



## **Policy and Procedure for Credit Hour Assignment and Review**

### ***Introduction***

With regards to determination and assignment of credit hours, the SANS Technology Institute is subject to both Federal regulations and the policies of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (the “MSCHE”), a federally-recognized accrediting agency. The SANS Technology Institute monitors compliance with the federal rules and the policies of the MSCHE concerning the amount of work required for a unit of credit, and requires that an amount of work for each unit of credit be institutionally established, in accordance with accepted practice of higher-education institutions, representative of intended learning outcomes, and verified by evidence of student achievement.

### ***The Credit Hour Policy of the SANS Technology Institute, including related terms and definitions***

The SANS Technology Institute, reflecting the “Credit Hour Policy” of the MSCHE, effective August 23, 2012 and as revised October 30, 2012, determines and assigns credit hours in compliance with the following federal definition of a “credit hour,” as promulgated by the U.S. Department of Education and as associated with the standard “Carnegie Unit”:

“...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 each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit; 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.”

We also incorporate herein the letter issued by the United States Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, dated March 8, 2011, with the subject “Guidance to Institutions and Accrediting Agencies Regarding a Credit Hour as Defined in the Final Regulations Published on October 29, 2010,” (the “Information and Guidance Letter”<sup>1</sup>), in which the Office of Postsecondary Education provided “information concerning the definition of a credit hour and guidance on implementing these final regulations.”

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://ifap.ed.gov/dpcletters/attachments/GEN1106.pdf>

In addition, for purposes of discussion of our policy, the SANS Technology Institute also employs the term “Contact Hour” as defined in the MSCHE’s “Degrees and Credits” Guidelines, June 26, 2009: a “Contact Hour” is “A unit of measure that represents an hour of scheduled instruction given to students. Source: IPEDS.”

### ***Implementation of the Credit Hour Policy***

The SANS Technology Institute, through its Curriculum, Academic, Faculty, and Student Affairs Committee, determines and assigns a credit hour consistent with these above definitions, guidelines, and clarifications, evaluating all of its courses to establish equivalency with an amount of work “represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement” that reasonably approximates not less than the amount of work an average student in our program must complete to meet the federal definitions. Relative to the federal definition, it is important to note that many of the contact hours associated with our courses are typically delivered not over fifteen weeks, but during an intense, immersive five or six day period, and that many of our contact hours may be delivered through distance-enabling technologies. In these regards, the Information and Guidance Letter offers relevant commentary, including “In determining the amount of work the institution’s learning outcomes will entail, as under current practice, the institution may take into consideration alternative delivery methods, measurements of student work, academic calendars, disciplines, and degree levels.”

In particular, for courses which primarily involve faculty lectures, an exam or other assessment, and/or a paper or simulation requirement, the assigned credit hours reflect the amount of work expected of an average student which reasonably approximates 15 contact hours and a minimum of 30 additional hours of out-of-classroom work. The term ‘contact hour’ applies to student time engaged by and associated with direct faculty instruction, whether in lectures or directed laboratory or simulation activities, whether delivered in-person in a classroom or through distance-enabled technologies, or a combination thereof. “Out-of-classroom work” includes any assigned preparative and post instruction readings and study, paper or presentation writing, exam preparation and test-taking time, engagement in simulation exercises or other practice-oriented activities, or any other work expected by the course requirements and included in the course syllabi. Especially for course components employing faculty-student interaction structures different than lecture-based faculty instruction, such as research paper or presentation counseling and preparation, computer-enabled simulations, practica, or any other academic work leading to the award of credit hours, including independent studies, course syllabi at a minimum clearly state learning objectives and expected outcomes and workload expectations that meet the standards set forth above. This credit hour assignment policy covers all types of courses, disciplines, programs, formats, and modalities of instruction.

### ***Periodic or Ad Hoc Reviews of Credit Hour Assignments***

The SANS Technology Institute periodically reviews the consistency and adequacy of its assignment of credit hours to its programs of study through a combination of recurring academic program reviews, new course and program approvals, and the periodic reviews associated with accreditation. If during

any of these reviews it is determined that credit hour assignments, intended learning outcomes, or student achievement deviate from alignment with our credit hour assignment policy, the Provost or Dean of Academic Affairs will identify the appropriate Program Director, program and/or teaching faculty member and assign to her/him/them the task of investigating and correcting the deviation. Correction can be in the form of a credit hour assignment adjustment, outcome/achievement adjustment, or a combination of both, with final changes presented to and approved by the Curriculum, Academic, Faculty, and Student Affairs Committee.