Contact Ratio

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