

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Hours and Units Calculations

I. Standard Formula for Credit Hour Calculations

Standards for credit hour calculations are contained in title 5 §§55002.5, 55002(a)(2)(B), and 55002(b)(2)(B). Courses not classified as cooperative work experience, clock hour, or open entry/ open exit use the following method for calculating units of credit.

Divide the total of all student learning hours (lecture, lab, activity, clinical, TBA, other + outside-of-class hours) by the hours-per-unit divisor, round down to the nearest increment of credit awarded by the college. Expressed as an equation:

[Total Contact Hours + Outside-of-class Hours]		Units of
Hours-per-unit Divisor	=	Credit

The result of this calculation is then rounded down to the nearest .5 increment or to the nearest fractional unit award used by the district, if smaller than .5. This formula applies to both semester and quarter credit calculations. While this formula can yield a value below the lowest increment of credit awarded by the college, zero-unit courses are not permissible. The following definitions are used in the application of this formula:

- Total Contact Hours: The total time per term that a student is under the direct supervision of an instructor or other qualified employee as defined in §§58050 58051. This number is the sum of all contact hours for the course in all calculations categories, including lecture, recitation, discussion, seminar, laboratory, clinical, studio, practica, activity, to-be-arranged, etc. Contact hours for courses may include hours assigned to more than one instructional category, e.g. lecture and laboratory, lecture and clinical.
- **Outside-of-class Hours**: Hours students are expected to engage in course work outside of the classroom. Federal and state regulations for credit hour calculations are based on the total time a student spends on learning, including outside-of-class hours. As a matter of standard practice in higher education, lecture and related course formats require two hours of student work outside of class for every hour in-class. All other academic work, including laboratory, activity, studio, clinical, practica, TBA, etc. must provide an equivalent total number of student learning hours as typically required for lecture, with the ratio of in-class to outside-of-class work prorated appropriately for the instructional category.

Typically, these ratios are expressed as follows:

Instructional Category	In-class Hours	Outside-of-class Hours
Lecture (Lecture, Discussion, Seminar and Related Work)	1	2
Activity (Activity, Lab w/ Homework, Studio, and Similar)	2	1
Laboratory (Traditional Lab, Natural Science Lab, Clinical, and Similar)	3	0

Other categories or ratios for inside- to outside-of-class hours are possible, but should fall within the parameters for one unit of credit as described above. Standard expectations in higher education for credit hour calculations generally align with the in-class to outside-of-class ratios as described in this table. Deviations from these widely accepted standards, while permitted, can negatively affect course transferability and articulation and should be used with caution. Since TBA hours are required to be listed separately on the COR, any outside-of-class hours expected of students in relationship to TBA contact hours must be included in the total student learning hours for the calculation.

Hours-per-unit Divisor: The value, or value range, used by the college to define the number of hours required to award each unit of credit. This value must be minimum of 48 and maximum of 54 hours for colleges on the semester system and a minimum of 33 and maximum of 36 for colleges on the quarter system. This number represents the total student learning hours for which the college awards one unit of credit. Colleges may use any divisor within this range, but should maintain consistency between the divisor and the dividend. For example, if a college uses the 51 = 1 unit calculation to determine the hours of lecture and outside of class work in the dividend, they should use 51 as the divisor. Colleges that indicate the minimum and maximum range of 48 – 54 should show that same range for the dividend in the equation and resulting unit calculation.

Colleges must exercise caution in determining the hours-per-unit divisor for credit hour calculations. Because California finance laws assume that primary terms average 17-weeks on the semester system and 11³/₄ weeks on the quarter system (the two semesters or three quarters equal the traditional 35week academic year), and because student attendance and related apportionment state compliance auditing is based on the student contact hours delineated in the official COR, the Chancellor's Office strongly recommends that colleges use the 18-week semester or 12-week quarter as the basis for the student contact hour calculation used in the COR, even if a college has been approved to use a compressed academic calendar. The 18-week semester or 12-week quarter primary term provides the greatest flexibility in terms of contact hours, and colleges do not risk an audit finding for excessive apportionment claims such as they might experience using a 16-week semester basis for the contacthour calculation. Additionally, it is also important to note the flexible calendar program is designed around the 35-week traditional academic calendar, so basing contact hour targets around an 18-week semester assures that instructional hours lost to "flex" activities will not result in the district not providing the minimum number of hours required by Title 5, section 55002.5, to award a unit of credit. Colleges using the 48-hour minimum calculation for determining credit hours risk problems with apportionment calculations and audits. Colleges must be specifically authorized by the Chancellor's Office to use a compressed calendar, which adds further caution to the use of the minimum end of the hour to unit range.

Likewise, the activity or laboratory with homework calculation should be used with caution. In the natural sciences and other disciplines, it is standard practice to base the number of units awarded for laboratory solely on contact hours, even though there may be some expectation of student work or preparation outside of class. Any alteration of this relationship for laboratory courses in the natural sciences and clinical hours in many allied health fields, can jeopardize programmatic accreditation where specific ratios or hours are required for program components or course acceptability in meeting major or general education requirements when transferred to a baccalaureate degree-granting institution. Use of this category should be restricted to only those instructional areas where it is clearly aligned with accepted practices higher education. The term "activity" as used in this context is not intended to limit or define the use of this term locally. Some colleges use this term—and related credit calculations—interchangeably with laboratory.

The Course Outlines of Record for many districts do not specify the outside-of-class hours, relying instead on the assumption of traditional ratios for inside- to outside-of-class hours for lecture, laboratory, or other course formats. In instances where districts only record total contact hours for the course as a whole or in each instructional category on the Course Outline of Record, the course submission must include the expected hours of student work outside of class used to determine total student learning hours for the purposes of credit calculations as described above. The tables on the following pages provide guidance for the expected outside-of-class hours for a wide range of typical credit hour calculations.

II. Fractional Unit Awards and Minimum Thresholds

Title 5 requires colleges to award units of credit in .5 unit increments at a minimum. Calculations for each increment of credit awarded by the college represent the minimum threshold for awarding that increment of credit. Students are awarded the next increment of credit only when they pass the next minimum threshold.

For example, if a course is designed to require 180 total student learning hours (36 lecture, 72 lab, and 72 outside-of-class hours), the calculation of units works as follows:

180 / 54 = 3.33 3 units of credit In this example, the college would not award 3.5 units until the total student learning hours reached the 189-hour minimum threshold for 3.5 units. However, if a college offers credit in .25 increments, this example would yield a 3.25 unit course. Another common example is a course offered for 40 contact hours, with no hours of homework, resulting in 40 total student learning hours. In a district that awards credit in .5 increments, 40 total student learning hours / 54 = .75, which meets the minimum threshold for .5 units of credit, but does not pass the minimum threshold for 1 unit of credit. In this example, 40 total student learning hours (36 contact and 4 outside-of-class) would award .5 units of credit. This is similar to grading systems where, for example, a student earns a "B" for any percentage between 80 and 89. The student is only awarded an "A" when they reach the minimum threshold of 90 percent.

III. Cooperative Work Experience

Units for Cooperative Work Experience courses are calculated as follows:

- Each 75 hours of paid work equals one semester credit or 50 hours equals one quarter credit.
- Each 60 hours of non-paid work equals one semester credit or 40 hours equals one quarter credit.

IV. Clock Hour Courses / Programs

The definition of a clock hour program and standards for awarding of units of credit for these programs is defined in federal regulations 34 CFR §668.8(k)(2)(i)(A) and 668.8(l), respectively. In this regulation, a program is considered to be a clock-hour program if a program is required to measure student progress in clock hours when:

- Receiving Federal or State approval or licensure to offer the program; or
- Completing clock hours is a requirement for graduates to apply for licensure or the authorization to practice the occupation that the student is intending to pursue.

Programs that meet this definition are required to use a federal formula for determining the appropriate awarding of credit that is outlined in 34CFR §668.8(I).

V. Local Policy

Colleges are encouraged to develop local policy, regulations, or procedures specifying the accepted relationship between contact hours, outside-of-class hours, and credit for calculating credit hours to ensure consistency in awarding units of credit. The creation of a standing policy or formal calculation document helps districts fulfill the responsibility of local governing boards under Title 5 §55002 to establish the relationship between units and hours for the local curriculum development and approval process.

VI. Sample Calculations Tables

The tables on the following pages provide examples of common configurations for credit hour calculations, divided into two sections.

The first section provides tables for three most common ratios of in-class to outside-of-class work as described above for semester calculations. The table on the left provides calculations for the minimum 48 hours = 1 unit of credit. The table on the right provides calculations for the maximum baseline of 54 hours = 1 unit of credit. For colleges that use 51, 52.5 or other intermediate divisors, the same general principle and ratios apply and all calculations should fall between these two number sets. For example, a college using 51 as the divisor would show 3 units of lecture credit as 51 hours of in-class work, 102 hours outside of class for a total of 153 total student learning hours. While these tables are not prescriptive, they are accurate guides for the development of local processes or policy and provide good examples of compliant calculations that are aligned to widely accepted standards for higher education. The second section provides examples of calculation tables in the same format for quarter calculations.

Section 1: Sample Calculation Tables – Semester Calculations

Lecture	48 = 1	unit			54 = 1 (unit	
Units	Contact Hours	Homework Hours	Total Student		Contact Hours	Homework Hours	
0.50	8	16	24		9	18	
1.00	16	32	48		18	36	
1.50	24	48	72		27	54	
2.00	32	64	96		36	72	
2.50	40	80	120		45	90	
3.00	48	96	144		54	108	
3.50	56	112	168		63	126	
4.00	64	128	192	1	72	144	
4.50	72	144	216	1	81	162	1
5.00	80	160	240		90	180	
5.50	88	176	264		99	198	
6.00	96	192	288		108	216	
6.50	104	208	312		117	234	
7.00	112	224	336		126	252	
7.50	120	240	360		135	270	
3.00	128	256	384		144	288	
.50	136	272	408		153	306	
9.00	144	288	432		162	324	
9.50	152	304	456		171	342	
10.00	160	320	480		180	360	
10.50	168	336	504		189	378	
11.00	176	352	528		198	396	
11.50	184	368	552		207	414	
12.00	192	384	576		216	432	
12.50	200	400	600		225	450	
13.00	208	416	624		234	468	
13.50	216	432	648		243	486	
14.00	224	448	672		252	504	
14.50	232	464	696		261	522	
15.00	240	480	720		270	540	
15.50	248	496	744		279	558	
16.00	256	512	768		288	576	
16.50	264	528	792		297	594	
17.00	272	544	816		306	612	
17.50	280	560	840		315	630	
18.00	288	576	864		324	648	

Total Student

Activity, Lab w/Hmwrk	48 = 1 (unit		54 = 1 u	ınit
Units	Contact Hours	Homework Hours	Fotal Student	Contact Hours	Homework Hours
0.50	16	8	24	18	9
1.00	32	16	48	36	18
1.50	48	24	72	54	27
2.00	64	32	96	72	36
2.50	80	40	120	90	45
3.00	96	48	144	108	54
3.50	112	56	168	126	63
4.00	128	64	192	144	72
4.50	144	72	216	162	81
5.00	160	80	240	180	90
5.50	176	88	264	198	99
6.00	192	96	288	216	10
6.50	208	104	312	234	11
7.00	224	112	336	252	12
7.50	240	120	360	270	13.
8.00	256	128	384	288	14
8.50	272	136	408	306	15
9.00	288	144	432	324	16
9.50	304	152	456	342	17
10.00	320	160	480	360	18
10.50	336	168	504	378	18
11.00	352	176	528	396	19
11.50	368	184	552	414	20
12.00	384	192	576	432	21
12.50	400	200	600	450	22.
13.00	416	208	624	468	23
13.50	432	216	648	486	24
14.00	448	224	672	504	25.
14.50	464	232	696	522	26
15.00	480	240	720	540	27
15.50	496	248	744	558	27.
16.00	512	256	768	576	28
16.50	528	264	792	594	29
17.00	544	272	816	612	30
17.50	560	280	840	630	31.
18.00	576	288	864	648	32

Total Student

Lab, Clinical, Activity, etc.	48 = 1 0	unit			54 = 1 u	ınit
Units	Contact Hours	Homework Hours	Fotal Student Learning Hours		Contact Hours	Homework Hours
0.50	24	0	24		27	0
1.00	48	0	48		54	0
1.50	72	0	72		81	0
2.00	96	0	96		108	0
2.50	120	0	120		135	0
3.00	144	0	144		162	0
3.50	168	0	168	1	189	0
4.00	192	0	192		216	0
4.50	216	0	216		243	0
5.00	240	0	240		270	0
5.50	264	0	264		297	0
6.00	288	0	288		324	0
6.50	312	0	312		351	0
7.00	336	0	336		378	0
7.50	360	0	360		405	0
8.00	384	0	384		432	0
8.50	408	0	408		459	0
9.00	432	0	432		486	0
9.50	456	0	456		513	0
10.00	480	0	480		540	0
10.50	504	0	504		567	0
11.00	528	0	528		594	0
11.50	552	0	552		621	0
12.00	576	0	576		648	0
12.50	600	0	600		675	0
13.00	624	0	624		702	0
13.50	648	0	648		729	0
14.00	672	0	672		756	0
14.50	696	0	696		783	0
15.00	720	0	720		810	0
15.50	744	0	744		837	0
16.00	768	0	768		864	0
16.50	792	0	792		891	0
17.00	816	0	816		918	0
17.50	840	0	840		945	0
18.00	864	0	864		972	0

Total Student Learning Hours

Section 2: Sample Calculation Tables - Quarter Calculations

Lecture	33 = 1 ui	nit		36 = 1 ur	nit
Units	Contact Hours	Homework Hours	Total Student Learning Hours	Contact Hours	Homework Hours
0.5	5.5	11	16.5	6	12
1.0	11.0	22	33.0	12	24
1.5	16.5	33	49.5	18	36
2.0	22.0	44	66.0	24	48
2.5	27.5	55	82.5	30	60
3.0	33.0	66	99.0	36	72
3.5	38.5	77	115.5	42	84
4.0	44.0	88	132.0	48	96
4.5	49.5	99	148.5	54	108
5.0	55.0	110	165.0	60	120
5.5	60.5	121	181.5	66	132
6.0	66.0	132	198.0	72	144
6.5	71.5	143	214.5	78	156
7.0	77.0	154	231.0	84	168
7.5	82.5	165	247.5	90	180
8.0	88.0	176	264.0	96	192
8.5	93.5	187	280.5	102	204
9.0	99.0	198	297.0	108	216
9.5	104.5	209	313.5	114	228
10.0	110.0	220	330.0	120	240
10.5	115.5	231	346.5	126	252
11.0	121.0	242	363.0	132	264
11.5	126.5	253	379.5	138	276
12.0	132.0	264	396.0	144	288
12.5	137.5	275	412.5	150	300
13.0	143.0	286	429.0	156	312
13.5	148.5	297	445.5	162	324
14.0	154.0	308	462.0	168	336
14.5	159.5	319	478.5	174	348
15.0	165.0	330	495.0	180	360
15.5	170.5	341	511.5	186	372
16.0	176.0	352	528.0	192	384
16.5	181.5	363	544.5	198	396
17.0	187.0	374	561.0	204	408
17.5	192.5	385	577.5	210	420
18.0	198.0	396	594.0	216	432

Total Student Learning Hours

Activity or Lab w/Hmwk	33 = 1 ui	nit		36 = 1 ur	nit	
Units	Contact Hours	Homework Hours	Fotal Student -earning Hours	Contact Hours	Homework Hours	Fotal Student .earning Hours
0.5	11.0	5.5	16.5	12	6	18
1.0	22.0	11.0	33.0	24	12	36
1.5	33.0	16.5	49.5	36	18	54
2.0	44.0	22.0	66.0	48	24	72
2.5	55.0	27.5	82.5	60	30	90
3.0	66.0	33.0	99.0	72	36	108
3.5	77.0	38.5	115.5	84	42	126
4.0	88.0	44.0	132.0	96	48	144
4.5	99.0	49.5	148.5	108	54	162
5.0	110.0	55.0	165.0	120	60	180
5.5	121.0	60.5	181.5	132	66	198
6.0	132.0	66.0	198.0	144	72	216
6.5	143.0	71.5	214.5	156	78	234
7.0	154.0	77.0	231.0	168	84	252
7.5	165.0	82.5	247.5	180	90	270
8.0	176.0	88.0	264.0	192	96	288
8.5	187.0	93.5	280.5	204	102	306
9.0	198.0	99.0	297.0	216	108	324
9.5	209.0	104.5	313.5	228	114	342
10.0	220.0	110.0	330.0	240	120	360
10.5	231.0	115.5	346.5	252	126	378
11.0	242.0	121.0	363.0	264	132	396
11.5	253.0	126.5	379.5	276	138	414
12.0	264.0	132.0	396.0	288	144	432
12.5	275.0	137.5	412.5	300	150	450
13.0	286.0	143.0	429.0	312	156	468
13.5	297.0	148.5	445.5	324	162	486
14.0	308.0	154.0	462.0	336	168	504
14.5	319.0	159.5	478.5	348	174	522
15.0	330.0	165.0	495.0	360	180	540
15.5	341.0	170.5	511.5	372	186	558
16.0	352.0	176.0	528.0	384	192	576
16.5	363.0	181.5	544.5	396	198	594
17.0	374.0	187.0	561.0	408	204	612
17.5	385.0	192.5	577.5	420	210	630
18.0	396.0	198.0	594.0	432	216	648

Lab, Clinical, Activity, etc.	33 = 1 ur	nit		36 = 1 ur	nit	
Units	Contact Hours	Homework Hours	Total Student Learning Hours	Contact Hours	Homework Hours	Total Student Learning Hours
0.5	16.5	0.0	16.5	18	0	18
1.0	33.0	0.0	33.0	36	0	36
1.5	49.5	0.0	49.5	54	0	54
2.0	66.0	0.0	66.0	72	0	72
2.5	82.5	0.0	82.5	90	0	90
3.0	99.0	0.0	99.0	108	0	108
3.5	115.5	0.0	115.5	126	0	126
4.0	132.0	0.0	132.0	144	0	144
4.5	148.5	0.0	148.5	162	0	162
5.0	165.0	0.0	165.0	180	0	180
5.5	181.5	0.0	181.5	198	0	198
6.0	198.0	0.0	198.0	216	0	216
6.5	214.5	0.0	214.5	234	0	234
7.0	231.0	0.0	231.0	252	0	252
7.5	247.5	0.0	247.5	270	0	270
8.0	264.0	0.0	264.0	288	0	288
8.5	280.5	0.0	280.5	306	0	306
9.0	297.0	0.0	297.0	324	0	324
9.5	313.5	0.0	313.5	342	0	342
10.0	330.0	0.0	330.0	360	0	360
10.5	346.5	0.0	346.5	378	0	378
11.0	363.0	0.0	363.0	396	0	396
11.5	379.5	0.0	379.5	414	0	414
12.0	396.0	0.0	396.0	432	0	432
12.5	412.5	0.0	412.5	450	0	450
13.0	429.0	0.0	429.0	468	0	468
13.5	445.5	0.0	445.5	486	0	486
14.0	462.0	0.0	462.0	504	0	504
14.5	478.5	0.0	478.5	522	0	522
15.0	495.0	0.0	495.0	540	0	540
15.5	511.5	0.0	511.5	558	0	558
16.0	528.0	0.0	528.0	576	0	576
16.5	544.5	0.0	544.5	594	0	594
17.0	561.0	0.0	561.0	612	0	612
17.5	577.5	0.0	577.5	630	0	630
18.0	594.0	0.0	594.0	648	0	648