

CREDIT HOUR POLICY

1. Background. South Texas College of Law (the Law School) has adopted policies and procedures for determining the credit hours awarded that conform to or exceed those established by the American Bar Association (the ABA)¹ and by the Department of Education.² ABA Standard 310(b) provides as follows:

A “credit hour” is an amount of work that reasonably approximates:

- (1) not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and two hours of out-of-class student work per week for fifteen weeks, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or
- (2) at least an equivalent amount of work as required in subparagraph (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution, including simulation, field placement, clinical, co-curricular, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

Interpretation 310-1 explains that 50 minutes is sufficient for one hour of direct faculty instruction and that the fifteen week period may include one week for a final examination.

2. The Academic Calendar. The Law School’s academic calendar for both the fall and spring semesters consists of fourteen weeks of class meetings followed by a two-week examination period. The summer session consists of seven weeks of class meetings followed by a one-week examination period. The summer and winter intersessions are one week of class sessions coupled with an examination, paper, or project.

3. Credit Hour Policy. The credit hour is the basic unit of academic credit granted by the Law School. It reflects (but exceeds) the Carnegie unit that has served as the traditional unit of measure in American higher education. For courses offered by the Law School, one semester credit hour is equivalent to (a) one hour (60 full minutes) of faculty instruction time per week for 14 weeks, plus an additional week for a final examination, for a total of 900 minutes (840 minutes of direct instruction and 60 minutes of examination) or 15 hours per credit hour; and (b) a minimum of two hours (120 minutes) of student preparation time outside of the classroom each week for 14 weeks, plus an additional week for a final examination, for a total of 1,800 (120 minutes per week for 15 weeks) or 30 hours per credit hour. Thus, for each semester credit hour, students should have a minimum of 45 hours of rigorous engagement with the course material and activities directed toward the course learning outcomes.

If a course does not meet every week or does not have an examination, an equivalent amount of time will be allocated during the semester to direct classroom contact and student out-of-class work per week.

¹ ABA Standards and Rules of Procedure for Approval of Law Schools (2014-2015), Standard 310(b).

² 34 C.F.R. § 600.2 (2015), Regulations of the offices of the Department of Education.

An equivalent amount of work is required for each semester credit hour awarded in clinics, field placements, simulation courses, co-curricular offerings, and any other academic work for which the Law School awards academic credit.

4. Credit Hour Standards by Term. The measure of instructional contact time and out-of-class preparation or other course activity time may be adjusted to reflect the varying lengths of the Law School’s academic terms. The minimum required direct faculty contact time and out-of-class student engagement for the regular long semesters, summer sessions, and winter and summer intersessions are set out below.

Fall and Spring Semesters

Courses offered during the fall and spring semesters are scheduled to meet for fourteen weeks followed by a two-week examination period.

Credits	Faculty Contact/Week	Faculty Contact/Semester	Student Preparation/Week	Student Preparation/Semester	Total Student Engagement per Semester
1	60 minutes	900 minutes	120 minutes	1,800 minutes	2,700 minutes
2	120 minutes	1,800 minutes	240 minutes	3,600 minutes	5,400 minutes
3	180 minutes	2,700 minutes	360 minutes	5,400 minutes	8,100 minutes
4	240 minutes	3,600 minutes	480 minutes	7,200 minutes	10,800 minutes

Summer Sessions

Courses offered during the summer sessions are scheduled to meet for seven weeks followed by a one-week examination period.

Credits	Faculty Contact/Week	Faculty Contact/Session	Student Preparation/Week	Student Preparation/Session	Total Student Engagement per Session
1	120 minutes	900 minutes	240 minutes	1,800 minutes	2,700 minutes
2	240 minutes	1,800 minutes	480 minutes	3,600 minutes	5,400 minutes
3	360 minutes	2,700 minutes	720 minutes	5,400 minutes	8,100 minutes
4	480 minutes	3,600 minutes	960 minutes	7,200 minutes	10,800 minutes

Winter and Summer Intersessions

Courses offered during the winter and summer intersessions are designed to focus on legal skills training. They will meet for one week, but students may be expected to perform course work before the session begins, during the session, and after the session has concluded. This outside work may consist of course-related reading, preparation for in-class performance, projects, or other academically-related work directed toward the course’s learning outcomes.

Credits	Faculty Contact/Session	Student Preparation/Session	Total Student Engagement per Session
1	840 minutes	1,800 minutes	2,640 minutes
2	1,680 minutes	3,600 minutes	5,280 minutes

5. Credit for Student-Edited Law Journals. Student members of law journals are eligible to receive one semester credit hour per semester for performing at least 45 hours of academically-related work, including legal research and writing on a note or comment, reading and evaluating journal submissions, or editing articles. Students are responsible for maintaining a weekly log of their hours for review by the faculty advisor of the journal at the conclusion of each semester or session. Academic credit will be awarded on a high pass/pass/low pass/fail basis.

6. Credit for Moot Court, Mock Trial, and ADR Competitions. Students selected to participate in intercollegiate moot court, mock trial, and ADR competitions are eligible to receive one semester credit hour per semester for 45 hours of academically-related work, including legal research, brief writing, appellate advocacy, trial advocacy, negotiation, mediation, arbitration, and the like. Students are responsible for maintaining a log of their hours for review by the faculty advisor or coach at the conclusion of each semester. Academic credit will be awarded on a high pass/pass/low pass/fail basis.

7. Credit for Clinics and Academic Externships. Each Law School clinic and externship placement includes a classroom component. For clinics, students receive one semester credit hour for performing 50 hours of supervised law practice-related work connected with clinic client representation or other activities directed toward the clinic's learning outcomes. Clinic students also must fully participate in the classroom component of the clinic in order to receive credit. For academic externships, students receive one semester credit hour for performing 60 hours of supervised law practice-related work in their field placements. Full participation in the classroom component is required of all academic externship students; they are also responsible for submitting weekly journals and timesheets for regular review by a faculty member. Academic credit is awarded on a high pass/pass/low pass/fail basis.

8. Online Courses. At present, the Law School rarely offers courses online. When such courses are proposed, they must meet the definition of standard faculty contact time within the duration of the online version (*i.e.*, 900 minutes per credit hour). A course where instructors and students do not meet in the same space must be consistent in terms of quality, assessment, learning outcomes, and course requirements as the equivalent course offered face-to-face. For synchronous courses, *i.e.* those courses where students participate in direct faculty instruction remotely as it takes place, the remote participation – actively monitored by the faculty member – will be treated as the equivalent of face-to-face class meetings. For asynchronous courses, *i.e.* those courses offered without any required face-to-face, contemporaneous faculty interaction, a week of instructional time is any given seven-day period in which at least one session of regularly schedule instruction or examination occurs. Faculty must demonstrate active academic engagement through interactive methods which could include, but are not limited to, viewing an interactive recorded lecture, narrated PowerPoint presentation, or podcast; submitting an academic assignment; taking an examination, an interactive tutorial, or computer-assisted instruction; attending a virtual study group assigned by the instructor; contributing to an academic online discussion; or engaging in contact with the faculty member and class peers related to the academic subject matter of the course (as on discussion boards or chat rooms). Simply logging on, either by faculty or students, does not constitute active learning.

9. Procedures for Ensuring Compliance with the Law School's Credit Hour Policy.

The ultimate responsibility for ensuring that individual course offerings comply with the Law School's credit hour policy resides with the faculty. As new courses are proposed, the proponent has the burden of showing that the amount of direct faculty contact and out-of-class student engagement with the course learning outcomes and course requirements satisfies the Law School's credit hour policy, and the Curriculum Committee should review the proposed credit hour statement, syllabus, and course requirements and determine before granting approval of the course as an experimental offering that it will meet the requirements of that policy. Thereafter, before recommending to the full faculty approval of the course as a permanent course offering, the Curriculum Committee must make an affirmative determination that the course meets the minimum requirements for the credit hours proposed for the course. The full faculty's approval of the course as a permanent part of the Law School's curriculum represents, among other things, its affirmative determination that the amount of student work required by the course satisfies the credit hour policy. The Curriculum Committee and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs shall have initial responsibility for monitoring the continuing compliance with the Law School's Credit Hour Policy and may require corrections of any deficiencies.