



Credit Hour Policy

Last updated 1 December 2023

Definitions

Signum defines one (1) credit hour as at least 45 hours of student work, which should comprise at least 15 hours of academic engagement and at least 30 hours of student preparation. In accordance with commonly held US higher education principles and practice, we define one hour of student work or academic engagement as 50 minutes. Class and study time may exceed these minimums to ensure that students meet the learning outcomes.

All Signum graduate classes are 3 credit hours, so they should typically include at least 45 hours of academic engagement and at least 90 hours of student preparation. In a standard 12-week class, students should expect to spend at least 3.75 hours per week in “academic engagement” and at least 7.5 hours per week preparing for class independently.

Academic Engagement (min. 45 hours per course)

Academic engagement is defined as hours spent learning directly from a member of the Signum faculty, either in live or recorded sessions. These activities will typically comprise:

- Live or recorded lectures
- Live, in person preceptor sessions or tutorials

12-week Signum classes will typically provide instruction using one of the following combinations:

- Live or recorded lectures cumulatively totaling at least 137.5 minutes (2.75 hours) and one live discussion session of at least 50 minutes (1 hour) weekly for 12 weeks
- Live or recorded lectures cumulatively totaling 100 minutes (2 hours) and live discussion sessions totaling at least 87.5 minutes (1.75 hours) weekly for 12 weeks
- Live or recorded lectures cumulatively totaling 50 minutes (1 hour) and live discussion sessions totaling at least 137.5 minutes (2.75 hours) weekly for 12 weeks
- Live seminars totaling at least 187.5 minutes (3.75 hours) weekly for 12 weeks

Other combinations or activities are possible with approval from the Chair.

Preparation (min. 90 hours per course)

Student preparation is time students spend without direct guidance from the instructor but completing work that has been assigned for the course. Preparation activities could include, but are not limited to:

- Completing assigned reading
- Completing assigned exercises or translations
- Memorizing essential course materials (e.g. facts, charts, vocabulary)
- Reviewing for examinations
- Contributing to a course discussion board
- Writing papers
- Writing or rehearsing a presentation

Spread over 12 weeks, the average student should be spending at least 7.5 hours per week on class preparation, and the instructor should be mindful of assigning a combination of activities, either on a weekly basis or over the course of the term, that will give the average student ample opportunities to prepare and revise work accordingly. The Director, Chair, and Deputy Chair, in consultation with the faculty, have developed a list of suggested timings instructors may use when evaluating the amount of time they may expect students to spend on preparation activities, such as those listed above, but faculty are encouraged to communicate with the Chair or Deputy Chair (as most pertinent for their coursework) to ensure that they have provided an adequate balance of activities. See the Activity Timings Sheet for the current academic year for the most updated list of activity timings.

Tutorials

Thesis and capstone terms follow U. S. Department of Education guidelines in expecting students to complete an *equivalent* amount of work over the course of the term but applying different proportions of “academic engagement” and “preparation” hours to accommodate the extended independent preparation students will complete as they research and write a full thesis or capstone project. Student hours for independent study activities will be measured by student achievement of institutionally established learning outcomes. A thesis or capstone student will spend a minimum of 11.5 hours preparing course work (thesis research and writing) per week (138 hours total across 12 weeks), with a minimum of 8 hours of engagement with the advisor over the course of the term. At least two (2) of those 8 hours of engagement should be synchronous and live, but the faculty and student may elect to conduct the remainder (at least 6), and any additional hours, asynchronously over email, recorded voice or video memos, or other means as mutually agreed upon.

Implementation

New Courses

As each new course is proposed or modified, the Chair or Deputy Chair will review the syllabus to ensure that it offers students the minimum number of hours of academic engagement and academic preparation.

Subsequent Terms

Each term, the Chair, Deputy Chair, or a designated member of the academic leadership team will review the syllabus for each section being offered to ensure that all classes include the minimum number of hours of academic engagement and academic preparation.

Maintenance

The Director, Chair, and Deputy Chair will review the Activity Timings Sheet annually, staying abreast of current research into credit hour determinations and polling faculty and students both formally and informally to ensure that the Activity Timings listed on the sheet are appropriate for an average Signum student.