Awarding Credit Hours to SOM Courses and Clerkships

Educational Program Committee Approved: September 21, 2011
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Introduction: The University of Louisville policy states that “in general, one credit hour of lecture, discussion, or seminar requires at least 50 contact minutes per week during a regular semester.”

Historically, the number of credits per course has been determined by “face to face contact time.” For the past year, the Educational Program Committee (EPC) has been reviewing credit hours for all required SOM medical student courses, primarily due to changes in course hours and design of the courses themselves. The University also requires all units to submit documentation of the unit’s process for assigning credits to courses.

The EPC uses the guidelines below for assigning credit hours, effective AY 2016-2017.

Guidelines for Preclinical Courses:

1. The total number of credits for each preclinical required course will be calculated as follows: all required course learning activities will be totaled using the list of EPC-generated learning experiences (see number 2 below). This total will be divided by 15 (the nationally used average for weeks per semester), which will produce the total number of credits for each course. The EPC will round off to the nearest credit or half credit.

2. The following required learning experiences will be used to calculate credit count for preclinical courses: live or recorded lecture, independent study, formal/scheduled test preparation or test review sessions, small group activities, preceptor/shadowing experiences, team-based learning (TBL), problem based learning (PBL), standardized patient encounters, laboratory sessions, clinical correlations (lectures), and patient simulation experiences.

For example, a course that includes the following required learning activities will be listed as a 3 credit hour course: 35 hours of lecture, 5 hours of lab, and 7 hours of independent learning activities will be a 3-credit course (total = 47, divided by 15 = 3.1, which, when rounded off to the nearest half credit would be 3 credits).

In general, only learning experiences that are required and structured will be used to calculate course credit hours. Self-directed learning occurring outside of the classroom environment will NOT be included in the credit hour calculation. Other activities not included are homework, studying, practice questions, quizzes and examinations. It is anticipated that medical students will spend an average of 40 hours per week in out-of-class self-directed learning activities.

3. The EPC will be consulted to address questions regarding credit hour calculations.

Guidelines for Clinical Courses:

1. “Clerkships” are courses that require student attendance and work primarily in the clinical care environment with some classroom contact time. Clinical work can range based on patient needs, season of the year, and area of study between 40-80 hours per week. The total number of credit
hours for each required clerkship will be calculated using a 1 week = 1.25 credit hours formula. For all other clinical rotations, they will be calculated using a 1 week = 1 credit hour formula.

Distinguishing between Independent Learning and Self-Directed Learning:

- **Independent study**: Opportunities either for medical student-directed learning in one or more components of the core medical curriculum, based on structured learning objectives to be achieved by students with minimal faculty supervision, or for student-directed learning on elective topics of specific interest to the student. (Element 6.3)
  - Independent learning experiences support the LCME “self-directed learning” standards 6.3 and 8.8 and are generally a replacement for content that was previously taught via lecture, ex. online learning modules, posted resources with specific learning objectives and self-assessments, etc. Independent learning activities will be included in credit hour calculations and will appear on the schedule.

- **Self-directed learning**: Includes medical students’ self-assessment of their learning needs; their independent identification, analysis, and synthesis of relevant information; and their appraisal of the credibility of information sources. (Element 6.3)
  - The LCME definition above of self-directed learning can occur as part of scheduled class time with peers in a group learning environment, or out of class. Standards 6.3 exists to ensure that teaching and assessment of self-directed learning skills is taking place within the formal curriculum. Standard 8.8 exists in part to ensure that sufficient time is preserved in the student class schedule for students to complete additional self-directed learning on their own time outside of required class activities.
  - Self-directed learning that occurs as part of scheduled class time with peers in a group learning environment and has an attendance requirement will appear on the schedule and will be included in credit hour calculations (ex. problem-based learning case times).
  - Additional self-directed learning that happens outside of the classroom on the student’s own time will not appear on the schedule and will not be included in credit hour calculations (ex. completing extra practice questions, homework, researching topics, reviewing assigned readings or class materials to deepen learning.)

**Policy History**
Approved: September 21, 2011
Revised: December 19, 2012
Revised: February 6, 2013
Revised: August 22, 2016 (Added verbiage to reflect LCME elements 6.3 and 8.8)

**LCME Elements References:**
LCME Element 6.3 Self-Directed and Life-Long Learning
LCME Element 8.8 Monitoring Student Time