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## **5. INSTRUCTIONAL PROCEDURES**

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## 5.1 CREDIT HOUR POLICY

Academic credit provides the basis for measuring the amount of work a typical student is expected to complete during a specified amount of academically engaged time whether the instructional interaction is in a traditional classroom setting, a laboratory, studio, internship or other experiential learning, or through technology-based (online) or other distance education instruction. A “credit hour” is a unit of measure reflecting the value the University assigns to the level of instruction, academic rigor, and minimum time requirements for courses taken at the University of North Alabama (UNA).

UNA employs sound, commonly accepted practices for determining the amount and level of credit awarded for courses, regardless of format, location, or mode of delivery. The University of North Alabama endorses the basic definition of a credit hour as determined by the federal government and supported by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

According to 34 CFR 600.2, the federal definition of a credit hour is as follows:

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 ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; 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.

### Determination of Course Credit

At the University of North Alabama, the academic department determines the number of credit hours and level of credit to be awarded for the course and assigns a course number. Graduate level courses require additional research and application beyond the undergraduate level.

The department completes a formal proposal for a new course. The proposal is reviewed and approved by: departmental faculty, the Department Chair, Dean of the College, and the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee or Graduate Council depending on the level of instruction. The curriculum development and review process is detailed in [section 3.3.3](#) of UNA’s *Faculty Handbook*.

## Instructional Schedule\*

The University of North Alabama operates on the semester system, with two semesters (fall and spring) during the regular academic year. Fall and spring semester courses are scheduled for approximately 15 weeks, excluding holidays and spring/fall break, but including a week of final exams, resulting in approximately 14 weeks of class meetings.

Semester hours of credit are awarded based on the average number of minutes of instruction or the equivalent during the semester or term. Courses follow the guideline of 700 minutes of instruction per credit hour. This translates into 2100 minutes of instruction for three-credit-hour courses.

For classes that meet on campus, the University of North Alabama follows these guidelines:

- Three-credit-hour daytime courses that meet three days per week meet for 50 minutes per class session. These courses meet for approximately 42 sessions per term.
- Three-credit-hour daytime courses that meet two days per week meet for 75 minutes per class session. They meet for approximately 28 sessions per term.

Fall or spring evening courses may meet one or two nights per week. The total number of meeting minutes per semester is used in the calculation of the total length of each class meeting for evening courses (2100 minutes for a three-credit-hour course).

Additionally, UNA offers courses in compressed schedule formats:

- For example, the Summer I and Summer II sessions are each approximately four weeks in duration. The combined summer term is approximately eight weeks in duration. Intersessions are approximately three weeks in duration.
- Courses offered in a compressed schedule session follow the guideline of 700 minutes of instruction per credit hour. This translates into 2100 minutes of instruction for three-credit-hour courses. Therefore, the total number of instructional hours in courses offered in a compressed schedule session is approximately the same as the instructional hours in courses or labs offered during a regular semester session with the exception of some laboratory courses or sections, which may require more instructional time than typical courses.

\*Note: Credit hour requirements of discipline-specific accrediting bodies or licensing units will be taken into consideration when credit hour determination is made related to the impacted academic programs.

## Studio/Labs/Applied Music/Clinical Instruction

Studio art courses follow the standards of the National Association of Schools of Art and Design and meet 100 minutes per credit hour.

Labs associated with natural science courses meet for a length of time determined by the department, as follows: typically two hours per week in physics, earth science, geology, geography, and most biology courses; three hours per week in chemistry, industrial hygiene, and some upper level biology courses; and four hours per week in a small number of upper level biology courses. One credit-hour labs associated with the Department of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation involve approximately 120 minutes of lab instruction per week. One credit-hour labs associated with the Department of Chemistry and Industrial Hygiene involve approximately 165 minutes of lab instruction per week.

Applied music courses follow the standards of the National Association of Schools of Music: "a semester hour of credit represents at least three hours of work each week, on average, for a period of fifteen to sixteen weeks" incorporating both lessons and practicing. Weekly lessons are one-half clock hour for one credit hour and one clock hour for two credit hours. Music technique courses offering group instruction in woodwind, brass, percussion, string, piano, and guitar are assigned one credit hour for two 50-minute class meetings per week. Music ensembles in the areas of band, orchestra, choral, opera/musical theatre, and chamber music are assigned one credit hour and vary in rehearsal hours per week ranging from 1.5 to 8 hours per week depending on the nature and mission of the ensemble.

Nursing follows the Federal Credit Hour definition, making allowances, as permitted by law, for the amount of work, measurements of student work, academically-engaged time and academic disciplines in its allowance of flexibility of the definition of credit hour as determined by the institution. Through this definition, lab (clinical) hours are considered "direct faculty instruction" and, therefore, credit hours.

#### Internships/Practica /Independent Study

For courses designed to include significant out-of-class experiences (e.g., student teaching, internships, etc.) and Independent Studies guidelines are set by the academic department for how the instructional time frame will meet credit guidelines outlined above. These courses require individual enrollment accompanied by a detailed contract specifying the nature of the student work product, learning outcomes, the frequency of meetings between the faculty member and student, and the method of final evaluation (grading).

#### Online/Technology-Based Instruction/Distance Education

The University requires that all non-traditional courses delivered online, through other technology-based instruction, or via distance education be equivalent to traditional, campus-based courses in terms of course descriptions, expectations, assessments, and learning outcomes.

Courses delivered with technology emphasize academic engagement and student preparation in determining time of instruction, but otherwise follow the same guidelines as face-to-face courses. The University employs the following terms and definitions relative to its course offerings:

**Traditional Courses** – Course activity is organized around scheduled class meetings.

**Blended (also called Hybrid) Courses** – Online activity is mixed with classroom meetings, replacing a significant percentage, but not all required face-to-face instructional activities.

**Online Courses** – All course instructional activity is done online; testing is conducted on-line and, where proctoring of exams is required, instructors offer students options beyond on-campus proctoring.

Academic engagement may include, but is not limited to, submitting an academic assignment, listening to class lectures or webinars (synchronous or asynchronous), taking an exam, completing an interactive tutorial or computer-assisted instruction, attending a study group that is assigned by the institution, contributing to an academic online discussion, initiating contact with a faculty member to ask a question about the academic subject studied in the course, conducting laboratory work, or completing an externship or internship.

The University of North Alabama courses delivered abroad or at other off-campus settings are developed by faculty to take full advantage of the unique location and be consistent with the expectations for academic engagement and instructional time articulated in the policy.

In summary, within the relevant semester time frame, the policy is:

General University Guidelines:

One semester credit of scheduled/lecture course instruction = 50 minutes of instruction time per week

One credit of lab = 180 minutes of lab instruction time per week

Four-credit lecture/lab class = 330 minutes of instruction time per week (150 min. lecture/180 min. lab)

Discipline Specific Exceptions:

**Art:** One credit of studio = 100 minutes of instruction time per week

**Biology:** Three-credit lecture & lab course = 210-270 minutes of instruction time (100 minutes lecture & 110-170 minutes of lab) per week

**Biology, Physics and Earth Science:** Four-credit lecture & lab course = 260-320 minutes of instruction time (100-150 minutes of lecture & 110-220 minutes of lab) per week

**Chemistry and Industrial Hygiene:** One credit of lab = 165 minutes of lab instruction time per week

**Health, Physical Education and Recreation:** One credit of lab = 120 minutes of lab instruction time per week

**Music:** One credit of group music instruction = Two 50 minute meetings per week

**Music:** One credit hour of music ensemble = 1.5 to 8 hours of rehearsal per week

**Nursing:** Six-credit lecture/lab class = 510 minutes of instruction time per week (150 min. lecture plus 360 min. clinical/lab experiences instruction time)

This policy will be reviewed by the UNA Council of Academic Deans on a regular basis and revised as necessary to maintain currency with updated guidelines and instructional changes.

## 5.2 CLASS SCHEDULES AND ROOM ASSIGNMENTS

The class schedule for each term is prepared in advance by the chairs of departments. Faculty members are expected to meet with their classes at the times and places designated on the schedule, to hold classes for the full period, and to dismiss classes promptly so that students can meet the next class on time. No permanent change of time or place of class meetings should be made except on prior approval of the dean of the college. Changes are recorded in the Office of the Registrar.

## 5.3 CLASS ROSTERS AND ROLL BOOKS

The official roster of students for each class is provided for the faculty member on-line. It is the responsibility of faculty members to assist in validating proper enrollment through careful check of the on-line rosters. A student may not receive a final grade unless properly registered for the course, and faculty members may not add a student to a class without supporting documentation. The grade book/spreadsheet showing the class grades throughout the term, as well as the final course grades given, must be retained for at least one year beyond the conclusion of the term for which it was used. Additionally, faculty members are required to retain documents that were used to compute grades but not returned to the students, such as exams and projects, for the same time period.

Faculty members are required to maintain regular and accurate records of student attendance for academic reasons and for the reports required for compliance with regulations imposed by the Veterans Administration, for compliance with federal student financial aid requirements of the United States Department of Education, and for compliance with other external agencies. As requested by the Office of Student Financial Services, faculty members must report whether students have started attending their courses. Faculty members must also report the last date of attendance for any student who receives a grade of F, U, or NC. Documentation for the last date of attendance may be from attendance charts, exams taken, projects submitted, online course activity, or other means.

## **5.4 STUDENT WITHDRAWALS**

Procedures through which students officially withdraw from a course or from the University are described in the undergraduate and graduate catalogs. Official withdrawal is approved by the appropriate instructor and the dean of the college. The instructor is notified by e-mail when the student completes the withdrawal process. Students officially withdrawing within the period designated receive a grade of "W" (withdrawal). Students "dropping" from courses or from the University without following official procedures receive a grade of "F." A withdrawal notice calling for a grade of "WD" indicates an approved withdrawal under exceptional administrative—rather than academic—procedures.

## **5.5 STUDENT ABSENCES**

The University expects students to attend classes regularly and punctually and regards reasonable participation through attendance as integral to the award of credit. University regulations on student absence are located in the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs. The individual faculty member may establish stricter limits and accompanying grade penalties, according to the level and nature of the course, but stricter policies must be approved by the chair of the department, and the students must be properly informed at the beginning of the course. The department chair should try, as much as possible, to ensure that absence policies are uniform in multiple sections of the same course. Each faculty member should review his/her attendance policies for each course, keeping in mind the educational goals of the course. Attendance policies should be consistent with course objectives.

The student is directly responsible to the individual faculty member for absences and for making up work missed. For excused absences, makeup procedures should be provided by the faculty member at the beginning of each term. Faculty members may excuse absences for illness or other extenuating circumstances. Official excuse for absence is provided on the announcements page of UNA Portal from the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs for group absences incurred in connection with such university-sponsored scheduled activities as intercollegiate athletics, musical performances, and similar functions. From time to time, faculty also will be notified by the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs of requests from other faculty or administrative officials for group absences to be approved in connection with field trips and special meetings or programs of an appropriate nature. Approval of the absence rests with the faculty member, and the individual student must secure advance permission. Implicit in an "excused absence," whether authorized by the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs or by the individual faculty member, is the student's entitlement, without grade prejudice, to make up tests or other specific work missed. Permitting makeup work for unexcused absences is at the discretion of the faculty member. The student is responsible for work missed regardless of reasons for absences.

## **5.6 FIELD TRIPS AND OTHER OUT-OF-SCHEDULE CLASS ACTIVITIES**

With the advance approval of the chair of the department, a limited number of field trips or similar out-of-schedule class activities may be permitted for course-related purposes. Faculty members planning such activities must recognize that participation may not impinge on the student's obligation to other classes and commitments. Formal request to other faculty members to approve the absence of the participating student is made through the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, as described under Student Absences above. The request should list the students in alphabetical order by recorded name and L+last two digits of student ID number. The faculty member sponsoring the activity also must advise the students to seek advance permission from the concerned faculty member for their absence.

## **5.7 EVALUATIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

The nature of assignments and of tests, papers, projects, performances, and other measures of student evaluation is established for the particular course by the faculty member. Multisection course requirements are coordinated by the chair of the department. Evaluations should be sufficient in number to assure appropriate measure of attainment and to permit students to gauge their standing at various points during the term. At least three major evaluations, including the final examination, should be used. Except for special classes for which papers, performances, or projects may be justifiable substitutes, a final examination is to be held for each class according to the schedule. Comprehensive term examinations are not required, but a final examination should carry distinctive weight in determining final grades.

The faculty member shall make a course syllabus available by the first day of the semester that includes information about the nature of class assignments, evaluations, attendance policy, and grading system. The syllabus should also include the university policy on accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, the university policy on Academic Honesty, the Title IX statement, and a statement that the University of North Alabama's official communication vehicle is UNA Portal – with an emphasis on e-mail (accessed through the homepage at <http://www.una.edu>). Good practice also requires that evaluations are properly reviewed, graded, and the grade promptly made available to the student. Any student evaluation material that is not returned to the student should be retained by the instructor for at least one year following completion of the course for possible reference.

Faculty members are expected to help assure the integrity of grades through proper security for, and supervision of, examinations.

Plagiarism and cheating are regarded as serious offenses and may subject the student to academic and/or disciplinary penalties. Policies on Academic Honesty are found in the [Undergraduate Catalog](#).



## 5.8 FINAL GRADE APPEALS PROCESS

The grades awarded by a faculty member are expected to be based on sound academic standards, on sufficient and appropriate evaluations, and through orderly procedures announced to the student. Faculty retention of coursework records is recommended in section 5.2 of the Faculty Handbook. Appeals on allegations of academic dishonesty shall follow the steps in the Academic Honesty policy (refer to [Undergraduate Catalog](#))

The faculty member is the sole determiner of the grade awarded in a course and is responsible for the justification of the grade. Students are entitled to an appropriate grade review on request, and students who question the grade received are referred directly to the faculty member for review. Should a student wish to continue further grade review, the following process should be followed.

1. The student should submit the Final Grade Appeal form indicating the nature of the complaint to the department chair in the department where the course is housed and request a review of the assigned grade, indicating that an initial review has been performed by the faculty member issuing the grade. The [Final Grade Appeal form](#) is available on the Academic Affairs website.
2. Should the student, after consultation with the department chair, wish to continue further review of the grade, he/she should indicate this on the [Final Grade Appeal form](#) and contact the dean of the college where the course is housed and request a review of the assigned grade. The Final Grade Appeal form should be forwarded to the dean by the department chair.
3. At either the department chair and/or dean level the faculty member may be asked to reevaluate the assigned grade.
4. If the student wishes to appeal further, i.e., to the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, in these rare and unusual circumstances the student shall indicate his/her decision on the Final Grade Appeal form. The Final Grade Appeal form will be forwarded to the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs by the dean. The Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs will determine if the evidence is strong enough to warrant further review, i.e., the burden of proof is on the student to make a strong case that merits committee review. In this case the appeal shall be forwarded to the university Grievance Committee (appointed by the President annually). Any members of the department where the grade appeal resides would be excused from this review. The Grievance committee will make a recommendation to the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs.
5. Following the decision, the student and the faculty member shall be notified and provided a rationale for the decision.

6. All grade appeals shall be initiated no later than six weeks after the term in which the grade was issued.

## **5.9 EXAMINATION SCHEDULE**

The schedule for term final examinations is issued by the Office of the Registrar. Examinations are scheduled for periods of one hour and forty-five minutes each and normally cover four days in a semester and one day in a summer session. Faculty and students are expected to comply with the schedule unless exception is approved by the dean of the college. The schedule of examinations is prepared with a view to a reasonable spread in examinations for students on normal schedules. Necessary deadlines for grade reporting also must be accommodated.

### **5.10 STUDY DAY**

The intent of Study Day is to provide students with a period of time to study before final exams. Consequently, classes that begin before 5 p.m. during the term are not to meet on Study Day, and faculty are requested not to schedule this day as a deadline for papers, projects, or tests. Student organizations are likewise requested not to schedule mandatory events or activities for this day. Final exams may be given on Study Day in classes that begin at or after 5 p.m. on that day, or the final exam in these classes may be scheduled for the last class meeting prior to Study Day. Academic departments requesting exceptions to this policy should consult with the appropriate college dean.

### **5.11 TERM GRADE REPORTS**

Official grades for the semester or summer session are available for students to view via their UNA Portal accounts. To expedite the preparation of graduation lists, names of candidates for graduation in a class are printed and forwarded to each faculty member along with instructions for entering grades online and deadline dates/times. Grade report sheets are also forwarded to each faculty member listing all Early College students registered in his/her classes. The included instructions require numeric grades to be entered for these students. These grade report sheets must be signed by the faculty member and returned to the Office of the Registrar. Numeric grades for Early College students are then forwarded to the appropriate high school counselors. It is the responsibility of the faculty member to notify the Office of the Registrar if some unforeseen circumstance may require delay in reporting. Such contact should be made prior to the deadline. Instructors can print the online grade screen after entering all grades to keep for their records.

### **5.12 PROPER CLASSROOM DECORUM**

Faculty members have the right and responsibility to create and maintain a classroom environment in which optimal learning can be achieved. Student behavior which intentionally interferes with the right of other students to learn will not be

permitted. Faculty members may include the statements above within the class syllabus. Resolution of conflicts arising from student behavior should begin with a private conversation between the faculty member and student. Any continuing problems should be discussed with the department chair and a course of action agreed upon before implementation by the faculty member. For additional guidance, please refer to the university's policy on threats in the workplace.