

What is a “contact” hour?

Each credit hour corresponds to a minimum of 3 hours of student engagement per week (about 1 hour for instructor led/engaged activity and 2 hours for out of class activities). A 3-credit course would equate to 45-48 contact hours. A 4-credit course would be 60-62 contact hours.

According to the Texas administrative Code traditionally delivered a 3-semester credit hour course should contain 15 weeks of instruction (**45 contact hours**) plus a week for final examinations, so such a course would have 45-48 contact hours depending on whether there is a final.

How are contact hours calculated?

They should be calculated on a per week bases. One contact hour per week of instructor led/engaged activity for 15 weeks is equal to one credit hour, so for a 3-credit course that would equal to 45 contact hours (**3 credit hours x 15 weeks**).

How many contact hours are there in a semester shorter than 15 weeks?

According to the Texas Administrative Code, if courses are delivered in a shortened semester, they are expected to have the same number of contact hours and same requirement for out-of-class learning just as courses taught in a normal semester.

So, for an **8-week** 3-credit course the number of contact hours per week would be increased to about 5.7 hours to meet the 45-contact hour requirement. For an 8 week 4-credit course the number is 7.5 hours to meet the 60-contact hour requirement.

How many total hours should a student spend on a course (instructor led activity & out of class)?

For every 1 credit, a student should have 3 hours of work each week in a full semester (on hour of instructor led/engaged activity and 2 hours out of class activities). A student in a 15 week 3-credit course would expect to spend 9 hours a week on the course (3 hours of instructor led/engaged activity and 6 hours out of class activities per week).

If the semester is shorter the same amount of time devoted to the course would be condensed. So, for an 8 week 3-credit course the student should expect to spend 18 hours a week (6 hours of instructor led/engaged activity and 12 hours out of class activities per week) on the course.

	15 weeks	8 weeks
3 Credits	9 hours per week	18 hours per week
2 Credits	6 hours per week	12 hours per week
1 Credit	3 hours per week	6 hours per week

How many contact hours should be applied to different activities?

There are a several universities that have created an activity list with corresponding instructional hours, the most condensed one is an adaptation from the University of Nevada, Reno which is listed below.

Instructional led/engaged activities are listed with descriptions and a corresponding rate of equivalency.		
Instructional activity	Description of instructional activity	Rate of equivalency
Active learning strategies	Facilitators lead students in evaluating course concepts in light of experience, enhancing the depth and breadth of content by intensely-focused group activities in class.	1 active learning strategy = 1 hour instruction
Blogs, journals, logs	Instructor guides students in applying learned concepts or reflecting on learning experiences; learned concepts to be shared with instructor and/or classmates for thoughtful analysis, feedback, and assessment.	1 private post = ½ hour instruction 1 shared post (incl. reading all classmates' posts) = 1 hour instruction
Case studies and problem-solving scenarios	Instructor leads students in performing in-depth analysis utilizing higher-order analytical skills, which relate to course objectives. Analysis is shared with instructor and/or classmates for feedback and assessment.	1 case study analysis and post = 1-2 hours
Zoom sessions	Instructor directs students in collaborative, synchronous discussion with specific expectations for participation.	1 hour session = 1 hour instruction
Conferences (group)	Under instructor's guidance, students participate in collaborative, synchronous learning with specific	1 hour conference = 1 hour instruction

	expectations for participation and feedback.	
Conferences (in-depth individual)	Instructor engages students in collaborative, one-to-one synchronous learning experience; student will need meet specific participation and feedback expectations.	20 minute conference = 1 hour instruction
Discussion board	Instructor guides/mediates threaded discussion, engaging learners with content that directly relates to course objectives and that has specified timeframes, expectations for participation, and thoughtful analysis.	1 post/reply = 1 hour instruction 2 posts/2 replies =2 hours instruction
Guided project	Instructors lead students in a summative project; student(s) and instructor collaborate via email, chat, discussion board, and/or in person to research, analyze, synthesize, and prepare project. Instructor receives periodic updates and provides guidance and feedback.	1 hour of instruction per week for duration of project
Instruction and presentations	Instructors provide students with instruction, including presentations in a virtual classroom setting.	1 hour = 1 hour instruction
Instructional PowerPoint presentations, videos	Instructor-mediated content is made available in an alternative delivery format for students to view/interact with in order to expand upon and clarify course concepts and objectives.	Student reviews and posts response to 1 unit of content = 1 hour instruction
Library research	Instructor guides students through in-depth research of scholarly articles or professional journals that relate to course objectives; results of research are to be shared with class in a designated manner.	1 three-five (3-5) page paper = 1-2 hours instruction
Modeling	Under instructor guidance, students compute, analyze, and/or interpret data and/or generate appropriate visual aids (using tools like Excel, SPSS, etc.).	1 hour = 1 hour instruction
Online quizzes	Instructor-created quiz through in which students demonstrate subject knowledge to provide faculty with feedback on students' progress.	1 hour test = 1 hour of instruction

Peer Review/assessment	Employing instructor-designated criteria, students evaluate each other's work.	Student review of peer assessment and follow up response post/email to student/teacher = 0.5-2 hours based on scope
Portfolio Preparation	Instructors guide learners through compilation, evaluation, and production of learning portfolios prepared according to course /program rubrics and aligned with specific learning outcomes.	Portfolio conferencing with final presentation of completed portfolio = 1 instructional hour, or equivalent to length of the exercise.
Reflection paper or article review	Instructor-guided activity whereby students apply learned concepts to personal experiences or apply higher order analytic skills in assessing scholarly articles or professional journals.	1 private post = ½ hour instruction 2 shared posts (required to read all classmates' posts) = 1.5-2 hours instruction
Service-learning project	Instructor leads students in completion of service project with specific learning objectives that integrates community service with academic study; faculty provides guidance, support, and feedback to students; student shares experience and reflection with classmates via emails, chats, discussion boards, and/or face-to-face.	1 hour of instruction per week for duration of project
Virtual Laboratory and Lab Reports	Instructor provides students with computer- simulation or online laboratories in blended lab-based courses or in order to replace missed laboratories. Instructors require students to submit, share, or post lab reports produced and assess work according to course rubric.	1 hour of virtual laboratory = 1 instructional hour, or equivalent to length of the exercise

For an additional resource in understanding the concept of contact hours can be found on the **USC Annenberg Faculty and Staff Resource Page**: [Calculating contact hours in online and hybrid classes](#).