University of South Dakota School of Law
Credit Hour Policy

The University of South Dakota School of Law is implementing these interim credit hour policies and procedures that will determine the number of credit hours that may be awarded throughout the curriculum, pursuant to American Bar Association (“ABA”) Standard 310 and the explanatory guidance. The language of the Standard is below:

Standard 310. DETERMINATION OF CREDIT HOURS FOR COURSEWORK

(a) A law school shall adopt, publish, and adhere to written policies and procedures for determining the credit hours that it awards for coursework.

(b) 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
For purposes of this Standard, fifty minutes suffices for one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction. An “hour” for out-of-class student work is sixty minutes. The fifteen-week period may include one week for a final examination.

Interpretation 310-2
A school may award credit hours for coursework that extends over any period of time, if the coursework entails no less than the minimum total amounts of classroom or direct faculty instruction and of out-of-class student work specified in Standard 310(b).

The Managing Director’s Guidance Memo regarding Standard 310 clarifies the ABA expectation for law schools. The following reflects the expectations set forth in the Standard, the Interpretations, and the Guidance Memo.

Credit Hour Policy
The University of South Dakota School of Law operates on a 14-week semester. The ABA, however, requires us to perform the instruction/homework calculation based on a 15-week semester, regardless of the amount of time that we allocate for students to complete those hours.

In order to meet our requirements, courses that schedule a final examination may treat the week of the exam as the 15th week for purposes of the instruction/homework calculation. Credit-
bearing activities that do not schedule a final examination (e.g., the LITC, externships, simulation courses, seminars, co-curricular activities, and any other such courses) must schedule the equivalent of 15 weeks of instruction and homework in order to justify the stated award of academic credit.

**Credit Hour Standards**

**All credit-bearing activities are subject to the following requirements:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>Faculty Engagement/week</th>
<th>Faculty Engagement/Semester</th>
<th>Out-of-class work/week</th>
<th>Out-of-class work/semester</th>
<th>Engagement totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>50 minutes</td>
<td>750 minutes</td>
<td>120 minutes</td>
<td>1800 minutes</td>
<td>2550 minutes¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>100 minutes</td>
<td>1500 minutes</td>
<td>240 minutes</td>
<td>3600 minutes</td>
<td>5100 minutes²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>150 minutes</td>
<td>2250 minutes</td>
<td>360 minutes</td>
<td>5400 minutes</td>
<td>7650 minutes³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>200 minutes</td>
<td>3000 minutes</td>
<td>480 minutes</td>
<td>7200 minutes</td>
<td>10,200 minutes⁴</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, if a class is subject to a final examination, the week of the exam counts in this allocation. Therefore, as a practical matter, if a professor teaches a 1-credit examination course, he or she would engage in classroom or direct faculty instruction for 700 minutes over the course of 14 weeks; for a 2-credit course, engagement in classroom or direct faculty instruction would last for 1400 minutes over the course of 14 weeks; for a 3-credit course, engagement in classroom or direct faculty instruction would last for 2100 minutes over the course of 14 weeks; for a 4-credit course, engagement in classroom or direct faculty instruction would last for 2800 minutes over the course of the semester. The week of the exam would account for the remainder of the required time. The *length* of the exam, however, should properly account for that remaining time.

If a class is not subject to a final examination, the instructor must ensure that the combination of both classroom instruction and direct faculty instruction, in addition to assigned out-of-class work, meets the requirements set forth above. The Guidance Memo recognizes that seminar courses, for instance, often allocate more credits than standard “seat time” would typically allow, in recognition of the fact that students spend a great deal of time out of class in order to prepare a substantial written product. Standard 310 permits this, as long as the necessary equivalent of the total engagement/out-of-class work requirements are met.

Similarly, the Low Income Tax Clinic, externship courses, and practicum courses have set their own standards regarding the receipt of credit, but at a minimum, students must receive 2550 minutes (42.5 hours) of combined faculty instruction and out-of-class assigned work per credit. Students are responsible for keeping track of their hours, and subject to approval by their faculty instructors. Copies of the final records demonstrating the manner in which students earned credit, completed by the end of the semester and approved by the faculty member, should be housed with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs for a minimum of three years.

---

¹ This is the equivalent of 42.5 hours.
² This is the equivalent of 85 hours.
³ This is the equivalent of 127.5 hours.
⁴ This is the equivalent of 170 hours.
Students enrolled in directed research/independent study course must keep a log of their work and submit it to their faculty supervisor for approval at the end of the semester. Copies of the final records demonstrating the manner in which students earned credit, completed by the end of the semester and approved by the faculty member, should be housed with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs for a minimum of three years.

**Credit for Co-Curricular Activities (Law Review, Moot Court, ADR Board, Trial Team):**
Student participants in these co-curricular activities are eligible for credit, subject to Law School academic policies. In order to receive that credit, however, students must keep a log of the time they spend engaged in activities that will count for credit. The advisor for each of these activities must approve the time spent as appropriate for the receipt of credit. At the end of the semester, the advisor must verify for the Law School Registrar which students will receive the credit. Copies of the final records demonstrating the manner in which students earned credit, completed by the end of the semester and approved by the faculty member, should be housed with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs for a minimum of three years.

**How to make determinations regarding the assignment of out-of-class work per credit:**
Out-of-class work includes any work assigned by a faculty member which facilitates learning in the course, as well as the achievement of the course learning outcomes or objectives, and which the student is expected to complete prior to coming to class. Any such work may include, but is not limited to, the following: reading assignments (including materials in casebooks, Restatements, statutory supplements, hornbooks, etc.), case briefing, additional preparation and revision of notes, outlining, completion of assigned questions, completion of problem sets (e.g., West Assessment quizzes, CALI questions, problems in the casebook, etc.), research assignments, writing projects (e.g., writing and/or editing students’ own work, reviewing/editing other student written work if required by the professor, etc.), any class-related work that students must complete in a group-work setting (e.g., out-of-class simulations), practice exams, journal submissions, quizzes, participation in online discussion groups, study in preparation for midterms, final exams, or other assessments, and all other course-related work as assigned.

When making the determination about the amount of work that must be assigned per credit, the responsibility for deciding what assignments students will receive is vested solely in the hands of the professor. Students may be directed to complete assignments of the sort listed above alone or in combination in order to meet the credit allocation requirement.

The faculty will make final determinations regarding the proposed length of assignments, etc., that will constitute presumptive compliance with the policy. Prior to that collective determination, however, individual faculty members may wish to consult the RICE Center for Teaching Excellence Course Workload Estimator. This tool suggests, for example, that students who are meant to engage the reading in a textbook, and who will encounter many new concepts while doing so, read at the pace of five pages per hour. This tool, however, is geared toward college students. Other experts suggest that law students, at a minimum, read approximately 10 pages per hour as 1Ls, with their ability to read casebook assignments at a faster rate improving over time.

---

5 The workload estimator is located here: [http://cte.rice.edu/workload/](http://cte.rice.edu/workload/).
**Procedures for Verifying Compliance with the Credit Hour Policy**
Faculty must submit their syllabi, with accompanying assignments, to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in order to determine their compliance with this policy.

Proposals for new courses submitted to the Academic Affairs and Curriculum Committee shall not be approved without demonstrating compliance with this policy. Proposals for experimental courses submitted to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs for approval and scheduling shall not proceed without demonstrating compliance with this policy.